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THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

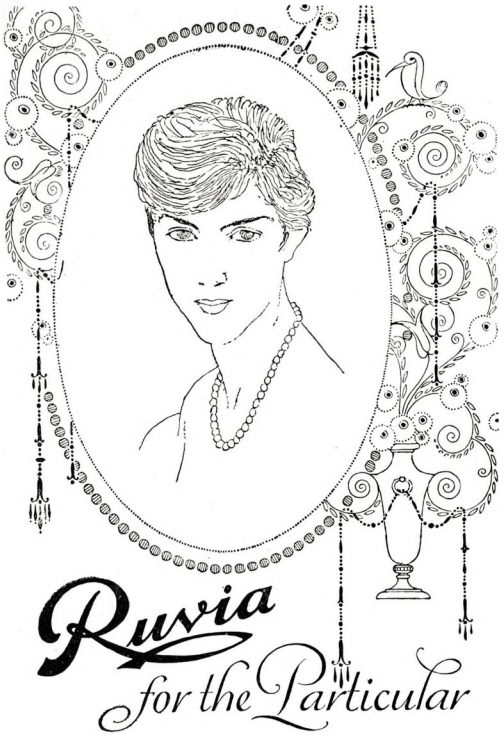
JULY 1916

Always the best writers:

Walter Jones
Perceval Gibbon
John Fleming Wilson

Featuring "Big Tim Meagher"
by PETER B. KYNE

Cyrus Townsend Brady
Albert Payson Terhune
Ellis Parker Butler
Frank R. Adams
Louis Tracy
and others



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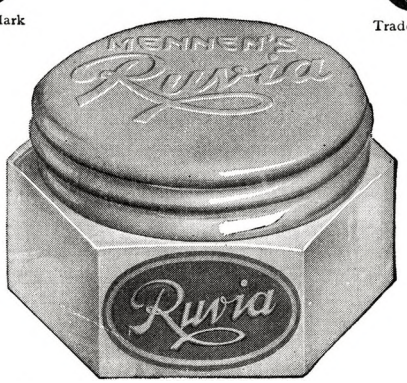

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THE BLUE BOOK

RAY LONG, Editor.

COVER DESIGN: Painted by J. KNOWLES HARE, JR.

The Eleven Best Short Stories of the Month

Big Tim Meagher. By Peter B. Kyne 481

Officer Tim was a real he-man, and when he bumped into the Police Commission he did his duty as he saw it. . . . No one but Peter B. Kyne could have written this story.

The Outing at Stroebel's Lake. By Walter Jones 490

A captivating story, told with all the characteristic humor that made Mr. Jones' "Pembina" stories famous. . . . The first of a remarkable group written especially for The Blue Book.

The Squire of Dames. By Perceval Gibbon 500

A dark drama of the Paris underworld, brought to a tremendous climax, by the brilliant author of "The Second Class Passenger" and the "Miss Gregory" stories.

The Pearl in the Oyster. By Gertrude Brooke Hamilton 525

"The world's mine oyster" had been Ferdy McPhule's viewpoint: how he found the pearl therein is told in this unusual story.

Quarter Limit. By William Almon Wolff 532

They were well on their way toward the pennant, when their whirlwind third baseman quit: the dramatic episode that brought him back again.

Saturday Afternoon. By Ellis Parker Butler 539

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Loot from *La Lutine*. By Frederic Reddale 569

Matt Bardeen, master diver, gets into difficulties with fishermen off the coast of Holland.

The War Bridegroom. By Albert Payson Terhune 574

No, this is not a war story. His "bride" was a favorite of the stock-market; and at last he divorced her!

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MAGAZINE JULY 1916

DONALD KENNICOTT, Associate Editor.

HEADINGS: Drawn by HERBERT MORTON STOOPS

Free Lances in Diplomacy. By Clarence Herbert New 583

"The Fight for Holland" is the title of this memorable story in which Lord Trevor and Lady Nan match wits and courage against subtle and daring enemies in their battle for England's success.

The Chase of the Nickel-Chaser. By Edwin L. Sabin 615

This is especially notable among the "Tales of a Wayside Garage"—for the audience itself takes part in the excitement, and the aforesaid excitement is most lively indeed.

Nothing in Tennis. By Frank Condon 624

"Love," says the dictionary, "is an affection of the mind caused by that which delights." This is a love story—simply that and nothing more; but you are sure to enjoy it very much.

Three Notable Serials

The Temporary Heir. By John Fleming Wilson 511

A short novel: striking in plot, vivid in action and individual in character. Mr. Wilson wrote "Emil Kunst's Strange Soul," "The San Bernardino Meridian" and other talked-about stories.

"Number 17." By Louis Tracy 548

This alluring mystery of New York, by the man who wrote "The Red Year" and "The Wings of the Morning," comes to some of its most interesting episodes in this second installment.

Whom God Hath Joined. By Cyrus Townsend Brady 598

The conclusion of this powerful novel of marriage and divorce: the much-tried matrimonial craft of Chrissey Deselden weathers its last storm and at last comes safely to port.

—And—

A Complete Book-Length Novel

Princess Bill. By Frank R. Adams 632

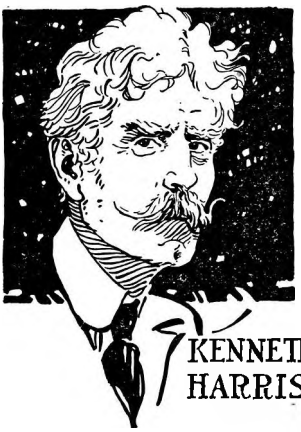
Lightsome, blithesome, joyous, this wholly frivolous and wholly delectable tale by the author of "The First Assistant Wife" and "Taking Care of Sylvia," will kindle gayety everywhere.

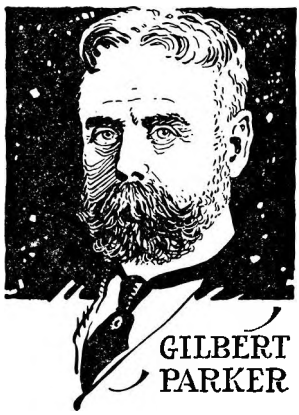
TERMS: $1.50 a year in advance; 15 cents a number. Subscriptions are received by all newsdealers and booksellers, or may be sent direct to the Publishers. Remittances must be made by Post-Office or Express Money Order, by Registered Letter, or by Postage Stamps of 2-cent denomination, and not by check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

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

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

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





The Headliners Next Month

"The Youngest of the McMahons." **By Gilbert Parker**

A vivid, virile story of the Canadian West, by the famous author of "The Right of Way," "The Seats of the Mighty" and "The Money Master."

"A Hairbreadth 'Scape for Euphemia." **By Kennett Harris**

"The best humored writer in America" is the way some one has aptly described Kennett Harris. His stories are invariably delightful, and this is one of his best.

And there'll be many other things just as well worth while in that 240-page August BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE. Roy Norton's "The Unknown Mr. Kent," a book-length novel which we will publish complete in the August issue, is a notably attractive work by the author of "The Truthful Liars" and "Mary Jane's Pa." Henry C. Rowland's short novel, "Jane," is one of the most powerful and unusual stories THE BLUE BOOK, or any other magazine, has ever printed. There'll be some especially thrilling episodes in Louis Tracy's fascinating mystery of New York, "Number 17;" and the conclusion of John Fleming Wilson's "The Temporary Heir" is even more impressive than the first part. There'll be stories, too, by such writers as Ellis Parker Butler, Clarence Herbert New, Albert Payson Terhune, Robert J. Casey, William Almon Wolff and other able writing men—all going to make up a magazine which both in quality and quantity has never been equaled.

The Most Best Fiction Appears in

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

The August issue will be on sale at all news-stands July 1st.

July
1916

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

Vol. XXIII
No 3

The first of a group of stories by the Ty Cobb of magazine writers

BIG TIM MEAGHER

by Peter B. Kyne

Author of the "Cappy Ricks" stories, "The Long Chance," "The New Partner," etc.

OFFICER TIM was a real he-man, and when he bumped against the Police Commissioner, he did his duty as he saw it. . . . . No one but Peter B. Kyne could have written this inimitably life-like and amusing story.

IT was said that Balmer, the chief of police, had not made good and would have to go. As to whether he had or had not made good, opinions were divided, but that he would have to go, no one conversant with city politics doubted in the least. Balmer was a relic of the previous administration, and while he could not, under the city charter, be dismissed without cause, Balmer knew that clause in the charter for a joke. Incompetence is the easiest thing in the world to allege of a servant when the one making the charge is also the judge who tries the case; also, in a Pacific Coast city, incompetence on the part of a chief of police is very easy to allege and very hard to disprove at a certain season of the year—and it was at this season of the year that the new Board of Police Commissioners appointed by the newly elected mayor took office, coincident with the mayor's instructions to keep the office out of politics—and dismiss the chief of police.

Shortly before the snow begins to fly in the East and Middle West the horde of men who, for economic reasons, are unable to face the rigors of winter in those sections of the country, begin their annual brake-beam hegira to the milder climate of the Pacific Coast. Here they constitute the Problem of the Unemployed, and after they have starved and suffered a little while, the newspapers begin to record a plethora of hold-ups, burglaries, murders and other crimes of violence; a few weeks

of this, and people are speaking of the annual crime wave, while the newspapers, having no common sense, much malice and nothing better to do, proceed to harass the chief of police. Every morning they ask him foolish questions he cannot answer, or if he can, they decline to print his answers; then his silence convicts him, and somebody of importance says: "Why don't we have a new chief of police? Why does the Police Commission tolerate this fellow?"

That was the situation Chief Balmer faced when the mayor, who was a natural trimmer, with his ear (as he thought) close to the ground to catch the first faint rumblings of the Voice of the People, instructed his Police Commission to dispense with Chief Balmer. So the Commission held a meeting to discuss a condition of which it knew nothing; and as a result, the secretary was instructed to send a letter to the chief of police, informing him that unless he could clear the city of criminals by the first of the month, the commission would, regretfully, regard his failure so to do as prima facie evidence of his total unfitness for the office of chief of police. The secretary was further instructed to give carbon copies of this letter to the press; and so it happened that the public received the letter before Chief Balmer did!

PROMPTLY the chief replied and enclosed certain statistics (which the newspapers would not print) proving that while it wasn't humanly possible to have a police officer standing by whenever a crime was committed, on the whole they had captured and were hopeful of convicting sixty-seven and two-tenths per cent of men accused of crime. Little Dr. Thomas J. Foss, who was a dentist by day and president of the Police Commission every Friday night, read that mass of statistics and wished most heartily he did not have to dismiss Chief Balmer. Quite foolishly he went to the mayor about it and pleaded for Balmer, but the mayor said: "Doctor, he must go!"

The Board of Police Commissioners soon had cause to regret that letter to the chief. Three well-known politicians, Democratic, Republican and Progressive, were out for Balmer's job at the first streak of dawn the day following the publication of that letter in the evening papers. By noon each of the two morning papers had a candidate in the field—one a lieutenant of police and the other an army officer about to be retired for broken arches, and consequently in need of a desk-job. Even the mayor showed up with a candidate in tow—whom he extolled in one breath while with the next he warned the Commission to keep out of politics and appoint a man who would rid the city of criminals! And to make matters worse, every police captain in the city held a caucus of his friends and decided to reach out for the plum, with the result that thirty days before Balmer got the sack,—officially,—twenty men were fighting for his job, with the Board of Police Commissioners the center of the riot. Asleep or awake, the unhappy members of that august body were pursued, buttonholed and exhorted by would-be chiefs of police. Dr. Foss, the president, who would cast the deciding vote in the event of a deadlock, was the greatest sufferer.

The reader will understand, therefore, something of the feelings that animated Dr. Foss as the evening upon which the Commission was to hold its regular weekly meeting drew near. The dread of appearing at the meeting-room of the Commission finally inspired him to a bright idea, and forthwith he telephoned his colleagues suggesting that they dine that night at a certain beach resort, and there discuss their plans.

THE Board of Police Commissioners had been in office less than a month, and inasmuch as "speed cop" Big Tim Meagher was a singularly efficient and well-behaved young man, he had thus far escaped being "up before the Commissioners;" in consequence of which, Big Tim could truthfully say that he would not have known a member of the Commission had he met him in his breakfast food!

Meeting night arrived. Dr. Foss, driving his own car and accompanied by his four co-members of the Commis-

sion, whizzed down the ocean boulevard at forty miles an hour, and failed to heed the peremptory signal of Officer Meagher to halt and explain his reprehensible conduct; whereupon Big Tim leaped upon his trusty motorcycle and quickly overhauled Dr. Foss.

Dr. Foss, as might be expected of a president of a police commission, regarded his apprehension largely in the light of piquant sauce poured over the dessert of his official composure. He registered tolerant amusement immediately. "Officer, do you know who I am?" he queried.

"Yes sir. You're Dr. Foss, and this is the third time I've had to pinch you for speeding." Big Tim got out his little book.

"My dear fellow," said Dr. Foss soothingly, "don't you know I'm the president of the Police Commission and that these gentlemen with me are members of the Commission?"

"No sir, I didn't know it," Big Tim replied, and he wrote the name in his little book, preparatory to stepping around in front of the car to make a note of the number. Then he came back to the door of the car and saluted. "I'm sorry you have made it necessary for me to arrest you, Commissioner," he said respectfully. "Report at the Hall of Justice for trial at ten o'clock to-morrow. There are four police courts, and I do not know to which one your case will be assigned, but when you get to the Hall of Justice you can look on the desk-sergeant's blotter at the city prison and find out. Drive on, Commissioner—and a little bit slower, if you please."

Dr. Foss was chagrined. He had failed signally to impress Big Tim Meagher, and when his confrères on the Board laughed at him, his chagrin changed to annoyance. When he had so confidently asked Big Tim if the latter knew who he was, he had fully expected some slight reward for the honorary job of Police Commissioner and president of the Board. He noted the number on Big Tim's star.

HOWEVER, the president of the Police Commission did not bother to report for trial at ten o'clock next morning. Indeed, he did not even take the trouble to telephone to the Hall of Justice to ascertain to which police court his case had been assigned, for he was convinced that it had not been assigned and that even if it had, Officer No. 177 had no case! Dr. Foss had weightier matters on his mind. At the secret meeting, the Board had been unable to agree on a successor to Chief Balmer, and another week of agony faced the Commission. Why, then, should he worry about his case? Even should his name appear on the morning calendar, the instant the clerk of the court came to it, he would bring it to the attention of the police judge, who would nod, and the clerk would write the word *dismissed* opposite the name. That would close the incident.

At the moment of arresting Dr. Foss, it had not occurred to Big Tim that this Doctor Foss was *the* Doctor Foss, but having gotten into deep water close to the shore, he resolved not to be bluffed out; for, he argued, if there was one man in the world who should set an example for others, that man was the president of the Police Commission. So he reported the arrest for speeding of T. Foss, and when his tour of duty was over, he buzzed blithely home and slept the sleep of the conscience-free and those who spend eight hours a day on a motorcycle.

Contrary to Dr. Foss' view of the matter, however, the clerk of the court did not call the attention of the judge to the fact that the president of the Police Commission had been arrested for speeding. It never occurred to the clerk of the court that Big Tim Meagher could be guilty of such lese majesty. In all this world no policeman has ever arrested a president of a police commission,—at least there is no such case on record,—and so why should Big Tim risk his star by establishing a precedent? The clerk of the court did not argue thusly, but he would have, had he argued at all. When the magistrate said, "Sixty days! Take him away, Officer, and see that he gets a bath. Next case!" the clerk of the court merely droned: "T. Ross. Ordinance umpety-ump. Arrested by Officer Meagher."

"Is the defendant in court?" queried His Honor.

"He is not, Your Honor," replied Big Tim Meagher; whereupon the bailiff was instructed to go out in the corridor and in stentorian tones call upon the recalcitrant T. Foss to come into court.

"You notified the defendant Foss to report for trial, did you not, Officer Meagher?" the court queried.

"I did, Your Honor. This is the third time I have arrested him for speeding—"

"Ah! I see," the judge interrupted, and smiled grimly. "The third conviction means a jail sentence. Well, I find Mr. Foss guilty and shall issue a bench-warrant for his arrest and direct you to serve it, Officer Meagher. Do you know where you can find this defendant?"

"I do," said Officer Meagher.

"Ten days in the county jail for Mr. Foss! Next case."

THE clerk made out the commitment papers and the bench-warrant; the judge scrawled his name on each; Big Tim Meagher gathered them up—and fifteen minutes later Dr. Foss had read the same. He registered amused contempt.

"So you would insist, eh?" said Dr. Foss. "Not that it matters a hoot," he continued, "but I think you ought to have known better. I told you who I was, and unfortunately for you, I happen to be the identical person I represented myself to be. Right after the next meeting of the Board, my bumptious friend, you'll find yourself patrolling a beat in Ingleside, biting holes in the fog. And God help you if you ever come before the Commission. You're too infernally incorruptible!"

"I live in Ingleside," Big Tim replied patiently. "I was raised there. The fog is what gives me such a fine, ruddy complexion. And I was thinking of asking to be relieved from this speed-cop detail. I'm tired of it. I want to walk for a while. I suppose you know, being a doctor, that motor-bikes are hard on a man's kidneys."

Dr. Foss registered fury. He was not that kind of a doctor, and he thought Big Tim should have known it. "You scoundrel!" he yelled, and shook his fist under Big Tim's nose.

"Oh, very well," said Big Tim, and gently pressed Dr. Foss' fist aside. "I came up here like a gentleman, prepared to give you ample time to get your affairs in order before taking you out to the county jail. Now, just because you've called me a scoundrel for doing my duty, and shook your fist in my face and tried to intimidate me, you're going to put on your hat and overcoat and come with me immediately, and if you don't come peaceably I'll handcuff you and carry you! Get me? There are so many spineless men in the police department chasing you for the Chief's job, it occurs to me to prove to you there is one man in the department whose ambitions for the present do not soar beyond a corporalship."

"Do you mean it?" demanded Dr. Foss—and registered amazement.

"Every time I pinch a man—and I bet I pinch forty a day on my beat—he hands me an argument. I'm in a hurry this morning, Commissioner. My wife told me to get back from court as soon as I could. You see, we keep chickens on our big lot in Ingleside, and I have a setting hen due to hatch out to-day. I've got to make a hen-coop for her before I go on duty again. So if you please, Doctor, less talk and more speed. I certainly mean to land you in the county jail, if for no other reason than to inspire terror of Officer Tim Meagher in the hearts of the joy-riders on my beat."

DR. FOSS registered cunning and understanding. "I've got this fellow's number—both ways," he soliloquized. "He's within the law, of course, and I can't touch him. What he's looking for is fame and publicity. He wants his picture in the paper. I'll just go with him, and say nothing. They don't know me out at the county jail, and so I'll enter it like any ordinary prisoner, and as soon as this fellow cracks the story to the reporters I'll be discovered; then the judge that sentenced me without thinking whom he was sentencing, will rescind his sentence and place me on probation, and

I'll be out immediately. It's best to have the story break from him rather than from me. I can then say that the reason I made no protest was because the officer was dead right and I declined to use my official influence as president of the Police Commission to hamper an officer in the performance of his duty. I guess that wont make me strong with the rabble, eh?"

So Dr. Foss made no further protest, but accompanied the imperturbable Officer Meagher to the county jail, where he was received with all the formalities due a member in good standing. He was duly registered as T. Ross, the name on the commitment paper, and because he didn't wear a Van Dyke beard, and had only been in the public eye a month, and further because he made no protest, and because presidents of the Police Commissions are never sentenced to ten days for speeding, Dr. Foss entered the county jail, unheralded, unsung and unwept.

Having delivered his prisoner safely, Big Tim went home to Ingleside and constructed his hencoop.

In his cold cell, which he shared with a Mexican section-hand being held for trial on a charge of murder, the confident Dr. Foss waited patiently until the afternoon editions should reach the county jail and send the sheriff flying to him with profound apologies and promises of all the comforts of home.

From time to time, as he worked at his hencoop, Big Tim smiled covert little smiles. It may not have occurred to the reader, but a speed-cop gets a tolerable insight into human nature, and Big Tim's seven and three-quarters head was filled entirely with brains. He read the eminent Doctor Foss as you or I, brother, would read a billboard.

"Little squirt!" mused Big Tim. "He's like all the rest of these political bums that put the city government on the eternal Fritz. God help me if I ever appear before the Commissioners, eh? Well, I've been in the department five years, and I haven't been before them yet; I guess I can continue to behave myself. I suppose the Doctor would rejoice if he could debar me from taking the civil service examination for corporal — but he can't; and if I pass my examination, the Commissioners must appoint me to fill the first vacancy. If they don't, I'll mandamus them and they'll have to. Little squirt! Thinks I'm looking for publicity. He has it all figured out that I'll rush downtown and slip the story to one of the afternoon papers for a scoop. Lord, how they'd eat it up, too! However, if the Doctor expects the story to break, he'll have to crack it himself. I wonder what his wife will say when he doesn't come home to supper!"

THE afternoon waned apace. Dr. Foss knew the afternoon papers were out, because it was time they were out, and moreover the man in the cell next to him had a visitor who brought him both papers. So when the visitor had departed and the Doctor's neighbor had finished reading the papers, the Doctor begged him to slip them through the bars into his cell. Strange to say, the story had not broken.

"The rascal! He's saving it for the five o'clock edition, so they'll get out an extra and catch the crowds leaving their offices," the Doctor decided, and waited patiently until six o'clock. But still no official came to rescue him, and at six-thirty, which was the Doctor's dinner hour, he was assailed by a horrible suspicion that Big Tim was saving the story for the morning papers! Gosh! He couldn't stand for that. Mrs. Foss would be out of her mind with worry if he failed to communicate with her—no, she wouldn't, either. Fortunately, she was out of town for two weeks, and he had their apartment all to himself.

In his extremity the Doctor was cheered by the knowledge that the first editions of the morning papers, in these brisk times, are on the streets the night before. Then he reflected that the story probably would not break in the bulldog editions; it was probable Officer Meagher had sold it as a scoop, and the editor would not use it until the last edition at two in the morning, in order to catch the two-fifteen train that carried the morning papers up State.

"After all, this will be a unique experience," the prisoner soliloquized. He

changed his mind, however, when a trusty shoved through the wicket of his cell a cup filled with a liquid that smelled like coffee but wasn't, and a pannikin containing boiled beans, beef stew and a thick slice of bread. Dr. Foss promptly lost his appetite and gave his rations to the Mexican, who was not so squeamish.

Just before locking-up time the jailer came to his cell. "What's that turnkey thinking of?" he growled. "Celling a speeder with that greaser! Come along, mister, and I'll put you in a clean cell and give you a pair of new blankets—something you can sleep in without wondering—you know! We try to be clean, but it's pretty hard in a place like this. They will slip in."

At midnight no one had banged at the jail gate and demanded immediate audience with the president of the Police Commission. The Doctor was certain, however, that the telephone would begin ringing about two-twenty A. M., and that one of the night watch would answer it; so he wrapped the blankets around him and stayed awake until three o'clock, at which hour nature would no longer be denied. Crushed with disappointment and drowsiness, Doctor Foss lay down on his hard cot and fell asleep.

WHEN Dr. Foss awoke, he was appalled to discover he had done so naturally. By right, the sheriff should have come, shook him gently by the shoulder and asked him over to the house for breakfast. Could it be possible that Officer Meagher, after leaving the jail yesterday forenoon, had fallen a victim to a speeder? That the hand of Death had intervened to keep the story out of the newspapers?

"This will never do," said Dr. Foss. "I've got to get out of this and have a bath and a shave and some regular breakfast."

A trusty came and handed him a small bucket of water for his morning ablutions. Even a child could have seen that the bucket was insanitary, and so Doctor Foss declined to wash himself in it. His breakfast he rejected with similar scorn, and when the turnkey came to unlock his cell and let him out into the jail-yard for exercise, he informed the jailer that he desired speech with the sheriff.

"What about?" the jailer demanded bluntly.

"The matter is more or less personal and—" the Doctor began suavely. The jailer cut him short.

"That's what they all say. Every man that gets in here for a minor offense, like speeding or contempt of court, thinks he's a badly abused man. He thinks he ought to be treated different from other prisoners, just because he's respectable and rich, and right away he wants to tell his tale of woe to the sheriff and get special favors. I gave you a clean cell and some sanitary blankets. What more do you want?"

"I'd like a bath and a clean washbasin and a towel, a hairbrush, a comb and a toothbrush and paste. Then I'd like some breakfast fit for a hog to eat—that's all."

"Well, you're supposed to bring those little home comforts with you," the jailer reminded Dr. Foss. "Didn't you know that? We don't furnish no luxuries out here. Still, if you want 'em, I can sent out and buy some for you, an' there's a restaurant a block away that'll be glad to send your grub in if you'll pay for it. But you can't see the sheriff. He can't be bothered about your personal comforts, and it's my business to see that he isn't."

"My dear man," said Dr. Foss, "do you know who I am?"

"No! That's another question they all ask. And do you know the answer? Well, I'll tell you. The answer is: 'I don't give a continental who you are!' Now are you satisfied?"

"I am Doctor Thomas J. Foss, president of the Police Commission of the city of San Francisco."

"Oh! You're a municipal officer, eh?"

"Certainly."

The jailer, who was somewhat of a wag, smiled widely. "Well," he said, "you see this is a county institution, and a municipal officer hasn't any standing here."

"But, my dear man—"

"But nothing. You're nutty. D'ye mean to tell me a policeman would have

the crust to arrest the president of the Police Commission?"

"I do. That is exactly what happened."

"Well, maybe it did. But you can't tell me a police judge would have the crust to send the president of the Police Commission to jail for ten days—"

"But he didn't know who I was!"

"Too bad about you, aint it? Why didn't you think all this up yesterday when His Honor was sentencing you? If you'd made a howl then—but why should I waste my time on a nut?"

THE jailer hurried away and left Doctor Foss to his meditations, for truth is always stranger than fiction, and frequently one is confused with the other! The most amazing occurrences are just the ones we refuse to believe can by any possibility occur. Didn't they do things to Galileo for saying the world moved? Didn't they deride Christopher Columbus for saying the world was round? They did. And they laughed at Doctor Thomas J. Foss for saying he was president of the Police Commission. Yes, indeed! They laughed at him for three terrible days. Then the other four commissioners convened at an adjourned meeting of the Board, and Dr. Foss, for obvious reasons, failed to appear and preside. Consequently the others again adjourned without appointing a new chief of police, and inquiries were instituted for the missing president. The elevator-boy in the building where he had his office was authority for the fact that Doctor Foss had not been at his office for three days, and the janitor at the apartment-house where the Fosses lived was equally certain that the Doctor had not been home for a week. He showed a policeman the Doctor's mail-box filled to overflowing with mail.

Then the reporters heard a whisper of Dr. Foss' mysterious disappearance —and the mystery was explained. The morning papers ran a picture of the missing one, and the jailer saw the picture—and when he hastened to Doctor Foss to apologize, the latter cursed him bitterly and abused him like a pickpocket. The afternoon papers carried the amazing story, and inasmuch as the afternoon papers first appear in the morning, the judge who sentenced Doctor Foss was interviewed on the subject in his chambers, just before convening court. While the reporters were questioning him, the mayor rang up and angrily demanded that he do something, no matter what, to get Doctor Foss out of jail immediately, if not sooner.

Then that police judge remembered. At the very first meeting of the newly organized Board of Police Commissioners, Doctor Foss had taken occasion to pay his respects to the four police judges. Their methods, he declared (and the papers printed his declaration), were a disgrace to the judiciary (which was quite true). A joy-rider who had carelessly killed a little child roller-skating in the street had been discharged with a most perfunctory examination, notwithstanding the fact that he had a record of five prior arrests — and dismissals — for speeding!

Dr. Foss' outburst had so frightened the police judges at the time, that they had held a caucus—after which they had issued a statement to the press, to the effect that hereafter all speeders would be given ten days in the county jail upon the third conviction. Quick as a flash, now, the particular police judge who had so unthinkingly sentenced Dr. Foss to a draught of his own bitter medicine decided to play the rôle of a just judge.

"Certainly I sentenced him," he declared to the reporters. "It was his third conviction, and it was his own proposition, and you may say to the people of this city, from me, that rich

or poor, unknown or dignitary, there is but one grade of justice dispensed in my court. I shall not revoke the sentence. If Doctor Foss desires it revoked,—if he pleads his high office as president of the Police Commission as a reason why he should be granted the special treatment this court will not accord to any other citizen that comes before it and is convicted under due process of law,—then it is my opinion that he is not fit for the high honor the mayor has conferred upon him."

The hypocrite! Nevertheless, it was too fine an opportunity to throw away, and that police judge had been in politics too long not to know the kind of stuff the newspapers hunger for. Any time a concrete case presents an opportunity for an editorial on the old, moth-eaten constitutional slogan of "Equal rights to all," it is never wasted.

DR. FOSS registered despair and served his ten days like a little man; Big Tim Meagher's record was exhumed from the archives of the department and discovered to be flawless, and the newspapers all ran his picture. The captions varied in form but not in substance. Here was the man (so the papers declared) who was a *rara avis* among policemen. Nothing on earth could swerve him from his duty!

After all, when one pauses to meditate upon this astounding situation, he is truly an extraordinary policeman who will not only arrest his superior, but actually will procure his conviction and a sentence of ten days in jail. Also, he is an extraordinary chief of police who, knowing his official head will shortly fall into the limbo of forgotten things, will not do something to irritate his executioners.

Chief of Police Balmer might not have been a howling success as a chief of police, but as a human being he was beyond criticism. He called Big Tim Meagher into his office and growled: "Tim, gimme your star!"

Big Tim saluted. "Very well, sir," he replied patiently. "But you'll give it back again, and I'll draw my pay for the vacation just the same. Besides, I'll enjoy the vacation."

"I'll promise you, Tim, you'll never get that star back while I'm chief of police. Why the devil did you jug the Commissioner and then keep so quiet about it?"

"Why, I only did my duty, Chief. Is a man expected to cheer for himself when he does what the city pays him to do? The Doctor thought I was arresting him to get some publicity for myself, while as a matter of fact I pinched him because he was doing forty miles an hour and thought he could get away with it on my beat! Don't you see, Chief, that if I had tipped the reporters off to the story, the Commissioners and my brother officers would all say I was a grand-stander? Why, the only thing to do was to let Doctor Foss crack the story himself. According to the newspapers he tried hard enough, but couldn't seem to get away with it!"

Chief of Police Balmer lay back in his swivel chair and laughed the first hearty laugh he had dared indulge in for a month. "Oh, Tim," he declared, "you're immense. The longer I'm in the department, the more convinced I am that an honest man is the noblest work of God—and it's so infernally hard to be a cop and stay square. The system is all against it, Tim, except when the system runs up against a lad like you, and then we discover that nothing really matters to a strong man. I told you I wasn't going to give you back your star, Tim—and I'm not. You can turn over your motor-bike to somebody else in the morning, for you're wasting your time and talents chasing joy-riders. You should have a wider range and hunt heavier game."

He reached into his desk and drew out the silver shield of a detective-sergeant. "I create all my own gumshoe men, Tim," he chuckled, "and I try to pick honest men. It's that bunch in the upper office that stand in with the crooks that I can thank when the Commissioners get my scalp. My successor will probably send you back to street duty, but while I'm chief, the mantle of my protection shall cover you, if for no other reason than to make that little Doctor Foss froth at the mouth."

"Thank you, Chief. But I wouldn't make the appointment to-day, if I were you," Big Tim pleaded.

"Why, you big bonehead?"

"It will only create a lot of publicity! The minute you post the order promoting me to detective-sergeant, the newspapers will discern in your act a covert slap at Dr. Foss. They'll make a front-page story out of it and kid the Doctor to death; and your job is hard enough, Chief, without going out of your way to make it harder."

Before the chief could reply to Big Tim's protest, Corporal Munson, his private secretary, entered and announced Doctor Foss.

The president of the Commission stalked into the room with mien as majestic as his five-feet-five would permit. He saluted Big Tim and the chief pleasantly.

"Chief Balmer," he announced, "I do not know if you are aware of it or not, but Officer Meagher, here, is a *rara avis* among policemen."

"I am quite aware of it this morning —for the first time, Commissioner," Balmer replied.

"He did to me," Dr. Foss continued, "what no other policeman in the department would have had the courage to do; moreover, he did it without malice or prejudice. At first I thought there was method in his madness, but now I know he is just a strange sort of human being who does exactly what he is told to do, provided he conceives it his duty to do it. I spent the first week of my sentence in the county jail devising ways and means of breaking Officer Meagher; the last three days I spent devising ways and means of rewarding him. I wish to state, Chief,—unofficially, of course, and not for publication,—that I am not in sympathy with the movement to oust you, but I fear my sympathy for you will avail you little when the matter comes to a vote with my colleagues. It has occurred to me, however, that what you need, if you are to be helped along in your job, is an honest man in the upper office. Therefore I have called this morning to suggest that Officer Meagher seems to me to be the ideal man for a detective-sergeant."

Chief Balmer blinked rapidly. "I could have wished, Commissioner," he replied with great dignity, "that you had seen fit to make this suggestion at a time when Officer Meagher was not present. Were I to appoint him a detective-sergeant, the other members of the Commission, and particularly the newspapers which are persecuting me, would affect to see in the appointment a covert slap of the chief of police at the president of the Commission."

"Quite so, quite so," murmured little Dr. Foss. "That aspect of the case had not occurred to me. However, that is something which may easily be remedied. At the very next meeting of the Commission, the secretary will be instructed to write to the chief of police, recommending Officer Meagher to his favorable consideration for early promotion. In the meantime, Officer Meagher, you have the assurance of the president of the Commission that you may have a week off, on full pay, and if anybody asks you any questions, refer them to me. It is probable the rest will benefit your—er—kidneys."

And without further ado Dr. Foss shook hands very cordially with Big Tim and the chief and departed.

"Why, the little scoundrel's a sport!" the amazed chief declared. "And here I've been cursing him for my enemy."

Big Tim laughed, happy to have it all end so very pleasantly. "Well, Chief," he said, "I guess I'll be starting on my vacation, if you have no objection."

"All right, Tim. Don't tell anybody you're a detective-sergeant, and if any of your friends want to know why you're not on duty, tell them you put the president of the Police Commission in the cooler for ten days, and now you're on vacation. When you get back, we'll have plenty of detective work for Sergeant Meagher."

Big Tim Meagher sighed. He would much prefer chasing speeders.

The Outing at Stroebel's Lake

by Walter Jones

THE first of a captivating new series by the man who wrote the famous "Pembina" stories.

"I WISH you would, Mis' Axxel; I wish you'd march in the parade next Thursday."

"I wish I could, Mis' Jury," sighed Mrs. Axxel, tucking a ball of clothesline under her plump arm, "but Axxel says if he ever ketches me in one o' them demonstrations, he'll drop his work and run right into the street and yank me out. He says to me a woman's place is in the home, and females that campaigns around in public 're unsecting themselves and ought to be pinched."

"You ought to go in the parade, then, just to show him where he gets off at! But that wasn't what I come out here to ask you. Have you got any paraffin-paper for doin' up lunches? And what're you figurin' to wear to the outing tomorrow?"

"Oh, a shirtwaist and that there new skirt I been makin', if I ever get it even on the drape. They tell me we got to hoof it 'most a quarter of a mile to the Lake, Mis' Jury."

"No, the committee'll have barges waitin'. Them grocers' picnics is always splendidly conducted. —El-veener! El-veen-er Jury, you come here this minute! What've you got in your hand?"

"Nothing, Mawr. Clawrde's callin' me. I gotta go round the house."

"No, you aint. You come here!"

Lizzie Jury set down her clothes-basket. Mrs. Axxel leaned over the fence. "Now lemme look. My Gawd! four o' them chenille dangles she's pulled off'm the parlor table-cover in a week! It seems like everything handsome I have in the house, that child's out to ruin it. —El-veen-er, I've a notion to lick you right on the premises!"

Elvina was only saved from chastisement by her mother's happening to look down the road. "My goodness, I got to go in! There comes Min now. The minute she steps foot in the house, she thinks supper ought to be on the table. Though I aint sayin' nothing but what she's a capable girl, lots o' nights I'm a mind to tell her to take her four dollars and a half and go on to Halifax! If any o' *your* husband's sisters ever says they're comin' to live with you, Mis' Axxel, just write back and tell 'em you got the smallpox. To-morrow morning we'll call for you and all go along to the car together."

AS Minnie Jury unhasped the front gate, her brother's wife whisked in the back door, and by the time Minnie reached the kitchen, Lizzie was industriously slicing potatoes over a skillet. "What's in that spider?" sniffed Minnie. "Me home from the store dawg-tired and hungrier'n a Eskimo, and here you're just startin' supper!"

"Now, Min, I've been hindered."

"Hindered! Huh, you haint been hindered so but what you could hang over the fence all afternoon and gab with that chemical blonde!"

"Mis' Axxel don't use nothing on her hair but tea-leaves! D'you bring me them fancy buttons for Clawrde's suit, Minnie?"

"No, dear." Minnie unfolded the evening paper complacently. "We was too busy this afternoon for me to go out and get 'em."

"Hmm, I s'pose you think callin' me 'dear' 'll prevent that poor child from bein' took nekked to the picnic if his buttons aint sewed on! If you're willing to make yourself useful, as well as ornamental, why'n't you go out and lug him in and tidy him up for supper?"

Miss Jury made no sign of acceding to this suggestion.

"I presume you're goin' right along with us and make it a nice little family party to-morrow?"

"Why, I don't think we'll go out with you, Liz; though I expect he'll not have any objection to eating together."

"Him! Who's takin' you?"

"Listen here, Liz," newsed Minnie non-committally, "that there Irene Boggus is gettin' her man soaked twenty-eight dollars a month alimony. Cruelty's the charge. It's pretty near enough to make a girl marry a fellah and then egg 'im on to throw a flatiron at her."

"I ast you, Miss Jury, who's takin' you?"

"Well, if you got to know—Mr. Cobalski."

"That bohunk from the quarry again!"

"He aint a bohunk, Liz! He's boss o' the gang out there; how many times do I have to tell you?"

"You can't take him. He aint a citizen o' this place. That's just like the Jurys, always doin' something to be on the odd! Why d'you have to hunt up them Polacks and Magyers? Aint a plain American good enough?"

"If you don't like Ivan," snapped Miss Jury, "we can eat by ourselves."

"For heaven's sakes, Minnie, bring Clawrde in and scrub him, will you? It's a quarter past five, and his paw always has a fit when the kid's dirty."

"Do it yourself. You're his maw. For the last three nights I've tidied him up and set the table. It's about time you got a hunch, Liz, that I aint a nursemaid or a pot-walloper. To-night I'm goin' to set and read."

"Why, Minnie Jury, aint you ashamed o' yourself, talkin' that way, with the nice home me and your brother gives you!"

"Gives me! I aint never seen the time yet you haven't your mitts out for my four and a half per!"

"That's it! all the time throwin' up your board to me! I'd like to know where else you could get it, all the luxuries that are furnished you here gladly. A front room, with two big windows, and—"

"No heat in winter and walls that haint been papered since the fall o' Rome."

"If you don't like your apartments, Miss Jury, I guess our family is growed up enough so we could use 'em ourselves. We got along before we ever saw your four dollars and a half—"

"All right, get along without 'em again." Minnie arose precipitately, threw her paper on the table and vanished up the back stairs.

"Now I s'pose I've did it!" quailed Lizzie. "That impudent piece'd snap your head off quicker'n Nero." Five minutes later, however, she called up the stairway conciliatingly: "You come on down now, Min. It's 'most time for Ed, and I'm goin' to open up some o' them special apricots for supper."

There came back only the sound of many objects moved in haste. "All right for you, Minnie Jury! If you're packin' up your things, don't you dare touch that vi'let cologne bottle on the dresser! Likewise, them reversible kid-curlers is mine."

"HULLO, Maw!" The door opened and Ed entered, with Claude on his shoulder and Elvina tugging at his fist. "What have you got for hash? Darn it, why'n't you clean up this kid once in a while? He's dirtier'n a Dahomey nigger. Where's Min?"

"How should I know?" Lizzie dished up her potatoes with elaborate indifference. "Upstairs, I s'pose."

"What's the matter?" He stopped, basin poised above the pump. "You two been havin' another rickus?"

"No, Ed, I—honestly, we—"

"Then what'd you hang you head for, when I came in?"

"Well, I don't care—Min, she's just been layin' down the law to me like she was in her own house, and flammed upstairs; and now she's tryin' to scare us, lettin' on she's leavin'."

"Leavin'!" Ed dropped his basin with a crash. "What have you done to her that she's leavin'?" With muttered alarm, he hurdled the banister.

Three minutes later he descended bewilderedly. "She must be some mad! She wont talk. You women make a feller crazy: one day you're kissin' and the next day clawin' each other like a couple o' cats."

"You set down, Ed, and 'tend to your supper. El-veen-er, you just spread one more slice 'o that bread on both sides and I'll smack you!"

They ate in listening silence until a brisk step rat-tatted on the landing. Minnie deposited her two suitcases before the front door; then she crossed halfway to the table. "Ed," she said, "I aint got nothing against you. You've always treated me white. And I don't want to make trouble in your home. That's why I'm clearin' out. Liz acts like I ought to be her hired girl. And she's just called my gentleman friend a Polack, which it aint any disgrace to him if he was. I may not find no place else where I'll get 'luxuries' like I have here, but I'm goin' to grab me off four dollars and a half's worth o' peace and independence, anyway!"

Lizzie burst into tears. "Min Jury, I don't see what you mean, takin' this thing up that was only a harmless little kidding-match! And I think you're perfectly hateful, leavin' when I've just opened you up a can o' them special apricots at twenty-three cents!"

This comestible reproof had no effect upon Miss Jury. She departed with farewell-forever dignity and an extra slam to the front door. Ed groaned. "Now you've went and done it! Drove out the only sister I have in the world from my home, and steered away four dollars and a half that was pure plush on our livin' expenses."

Lizzie made no direct reply to this reproach. "El-veen-er, you come here to your maw!" She gathered her child to her heaving bosom. "To-night you have to go to bed early, darlin', 'cause your paw's cross, and to-morrow prob'ly we can't go off and pick them pretty pond lilies."

Ed gulped his coffee gloomily. "She'll have it all over town we're quarrelsome! Can't you go coax her back?"

"How do I know where she's went? And I wouldn't ask her back here, Ed Jury, not if she's reduced to the pesthouse to board!"

Elvina clung to her mother tenaciously. "Mawr, what you bawlin' for? Did *he* make you?"

Ed looked across at this touching maternal picture, and his indignation altered focus. After all, his wife was his wife. "Darn it, Min *is* a spunky piece. It wouldn't hurt her none to help you with the children once in a while."

"And I don't care, that there Mr. Cobalski's a common foreigner! She oughtn't to expect him to eat with us."

"Prob'ly Min'll come crawling back before midnight," philosophized Ed.

BUT Miss Jury did not return. In the morning Lizzie opened her door half-hopefully. "Well, she's done her little flit, all right. I'm goin' to tell everybody I see, whatever she blabs about me it's a lie." She pulled open the dresser drawers and inspected the late Miss Jury's hair-receiver. "Combings, huh! She's losin' her proud locks something fierce, and I'm glad of it. Come on now, Ed, get up. Clawrde, you run in and hammer your paw till he gets up. What time do them cars start for the Lake?"

"Four specials, and they're leavin' the Square at seven o'clock."

"Well, then, we better get a move on!"

Breakfast was negotiated in a jiffy, and at twenty minutes before seven the entire Jury brigade clicked the front gate in full parade uniform.

"Stop!" commanded Lizzie brusquely. "That there window side of the refrigerator's unlocked, and I dunno what I done with the match I had down cellar huntin' my jell. If I throwed it in them old newspapers, the whole place'll be a conflaggation!"

"Aw, come on; it's all right."

"You gimme that key. What d'you want to do, burn up our lovely home?"

She hurried back to reconnoiter. The Jurys were joined by the Axxels at their gate. Mrs. Axxel squeezed Lizzie's hand masonically. "Aint this a elegant morning? How slickum you look, dearie! Listen here, Axxel's mad because he only weighs a hunderd and eighty-nine pounds, and the committee wont let him in the fat-men's race."

The augmented party had scarcely reached the street-corner when Lizzie again called a halt. "Ed Jury, I just got to go back! I don't know if I turned off that gas right, under the tank. A person's liable to get nervous and give it a back twist. I read in the paper once where it got all compressed and blowed a woman out into the street."

"Let 'er blow!" objected Ed vigorously. "There's them cars now. Pick up your skirts, you girls, and make tracks."

The outing bore down upon the specials like infantry in full charge. The Jury-Axxel delegation edged themselves into adjoining seats, and their car was barely under way when the ladies began to exchange greetings. "Oh goody, there's Frieda! Hullo, Frieda! Aint it a year ago Labor Day since I seen you? How's everything over in 'the Patch?' Why'n't you ever come over? Yes, this here's my youngest. Clawrde, say how-d'you-do to the pretty lady. Good gracious, Mis' Axxel, aint this old car the limit? The stuffing's all comin' out o' the seats. Wait till us girls controls the franchise: we'll make them public utilleries put velvet upholstery on everything!"

As Lizzie's glance roamed back over the car, her gaze fell upon Minnie Jury and her gentleman friend. Miss Jury inclined her head frigidly and looked away. To Lizzie's indignant eyes Mr. Cobalski appeared only an opprobrious blur of blond hair, broad necktie and loud-checkered lapel. "My heavens," she gloomed, "have I got to have my pleasure completely spoilt, bumpin' into them stuck-up dubs the whole day!"

THE picknickers descended hilariously upon a picturesque country crossroads. "Where's the barges?" demanded Mrs. Axxel.

"There must be some mistake in the arrangements."

"Oh, they'll be along."

"Surely they don't expect to tote us all in them two busted-down hayracks!"

Lizzie made a bee-line for the hayracks. A suave but sturdy committee-

man blocked her ascent of the portable steps. "This here," he announced, "is only for elderly women and infants."

"Oh, it is!" Mrs. Jury backed away. "How far to the Lake?"

"Just a piece down the road."

"D'you hear that, Ed: this fellah says there aint no barges and it's a mile we got to walk! Such slack works is a insult to every lady that's came out here."

"Dry up, will you?" reproved Ed. "Everybody'll take you for a knocker. Come on, now. I think it's fine walkin,' a nice cool day like this."

"Look!" pointed Lizzie suddenly, as a noisy wagon clattered by. "Them cases! They aint beer, are they?"

"Beer! Why, I thought these here outings was prohibition! If they're calculatin' to up and get our boys pickled, I'm goin' to call Axxel to heel and turn right round home."

"I guess it aint beer," decided Lizzie, hastily. "This haint the park, is it?"

The men had paused before a faded proscenium bearing the inscription:

STROEBEL'S LAKE
ADMISSION 25C

About the ticket-office rank grass grew luxuriant. Beyond the turnstile lay an uprooted sign which read:

NOT OPEN
NO TRESPASSING ALLOWED

"Aint this the limit!" gaped Lizzie. Why, when I was here six years ago, the street-cars run right up to the entrance, and there was a merry-go-round you could hear a mile off!"

"I guess it's all right." Ed led the way in philosophically. "I guess that's what the handbills meant, Maw, by 'exclusive use o' the grounds for the outing.'"

"Looky, looky!" clapped Elvina. "There's the pitty lake. I wanna pick 'em pond lilies yight away."

LIZZIE deposited her lunch-basket on the first decrepit bench and set out to explore. In five minutes she returned gloomily. "This park's a regular old wreck! The boats are all founderin' along the shore; the cars are took away from the rolly-coaster; and that elegant sand beach is all growed up with weeds and cat-tails! I'm so disappointed I could set down and bawl."

"Mawr," persisted Elvina, "when're we gonna pick 'em lilies?"

Her mother scanned the maritime horizon despondently. "There's only a couple out there beyond the reeds, and we can't use no boat, so you wont be able to pick 'em. What'll we do about here all day, anyway—tread round in a bushel? Quit hangin' on me, El-veener, or I'll smack you!"

"I'll look after Claudie," volunteered Mrs. Axxel, holding out a peppermint. "Come, Claudie, come with Auntie Axxel."

As soon as the two had disappeared, Lizzie and Frieda began renewing old times. A half-hour had flown by when they were interrupted by a shrill whistle. "That must be the program o' sports," commented Frieda. "As I was tellin' you, I only had four yards and a half o' the goods, but by puttin' in a silk guimpe—"

"It looks like we might have a middling agreeable time, after all," coughed Lizzie, edging toward the spectators.

First came the fat-men's race, followed by a sack-race, which put everyone in a good humor; then the announcer megaphoned: "Next event will be a wrestling bout, catch-as-catch-can, between Mr. Harold Spriggle and Mr. Ed Jury, both members of the local Grocers' Association, in good and regular standing."

"You aint goin' in that rough game, Ed Jury!" shrilled out Lizzie. "You'll get a eye gouged out, or something, and you got on your best pants—"

But Ed was already pulling his shirt over his broad shoulders. "There aint no danger, Maw—just a friendly little tussle."

"I sha'n't look," announced Lizzie peevishly. But the whistle had scarcely blown when she was crowding toward the ring. "What's he got to do?"

"Pin your husband's shoulders to the mat," explained a Spriggle partisan.

"Well, he never will! Ed'll beat him to it. Lookit there! Go right after him,

Paw. Cut him off his wind and then set on him."

"That wouldn't be no fair," protested a South Sider.

"Aint my husband got to win some ways?" demanded Lizzie valiantly.

"The fall goes to Mr. Ed Jury; time, five minutes and ten seconds," declared the referee.

Ed shook hands with a sheepish grin and thrust into his wife's fist an innocent-looking slip of paper, which was the prize. A bevy of curious females immediately surrounded Mrs. Jury.

"What's it say, Lizzie?"

"Credit for five dollars at any grocery in town!"

"Your husband *is* a big whale, aint he, Mis' Jury?"

"What d'you calculate to buy with the money?"

"Why, it'd almost get you a barrel o' flour!"

"It might get some folks a barrel o' flour," conceded Lizzie majestically, "but it's going to get me a couple o' them new al-u-*min*-ium cooking-kettles 't all the best families are usin' nowadays." She folded up the slip to tuck it away; her hand dallied a moment among the contents of her wrist-bag, and drew forth—a sheaf of brilliant yellow pamphlets. "This here's a opportunity it'd be criminal to lose! Girls,"—she passed out the pamphlets,—"here's a little suffrage literature, which all I ask is you should take it home and read it. Us women 've been downtrodden long enough, and the laws made by them selfish men. I wish 't every lady present 'd decide to leave off puttin' up her pickles this fall and go into politics. Next Thursday morning there's goin' to be a grand suffrage parade and rally, where every woman in the marching colyum'll receive for a souvenir—"

"Madam,"—an excited marshal of the day broke through the crowd that was gathering round Mrs. Jury,—"I am compelled to inform you that there aint no vending of proprietary articles or patent medicines allowed on these grounds. What've you got in that bag?"

"Votes for Women!" Lizzie calmly handed him a pamphlet. "It's good medicine for you men, and we're goin' to get it patented the first Tuesday o' next November!"

The embarrassed marshal retired amid a ripple of feminine giggles. Lizzie arose with dignity. "If you girls'll excuse me, I have to go and see after my little daughter. El-veen-er, your paw's drawed a prize for bein' the strongest man in the picnic!"

DURING a temporary halt in the sports, while the grocers' band discoursed a number of selections with more vigor than nuance, Lizzie was seated on a bench, fanning herself, when Mrs. Axxel approached with abysmal countenance. "What d'you think, Mis' Jury, I've made a turr'ble discovery! Me and Claudie—bless his ittie heart, he's been a good boy to-day—was pickin' daisies in that field there where they used to have the race-track, and every time I looked down to one end I seen a couple o' men or so slippin' out o' that little closet they always had for the judges' stand and duckin' behind the old hotel, and fin'lly there was two boys come along down by me and I pulled Claudie behind a tree, and when they passed, one of 'em says: 'Say, Jake, have you been to the blind tiger?' And the other fellah answers him: 'No, aint this rich! Lead me to it. Hurry up—I told my wife I'm only goin' to get a sandwich.' And then I snuck along between the trees, and when they opened the door a crack, sure enough, I seen they got booze in there, and they're histin' it!"

"Then them *was* beer-cases!" exploded Lizzie.

"Aint it awful, Mis' Jury, corruptin' a innocent family picnic! What'd we better do?"

"Nothing—what can we do? Although I don't suppose the committee's connizant o' what's goin' on."

"But if Axxel should get coaxed in—"

"Nonsense! Our boys are too gentlemanly," assured Lizzie with a firmness she was far from feeling. "Come on back now; they're resumin' the program."

As the two ladies advanced toward the sports, they skirted a group of chil-

dren playing ring-around-a-rosy. In the midst of the shouting youngsters, crowned with a wreath of clover, pranced a fatuously smiling gentleman whom Mrs. Axxel recognized as her lord and master.

"Anybody that says I'm more than twelve years old is a liar!" proclaimed the daffodil as they passed to a crowd of grinning elders. "Come on in, girls, and I'll make you queen of the May!"

The circle dissolved, and a young Minerva ran wailing to her mother. "Mommer, I aint goin' to play with that fat man any more. He smells o' p'fumery!"

Lizzie and Mrs. Axxel exchanged horrified glances. It was evident Axxel had located the blind tiger. "Axxel, you come here and quit makin' a fool o' yourself with them kids!" commanded his lady. "You got to rest up so you can go in the tug-o'-war, haint you?"

"You bet I am, pet," Axxel greeted her hilariously. "I'm goin' in the tug-o'-war, and I'm gonna pull the trimmin's off'n six 'o them South Side prune-peddlers by the strength o' my own unaided manhood!"

LIZZIE withdrew discreetly in the direction of a race that was starting. "What's this event?" she demanded of a bystander.

"The young married women's race!" shouted one of the participants. "Come along in, Mis' Jury. The more the merrier."

"I dunno but I will," chirped Lizzie. "Is there any prize?"

"Why, Maw,"—Ed broke from the crowd and plucked his wife's sleeve sheepishly,—"what're you thinkin' of, goin' in a race like that! It aint ladylike!"

"It aint *what*?" broke in the relative of a contestant huffily. "My sister's in it, and they aint no perfecker lady'n her on the grounds!"

At this rebuke Ed retired and Lizzie hastened to her place.

"Who's this new entry?" queried a South Sider.

"I dunno—Lizzie Jup, or Joppy, or something. She's that bold thing that was distributin' the pamphlets. Aint it the limit what some people'll do for notoriety!"

"Are you ready?" demanded the starter for the fiftieth time.

"Lady," warned an official, "don't you know you mustn't beat the gun?"

"I dont know nothing about beatin' the gun," snapped Lizzie intrepidly, "but I sha'n't let none o' them South Side Arlines get the jump on *me*!"

"On your marks again!" This time the starter's cartridge went off, and the race was on:

"Go it there, Lena!"

"Remember, Mag, you're puttin' Shamrock Avenue on the map!"

"Votes for Women's leading!"

"Lookit that fat Deutscher. She's fouled every woman in the race."

"Sadie Green's step' her foot clean through her skirt!"

For most of the contestants it was a lose-as-you-please affair, but Mrs. Jury and the German matron from Stuttgart Avenue ran strictly according to form. Just at the finish-line an unseen mound of turf sprang up and hit Lizzie in the face; but she caromed into the judges' arms undaunted. "What do I drawr for a prize?" she demanded.

"Second prize: a solid gold rhinestone brooch, contributed by Solomon Marx and Sons, jewelers, our esteemed contemporaries of 73 Main Street."

"Aint it a peacher!" Mrs. Jury retired to the bosom of her immediate friends to be brushed up and congratulated. "Such a genteel pattern. Though I wonder could I get the setting changed for emralls instead o' rhinestones? D'you know, it's my candid opinion I come in first. I looked back once and seen that Hamburger, and she was all winded. I bet somebody pushed her over the line. Excuse me a minute, folks; I'm so thirsty it seems as though I'm liable to faint."

AS LIZZIE approached a near-by hydrant, the gentleman in front of her turned to offer his cup. She looked up and recognized — Mr. Cobalski. Minnie stood superciliously in the offing. "Thanks, I don't want any." Lizzie reddened. "I was just a-goin' to moisten my handkerchief." She retreated in confusion.

She had about decided to hunt up her husband and display her trophy when Mrs. Axxel again intercepted her. "Oh, Mis' Jury, I'm 'most sick! Axxel's gettin' his decks awash. And I seen your husband snoopin' around the end o' the hotel. It's my opinion the majority o' the picnic'll be fuller'n ticks by dinner. What'll we do?"

"Ed? Never!" scoffed Lizzie indignantly. "It aint possible. Still," she considered, "I dunno; men're awful weak when they're tempted. Hunt Frieda and come on over here to this bench and we'll hold a council o' war."

The trio went into speedy executive session, which consisted in the other two waiting tremulously for Lizzie to function on the situation. "Now I've got it!" She clapped her hands suddenly to her furrowed brow. "Girls, the next stunt they're pulling off's the tug-o'-war, aint it? They brung a rope fifty yards long, and it'll take every able-bodied man on the premises. Well, we'll slip in behind the hotel, and as soon as they begin pullin', we'll make a bee-line for their old blind leopard, pry open the cases, and turn the whole cargo into the Lake. I'll put Clawrde on the watch, and if he sees anyone comin', we can take to the woods or hit 'em over the head with a bottle, according as we've got spunk at the moment. How's that for a program?"

"Wont it be dangerous, if we're ketched?"

"Most likely," consoled Lizzie; "but we're bein' mowed down in a noble cause, and them Prohibitioners'll have to put us up a monument: 'To the Martyrs o' Stroebel's Lake,' or some other noble sentiments. The question is, are you women game?"

The ladies nodded bravely, and as soon as shouts began to go up from the tug-o'-war, Lizzie issued her commands: "Now, girls, up and at it, like you was Emmaline Pankhurst bustin' up Parl'ament!"

UNDER Lizzie's tutelage Frieda and Mrs. Axxel worked valiantly, and as a yell from the grove proclaimed that the South Siders had won, they succeeded in emptying the judges' stand of its contraband. Simultaneously Claude came rushing into his mother's arms. "Mawr," he gasped, "the tugger is over, and Mister Axxel's comin' this way on the run!"

"Heaven save me!" screamed his faithful wife. "If Axxel ketches us here, I'm due for one o' them martyrs!"

Shooing Claude ahead of them, the ladies gained the shelter of the bandstand just as an advance guard of picnickers, mopping their brows from the strain of recent combat, began disappearing toward the race-track in stealthy pairs—only to return presently, with sheepish, suspicious glances at one another. Lizzie stuffed her handkerchief in her mouth to keep from giggling aloud.

"Oh, my goodness, where's El-veener?" she cried, jumping suddenly to her feet. In the excitement of the hour she had mislaid her offspring. The last she could remember seeing the child was right after the married ladies' race, when she had wiped her nose and told her to go over and sit down by Auntie Axxel. "Ed," she called, "Ed Jury, come here and help find this kid!"

Frieda went in one direction and Mrs. Axxel in another. Panic seized the unhappy mother. "Oh my Gawd, what if she's went off and got lost in the woods or drownded herself? El-veen-er! El-veen-er!"

"Quit hollerin' so," pleaded Ed. "The whole outing's huntin' her now. She's just off somewheres, playing with the other children."

BUT a half-hour's search failed to discover the vagrant. Lizzie finally gathered up her skirts and started down the sedgy shore, sobbing: "I'm goin' to find her, if I have to track all the way around this nasty lake!"

"She can't have went that way," counseled the searchers; "the grass 's too tall." But Lizzie kept on, and presently, far down the tangled path, they heard her shriek. Out from the shore jutted a rotting rowboat-landing, and just off the end of it bobbed a head of flaxen curls, sputtering, gasping, sinking among the miry cat-tails! A foot or so beyond swayed a single white

lily. The tragedy was simple: Elvina had come to the lake to pick pond lilies, and against all odds she had determined to pick them.

Lizzie flew for the dock; but a young man ran out of the bushes ahead of her, floundered a moment in the muck and restored the precious burden to her arms.

"El-veen-er! El-veen-er, speak to your maw!" Her hysterical cries brought the entire outing on the gallop. "My Gawd, Mis' Axxel, if she's dead, I'm goin' to jump in and drownd myself with her!"

Elvina, however, exhibited such immediate signs of vocal animation that her mother's emotions underwent a swift change. "You wicked, wicked girl! How many times did I tell you you darsn't go near the water? Two and a half yards o' satin ribbon in her sash, Mis' Axxel, and real lace on her panties—and now look at her! Aint it enough to unseat your reason!" The distracted mother stanched her reproof with a kiss, remembered her manners, looked up into the countenance of her daughter's savior and beheld—Mr. Cobalski!

Lizzie was temporarily petrified. "Come on away," said Minnie, at the elbow of her dripping swain. "They aint even goin' to thank you."

"I am so!" sobbed Lizzie, dabbling a tear and hastily reappraising Mr. Cobalski, "—soon as I can get control o' my grief! Mr. Cobalski, I'm sure I dunno how—"

"That's all right, madam." Plucked by Minnie, he backed away. "No more'n what any fellow'd have done. It's only four feet o' water. I couldn't ha' drowned in that."

"No, but El-veen-er could!" She looked at him pleasurably. "It seems as though I've seen you somewheres before. It couldn't be you're my sister-in-law's gentleman friend?" Her ingenuous glance suddenly included Miss Jury. "Why Minnie, aint you ashamed o' yourself, never introducin' me to Mr. Cobalski?"

Minnie performed an introduction sullenly. "And this is my husband," expanded Lizzie. "Ed, you take Mr. Cobalski off some place to dry his clothes, and me and Minnie'll 'tend to El-veen-er."

THE ladies retired with Elvina, squalling, toward the privacy of a convenient thicket. "Oh, Liz,"—with a burst of unexpected tears, Minnie snatched up one of the infant's pudgy fingers,—"what if that dear kid 'd croaked right there before our eyes! And last night me refusin' to lug her in and scrub her!"

"No," corrected Lizzie, "it was Clawrde you refused to scrub. How'd you folks happen to be there?"

"Why," blushed Minnie, "we was just settin' down, side one o' them oak trees, talkin', and I heard something and says: 'Don't that sound like a frog jumpin'?' And Ivan says: 'What're you thinkin' of! This here pond's too dead for a snail, even.' And just then she began to holler, and o' course we run."

The victim was stripped, wrung out, smacked a time or two—to remind her that for the future pond lilies were taboo—and wrapped in a borrowed blanket until her clothes should dry.

The men were waiting around the lunch-baskets. "Hurry up; lay out the grub," called Ed. "It's after two o'clock and everybody's etten."

Minnie retreated to the background. "I guess we better withdraw, Ivan. This here's a private affair. And I got our own little lunch packed separate."

"Withdraw nothing!" commanded Lizzie. "You're goin' to set right down here with Axxels and the rest of us.

"Mr. Cobalski," she reverted, when the feast was laid out, "you're a awfully courageous man and the hero of this day. Have another pickle. It don't seem as though I remember where it was you said you're born, Polan' or Bohemier?"

"Saint Looie!" grinned the bashful hero.

"Well, o' course, I seen all along you acted American enough, though I didn't know but mebbe you was originated somewheres in Europe. It's a shame you've went and ruint your best clothes."

"They aint his best clothes," cut in Minnie superiorly. "He's got one o'

them regular college men's models, for fourteen dollars and a half, at the Continental, haint you, Ivan?"

"I bet it's swell," Lizzie fell in graciously; "I expect I'll coax Ed up to get him one."

The conversation assumed momentarily a more reciprocal tone until the last morsel of lunch was consumed. "Now then," demanded Lizzie, "what'll we do?"

"Do?" echoed Ed. "Aint we already done enough for one day? Me and Axxel, and Cobalski here, 'll go back in the woods and smoke a cigar, and you girls redd up your dishes; then it'll be time to go home."

"Well," agreed Lizzie, "I presume we better, seein' El-veen-er aint fit to be exhibited around."

A half-hour later the McKinley Street delegation wended its leisurely way across the grounds and joined other picnickers on the hike to the car-line.

"I declare, if this breeze aint elegant!" gasped Mrs. Axxel as the special moved off, "after us leggin' it twenty minutes in the sun!"

"Paw,"—Lizzie unclasped her wrist-bag and held up her brooch proudly,—"you aint seen this! I guess you're not the only athleticker in the family. Soon as us women gets the franchise, we're goin' to bust into them Olympiac games."

"You sure done a regular Ty Cobb in that race!" beamed Ed. "Aint you ashamed o' yourself, though, distributin' them trashy pamphlets on a picnic?"

"No I aint, Ed Jury! It's a perfectly legitimate means o' pushin' the propaganda. And what d'you think I done? Signed up forty o' them ladies to march in the parade next Thursday!"

Ed groaned aloud. "That means me carry a dinner-pail and the kids run the street till all hours. I wish woman suffrage was in blazes! Come on; here's our stop."

AMID a volley of farewells they were dropped off at McKinley Street. As the car pulled away from the little neighborhood group, Minnie drew back in delicate confusion. "Well, aint this provoking?" she flushed. "I've went and forgot I aint gettin' off at this stop any more!"

"O' course you're gettin' off here!" protested her sister-in-law glibly. "It's a sinful shame you have to be turned outdoors while we're papering your room; but it'll be all done Saturday night, a elegant pink-and-silver figger, petunias on a cream ground, dear, and I'm goin' to carry you up that han'-some engraving from the libery, 'Neptune Arising from the Sea.'"

Minnie hesitated, considered the terms and surrendered. "It don't seem like Neptune's a suitable subject for a lady's boudoir, Liz. I'd ruther you gimme that harem scene Ed got with his cigarette coupons. And I have to insist on your cleansing them curtains—"

"Oh, I been thinkin' o' new curtains, dear! And really, I aint responsible for yesterday, Min: my bunions pained me something ferocious, and the truth is a person's so darned fond o' their relatives they talk to 'em like they ought to be paragons."

"Don't say no more. I realize I'm one that's abrupt in their temper. Them two kids are little cherubs—and mebbe I could wash Claudie Tuesday nights and Fridays."

"Now I'll open up another can o' them special apricots and fix it so't you and Mr. Cobalski can have the parlor all evening alone."

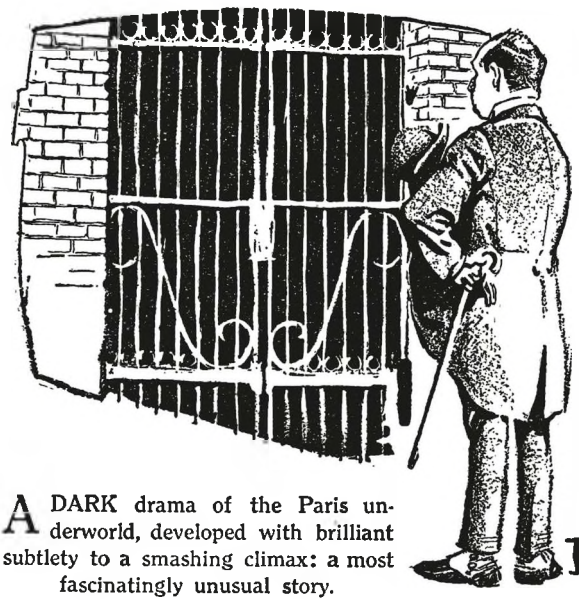
"There's your lovely home, Maw," cheered Ed as they neared the Jury domicile, "—and no compression aint blowed it away, neither."

"No," squinted Lizzie, "but already I can see that stupid boy didn't leave me no milk, and the chickens 've dredged out the front yard till it looks like Culebrer Cut, and—"

"We've sure had one grand day, though, aint we," voted Ed, "in spite o' them South Siders winnin' the tug-o'-war and El-veen-er tryin' to plant herself for a water lily?"

"We sure have!" pæaned Minnie and Ivan in loverly unison.

Another story by Walter Jones in the September issue.



The SQUIRE of DAMES

by

Perceval Gibbon

Author of "The Second Class Passenger," the "Miss Gregory" stories, etc.

A DARK drama of the Paris underworld, developed with brilliant subtlety to a smashing climax: a most fascinatingly unusual story.

THE house at Passy stood back from the road behind a gray stone wall, pierced by a gate of iron bars which conceded to the passer-by no more than a glimpse of a green and sunlit disorder of garden. To either side of it, isolated in their gardens, stood other houses similarly screened from view. A solicitous privacy, the secrecy of those who would have no secrets,—which is half the trick of respectability,—lay along the quiet road like a shadow.

Mr. Neuman—"Pony" Neuman to his intimates—was not yet past flavoring an atmosphere. He had just jerked the bell-handle which hung beside the gate of iron bars and inclined his head to listen for the agitated jangle of the bell at the other end of the wire; and there had come to his mind a recollection of those machines one sees in saloons at a certain kind of tourist-resort—a glass box containing improbable-looking dolls, rigid in frozen attitudes of interrupted action. One inserts a coin into a slot; there is a click and a whir; and the dolls start suddenly into a spasmodic caricature of action. Mr. Neuman, in his time, had spent many small coins on these miracles—there was a simple side to his mind; and he stood smiling as he waited.

He was a man of somewhere near forty years of age, short, bulky in the shoulders, with a pink, brisk face that would have been pleasant and commonplace enough but for the chill and wariness of the eyes. Standing in the sunlight under the wall, leaning upon his cane, his gray gloves carried loosely in his hands, his gray Hamburg hat pushed a little back from his sleek forehead, the small, thoughtful smile still inhabiting his face, he made the effect of a man intimately at home among the complexities of civilization, sophisticated to the tips of his manicured nails. Even his attitude in that empty, eyeless road had the quality of a posture that had been rehearsed; he flicked his boot with his cane with the gesture of an actor-manager.

FOOTSTEPS padded softly upon the brick path within the gate; Mr. Neuman, moving nothing but his eyes, glanced up. Between the overgrown lilacs that bordered the path there lumbered into view a stout and elderly maidservant, carrying a large, old-fashioned key.

She came to the gate, made a motion as though to insert the key in the lock and then paused, staring at Mr. Neuman through the bars. Her large face, weathered like a winter apple, lowered at him heavily, between stupidity and suspicion. There was a pause of silence and mutual inspection.

"You rang?" she inquired at last.

Mr. Neuman nodded. "Some little time ago," he replied pleasantly. "Madame Dupontel lives here, I believe? I wish to see her."

"Uh!" It was a grunt; the woman continued to stare at him defensively. But it was a trick of Mr. Neuman's trade to be difficult to withstand, and his manner of a very delicate insistence had its effect. "I do not know whether Madame is disengaged; however—"

She bent to the lock and opened the gate, squealing upon its hinges. Mr. Neuman stepped through.

"You need not give yourself the trouble of locking it again," he said airily. "I shall not detain Madame for long."

She grunted again, but submissively, and left the gate unlocked. Mr. Neuman followed her along the path, smiling.

A rustic arch, over which a decrepit climbing rose clawed and sprawled, opened from the path toward the house, where it rose above the dank and riotous green of its unkempt garden. Mr. Neuman, pacing in the rear of his stout, deliberate guide, looked up at it with a shrewd curiosity. It was, he noted with satisfaction, a largish, extravagant-looking sort of house, one of those excrescences of suburban Paris, all arches and cupolas and cornices, which are the ensign and expression of bourgeois wealth and taste. The roof of the veranda projected like a heavy brow—as if the whole house scowled.

The front door, in which were panels of virulently colored glass, opened from the veranda; near by, some bulging and much-used wicker chairs stood around a weather-beaten wicker table. Here, with her hand upon the door, the stout servant made a last stand.

"But what name shall I say to Madame?" she demanded plaintively.

MR. NEUMAN hung his cane by its crook to his left arm and produced from his breast-pocket his neat gold cigarette-case. From it he extracted a card.

"Give her this," he commanded. He glanced at the chairs. "And I will wait here."

She seemed as if she would demur; he cut her short at her preliminary grunt by moving away and seating himself. He let himself down into the sturdiest of the chairs, crossed one neat leg over the other, inspected his spats and settled his hat upon his brow. She was watching him open-mouthed. Suddenly he looked up at her with that little sophisticated smile of his; she vanished.

"Ha-ha!" said Mr. Neuman under his breath. "Not used to visitors here, eh?"

He composed himself to wait, settling himself in the creaking basket-chair in an attitude of debonair serenity, conscious that each of the windows along the veranda commanded a view of him as he sat. Mr. Neuman had a just pride in his ability to stand inspection; it was one of his professional assets; many a man had scrutinized him at leisure and afterwards lost money to him.

The accident that had directed his steps toward the house at Passy had happened providentially. Mr. Neuman had had a bad season at Monte Carlo: the wealthy youth whom he was "nursing" there was all but ripe for the slaughter; it wanted but a day or two to the moment when he could be plucked like a fowl and never know who had got the feathers—and then there had appeared upon the scene a worldly and hard-bitten friend who had taken the callow one under his own capable wing and brought all Mr. Neuman's patient labors to naught.

It was with an alertness sharpened by necessity that Mr. Neuman, from his obscure hotel in Paris,—he never lingered upon the field of a defeat,—surveyed his world, cocking his practiced ears for the first whispered hint of a resource. And after the afternoon following his arrival, as he sat in his window smoking a thoughtful cigarette,

while the talkative chambermaid sorted his linen for the laundry, the hint had arrived. Mr. Neuman had a charming way with hotel servants—they would talk freely to him where a detective would have found them dumb: he listened idly while the chambermaid volunteered reminiscences of her career in that and other hotels and as a *bonne à tout faire* in various private houses. She mentioned several employers; at the name of one of them Mr. Neuman interrupted with questions.

"Monsieur knows Madame Dupontel, then?" she inquired when Mr. Neuman had noted down the address of which she had spoken.

"Oh, yes," smiled Mr. Neuman. "I knew her before she was married."

"And is it true, as she says, that she was formerly an actress?"

"Quite true," replied Mr. Neuman. "And a very good actress too, once."

"Tiens!" said the girl. "A fat old thing like that!"

Mr. Neuman smiled at her benevolently, as she knelt on the floor beside the pile of his shirts, and she was encouraged to continue her autobiography. But the smile was really for the memory she had evoked of Madame Dupontel as Mr. Neuman had known her,—"Dutch Kate" she was then,—who had made her profit for years by being simply a "fat old thing," too plump and fussy ever to be suspected of shrewdness.

It was by virtue of just that quality of "fat-old-thingness" that Kate had brought off the crowning and final *coup* of her career. An elderly widower, holiday-making at Boulogne, had fallen into bad hands, and Kate, taking compassion on his sheer foolishness and helplessness, had come to the rescue and steered him clear of the toils. Within a month she had married him—him and his wholesale grocery business and his investments—and had vanished from that furtive world where to-day is a peril and to-morrow a menace, where the memory of youth is a pain and the prospect of age a terror.

In the "sporting" bars of Paris, where men of very quiet manners meet in the afternoons and exchange queer news of the world's capitals, there were glasses raised to the memory of the departed.

"Well, old Kate's gone. She's out of it now; here's luck to her!"

None had thought of preying on her; there is no world without its ethic, and loyalty to one's kind is the most elementary of the virtues. But now Mr. Neuman had learned that Kate was a widow; he knew she was well-off; and he couldn't at present afford to waste a chance.

THE glass-paneled front door creaked and opened inwards about an inch. Mr. Neuman did not move; he continued to gaze, with his air of pleasant meditation, upon the untidy garden. This lasted for about a minute; then the door was pulled wide open from within, and a stout woman in pink came forth toward him. Mr. Neuman jumped to his feet and removed his hat.

"Madame Dupontel?" he inquired with smiling politeness.

The stout woman stopped short and stared at him; Mr. Neuman, bowing and not ceasing to smile, returned her scrutiny. Six years of security and ease had done their work upon Dutch Kate; she had become a creature in the likeness of an over-filled sack, a figure abundant and unwieldy. Her vast bosom strained the cloth of her dress; over it her face was flabby and obese, absurd and pitiful under its thick powder and crowned with its too elaborate coiffure.

Mr. Neuman waited to let her speak. He had seen that she was first fearful and then puzzled; she had failed to recognize him, and now her face was merely uncomprehending. Suddenly it cleared; he marked its change to a glad relief. She stepped forward, holding forth both her pudgy, be-ringed hands, with a little inarticulate cry of unmistakable joy.

"Why—why—it's Pony!" she cried. "Old Pony Neuman, of all the people in the world! An' me thinkin'—but I *thought,* when I seen you through the crack of the door, that there was a kind of familiar look about you."

She gripped his hand in both of hers, jigging on her feet and prattling ex-

citedly. Under his mask of pleased acquiescence Mr. Neuman was asking himself: "What's all this—some game of hers?"

"I wondered if you'd recognize me," he said aloud, "after all this time. Lemme see: must be going on for seven years, Kate, now."

"Reco'nize you! Why, Pony, I'd know you anywhere. You aint changed a bit. An' the relief it is to me to find it's you an' not—not who I was afraid it was—well, there!"

Mr. Neuman nodded, smiling. She was sincere enough, evidently; this was no game.

"But we don't want to stand out here," said Madame Dupontel. "Come on in the house, Pony. I may be a widder but I can give you a real drink all the same."

"Charmed," replied Mr. Neuman. "Charmed!"

THE *salle à manger,* in which presently he found himself seated, facing his hostess across a dining table, with a bottle and siphon at his elbow and a glass before him, was at the back of the house; its window overlooked the untidy spaces of the garden.

"There's a million things I want to ask," declared Madame luxuriously, settling her fat arms on the table. "You're the first of the old lot that I seen since me marriage. Like a breath of fresh air you are, Pony."

Mr. Neuman's smile acknowledged the compliment. He could talk and look about him at the same time; and his eye, wandering to the window, dwelt appreciatively upon the evidences it revealed of solid solvency.

"And Lou Morris?" Madame Dupontel was asking. "What became of him?"

She was avid for news of that lawless cosmopolitan underworld of which she had once been a citizen. Six years of freedom from its constraints and perils had not quelled in her the zest for its adventures and strange contacts. She asked, by name and nickname, after delicate-handed bandits in Petrograd, Berlin, Ostend and London —after the great Conroy, who operated vastly like a financier; after Madame Olivant, who dealt in family jewels; after Punch Lapinsky, who had escaped from Siberia. To Mr. Neuman, who had come at her cautiously, calculating with care the angle of his approach, it seemed that she was throwing herself open to attack.

"Oh, him!" he answered. "He's dead—drank and doped himself to death. But say, Kate; this is a nice little place you've got here. Pretty comfortable, aint you?"

He spoke casually, not changing his tone from its level of trivial good nature. But at the last words he looked across the table, and his frozen and remorseless eyes—his business eyes—fixed her. It was time to get to work.

The stout woman sighed. "Oh, comfortable enough, 's far as that goes," she answered.

He noted the tone of discontent; he put it down to a foolish and romantic yearning after old times.

"It goes a good long way," he said. "I don't see what you've got to complain of. *You* haven't got to keep your eyes peeled for chances; *you* don't find yourself, after two months' work, countin' your shirts to see how many you can do without. Try changin' with me for a bit if you're not satisfied: I sha'n't kick."

She glanced up. "Had a bad season, Pony?"

MR. NEUMAN nodded. "Up against it," he replied shortly. He emptied his glass and set it down, leaned his arms on the table and waited. It was always his method to let the enemy attack first; his strength lay in counter-attack. In any crisis of his enterprises, Mr. Neuman was always to be seen, silent and watchful, waiting for his opponent to show his form.

The stout woman sighed heavily and shook her head.

"I wasn't kickin'," she said. "That's not it, Pony. I got troubles that you don't know about. Why, to-day, when Julie come in and said there was a monsieur waitin' to see me, you could 'a' knocked me down with a feather. I'm bein' blackmailed, Pony."

"Wha-at?" demanded Mr. Neuman, in strong surprise. "You're being—what?"

Her slack mouth drooped dolorously. "Blackmailed," she repeated. "That's right, Pony; there's a feller got after me—an' I'm payin'! You see, Pony, my late 'usband, he was a good feller and he didn't know—not rightly he didn't—about what my work used to be. I'd told him I was a actress, an' he believed it. An' now there's his sister an' her 'usband—very respectable, in the printin' trade; an' their son an' daughter; an' his old aunt, ninety-one years of age. An' I'd sooner pay anything, Pony—I'd sooner be bled white than have 'em all know."

Her soft, voluminous voice, the uncomely trouble of her big, thickly powdered face, the mere fluid-looking mass of her as she leaned upon the edge of the table, with the roly-poly arms in their tight sleeves outstretched and the shapeless jeweled hands joined restlessly, the pungency of the scent with which she was sprinkled—the effect of these seized Mr. Neuman by the scruff of his senses and held him goggling and gaping. He sat in his place and stared.

"Rotten, aint it?" said Madame Dupontel drearily. "I don't wonder you're took aback, Pony."

Mr. Neuman picked up his glass, found it empty and turned upon the bottle at his elbow.

"Who's the fellow?" he demanded.

"I don't think you know him, Pony," answered Madame. "He aint in your class. Bat Samuels, his name is. He was a hotel tout in Boulogne once—one o' them fellers that meet the steamers. That's how he came to know me."

Mr. Neuman poured himself a drink, measuring it from the bottle to the glass with the care of a chemist.

"Bat Samuels," he repeated. "Samuels, eh? Lemme think a bit! Why, you don't mean that rat that used to nark for the Sûreté—him that was a witness against that Apache crowd? Little man with a scraggy neck and black teeth—not him?"

Madame nodded. "That's him, Pony; that's Bat."

"An' how much has he had?"

MADAME went into figures. "But it aint the amounts; it's him comin' here himself, sometimes two or three times in a week, an' drunk as often as not. I never hear that bell ring now but I go off into a tremble, expectin' to hear that croak of his outside, and see him grinnin' and hiccoughin' in the door an' showin' them beastly teeth he's got. And lately he aint satisfied with what he used to get; he's raisin' his figures."

"He'll eat you alive," said Mr. Neuman grimly.

He drank from his glass, emptying it at a draught; it was a gesture that emphasized the speech. From across the table the fat woman was looking at him piteously.

"To-day, when I found it was you instead o' him, I could ha' jumped for joy." She paused. "Pony, now you're here, couldn't you—couldn't you help me a bit?"

There was, perhaps, in all Paris and its environs (as the maps say), no man less subject than Mr. Neuman to the sentimentalities which dull the edge of business. Even as Madame had commenced her appeal, he was considering, calmly enough, the advisability of getting a share of the plunder while any yet remained, and still calmly, had abandoned the project. The little rat-man who narked for the Sûreté,—was, in other words, a spy of the police upon his fellow-felons,—with his scraggy neck, his black teeth and his general vileness, had taken the wind out of his sails. Even an international crook may be careful of his company; and Mr. Neuman couldn't work on the heels of Bat Samuels. It was a decision deliberate and reasoned, owing nothing to sentiment; yet, when he looked up at the large, foolish face opposite to him, waiting in a twitching tension of hope for his answer, something that had lain dead within him till now awoke.

Madame Dupontel saw the sudden flush of red that surged into his face and his quick movement in his seat. He swore crisply—Mr. Neuman seldom swore—and brought his fist down on the table with a crash that made the bottles jump.

"You bet I'll help you!" he said

strongly, relaxing himself in the luxury of a frank emotion.

"Ah!" The fat woman sighed happily. "You always was a good feller, Pony."

"That's all right, Kate." Mr. Neuman was serious, with the gravity of determination; he looked a very adequate and resolute person when he chose. "You're one of us, you are; we can't have these outsiders goin' to war on us like this. I reckon I can fix this Bat Samuels for you. Where'll I find him?"

She shook her head. "He never gave me no address, Pony. You see, he comes himself. That's nearly the worst part of it; it does scare me so."

"Ah, well!" Mr. Neuman reached for his hat and cane and rose. "I s'pose I can find him. It's a marvel to me that that Apache crowd that he split on hasn't fixed him long ago. Still, you needn't worry any more, Kate; I'll handle him now."

SHE had risen likewise. She looked at him across the intervening table with admiration and utter trust, in which there was mixed something of a fearful secrecy. "What you goin' to do to him, Pony?" she asked, lowering her voice. Then in a pregnant whisper: "You aint thinkin' o' nothing *rough?*"

Mr. Neuman shrugged his shoulders and frowned. "Lord knows," he answered. "Roughing isn't in my line; I'll know better when I've seen the man. But it don't matter to you, old girl; this is my business now."

"An' it couldn't be in better hands," agreed Madame Dupontel warmly. "I'm safe with you. An' the blessin's of a helpless widder on you, Pony—a pore old widder's grateful blessin's!"

Mr. Neuman laughed and made his farewells. He was aware of a mixture of emotions, and some of them were new to him. Partly he felt like a fool and partly like a loser who has thrown away a game he could have won; but there was likewise a sense of having acted a spirited and generous part to an appreciative and applauding audience, and of being in fact rather a noble and vigorous person. It put a new jauntiness into his gait as he walked away from the gate of iron bars; he swung his gold-mounted cane dashingly. It was only when he turned and looked back to wave to Madame, where her vastness projected from the gateway like a great pink bubble, that he remembered how the hidden house had reminded him of the glass boxes in which the mechanical dolls waited to be made alive. At the memory, some of the confident brightness and complacency faded from his face.

"I'll never waste a cent on one of those fakes again!" declared Mr. Neuman seriously. "An' as for Bat Samuels, I bet I'll make *him* dance, anyhow."

To the ordinary dweller in the daylight world it might appear an affair of difficulty to trace in Paris a man who desired to remain hidden, who belonged, besides, to a species which only survives by virtue of its skill in keeping out of sight. To Mr. Neuman, however, with his peculiar knowledge and his special sources of information, the task was not formidable. He knew what he had to look for—the trail which such a one as Bat Samuels, with money to spend, would leave across the lower floor of the underworld. By early evening, he was already following that trail.

HIS inquiries had taken him up the hill towards Montmartre and into a small and unpretentious café near the Place Pigalle. Already the lights were ablaze in the twilight along the Boulevard Clichy; the quarter was settling down to its hectic evening industry of manufacturing "night life" to the crude taste of the tourist. But in the small café there endured an almost studious quiet. The half-dozen or so of men who sat in couples at the little tables were unobtrusive in appearance and low-voiced; the proprietor, behind his zinc-topped counter, was big and jolly of feature without any corresponding jolliness of expression; the single servant of the place was a sluttish middle-aged woman with a strong mustache and the jowl of a hanging-judge. Hither, in the natty splendor of his well-cut clothes, with his debonair and comely presence, entered Mr. Neuman.

Wary eyes turned upon him from the groups at the tables; Mr. Neuman met them with a chill and masterful calm.

"Good evening, my big one," he greeted the somber host. *"Ca va toujours?"*

The large man all but smiled. *"Tiens!"* he exclaimed. "It is Monsieur Neuman!"

He extended across the counter a hand like a sponge, big and yellow and soft, and Mr. Neuman shook it with condescending warmth. Behind him, in a rustle of whispers, he heard his name pass from mouth to mouth. He was here on ground where his eminence was recognized.

He leaned an elbow upon the bar, crossed one ankle over the other and let his cane dangle from his wrist.

"A vermouth, I think, for us both," he commanded. "Your vermouth used to be worth drinking when I was here before. How long ago is that?"

The proprietor, busy with the bottle, shook his large sleek head. "A year?" he ventured. "Two years?"

"Time passes," said Mr. Neuman oracularly. He clinked his glass with the other's and drank critically: "Ye-es; it is still drinkable. And what," he inquired carelessly, "—and what is the news now?"

He took a cigarette from his gold case, leaning still upon the bar, listening with an air of idle good-nature to the proprietor's chronicle of gossip. In that shabby place of shadows he was refulgent; among those slouching customers he stood like a king. They were plebeians of their kind, the journeymen of their craft; he was an aristocrat and a master. He felt the homage and envy of their regard as he leaned, smoking and smiling, waiting for the large man to come to the name he was anxious to hear.

IT came at last. Mr. Neuman took his cigarette from his lips and regarded it attentively.

"Spending money, is he?" he said reflectively.

"Every night," replied the proprietor. "It is curious. He is not working, and yet he has money like that! Perhaps we shall hear of something soon—a closed house in the suburbs with only dead people in it, or there is a body in the Bois that has not been found yet."

Mr. Neuman was not shocked; he merely nodded indifferently. He was in a world now where burglary and murder were industries like other industries. It was not his world; he was present rather in the guise of a distinguished foreigner; but it was not his business to be critical of the habits and manners of the natives.

"Comes here, does he?" he inquired.

The proprietor shook his head. "No," he said, and his slow eyes traveled across the room, carrying Mr. Neuman's with them. At a table against the wall, a man sat alone. Mr. Neuman's raised brows asked a question.

"Yes," answered the other, sinking his voice. "The Skinner, we call him—Jacques the Skinner. He was one of that gang that Samuels gave evidence against. You remember? Two went to the guillotine and five to New Caledonia. So, you see—Samuels would not come here."

Mr. Neuman saw quite clearly. He turned and looked at the Skinner with interest.

"I've heard of him," he said. "Is he sober? Because, now I'm here, I'd like a little talk with him, if it could be managed."

"But he is always quite sober," protested the proprietor. "A very pleasant poor fellow—Jacques! He will be proud. I will arrange that for you in a moment."

"Do," requested Mr. Neuman.

The table at which Mr. Neuman seated himself was that nearest the window; he placed himself at it with his back to the quiet street. The Skinner, after a whispered conference with the proprietor, came drifting across to it.

"Absinthe," he said, in reply to Mr. Neuman's ritual opening remark, and let himself tumble limply into his chair.

UNDER the light, he was visible as an emaciated boy, of perhaps twenty years of age, upon whose meagerness

of frame the shabby black clothes hung slackly. His face, drooping above his shallow chest, was dead white; the line of the thin lips across it was like a narrow gash; it was still as a countenance of stone. Till the absinthe was brought, he neither moved nor spoke; Mr. Neuman, watching him, felt, despite his connoisseurship in the varieties of man, an impulse of disgust that was half fear—the creature was so utterly evil that save when he was doing evil he was scarcely alive at all. He existed in a torpor of absinthe and foul imagination till he woke to grisly crime.

The scowling waitress brought the liquor; the clatter of the glassware on the iron table seemed to rouse the Skinner. His stagnant eyes took in its presence slowly; he heaved himself upright as if with extreme effort, put out long, bony hands to the bottles and looked across them at Mr. Neuman for the first time. In the light of that glance, all seeming of feebleness fell from him; it was as though he had unsheathed for a moment the poisonous and lethal soul of which his flimsy body was the scabbard.

He mixed his complicated drink expertly, tasted it and set it down. Mr. Neuman, who had been watching him with fascination, leaned forward over the little table and began to talk. . . . .

The small café slumbered and whispered about them; men entered and left; the waitress went heavy-footed about her work; behind his bar, the proprietor champed and snorted over his evening meal. None disturbed the murmured conference at the table by the window. If any glanced at Mr. Neuman, it was merely the tribute of interest which obscurity pays to success; but none took a seat near enough to overhear, and none made any comment. Mr. Neuman explained, making play with a white forefinger; from time to time the Skinner nodded a reply; for the rest, he listened. Three times the scowling waitress, answering the wave of a hand, renewed the supply of absinthe.

"Then," said Mr. Neuman finally, "that's fixed, eh? If I find him tonight, I'll steer him round to Massy's bar before midnight. I'll know by then where his room is, an' I'll leave word with that one-eyed waiter there. I suppose I can depend on you to keep sober?"

The Skinner only looked up for answer. Mr. Neuman was ready for him this time; he met that narrow cutthroat gaze with his own icy and dominating stare. Their eyes fought for a space of moments; it was the Skinner's which gave way first.

"Well, don't forget!" said Mr. Neuman, driving home the warning with a frowning nod. The Skinner's thin lips parted in soundless acquiescence. "Because," added Mr. Neuman, "I shouldn't forget it if you did."

He rose; the big proprietor came shuffling forth to walk to the door with him and bid him a deferential farewell. But he asked no questions; his was the house in which embarrassing questions were never asked.

THERE is, among the more innocent and childish attractions of the Boulevard Clichy, an establishment which opens from the pavement like an electric-lighted tunnel, inhabited by rows of slot-machines which furnish canned music, moving pictures and the like wonders to whomsoever will furnish the due coin. There are likewise machines with which one gambles feebly, staking ten centimes upon the possibility that it will fall from the slot through a system of obstacles into a certain tray and yield a return of perhaps a franc.

Mr. Neuman, drifting along the rank of slots, forgot his resolution never again to be a patron of mechanical dolls; there were one or two machines which he found interesting; and he came quite casually up to the little group that was watching a speculator at play with the mechanical gambler. He heard the tinkle of the coin inserted, the choke of the works as it was swallowed, the rattle of the money's descent to the all-but-inevitable forfeit. He pressed nearer, and across the shoulders of the onlookers he had a glimpse of the man who played.

He said nothing; a man in Mr. Neuman's business must rid himself of the

habit of exclamation; but for a moment he smiled.

He worked his way through the group about the player, feeling in his pockets for small change, till he stood beside the machine. He watched another small coin go tumbling to its fate; then he reached for the slot with his own contribution.

"What do you do? Just put it in?" he asked of the man who had been playing.

"Shove it in an' press this knob," answered the other.

Mr. Neuman did as he was directed, saw his coin engulfed, and laughed.

"You won anything?" he inquired, producing another.

"No," replied the stranger with an oath. "An' I'll bet you don't neither. These things aint meant to win with."

HE was a man of anything between twenty-five and thirty-five years, smallish of stature, whose every aspect and attitude were marked by a quality of mere meanness. Something at once ungainly and furtive was salient in him; his long neck stood out of his collar with a suggestion of indecency; his narrow face was timid and impudent; and when he grinned at the loss of Mr. Neuman's second stake, he showed a mouth like an old graveyard, foul with ruined and blackened teeth—a very carrion-worm among men. Mr. Neuman, sacrificing coins alternately with him, smiling, chatting, putting out his trained talents of captivation, could well understand how that figure of squalid menace upon her doorstep had terrified Madame Dupontel.

"Well," he said, when two francs' worth of change had enriched the proprietor of the machine, "this thing's certainly got an appetite, but I don't see myself standing here and feeding it all night. I'm going to get a drink or two."

He nodded to his companion as though to leave him; it had not taken him long to get the measure of Bat Samuels.

"Le's 'ave a drink together," suggested Samuels promptly.

Mr. Neuman nodded indifferently. "Come on, then," he said, and Samuels went.

The Boulevard Clichy blazed and surged; above it, the summit of Montmartre rose in cliffs of building; below, Paris glowed and sparkled in vivacious beauty. Over all, a clear night sky, powdered with stars, arched like a dome, and the clamor of the moment was strident in the ears of eternity. Along the Boulevard, threading through the throng of the pavements, went Mr. Neuman, that suave and accomplished squire of dames, and Bat Samuels, who spent with both hands the money he knew he could have for the asking and the moments upon which he set no value.

From one place for the solace of unquiet souls to another they wandered in a companionship of increasing intimacy; it was nearing midnight as, with linked arms, they bore down upon the flaming enticement of Massy's bar.

"Whadier doin' to-morrer?" inquired Samuels then. "What say to comin' 'ome to my room with me an' sleepin' there an' then goin' the rounds together again?"

"Well." Mr. Neuman was doubtful. "I don't know about that. Where is your room?"

And Bat Samuels, pointing to the hill above them, gave his address.

"I got a good room—none o' yer lousy attics for me," he added. "There's a sofa in it; you'd be all right, an' to-morrer we'll 'ave a real old bust."

Mr. Neuman gave a sidelong glance at the profile of the man who held his arm and offered him the shelter of his dwelling and spoke of to-morrow as though he carried it in his pocket. He hesitated a moment.

"I'll come home with you, if you like," he said then. "But as to to-morrow—we'll see!"

Bat Samuels jeered. "You think that a little spree like this'll make any difference? Why, I don't call this drinkin' at all—crawlin' along from one place to another all the evenin'. You don't want to worry about me; I'll be lively enough in the mornin'."

He shouldered his way into Massy's bar, with Mr. Neuman following at his heels. A one-eyed man served them

with liquor and walked across to the counter with Mr. Neuman to fill his handsome gold cigarette case for him.

IT was close upon two o'clock when they turned at last from the boulevard into the narrow uphill street which led towards Samuels' lodging. Mr. Neuman still walked with his accustomed gait, cane and gloves in hand, a civilized and responsible figure; Samuels lurched somewhat and was voluble and noisy; his hoarse talk covered Mr. Neuman's silences as they left the lights behind them and went up between the high, silent houses under the quiet glory of the heavens. He was elaborating his program for to-morrow; the word was frequent on his lips; there was a moment when it seemed to Mr. Neuman, whose nerves were tautening like a banjo string, that he emphasized it in derision, that he knew what was prepared for him and was mocking his enemy.

"I'll show you more o' Paris than y'ever saw in yer life," the hoarse voice boasted. "I'll tell you—this o' town's 'ot—red-'ot—but you want to know yer way about. Now, to-morrer, I'll take you to a place I know—you'll see—"

He stopped; they had reached the door of a gaunt tenement which lifted rank upon rank of dark windows, with here and there a lighted one, above their heads. Samuels fumbled for the bell which should rouse the concierge in her bed to pull the cord which would open the door.

"This your place?" asked Mr. Neuman.

"This is it," answered Samuels. "Goo' place, too—you'll see." He added, with a meaningless vanity: "'Spectable people live 'ere!"

The door clicked; Samuels pushed it back, revealing the dimness of a stone-flagged entry out of which a dark stairway ascended. The curtained glass door of the concierge's hutch showed the faint and dull glow of a light within.

"Come on!" bade Samuels, entering. Mr. Neuman still hesitated upon the threshold. "Wha's the matter?"

"Sure it's all right?" asked Mr. Neuman.

"'Course it's all right," cried Samuels. His face in the gloom showed white and horrible, like some gruesome mask hanging in midair. "Think I'd bring you 'ere if it wasn't?"

Mr. Neuman shrugged his shoulders; it had the look of a movement of surrender; he entered at the door which his urgent host held open for him. Samuels let it go when he was within and it swung to and closed itself with a hollow slam.

From the concierge's room a querulous voice called indistinctly through the glass door. Samuels shouted his name.

"Now!" he said, and led the way up the stone stairs, upon which his footfalls echoed noisily.

"Now!" repeated Mr. Neuman under his breath, and followed him.

THE unlighted stairway circled in its well from landing to landing; upon each, dumb doors showed their blank and solemn countenances to the pair who went by, the unsteady man who led the way, the sober one who followed. None looked out upon them; they mounted in the silence of the sleeping house unseen, measuring the moments of their ascent with the tread of their deliberate feet upon the steps.

"'Ere's where I live," said Samuels, at a door upon the third story. He made play with a key, stabbing at the lock with it. The door yielded at the thrust of his groping hands. "'Ullu! I must 'a' left it unlocked. Queer! Come on in, an' I'll turn on the light."

Mr. Neuman, upon the threshold, put one hand to the doorpost and held by it. He heard Samuels lurching about in the darkness of the room, bumping against the furniture and swearing. "Never can find that blarsted switch. Where the 'ell is the thing? Ah!"

His hand, brushing along the wall, had found what it sought; the switch clicked; the room was suddenly full of light.

"An' now—" began Samuels.

He turned towards where Mr. Neuman waited in the door and stopped short, the words jolted from his lips at sight of the lean, black-clad figure, spare and dangerous as a thin knife,

that stood, motionless, voiceless, at his very elbow. Mr. Neuman, gripping the doorpost, had a view of his face, imbecile with terror, incapable even of an outcry. And he saw, too, the face of the Skinner, white as bone, and the vivid red of the thin lips that widened as he watched into a slow smile. There was an instant during which none moved; then Mr. Neuman, with a hand that wavered, drew the door towards him and shut himself out from the room.

AFTERWARDS, what he remembered most powerfully was that interval of waiting in the darkness upon the landing, gripping the banisters and listening—straining his ears in a horrible and fascinated eagerness for sounds that should filter through the closed door. The house, which had been so silent, seemed to pulsate about him with the scores of lives it harbored, to reverberate to the beating of hearts; but from that room in which the Skinner and Bat Samuels were closeted there came no sound—not a cry, not the thud of a blow or a fall.

He saw the line of light below the door disappear; the Skinner in there, his work done, had turned it out. The door opened noiselessly, and Mr. Neuman was aware that he had come out, a shadow of a presence from which he shrank. The shadow spoke.

"C'est fini," it breathed. "It is finished." Then after a pause: "You would like to see?"

Mr. Neuman shook his head violently, forgetful of the darkness. "No," he whispered. "Come out of this, quick! I'll—I'll be sick or something in a moment."

He could not see,—he was glad of that,—but he knew that the Skinner was smiling. He braced himself for the ordeal of descending the long staircase with this companion at his side.

IN the *salle à manger* of the house at Passy, Madame Dupontel leaned upon the dining table and beamed admiringly at Mr. Neuman, seated opposite to her. Bottles and glasses colored the interview with the hues of hospitality; a strong sun lighted the prospect of the garden.

"So," said Mr. Neuman, concluding his remarks, "you can take my word for it, Kate—you'll not be troubled any more. You and he wont meet again."

He had still his outward spruceness, all that polish and outward finish which a man can buy from tailors and haberdashers. If the pinkness of his face was less pink, if he seemed tired and older, he had already explained that he was not sleeping well of late.

"Well, Pony," said Madame Dupontel, "you don't need to hear me say I'm grateful; you know that without me tellin' you. But I would like to know how you fixed him."

Mr. Neuman's face twitched in a half-involuntary grimace.

"Leave it at that, Kate," he said. "You were in a mess, and I got you out of it. That's enough for you to be sure of."

Madame Dupontel shrugged. "Well, if you say so, Pony," she yielded. "Any'ow, I'm grateful to you for what you done, 'owever you done it. You been a gentleman to me, Pony."

Mr. Neuman waved her compliments from him.

"Yes, you 'ave—a gentleman to me. An' now, since you've 'ad a bad winter—you said the other day you was up against it—if a thousand francs, or two thousand, would see you through it—"

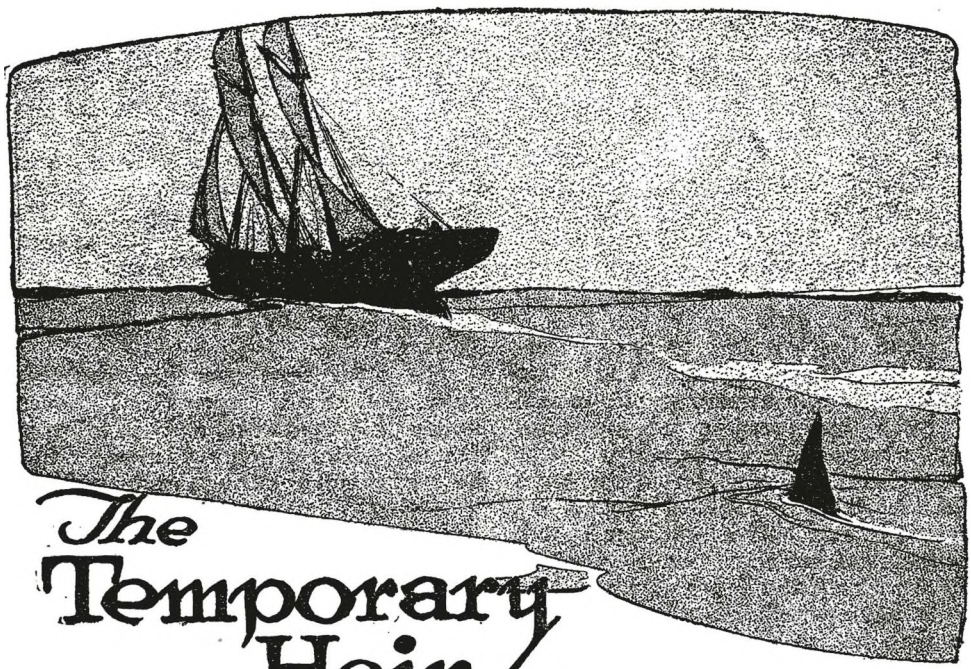
She had her purse upon the table; she opened it while she spoke, and her absurd shapeless fingers fluttered the crisp edges of a bundle of paper money.

"It'd be a pleasure to me," she added.

Mr. Neuman gave a small shudder; the eyes with which he looked at her had a touch of wildness and his smile was an effort.

"No," he said hastily. "No, thanks, Kate. Between a gentleman and a lady, you know—no, I couldn't take any money for what I've done for you."

The whisky-bottle, catching a ray of the sun, winked at him. He reached for it eagerly.



The Temporary Heir

by John Fleming Wilson

CAPTAIN EZRA AMES slowly realized that he was awake; it was not a nightmare that held his great limbs immovable and constricted his chest until each breath was an achievement. He recognized his surroundings: the shanty wall of rough planks with glimmering cracks, the roof overhead of corrugated sheet-iron, the greenish glass of a lamp bowl on the rickety table; above all he knew the rank, soapy smell of the copra stored in the next room. This was no dream. He was dying.

"Paralyzed!" he thought, unterrified. He attempted to move his head. At first he fancied he had succeeded. When he was sure he had not, he took up the difficult business of breathing once more. Captain Ames, who had never yet called himself beaten, was not going to yield to death until he had finished his business. And such a business! the climax of a lifetime, the capsheaf of a lawless harvest. He had dreamed of this grand finale for five years, years of unspeakable toil and peril and bloodshed and rapine. And on the very eve of his accomplishment, he was suddenly arrested by the cold hand of Death. He could not personally enjoy the victor's triumph. He must send a messenger into the promised land which he was not to see. Without a tremor of hesitation or a flicker of feebleness, he prepared to complete his grand affair before the shadows became darkness.

THIS short novel by the author of "The Saving Sense," "Emil Kunst's Strange Soul" and other noteworthy stories is even more striking than his previous work — a story to stir the imagination and cling long and vividly in one's memory.

He wondered who it would be who was to come and find him dying. Peterson, his dauntless, soulless lieutenant? Wilks, his cringing slave? Or would it be, after all, Hendricks?

The tropic sun flooded the bare room with yellow light; the open doorway was a blinding oblong to his dimming eyes. He waited patiently, enduring the pain of the glare, because he knew that when the opening was closed by a shadow his watch would be ended, and he would be aware who it was to whom he was to confide his final piece of business—and the girl.

Would Destiny dare to send Peterson? he thought again. The Mate would be barely awake, stupid, unable to catch the meaning of his commander's motionless pose, much less to comprehend his purpose. If it were Wilks? Ames saw his old enemy revivified by suddenly triumphant hatred, the formless, beaten clay once more taking upon itself the figure of a man. If Wilks came—well, Ezra Ames would die with his career uncompleted. But if it were Hendricks, the other of the three white men with him on that lonely isle, he must be stronger than ever he had been in his prime; he must perform the hardest feat of an arduous existence, for Hendricks had always defied him; he had yielded to physical force or acknowledged the strength of circumstance, but had never surrendered his freedom of spirit.

"And I shall have to articulate plainly," the dying skipper thought. "When old Cap Masters was paralyzed, he only mumbled. That was how I managed to get his schooner, in spite of what he wanted to say. Mumbling will never get me anywhere with Hendricks."

So, wondering which of the three Fate would bring first to his door, he composed himself.

WHEN the opening was obscured, Captain Ames knew who it was who was entering, though he neither distinguished a sound nor perceived an outline. No one but Hendricks would have dared come in without a preliminary question or excuse.

The newcomer merely glanced at the bulky form on the cot and stepped boldly across the room to a cupboard. The key hung in the lock. He opened it and drank heartily out of a bottle. Then he turned and met Ames' glance. For a minute the two men, as of old, fought for the mastery, but it was Captain Ames who now closed his eyes, in spite of himself. When he opened them again, he saw that Hendricks understood something had happened. He was coming to the side of the cot, slowly and deliberately. He was staring down, pursing his full lips.

Ames carefully framed the word, "Dying!"

The other bent over him thoughtfully, not at all surprised. He even nodded his head once, as if in affirmation of an unspoken reflection. Then he remarked casually, "Paralyzed?"

"Dying!" the Captain repeated irascibly, fearing that his utterance might fail him. But Hendricks seemed to catch both syllables perfectly, and nodded again.

"I see," he said. "Creeping paralysis. Caught your legs first, and is working up. You called it 'gout,' didn't you? Well, you can still talk. What do you want to say?"

Such complete comprehension made things easier, Ames thought unresentfully. Hendricks was no fool. So he prepared for the task of summing up in a moment his life's plan.

"There is a girl in San Francisco. Address in my log-book. The will in Honolulu. The pearls in my belt."

"Ah, the residuary legatee," Hendricks returned, still leaning over the motionless figure. "You expect me to sail your schooner to the Coast and turn everything over to the girl. I see!"

Ames thrice repeated a simple, sibilant "Yes!"

Hendricks straightened up and smiled with the easy cynicism which had always marked him in Ames' mind as a soul unsubdued. "And what is to prevent my running off with the schooner and the pearls? Nothing at all!"

For a long instant the two men's eyes met again. Suddenly Ames said in a pacific manner: "You are honest."

"Am I?" demanded Hendricks calmly.

"Honest," affirmed the dying man. "Every fault but dishonesty. You will take everything to the address."

"Sure!" was the sardonic answer. "As a matter of fact, I *am* honest. That doesn't alter the fact, you know: you stole *my* schooner and *my* pearls. That kind of makes me entitled to your packet and your pearls, doesn't it?"

Captain Ames did not wince. His profound glance confessed that Hendricks spoke what might be taken as the truth. It also insisted that Hendricks would not take advantage of this.

"I got 'em away from you fair enough," he said. "They're mine. I intended all along to take my stuff back to *her*. You never understood: I was strong enough to be (he seemed to hesitate for some adjective more applicable to his secret character) what you called 'Killer' Ames. And I was strong enough to know when I'd got what I wanted and quit all this and—go back. You understand now?"

Hendricks' mouth became a little firmer. "I see," he muttered. "You'd go back with the blood on your hands and never let on that you weren't a saint. Well?"

"I haven't given up yet," was the response in an unruffled tone. "I know I'm dying. But the schooner and the pearls go back to *her*." For a moment the motionless man breathed hastily and determinedly. When he spoke again, it was not so distinctly.

"I'll do you a good turn, Hendricks, in spite of yourself. . . . . I beat you fairly once. . . . . Now I'll make you honest, in spite of yourself." His undimmed eyes met the other's with absolute firmness. "It'll be the making of you, Hendricks."

SOMETHING of the dying man's indomitable spirit seemed to infuse these words with a vitality that survived his own. For while his eyes remained open, apparently gazing at something, Hendricks recognized the final incident and closed them. Having done so, he stepped back, repeating: "The making of me, did he say? The red-handed pirate!" He had recourse to the cupboard, sipping his liquor with an expression in which his ordinary attitude of leisurely contemplation was accentuated. He did not even raise his eyes when another figure loomed in the doorway and a husky voice said ingratiatingly: "Captain Ames, I'd like a sup of the rum, sir."

"The skipper is asleep," Hendricks said quietly, and passed the bottle out. The other drank quickly and shook his head. "The old man is getting wonderful drowsy lately," he whispered.

"So he is, Peterson," Hendricks returned in a low tone. "Where's Wilks?"

"Cooking breakfast."

"So? Let's have some coffee."

The two men went out, glancing from habit at the schooner at anchor in the bay, a small expanse of water fledged with wind-riven palms.

"Captain told me last night to see to it that the water-casks were filled this morning," the Mate remarked. As there was no response, he continued: "He's going to sail pretty soon?"

"I don't know," Hendricks answered curtly. "He didn't say."

"He never does," Peterson went on, pulling at the waistband of his ragged trousers. "I've been mate with him off and on for ten years, and he never *does* say. But this last time he's been down here about five years, and I reckon he'll be up and going east before long. Never knew him to spend more'n six months on a voyage before that last time he went to the Coast. He's asleep still, you reckon?"

"Very likely. I'll go back after a while. He wants me to make out some papers for him."

"That means Honolulu and the mail, anyway," the mate said briskly. "Well, that's good news, for sure."

Neither said more as they joined a small, gray-haired man who was cooking something over an oil stove precariously balanced on a box under a palm tree. This individual gave them no greeting whatever, but merely pointed to a coffeepot on the sand. He seemed hardly conscious what he was doing, moving with an odd, trembling step back and forth in the long shadow of

the tree. Now and then he bit nervously into a dry biscuit, nibbling rabbitwise. Presently whatever it was in the pan suddenly took fire, and he toppled the whole affair to the ground.

Peterson and Hendricks were silent, both of them appearing to take no notice of their companion, who was utterly stupefied by the disaster. But he picked the pan up, wiped it out with a piece of paper, steadied it on the stove again and reached into a bucket beside him for more turtle-eggs. It was evident that he was making an omelet. From his air of listening, they knew that he was preparing breakfast for Captain Ames. They saw nothing ludicrous in the old man's absolute terror. Only Hendricks allowed himself an unperceived smile. He seemed to think it might be interesting to witness Wilks' transformation when he discovered that his master was no more.

They each ate a couple of biscuits and drank a cup of muddy coffee. Then Peterson gave up his attempt at breakfast in disgust. "I'll have another sup out of the old man's bottle," he remarked surlily.

"I'll bring it to you," Hendricks volunteered. "He wont miss it. He'll think he finished it himself last night."

The Mate laughed, and displayed a cavernous mouth, almost toothless. The thick-walled nostrils above his short upper lip widened as his eyelids came together, leaving a slender, fumy line of dark pupil visible. Hendricks could not repress a slight shudder of disgust. Peterson was impossible, much more so than Wilks. He resolved suddenly and firmly to put an immediate end to their enforced association.

HOWEVER, he entered the room where the body lay and brought the bottle out, with every appearance of being careful not to awaken a sleeping brute. Then he watched the Mate roll away down the beach, bawling to the Kanakas on the schooner to come and fetch him aboard. When the whaleboat had been in and was well on its way back, Hendricks strolled across the sand to where the fidgeting Wilks doddered over his omelet in a perfect doldrums of doubt and fear.

"Don't worry," Hendricks said calmly. "I'll take his breakfast to the skipper."

Wilks fairly tumbled over his own incapable feet to be rid of his task. His voice quavered in a whisper: "I jest hate to take it to him this time. He's slept late, and that al'ays means his temper—"

"Yes, yes," Hendricks put in. "But I'll take it to him this time. Don't shake so." As he turned away, he spoke over his shoulder: "Better be ready to get aboard to-day."

The old man stared after him—then shook an impotent fist at the cloudless sky, as if it too menaced him from its pellucid and inexorable emptiness.

Back within the shelter of the shanty Hendricks put the food down and surveyed the grim form on the cot. Ames was an oppressive figure, even in death. His austere visage had lost nothing of its implacability. It would require eternity to soften the lineaments which time had hardened. Hendricks drew the yellowed sheet over the corpse. Then he thrust his two hands beneath it, fumbled a moment and drew out a broad, soft leather belt, which he laid on the table beside a log-book, scrawled all over with the blunt reckonings of the dead man.

"I suppose that temporarily I'm the sole heir and executor," Hendricks murmured aloud. "Let's see what's in the estate."

The belt disclosed a varied assortment of valuables: a couple of hundred pounds in English notes, a dozen sovereigns, a twenty-dollar gold-piece, a poor emerald, a cigarette-case sealed with tape and wax, and a plain gold band.

"Looks like a wedding ring," Hendricks surmised aloud, and passed on to the consideration of a thin packet of papers. They included certain ship's documents and a bill of exchange for two thousand dollars made out to "Capt. Geo. Hendricks." This he scowled over.

"Now, why didn't he forge my endorsement and cash it!" he demanded of the still room. He recalled the day

when Ames had despoiled him of it, that day when George Hendricks ceased to be a ship-owner and master, lost his connection with the outside world and became the poorly paid associate of Killer Ames. He put the draft in his pocket. Then he cut the tape about the cigarette-case and allowed the contents to escape from their cottony nest to the rough top of the table.

For a quarter of an hour Hendricks looked at the pearls lying heaped before him—the spoils of rapine, treachery and ruthless bloodshed. Several times he picked up one or another of the big spheres, trying to identify its history, and each time his expression of cynical discontent deepened. Finally he swept the whole lot back into their receptacle with a laugh.

"Not worth a dollar!" he told the silent one. "You're dead and they're dying. You were fooled at the last, in spite of your smoothness, Killer Ames! You'd have gone to that girl and boasted of your riches, and when you came to show 'em down, they'd have been just dead pearls—not worth a cent, for all the murder you did to get them!"

But he neglected the log-book's secrets to consider this catastrophe. He knew that the pearls had been perfect, worth a hundred thousand dollars. How had they spoiled? What had made them die?

LIKE all pearl-fishers, Hendricks was superstitious. He knew a thousand tales about these frail, precious jewels of the sea. But never had he heard of a whole treasure of pearls losing their brilliancy and their life at once, in a short time. What was the explanation? He gave up the problem and accepted the fact, feeling a sudden, profound contempt for Ames. The man was nothing at all, really—just as much a fool as others. Witness his cherishing a lot of worthless pearls and babbling about "going back" and "the girl."

He understood perfectly that his own affair was ended. No money in the estate for himself. But Ames had spoken of a will in Honolulu. He had —very likely a mere empty document. The girl wouldn't get much.

He meditated over her. Who was she? How had she met Ames? What did she know about him? And had a pretty woman, too, actually fallen under the man's spell? What a joke to go to her in San Francisco and give her these rotten pearls as Ames' bequest! It would be splendid revenge on the Killer.

He realized that he had laughed long and loud, when there was a sound of footsteps outside the house. He started up and went to the door. Standing there, he turned his face inward again and called in a bantering tone: "It's Wilks, Captain. Shall I let him have a drink?" Then he bent his sardonic gaze on the shuffling man hesitating a dozen feet away.

"I sh'd like liquor," quavered Wilks, darting a glance of pure hatred at the wall between him and his enemy.

Hendricks nodded coldly and withdrew, knowing well that he would venture no nearer. He came out with a freshly opened bottle, handed it over and said: "Captain Ames wants you to go aboard and *stay* there."

The old man blinked. Then his lips parted in a mirthless grin. "I nearly killed him once, when I had drunk plenty," he whispered, almost boastfully. "Huh! Is that the way he feels?" He drank avidly. "He's afraid of old Wilks when I'm drunk. He better be!" He drank again, listened for some roaring curse from within, doddered off.

Alone once more, Hendricks picked up the log-book and addressed the corpse. "All right, I'll just take the schooner and this stuff to San Francisco," he said tauntingly. "You thought you'd get ahead of me again. But what'll the dame say to your rotten pearls? Hey? I'll laugh when I see her face. Oh, yes! I'm honest, am I? I'm too honest for *your* peace of mind, by heavens!"

Without further ado he packed the contents of the belt, the log-book and a couple of bottles from the cupboard into an old carpet-bag which Ames had always affected, nodded to the sheeted form and went out, pulling the crazy door to after him.

"So ends this cruise," he announced, glancing over the desert island. "Now, Mr. Peterson, I don't like you, I don't

need you and I wont have you." He let his finger rest on the butt of the revolver in his belt and smiled. A quarter of a mile away, he saw the Mate overseeing the loading of the filled water-casks. Much nearer was a dinghy into which Wilks was huddling some small cooking-gear, stopping now and then to inflame his senile blood with renewed draughts from the bottle. Hendricks strode down upon him, tossed the carpet-bag into the bottom of the boat and said curtly: "The old man says to put that in his cabin. Better get away, now. He's coming out pretty soon. We sail in an hour."

Wilks bent his acrimonious gaze on the young man's well-set-up figure and snarled an assent.

"'Nd if I was as young as you, I'd never sail with him again," he muttered. "Huh! Killer Ames, is he? Some day—"

Hendricks answered with an easy laugh. "All right, Papa. Talk as much as you like. *But* you'd better stir your pins."

"I was Cap'n Wilks once," was the trembling reply. "No matter now." He thrust the little craft off the beach with unexpected strength in his meager muscles and sculled away. Hendricks watched him go, frowning over his next task.

WHEN Peterson glanced up after examining the hoops of the last barrel and stamping the bung in with his heel, he saw Hendricks close by and asked thickly: "When's the old man coming off?"

Hendricks did not immediately answer. The sweat started out on his forehead. His fingers clutched the butt of his revolver. A swift glance at the Kanakas told him that with the uncanny sensitiveness of their race they expected something extraordinary to happen. Now was his time to complete what had begun when Ames died. One shot,—it seemed as if he heard the explosion!—and Peterson, the brute, would also be out of his way. Hendricks had never killed a man. It was a weakness. He suddenly turned away and answered the question.

"Pretty soon, Mr. Peterson. He wishes you to stow the water and get your anchor clear. Send the boat off for us when you are ready."

The Mate nodded, and at his hoarse word of command jumped into the whaleboat and thrust off. Peterson leaped into the sternsheets and waved his paw at Hendricks. That individual, feeling strangely separate from his surroundings, responded with his usual indolent air. He watched the boat slip over the glassy surface of the little bay until it entered the shadow of the schooner. Then he retired and went quietly into the shanty.

Nothing is so fatal to one's self-esteem as to find that the execution of a plain purpose is impossible because of one's inherent weakness. Hendricks' course of action lay before him, too plain for debate. After two years of what had been nothing less than real servitude to a man who had filched his worldy goods and his self-respect therewith, he was unexpectedly set free by Ames' sudden death. What simpler than to take the Killer's schooner in lieu of the one he had lost, appropriate Ames' property as slight repayment for his own, and so depart for the Coast and there destroy the illusion which Ames had labored to establish in the mind and heart of some woman? Simple and safe. And what a combination of retaliation and reprisal this was: to recover what had been stolen and then go farther and leave him not even a place in the tender memory of a girl. All that stood before him and the secure accomplishment of this was Peterson. And when he had seen that misshapen visage and heard those gross tones and felt the soulless strength of the man, Hendricks had been unable to kill him, though reason urged and memory justified the act. Looking wrathfully at the form on the cot, he said: "You're right, I've got just one virtue, and that's weak, piffling honesty."

Unconsciously he prayed that he might yet find himself fit for murder, besought this boon of a higher power as simply as a child asks for his soul's keeping through the night. The sweat again stood out on his forehead, and he closed his eyes agonizingly as he

wrestled for strength to kill his enemy. The Divine Power was deaf. He turned once more to the man who was equal to the task. Killer Ames, though dead, was mightier than the living.

"You've got to help me," Hendricks told the quiet body.

HE went down to the beach, where the Mate was just coming ashore. "The skipper has decided not to sail till midnight," Hendricks lied. "He says there ought to be a breeze then; that will save us towing the schooner through the pass. He wants you to stay aboard. I'm to stay here, and we'll be off after dark."

The Mate laughed, his ugly face to the cloudless sky. "I bet you!" he rumbled. "I know when the old man gets a notion. He's taking his rum regular, as he always does when he's bound for port at last. All right; I take some, too."

Hendricks drew out a key and handed it over. "It's to the skipper's locker on board. Help yourself. Better give Wilks some, too."

"Wilks?" grinned the Mate, almost closing his dull eyes. "Hoho! Papa Wilks is sharpening his knives already. He's fair murderous now. Hoho!" Peterson's hilarious bellow rang out over the lagoon. As the smiling sailors pulled slowly for the schooner, the lonely man on the beach heard again and again the terriffic roar of that laughter, pealing to the empty sky, the guffaws of mindless might at the petty mewings of a thin soul in torment.

Till sundown Hendricks heard no more from the schooner—except towards dark, when he caught the acrimonious babble of a voice which he knew to be the old man's; it was followed by an inarticulate rumbling tone which trailed off into another gust of bellowing hilarity.

"Wilks running amuck," he thought. "Peterson probably merely clamped him in his arms and squeezed the breath out of him."

He was certain of this when he saw a figure which could be that of no one but Wilks scramble overside into the dinghy and put towards shore. A brief glance at him as he disembarked on the sand told him that the old man was in a kind of stupor, barely cognizant of his surroundings. In the dusk he stared over the island and then settled himself back in the boat with his head on his chest.

It fitted in precisely with what Hendricks had hoped for. He let the man doze for an hour or so—then tried to rouse him. Wilks merely grunted, to the other's profound relief. His plan would work.

It was absolutely dark when Hendricks at last staggered down the beach with the body in his arms. As he eased it into the bottom of the boat, he peered at Wilks searchingly. The old man merely mumbled and mechanically took the oars.

They approached the vessel's side quietly. There was no hail from the deck. Hendricks hauled the dinghy alongside and clambered up softly. Not a sailor was to be seen. Peterson was asleep on a long chair on the poop.

FINDING all clear for his last act, Hendricks went down into the little boat and again picked up the body. By incredible exertions and aided by Wilks, who mumbled something about the Captain's being drunk, he got what had been Killer Ames on deck and thence down into the cabin. Here he dismissed his assistant, and single-handed completed his task of getting the corpse securely into Ames' berth.

When he had closed the door on it, he steadied himself with a long pull at a bottle on the table, token of Peterson's activities, and went forward to stir out the crew. Within half an hour the anchor was catheaded and the schooner was slipping silently outward toward the pass. Hendricks steered carefully for the narrow opening between the low banks till the ebb tide caught the vessel and hurried her onward and the breeze outside filled her sails as she bore away to the north. He then cleared the decks, taking occasion on his rounds to look into the half-deck cabin upon Wilks, who was huddled on his bed, staring into space.

When the island was only a thickening of the horizon behind him, Hend-

ricks wakened Peterson, who seemed to be past comprehension of anything, but managed to keep his feet and stand his watch for an hour, though giving every evidence of being wholly insensible.

"He wont suspect anything," Hendricks thought with satisfaction. "But I must get him wide awake; otherwise he'll not believe the old man is aboard."

He effected his purpose by taking the wheel and jibing the schooner. When he had her on her course again and had picked Peterson out of the scuppers, where he had been knocked by the swinging boom, he shook him angrily.

"You're a pretty seaman!" he growled in his ear. "What will the skipper say? Wake up, you fool!"

Peterson rubbed his aching head and gradually realized his plight. "I was sound asleep," he grumbled.

"You were," Hendricks said in a loud whisper. "The old man saw you, and he laughed."

The Mate's sodden face sobered instantly. "Laughed, did he?" he responded in a husky murmur. "Laughed? My God!"

Hearing the note of dread in his voice, Hendricks went on: "He'll flay you alive to-morrow."

Peterson's slow horror was unaffected. He whispered again: "My God!"

"What are you going to do about it?" Hendricks demanded, enjoying the feeling that this uncouth brute could be cowed by a mere suggestion that his master was preparing punishment for him.

Peterson shuddered and turned his wry face to his companion with a piteous expression on it. "He's a devil," he gurgled. "He laughed, you say? The last time Killer Ames *laughed* was when—" His eyes seemed to start from his head at a vision. Then he drew back, overcome with nausea. Hendricks listened to his unsteady footfalls as he walked back and forth on the little deck, and his own face darkened. He had heard of a time when Ames laughed. It was not a veracious report mouthed over a drink, nor gossip, nor a tale told for the talebearing; it was a mere whisper, concluding with a faint "—Killer Ames laughed." He went below.

SITTING on his bunk in the stuffy room which had confined his activities for so long, he struggled to drive the phantasmic horror from his mind. Well enough he knew that the air he had breathed while associated with Ames had been filled with this same mysterious miasma; time and again he had seen other men choked by some invisible and subtle poison emanating from the man's simple presence. His own easy cynicism had saved him. He hadn't really allowed himself to perceive the truth of the Killer's monstrous tyranny, that it was founded on a past so dark that the very flame of Ames' passion had cast a shadow. Now he felt the awe which other men felt, the unreasoning dread which cowed even the gross and senseless Peterson. It seemed to him that Death itself had drawn back at the last moment—he leaped up wildly. What? Not dead? No! There was a sound behind that closed door! The corpse was stirring, was fumbling at the yellow sheet. With starting eyeballs Hendricks peered into the gloom of the cabin—hearing that muffled and terrible sound of an unholy resurrection.

It reached his straining ear as an unsteady, shuffling, mumbling susurration. He could not discern anything in the shadow—except a hand that seemed to materialize yellowishly, clutching for the door-knob. But this hand was outside. He watched it dumbly. Then his blurred eyes cleared. He saw Wilks.

The old man was seized with no vile physical passion now. His transfigured face suddenly became plainly to be seen, and it told of a purpose so bleak that it was unearthly. His bright eyes glittered; his gray lips were parted as if in triumphant aspiration. He was making for the blank door behind which Killer Ames lay concealed. He reached it, turned the knob noiselessly, entered, closed the door behind him.

Hendricks leaned forward and waited, his temple resounding to the dull throb of the heart. The door was opening again—swung wide. A dark

and shadowy shape emerged and slipped away. Hendricks still stared at the half-open door.

He roused himself only when the Mate clumped down the steps and came over to him and peered at him with bloodshot eyes and whispered: "Hendricks! Come up and stand the watch with me."

"All right," was the response. "Have you got the bugaboos too?"

PETERSON wiped his slavering lips on the back of his hand and glanced fearfully over his shoulder at the Captain's door. When he saw that it was not closed, he cringed. He seemed on the point of hysterical speech, but Hendricks, his own nerves tingling, seized him by the arm and led him back on deck.

"Pull yourself together, man," he said wrathfully.

"Is th' old man awake?"

Hendricks fixed his eyes on the bright stars burning in the sky. Was it time to tell the truth? He felt Peterson's groping fingers on his arm. He laughed, pointed upward with a strange gesture.

"I guess he's awake," he said. "I hear him laughing."

The Mate's fleshy finger dribbled on his sleeve. "Laughing? My God!"

"At Wilks."

Peterson's voice fell to a mutter. He drew his companion out of earshot of the man at the wheel, to whisper a secret.

"He better be careful of old Wilks," he said thickly. "Wilks is dangerous. *I'm* afraid of him—I'm afraid of Billy Wilks that was, before Killer Ames stole his wife and marooned Billy on an atoll. Three years Billy was on that there island, Billy that feared neither God nor man nor devil till Ames came along. 'You was never afraid of anybody,' I remarks to Cap'n Ames one day, 'except Billy Wilks. And *he's* safe and sound on that island.' Ames looks at me and laughs. 'By George, I nearly forgot Billy,' says he, and he up and changed the course and made the atoll. Old Wilks was on the beach, all smeary with turtle-egg and handling a knife. 'Wilks,' says the Killer, 'I nigh forgot you. Haw've you been?' The old boy held up the blade and quavered: 'I kept this sharp two years to fight you with, but it wore out digging shell.' 'Throw it away or keep it,' says Ames nicely. 'Come aboard.' Old Billy scrawned his throat and cackled, 'Where's my wife?' And the skipper he looks across at him and licks his lips. 'The lady you called your "lamb person?"' he says, very softly, and laughed. Yes sir, Killer Ames just laughed. And Billy Wilks that was, and had made fun on his own quarterdeck with his wife and called her little names like she was a child, listened to him, and came over the side and has been just what you see him now. But"—Peterson's voice lowered into a mere mutter—"I *seen* the old Billy Wilks just now, a-stepping along the deck with that blunt knife all clawed in his fingers. And you say Killer Ames laughed again? My God!"

"You're seeing ghosts, man!"

Peterson lifted his misshapen face to the dark firmament, as if to discern in the empty vault whatever it was that shadowed his world. Hendricks shook himself. "Ghosts!" he repeated. "Come and I'll show you one."

Peterson stared at him dully. "What d'ye mean?"

"Come and see. The skipper wants you."

"I can't go!" the Mate protested, with a profound misery in his tone. "I don't understand him at all. But he always has the laugh on us."

"On some of us," Hendricks corrected. "On Wilks, and on you, for instance. But not on me."

"What d'ye mean?"

Hendricks led him down the steps into the cabin and trimmed the lamp before pointing toward the open door of the Captain's room. The Mate stared at nothing, his mouth set in a grimace.

"After all, it was a good joke on Wilks," Hendricks went on calmly, pushing the door farther open and disclosing the still form of Captain Ames.

The Mate gazed at the gray face of his commander, and slowly understanding came to him. He pointed to

the blot on the yellow sheet just over the Killer's breast. In an appalled whisper he said: "Billy Wilks did it!"

HENDRICKS felt a sudden need for plain speaking; he must put a stop to this ghastly mummery. He shook the Mate roughly.

"No," he said loudly. "Ames died yesterday morning. Wilks was too late, don't you see? Ames died yesterday, with me in the room. Says he to me: 'The joke is on the boys, Hendricks. I've made 'em step lively, and when I'm gone they'll think they're quit of me.' Then he laughed." Hendricks smiled into Peterson's staring eyes. "He laughed," he repeated. "And so did I."

This he said in his newborn resolve to assume the scepter which Ames had dropped. It fell in with his purpose to maintain the reign of terror. And so he forced himself to laugh loudly. But to his surprise Peterson joined him, throwing his unkempt head back, showing the circular nostrils with their thick, fleshy walls. His mouth opened cavernously.

"Hoho!" he roared stertorously, resting his huge paws on his hips. The little cabin resounded to his merriment, as his great voice rose and rose in volume in that terrible jocosity. Hendricks stepped back, in a cold perspiration. Then his eyes caught a crouching figure just behind the Mate, and he moved still further back.

As if in obedience to this silent movement, Wilks straightened himself up, darted out one skinny arm and withdrew it slowly. Peterson, mouth still open, ceased his wild hilarity, sank crumbling to the deck.

Instantly sobered, Hendricks plucked the knife out of the old man's fingers. "I think there will be no more laughing on this schooner, Wilks," he remarked.

"*Captain* Wilks," said the old man sibilantly.

Hendricks humored him. "Very well, Captain. Now what?"

"You will act as Mate, Mr. Hendricks. Clean out this cabin, if you please."

The younger man stared after his new commander with a feeling that he was once again in the grip of a power too mighty for his buffeting. Ames was gone; Peterson was gone; remained Wilks, the Billy Wilks of former times, ruthless, inexorable and terrific. He yielded his transient dream of freedom and acknowledged himself beaten.

BY the time the forenoon was in its full, Hendricks was again the cynical, tolerant subordinate. He had finished his task and was leaning over the low rail of the schooner, staring down into the azure depths of the sea. Somewhere in the obscurity below him there was a shadow which now darkened, now faded. In the instant when he had dismissed Ames and Peterson to their final abode, that shadow had grown amazingly distinct for a moment and then became its present wavering blur. It struck him as a proper end to the two men's bloodstained lives that they should fall in their turns the prey of monsters of the sea.

Wilks, who was striding back and forth on the poop, suddenly stepped up beside him. Involuntarily Hendricks lazily pointed out the sinister shadow and asked: "Friend of yours, Captain?"

Wilks leaned over the rail and screwed up his peering eyes. He shook his head judicially.

"Friend of Ames', " he croaked; then with an absurd transition he went on: "And some woman will miss him, Mr. Hendricks!"

There rose before Hendricks' eyes the dim vision of a girl waiting for Ezra Ames to come in from sea after his adventures, with hands full of treasure. His thought found utterance. "Dead pearls."

Wilks blinked. "They do die," he cackled. He chewed his lips reflectively. "I knew a man once whose pearls died on his hands. 'I'm broke for fair,' says he, looking down at 'em, and blew out his brains. I took them pearls to Amsterdam, for luck. 'Nd a woman that was waiting in an upper room at the dealer's put 'em about her neck, and the dealer paid me a thousand

pounds for the pearls and told me the woman loved them, and they would come alive again in the warmth of her bosom. It's always a woman that brings the dead back, Mr. Hendricks."

Wilks was silent, and his companion surmised that this was an obscure reference to himself and the woman he had lost. Possibly when Ames died, Hendricks thought, the barrier between the old man and his long-mourned wife had also fallen, and she had come back, a kind of spiritual presence which had rejuvenated him and made him master once more. But he put away the fancy as morbid. Too many ghosts already haunted the schooner.

"Then that's true about pearls?" he inquired with an effort at naturalness.

"Pearls—and other treasure," the old man said ruminatively.

"Did Ames have any pearls?" Hendricks pursued, as a feeler.

"Killer Ames have pearls?" returned Wilks, pawing his beard. "Hee-hee!"

And this shrill cachinnation was the sum of the old man's response; to be taken as a comment on, Hendricks supposed, the vanity of toil and imperiling one's soul for transitory things. At any rate, Billy Wilks had no intention of seeking for hidden treasures. So that night Hendricks stowed away in a safe place what Captain Ames had left, and studied interestedly the address in the log-book. It was perfectly plain:

SUSAN MATHEWS,
4847 Steiner Street,
San Francisco, Calif.

Very thoughtfully Hendricks considered this and its meaning. To him the name of woman meant a weakness; Killer Ames had not been weak. Even when he had swooped down on Wilks and stolen his wife (that vague and precious "lamb person" chronicled by the whispering Peterson), reducing the erstwhile masterful Billy to a cringing crone, the dead man had apparently not betrayed mere human frailty. Who was this woman? The name proved that it was *not* Mrs. Wilks. Who was Susan Mathews? Ames had not even called her name in his last moments. He had simply referred to her as *her*, as though she included in herself all that he remembered or aspired to in womanhood.

A mystery!

IN his new position as mate under Wilks, standing a regular watch, with none to speak with or question, Hendricks found himself much given to quiet self-inquisition. The routine of the schooner was without incident to divert his attention from the problem of existence.

Most men can lay a finger on some single great error whereto to attribute their downfall. Hendricks could not do so. What he had suffered, and it was much, had been a mere matter of incident, a casualty. He had been hit with a stray bullet, so to speak. Luck! Neither woman nor liquor nor avarice had brought him to failure, but chance buffets in the mêlée of life. He was denied even the valuable recompense of experience; he had learned no lesson which wise men affirm is the priceless teaching of misfortune. Where other men had endured and surrendered, or suffered and been victorious, he had borne a middle part. He was young, yet unsuccessful; he was old and without vital knowledge. He was in mid-career, and no goal in sight. He had been present at death, and was wholly ignorant of the meaning of existence. In the night watches he demanded of himself: What do I want?

He contemplated wealth, and shook his head over the logical question: what shall I purchase with it? Adventure? an empty phrase descriptive of the past in terms of the future. Love? he knew of no woman. In a world where every man sought the accomplishment of some burning desire, he drifted like a derelict.

"There must be something somewhere," he said to himself. "I used to think there was a life worth living. I have forgotten what it was, I guess."

So he turned his thoughts back upon his environments. Wilks affected him as a curious study. Here was a man who had altered from a whining and incapable drudge into an alert and com-

posed shipmaster. He more than held his own in the daily emergencies of the voyage, and he was most evidently straight on the direct road to the achievement of some purpose. Hendricks was compelled to believe that the act of murder had been beneficial to him. And logically he was forced to consider the question whether Wilks might not kill him too, in pursuance of his mysterious aims. He found himself less disturbed than he thought natural. It made him anxious about his own mental health. Was it possible that he was already senile? dying to the world?

When Wilks said one morning, "We'll make Honolulu in six days," he roused himself to inquire: "Why Honolulu, sir?"

The old man shut his lips tightly and scanned the cloud-flecked sky. Then he looked down on Hendricks to say: "If you like, you can have the schooner then. I have no use for her. I'll stop in Honolulu."

"Do you mean to say you will turn this vessel over to me, Captain?"

"Did you ever hear tell of Billy Wilks?" came the sharp query.

"Why—I—yes sir."

"I'm Billy Wilks. Ten years ago Killer Ames laughed at me in George's coffee-house—told the boys Billy Wilks was a bluff—not worth listening to. Ames laughed. *They* laughed too. I'm just going back to George's and laugh at *them*." He fixed his eyes on his mate and nodded several times with great satisfaction. "Who'll laugh now? Not Killer Ames. What do I care for his old schooner! Hey? Hey? The vessel's yours."

Hendricks did not conceal his astonishment. "Do you mean to say you aren't going to do anything?"

"Do?" repeated Wilks. "What else is there to do? Hey? I've done it. I'm going back to George's and order a cup of coffee and watch the boys come in and stare at me—at Billy Wilks, which is back in the flesh when Killer Ames is overside in a thousand fathom. An' I'll stare back at 'em, and they'll know as Wilks was all right, and came back in his own ship and nobody dared look sideways at him."

"And then?"

Wilks smiled craftily. "I'll stay there, always on deck where people will come and look and say: 'Well, well! Ames is dead and gone, but look who's here—Captain Billy Wilks."

SLOWLY Hendricks realized that the old man told the precise truth. After all his suffering—after years on a desert isle watching the sea-line for the sail of the man who had ravished his "lamb person"—he had committed murder and seized a schooner just to go back to a coffee-house and stand in the eye of an obscure public as a man who was superior to Killer Ames. He had lived and struggled and survived, not for hours of tender reminiscence of happy days, but to preen himself on his ignobly, petty pride. Hendricks set Wilks down as a fool. He dismissed him from his mind when he had left at Honolulu with a hasty farewell and a "Wish you pleasant voyage, Cap'n."

"Hum!" Hendricks muttered to himself. "He never even entered the vessel at the custom-house. What'll I do?" The native bo's'n, mindful only of the possibility of being paid off and having a riot ashore, could not answer him. But he spoke of money.

"Sure enough," Hendricks said, and called the crew aft and settled with them out of the funds he had found in Ames' belt.

"Now," he said, when the last man had made his mark, "I'm going to sail for San Francisco. Who'll go with me?"

Astonished enough he was when the natives, to a man, volunteered and said they would forego the delights of stopping ashore.

"Then we'll sail to-night," Hendricks said promptly, and left the ship in care of the bo's'n and departed to buy stores.

He came back in a *paké* hack with packages piled high about him. The bo's'n met him at the pier and babbled some incomprehensible things, while Hendricks interrupted: "What's that? what's that?" In the end he caught the meaning of the Kanaka's hasty speech and nodded.

"So Papa Wilks has been chattering, has he?" he remarked. "We'll hie us to sea, Uncle Harry, *wiki wiki.*"

So, without fulfilling the legal formalities, Captain Hendricks took the schooner *Empress* to sea in the quiet starlight following a day of roaring trades, and in Molokai channel listened gravely to the incoherent story told by his bo's'n. Hendricks whistled.

"So that's what he said, is it?" he remarked. "I'd have thought the old boy had learned his lesson. But he had to boast of killing Ames, did he? Right out in public, eh? And said I had to stand by and look on? The old son of a gun! Uncle Harry, what'll we say in San Francisco?"

The old islander bent his wrinkled and benign face on his captain's and said gently: "We say you very good man. Ames *poopooli;* Papa Billy *poopooli.* You good man; Kanaka boys love you." He stretched his dusky hand outward in a great gesture. "We boys go with you always."

"The deuce you will!" Hendricks said in amazement. "What have I done for you, you heathen?"

Nothing understandable could be made out of the man's vague mixed speech, except that in some fashion he and his fellows foresaw in the future (indicated by constant pointing to the stars) that he, their captain, was to be happy, sharing his felicity with them.

Hendricks smiled. He put them down as a funny lot. Well, time would tell. Pretty soon they would be in San Francisco, and he would see Susan Mathews and hand over to her the lusterless pearls. Whatever befell, he would know what kind of woman it was who had entranced the bold spirit of Killer Ames. Meanwhile old Billy Wilks could chatter away to his heart's content, nobody a particle the wiser, seeing that the *Empress* and all the witnesses to his tale were at sea, bound no one knew whither except himself.

IT HAD been one of Captain Ames' personal eccentricities always to keep his vessel clean and well found. Now, in spite of her long sojourn in the tropics, her copper was bright, and she swept northward like a gull, made latitude thirty and swung eastward to the tune of the racing gales till Hendricks laughed over his daily reckonings in sheer pride. Fourteen days out from Koko Head, in the early morning, Uncle Harry lifted his dusky arm and pointed to a white blotch in the drifting cloud above the coastwise surf.

"The Cliff House!" cried Hendricks. "When did we pass the Farallones?"

No answer was forthcoming, and he marked down under "weather" for the morning watch, "Thick. Fresh gale." Having duly brought up the log, he went on deck and hailed a tug. After a bit of bargaining, this monitor took the *Empress* in tow and in the forenoon swung her to her anchorage off Angel Island. Before the hook was down, the doctor's launch was alongside, and that busy official came over the side with a quick: "Ha! this is where you sailed for, eh!"

"It is," Hendricks replied amiably.

"We've been waiting for you two weeks," the surgeon continued, scanning the white decks and scrutinizing the grinning hands. "Captain Ames died at sea, huh?"

"I suppose Captain Wilks reported it in Honolulu," Hendricks remarked. "It's all down in the log."

"Wilks reported a good many things, Captain," was the curt response. "But not officially. I suppose you realize that you entered port in Honolulu without due formalities and sailed without leave?"

"That was his business, not mine," Hendricks protested.

"Well, it's up to you now," the doctor said. "Up to you now!" He glared at him officially over his glasses.

"I'm here," was the answer.

"Sorry, but you'll have to stay here, too. Government orders. Can't pass you. Cable report that murder was done, and all that. Your crew as well as yourself held for examination."

"Now that is the very deuce and all," Hendricks said, thoroughly provoked. "I suppose old Billy Wilks had to tell a whole lot, didn't he?"

"Very likely," was the dry reply.

Hendricks saw several stolid and matter-of-fact men distribute themselves over his vessel and smiled help-

lessly. He drew the bo's'n aside and informed him of the orders. The islanders nodded, as much as to say that everything was all right. No one would talk.

ALL afternoon Hendricks kept his cabin, dozing the hours away and paying no attention to the occasional intrusion of some officer to make sure that he had not evaded the law. Supper he ate by himself, apparently quite satisfied to stay on his vessel though the joyous city was preparing for another night's pleasure.

"You don't seem to worry much," remarked one of his guards, helping himself to a cigar from the table drawer.

"Not much," Hendricks said coolly.

"Nor to be curious about the news," added the other. "Though you've been at sea and away from a newspaper for months, I'm told."

"Hang the news!" said Hendricks, and went into his room and closed the door.

At midnight he slipped out a big quarter-cabin window into the water, with his treasures and clothes made into a bundle in an oilskin bag. He swam silently away toward the shore.

It was quite daylight when he managed to drag himself up on the rocks below Fort Mason, and it was with some difficulty that he concealed himself to dress. This done, he considered himself with an anxious eye. He looked all right, he decided. No one would suspect him of being an escaped shipmaster. He clambered up the heights to a street-car line and went downtown. He had not been in San Francisco in six years, but he remembered a shop where good clothes were cheap—and questions, most likely, not asked.

An hour sufficed to equip him with what he needed—new shoes, a light top coat and a hat of a later block than the one he had purchased in Sydney three years before. Afterward he proceeded to the beach and ate a hearty meal of fresh meat and vegetables at a little inn, smoked his first good cigar and loafed until two o'clock. Then he hailed a cab and gave the driver the address of Susan Mathews, as Captain Ames had written it down in the log-book.

There is no mental attitude so strong that it will not be modified by the change from the solitude of the sea to the bustle of a city. As his cab rolled away toward the city to the steady clump of the horse's hoofs on the asphalt, Hendricks realized that he was on an important affair. For the first time he saw Ames' death, Peterson's murder and the sequent events, as hugely vital matters, not mere happenings in a lifetime. He knew that Ames must at some time or another have been driven along this same thoroughfare bound for this same address. He pictured him in lively colors, his austere, bronzed countenance turned on the passing crowds with a steady expression of having superior interests. Ames would have looked forward to this trip, undoubtedly. Now that he was dead far away, he, Hendricks, was making it for him, doing Ames' very important errand, to a woman who had had a vast deal to do with Ames' life. He could not help predicting to himself the kind of woman this Susan Mathews must be, to whom Killer Ames addressed his last thoughts, for whom he had ravaged the uttermost seas, to whom he himself was now conveying a handful of worthless, dead pearls.

And what should he tell this Susan Mathews when he saw her? That Ames was dead like any mortal fool? That he had not mentioned her name when he was passing, but merely spoken of her as "her?" That his last bequest had been a lot of trifles not worth looking at? It all depended! He fell into a revery, and only roused himself with a start when the cab stopped before a big house on the brow of a hill. He heard the cabman's gruff, "Yer place, mister," and stepped out briskly.

"By Jove, Ames didn't find his love in a hovel," he said to himself.

The conclusion of *"The Temporary Heir"* will appear in the August BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE—on sale July 1st.

The Pearl in the Oyster

by Gertrude Brooke Hamilton

Author of "A Woman," "Lots of Money," etc.

DOCTOR HIPP, the renowned nerve-specialist, had dropped dead at the telephone. Dilation of the heart had been given as the cause. It could not be said that many hearts had dilated sadly over the news. The nerve-specialist had been one of those medical mummies who move through life like automatons. He had been reputed a man of wealth: His office suite, in the section of Manhattan where fashionable physicians congregate, had been daily swept by a stream of neurotics. His house, in a district where people of wealth reside, boasted a library of rare books and a valuable collection of old Chinese porcelains.

BROUGHT up in the heart of New York, she did not know what money was—had never seen it. And Ferdy McPhule, young-man-about-town, fell in love with her. Miss Hamilton is at her best in this remarkable story.

Gathered in conference in the Hipp library, after the obsequies, were Chauncey Pharamond, Hipp's friend; Max Bayard, Hipp's attorney; Lyman Cowdery, Hipp's cousin; and Ferdy McPhule, representing the bank in which Hipp's papers were deposited. As far as any financial magnitude went, the conference was saltless—but tobasco, lemon and pepper were supplied in abundance by the revelations of the cesspits from which Hipp's money had been dug and the sewers into which it had been shelled.

The will was in favor of Hipp's granddaughter, Godiva Soulé.

The monotoned conference drew to a close. The atmosphere of the library, into which the sun filtered through sea-gray damask hangings, was dank; a faint, stale smell of old editions, mingled with a half-sensed odor of sacred punk from the Chinese vases and decorated jars, heightened the impression of general decadence.

Ferdy McPhule, the youngest of the men, obviously restrained an inclination to get up and open one of the windows. McPhule was a graceful man, groomed to a finish, with blasé gray-blue eyes and fastidious nostrils. He was seated next to Pharamond, a man like a stout, long-handled rake, with heavy, ingrowing teeth pivoted together like scissors. Lyman Cowdery, who bit his finger-nails, was on the other side. Max Bayard, tight-lipped, sat opposite.

"Have you Miss Soulé's address, Mr. Cowdery?" asked the attorney, snapping rubber bands about packets of papers.

"Godiva lives here," replied Hipp's cousin.

"I thought the Doctor resided alone," said Bayard without interest.

Pharamond, Hipp's friend, spoke. "No; Godiva has been here since her babyhood." He focused greenish eyes on a tall rock-crystal vase that made a splotch of flawless light in the center of the table around which the men sat. "A unique specimen," he added smoothly.

Bayard leaned back in his chair and pressed an electric button in the wall. "It may be as well to have Miss Soulé in," he said.

Ferdy McPhule picked up the portfolio he had brought his papers in, and fastened the buckle-straps.

"Just a minute, Mr. McPhule," said Bayard. "Miss Soulé may care to go over your report."

Ferdy replaced the portfolio on the table. Pharamond, with one hand behind his back, the flat, thick fingers curling, prowled about the library, looking covertly at the curios.

The decrepit butler who had served Doctor Hipp half a century answered Bayard's ring.

"Ask Miss Soulé if she will come to the library," the attorney said.

Ferdy played with the watch-chain strung across his waistcoat. Pharamond halted before an ebony cabinet, on the side of which hung an exquisite globular sang-de-bœuf bottle. Cowdery nagged a hang-nail with his finger. Bayard put together more packets of papers.

Godiva Soulé came into the room.

FERDY McPHULE elevated his eyebrows. Bayard was instantly on his feet. Cowdery looked at his nails. Pharamond fingered the slender tubular neck of the sang-de-bœuf bottle. Godiva Soulé was a somewhat divine-looking young woman who gave the impression of a tall child.

"Do you want me?" Godiva asked the first man she looked at, who happened to be McPhule.

Ferdy flushed. "I believe Mr. Bayard does," he said courteously.

"The Doctor's will has been read, Godiva," said Cowdery.

Godiva turned to her cousin with brightness but no cognizance.

"Your grandfather has made you his heir, Miss Soulé," said Bayard, matter-of-fact tone lightened by admiration. "But his money matters are badly involved. I fear your inheritance will amount to little more than this house and its contents."

Godiva listened sedately, glanced at Ferdy McPhule—and laughed.

"She doesn't know anything about money," said Pharamond, in an undertone to McPhule, "—literally. The Doctor never let her see it, or know of its existence."

Ferdy smiled, with irony.

"It's true," emphasized Cowdery, looking dubiously at Godiva.

Godiva laughed again, with a pure, sweet tone, and stood by the table looking at Ferdy, as if waiting to be told she might go. Her laugh, slight and innocent, took the dullness out of the occasion. The four men became less wooden.

"A young lady of Manhattan who hasn't seen money!" scoffed Ferdy McPhule, lifting his hands.

"She wouldn't know a penny if you showed her one," declared Pharamond.

"She has never carried a purse," stated Cowdery.

"You can't go any distance in this town without a purse," retorted McPhule airily.

"Godiva has never been out alone," said Cowdery.

Ferdy laughed heartily. Godiva also burst into laughter—a shower of silver sound.

Cowdery explained Godiva with cousinly luke-warmness: "She knows a lot about medical things and antiques, and the best instructors in the city have come here to teach her dancing and music and the languages. The Doctor raised her on a theory. She is as natural as when she was born."

"Humph," said Bayard.

"A Manhattan naiad," commented Ferdy McPhule.

The attorney regarded Godiva with

dry interest. "I suppose Miss Soulé will make her future home with you, Mr. Cowdery?"

GODIVA shook her head. "I'll stay here," she said, putting out a beautiful hand and touching the crystal vase on the table.

"It takes money to keep up an establishment like this, Miss Soulé," Bayard said.

Godiva looked by chance at Ferdy McPhule.

"Money," Ferdie repeated involuntarily.

She was merrily attentive. "Money?"

"Yes," said McPhule flippantly; "everything is bought with money—the roof over your head, the floor under your feet."

Godiva's radiant, unchanged gaze showed that she did not understand.

"These costly vases will have to be turned into money for you, Miss Soulé," said Bayard, looking about.

She seemed alarmed. Her fleet glance around the room showed that she loved the curios. "You're going to take Grandfather's things away from me?" she timidly inquired of Ferdy.

"They don't belong to Grandfather any more," explained Ferdy pleasantly. "They're yours."

"Mine?" she repeated. She ran over to a huge, lapis-blue jar and joyously touched its turquoise cover.

"It would be sacrilege to sound a hammer on these porcelains she has reason to be fond of," said Pharamond, coming from the other end of the library.

"It might be well to eliminate romance, Mr. Pharamond," remarked Bayard, eying the lovely granddaughter of the dead nerve-specialist with a combination of pity and irritation. "If Miss Soulé is alone in the world," he added briefly, "somebody had better teach her the importance of money." He took a ten-dollar bill from his pocket and laid it on the table. "You know the value of this, Miss Soulé; don't you?"

Godiva approached the table, looking inquisitively at the bill. She picked it up and examined it.

"She's never seen money before," reiterated Cowdery.

Godiva put down the ten-dollar bill. "I don't like it," she said, with a puzzled frown. Her clouding eyes went by accident to Ferdy McPhule.

Ferdy slid his hand into his pocket, pulled out some change, and held up a penny fresh from the mint between his thumb and forefinger. "How's this?" he asked her.

She drew near him, looking at the penny. "What is it?" she queried, with pleasure.

"Don't you really know?" counter-questioned Ferdy.

She shook her head, took the penny from him and turned it over on her palm. "Is it a curio?"—lifting bright eyes.

"It's the same old thing—money," said Ferdy.

She inspected the copper atom. "It's pretty,"—politely. "But I don't want my vases turned into it." She gave it back to him and drew nearer. "There's an urn in the garden set with pieces like it," she naïvely confided.

"There is?" said Ferdy, slightly embarrassed.

"I'll show it to you some time." She stood very near him, etched like a streak of light against the dead colors of the library.

"I sure would like to see the urn," Ferdy gravely assured her, color rising to the roots of his blond hair.

"We need not detain you any longer, Mr. McPhule," cut in Bayard with an amused note. "It might be well to wait until Miss Soulé acquires some practical education, before submitting reports to her."

Ferdy put his well-shod heels together, made Godiva Soulé a debonair obeisance and withdrew, by a convenient door, from the Hipp library.

FERDY McPHULE went back to his bank, the Fifth Avenue branch of a trust company, and filed his receipts in the Hipp transactions. As he walked up the Avenue after banking hours, toward his bachelor quarters in the Gainsborough on West Fifty-ninth Street, McPhule found himself recalling the musty Hipp library and the tall

child. Idly contemptuous of the fair sex, Ferdy looked at the women flocking by him on the Avenue—pretty birds, finely feathered and soft of breast; artful, all of them; most of them rotten to the core, he shallowly reflected.

On the salver in the hall of his apartment Ferdy found a pleasant surprise—a letter from his mother in Middleburg, telling him she was coming to make a short visit in New York. It had been some years since McPhule had seen his mother. The thought of her, and the prospect of her presence, was good. He was conscious of a rejuvenation of jaded senses—which he credited, with gratitude, to his mother. Since he had left Middleburg, a self-enthusiastic young-man-about-a-small-town, Manhattan had moored him, like a bivalve in brackish waters, to cobblestones, human shells and the like. He had become somewhat saline.

To Ferdy McPhule's annoyance, the bank found it necessary to send him back the next afternoon to the Hipp residence, to confer with the beneficiary of the nerve-specialist's will. It was with a sensation of personal discomfort that Ferdy went. He frankly admitted to himself that he did not want to see Godiva Soulé again.

The reluctance was apparently not mutual. Godiva came running into the drawing-room with outheld hand. "Have you come to see the urn in my garden?" she asked.

Ferdy flushed.

"I'll show you my birds and flowers too," she said generously—and looked at him with teasing laughter in her eyes. "Why did you get mad yesterday?"

"I didn't get mad," said Ferdy.

"You went off without looking at the urn."

"Well, I'm back again,"—with a constrained laugh.

"I knew you'd come." She regarded him with obvious friendliness and volunteered: "I dreamed about you last night."

"You flatter me," said Ferdy stiffly.

"I dreamed you were chasing my grandfather with a hot poker, and when you caught him, you threw the poker away and shook hands," she said. Her clear eyes filled with tears. "I miss my grandfather."

"You must," said Ferdy. He impulsively took her hand and pressed it. The quicksilver that ran from her fingers went up to his shoulder like a shot. He dropped her hand. Color bloomed over his face.

HE dived into the business that had brought him. But when Godiva, at the zenith of polite attention, said, "Let's look at the urn," Ferdy McPhule arose and followed her.

She went through a series of spacious rooms and stepped through a French window to a stone walk that led around a luxurious, glass-roofed inner garden. A spraying fountain, upheld by a laughing marble child, occupied the center of the lovely place. On all sides flowers bloomed and tropical plants flourished. Birds of gorgeous and strange plumage flew about.

Godiva Soulé led Ferdy past the fountain to a curious copper urn set with rare coins. "They're not just like yours," she said thoughtfully, going over the coins in the urn.

He took a penny from his pocket and flipped it into the urn.

Godiva stood on tiptoe and peered into the dim urn. She stopped him as he started to feed the urn dimes and nickels. "Give them to me," she dictated, cupping her hands.

Ferdy poured them into her curved palms. "So you like money," he said.

She sat on the ledge of the urn, ranged the nickels and dimes along the dull copper surface, and studied the faces of the coins. "I *wont* have my vases turned into it!" she said petulantly—and began to fling the money at the fountain.

Ferdy sat beside her. "You needn't," he said, without relevancy. "You needn't do anything you don't want to do." He helped her throw away his small change. "Do you stay in this garden all day?"—giddily.

"No." She leaned against the urn and swung a sandal-shod foot. "I experiment in Grandfather's laboratory and dance in the sun-parlor and study the city with my spyglass from the roof."

"Why do you study the city with a spyglass?" he asked, looking at her swinging foot.

"To know it," she answered, with a surprised intonation. "Don't you ever do it?"

"No, I don't."

She put out her hand and touched his sleeve, timorously feeling its texture. "You are very strange!" she mused. "I knew it when I saw you yesterday, and in my dream last night." She sighed, withdrew her hand and let it dangle at her side.

Ferdy's light regard of her changed to a sober look.

SHE watched a bird drink from the fountain. "You are the first person I've shown my garden to," she told him.

"I wish I could believe that," he said in a low voice.

She turned her head; her eyes held their infinitely appealing surprise.

"But I can't." His tone was regretful.

"Why?" her fresh lips formed.

"There's only one thing I can believe." He held her eyes. "That you're a *diabolical flirt!*"

She was apparently fascinated. Her attentive face came within a few inches of his. "A—what?" she whispered.

"Flirt," he repeated, maintaining his composure.

Delicate color crept to the roots of her fine-spun hair.

"Aren't you?" he said in a smothered voice.

She shook her head.

"You can't be real," he insisted, attempting a glib gesture. "Why, to believe in you, a man might have to believe in fairies!" He pursued her personality with a touch of harsh ardor: "A woman in the heart of New York, playing in a garden! experimenting in a medical laboratory! dancing in a sun-parlor! studying the city with a spyglass!—and not knowing a penny when she sees it!" He lifted his hands. "Please! please!"

She turned her head and looked at him. Her beautiful face was without sophistry.

He flushed. "I beg your pardon," he said instantly.

"How very strange you are!" she laughed—and lost the laugh in a frown. "I'm not so sure I like you."

"How could you?" he asked penitently.

A GREYHOUND stepped through the French window and came along the stone walk to Godiva. She took the graceful head of the dog between her hands. "This is 'Sentinel,' " she said.

Ferdy regarded the greyhound with unreasoning distaste.

Godiva said, with some timidity: "Do you want to go up on the roof and look through the spyglass?"

"Thanks." He stood up. "Not today."

She bit her lip. "Mad again?"

"No."

"You look mad."

"I'm not in the least angry." He brought his heels together and bowed. "I must be going,"—tersely.

She looked at a device on the urn that marked time by shadow. "Must you?" she said.

He seated himself beside her. "I must be going soon," he warned her.

"But not yet."

"Well, not quite yet."

"I'm glad. What shall we talk about?"

"Anything."

"No—you choose a subject."

"Let's talk about your spyglass."

She laughed, and pulled the silky ears of the greyhound. "Grandfather often took me to the high towers all over the city, to look through my spyglass."

"So you're always looking down on the rest of us from a great height. I half believe you're an angel. Can you fly?"

She was e a g e r and excited. Scrambling to her feet, she gained the ledge of the urn and poised on one foot, balancing her slim body by stretching out her arms. "Grandfather said I was almost without gravity!" she boasted. "Dare me?"

"If I dared you, you'd crash on your nose." He was ready to catch her.

"I wouldn't," she screamed gleefully, and stood on the toes of her sandaled foot.

Chauncey Pharamond came through the French window into the inner garden. He held a mandarin necklace of amber and jade beads. "I found this lying on the library floor, Godiva," he called. "Your grandfather would turn in his grave at such carelessness." Pharamond came through the flowery court, looking crossly at the tall child.

"I'm sorry," said Godiva pliantly, getting down from the urn. She took the necklace from Pharamond and clasped it about her throat. "I guess I dropped it when I heard you were in the drawing-room," she said to Ferdy.

Ferdy McPhule elevated his eyebrows. Shortly afterward, he left.

He found that his call on the beneficiary of the nerve-specialist's will had lasted two hours. The bank had closed. His mother's train had come in. She was waiting for him in the Gainsborough. "I'm glad you're here, Mother," he said, taking her in his arms.

FERDY McPHULE towed his mother over the city of Manhattan, showing her the sights, and expanding in her cherubic enjoyment of them. He happened to see Godiva Soulé on top of a Fifth Avenue 'bus one afternoon, in company with her cousin Lyman Cowdery.

Recognizing Ferdy, Godiva half stood up. As the 'bus went on, the wind blew out a white chiffon veil that she wore. She looked wistfully over her shoulder. Something went to smash inside of Ferdy McPhule—a crazy impulse to pursue the 'bus, capture the woman on top, beat, kiss and kidnap her, shook his easy-going nature from pit to summit!

That evening he told his mother about Godiva Soulé.

Evincing the inevitable maternal alarm for a handsome son, Ferdy's mother expressed a desire to meet Godiva. Ferdy wrote Godiva a short note, asking if he might bring his mother to see her garden. Godiva telephoned him to bring his mother to see her garden the next day at four o'clock.

The luxuriant inner court was a flood of sunshine when Ferdy called with his mother. Godiva poured tea near the urn, and fed them golden cakes and interesting conversation. Going back on the subway, Ferdy's mother said reluctantly: "She is charming."

"Lord love you!" ejaculated McPhule sillily.

His mother, a few minutes later, demurred. "She is rather an odd type."

"One in the world," said Ferdy McPhule.

"Why don't you take a holiday and come back to Middleburg for a visit?" suggested his mother anxiously. "Remember Agnes Goodhue's little sister Rose? She has grown up so pretty."

Ferdy was not listening. Shadows were chasing and shifting across his good-looking countenance.

AGAIN Ferdy McPhule called on Godiva Soulé. He found Chauncey Pharamond and Max Bayard in the Hipp drawing-room. Bayard had been talking about money to Godiva. Pharamond was fingering a vase.

Godiva was unrestrainedly glad to see Ferdy McPhule. But Bayard, with his insistent money-gab, and Pharamond, with his itching fingers and ingrowing teeth, got on McPhule's nerves. His leave-taking was almost contemptuous of her.

Doubt ate like rust into Ferdy's thoughts of the tall child. Every shot-to-pieces ideal in him rose to refute Godiva's sincerity. In extreme youth, he had believed in women. And women easy to know and drop, women whose social favors were hard to attain, women with money and women down on their luck, women of pious mien and women bedecked—all these had deluded and bamboozled him.

Ferdy McPhule took a holiday and went home to Middleburg. Agnes Goodhue's little sister Rose struck him as nauseous! He abbreviated his sojourn in old surroundings.

Back in New York, McPhule walked a good deal in the vicinity of the Hipp residence. Pharamond was the man Ferdy most constantly saw going in and out of Godiva's house. He fancied the wealthy Chauncey wore an air of covert triumph. With a sneer, he wondered how Godiva was keeping up the establishment without funds.

On a moonlight night when the city was like a space of sea-bottom and the air tasted of brine, Ferdy saw Godiva come to a window of her house and look at the celestial globe in the sky. The sight of her face in the moonlight told him that he loved her as a dreamer loves a poem, as a lunatic loves an hallucination, as a pilgrim loves a shrine, as a slave loves a queen, as a brute loves a captive, as a man sometimes loves a woman. He wanted her for his own, even if she were the devil's own daughter!

Dizzy with the delight of it, and at the same time affronted because of it, he went unsteadily up the steps of the Hipp residence and viciously punched the door-bell.

GODIVA opened the door.

"How are you?" said Ferdy McPhule huskily.

"All right," she answered.

"You're looking well." His voice was a croak.

She led the way to the library. The grayhound was there. Ferdy touched its head. Godiva sat near the table, bare of the rock-crystal vase. They were both silent.

The grayhound walked to Godiva and put its head on her knee. She took it between her hands. "This is my only true friend," she said.

The stare on Ferdy's face was made colorful by a wave of blood. She bent and kissed the greyhound. "My house is for sale," she volunteered timidly. "Do you know anybody who wants to buy?"

"No, I don't." Ferdy sat down by her.

"I'm sharing my meals with Sentinel," she vouchsafed, holding the dog's head. "I'm cooking them myself." She showed Ferdy a slight burn on one of her fingers.

He took the finger and examined the discolored spot. Suddenly he dropped on his knees and taking her slender feet in his hands kissed them.

"I'm all alone," she whispered tremulously.

He set her feet on the floor.

"Not even the servants," she faltered.

"Where are the servants, Godiva?"

"They left weeks ago."

"Where's your cousin Lyman Cowdery?"

"His wife is ill."

"Max Bayard?"

"He was married week before last."

"Pharamond?"

"He's bought the last vase. You know he collects them, as Grandfather did. He loved our porcelains. Mr. Bayard wanted them sold at auction—but Mr. Pharamond didn't. He bought them from me, one at a time. I got so tired of him, having him about fingering and feeling the vases, I told him he could have the rest. He gave me some money for them. I've been living on it. It's as you say—you can't have floor or roof, without money." She sighed, and looked down at him. "How is your mother?" she murmured.

"Fine," answered Ferdy.

HE stood up, tall and slim, his cherubic countenance strong with the strength of his manhood. He caught her in his arms, tilted back her face and took her lips. Almost instantly he was holding her in a different spirit, as if he could not bear the thought of crushing her.

"Did you like my mother?" he asked, with difficulty.

White and radiant, she shyly clung to him. "Yes," she answered.

"Would you like her for your mother?" He was deliriously aware of her light weight in his arms, lighter than any woman he had ever held, yet heavy enough to take his passion captive and hold it.

He hardly dared look down at her. She was his—a feminine strip, as feeble and poignant as a moonbeam on Broadway, dazzlingly young, sparkling with the salt of the city, rich, under the slight surface, with talents trained by the city's expert touch; a bright, living exponent of what town-bred men and women might be, if town-bred men and women were not evil.

Gray-blue eyes blurred by tears, Ferdy McPhule laid his cheek against the fine-spun hair of the woman Manhattan had given him.

Quarter Limit

by William Almon Wolff

LO, the poor ball-team! Their whirlwind third baseman—who is rich and doesn't have to play—quits when the pennant is in sight. . . . . A most amusing story by a writer with a real gift.

IT must be just because most of us—the average sort of folk who use up most of the straps in a subway car and join the rush for the seats in the shade, back of third base, on a Saturday late in June—don't do any one thing well. We do average things in an average way. So when we consider a man who writes poetry that's good enough to be quoted, or paints the sort of picture the newspapers reproduce (with captions about the fabulous sum that the millionaire president of the Bathtub Trust paid for it), or who makes good on a big-league baseball team, we are pretty likely to take it for granted that a man who can do such things must have been born with a very special sort of gift. We set him apart, and look up to him, and get excited when some one points him out to us in the theater.

Hero-worship is all right. The trouble is that we pick out the wrong quality to admire and get all stirred up about, as often as not. Take the base-ball-player for example: Statistics are futile things, but they have their merits. Under the latest big-league rules there are, after the fifteenth of May, just 368 genuine, all-wool-and-a-yard-wide big-league ball-players in the United States. But it isn't reasonable to suppose that a population of a hundred millions, more or less, can't provide more than 368 men who were born with physical and mental attributes of the sort required of big-league ball-players. All of which leads up to the statement that most ball-players are made and not born, after all.

There are exceptions. No one made Ty Cobb, but he is close to superhuman, as a player. And there are a very few others, not in his class, to be sure, but still, ball-players by the grace of God. The majority, however, arrive at the degree of skill that insures their retention after the last of the bushers are shipped home by fast freight, prepaid, as a result of hard work by themselves and the managers who teach them the fine points of the game.

NOW meet Art Baker. He never worked hard at anything in his life; he never had to; and he didn't have the peculiar temperament that makes a man—a man who knows he is sure, without any effort on his own part, of bread and butter and jam and six-cylinder automobiles and any other little play-things he may take a fancy to—emulate the busy-bee. To put it plainly, Art was lazy. Baseball—as a game to play six days a week in the East and seven in the Sunday game belt, unless it rained—struck him as a false alarm. He hadn't minded playing ball in college, and he would probably have stopped off on his way to his own wedding, if he'd seen a lot of kids playing in a vacant lot, with tomato-cans for bases, to take a hand. When it came to baseball, Art was a born amateur, in the non-technical sense of the word.

And yet when people who couldn't think of any other foolish questions asked Mac who was the greatest ball-player he had ever known, Mac always gave them the same answer. He didn't say Cobb or Wagner or Lajoie or Cap Anson. He said Art Baker, and he usually swore, though Mac wasn't profane, as a rule—not very, that is, considering the amount of provocation he had.

Of course it wasn't generally known at the time, but the way Art happened to come South, with the other rookies the scouts of the Comets had dug up, was like this: Some one had bet him he couldn't make the team. Art was human, although there were those—and still are—who wouldn't admit it. He took the bet, being constitutionally incapable of taking a dare. No one knew anything about him, and he got his chance to report in Georgia—the Comets trained down near Augusta that year—by offering to pay his own expenses. I never saw Art's income-tax return, but I know his income ran to five figures, and maybe six.

Mac, naturally, didn't know him from Adam's off ox. To Mac, who didn't make a practice of looking up his rookies in Dun and Bradstreet and the Social Register,—confining his researches concerning them to Mr. Spalding's well-known statistical volume, in which Art didn't figure,—Art was just one of a lot of infield candidates who had expressed a preference for third base.

It was a cinch some rookie was going to break into the infield at third base that spring. Old Jerry Dunn was still willing, but he had to wrap himself up in adhesive plaster before he started a game, and if you sat in the front row of the grandstand, you could hear his joints creak when he straightened up to try to arch one over to first. To put the case brutally, Jerry was through. Mac had kept a kid called Carter on the bench for two years, hoping to teach him how to hit curve balls, but it was beginning to look as if it couldn't be done. So Mac had sent out S. O. S. calls for a third baseman the summer before. Third is the hardest position in the infield to fill, and Mac wasn't very happy about the prospects. He had at least nine men in the first batch of recruits who were alleged, by themselves or the scouts who had signed them, to be future Jimmy Collinses; but after he had looked them over, Mac shook his head sadly—very sadly.

Baker didn't get much of Mac's attention in the first few days. No one noticed him much, for that matter. Then one of the newspaper men identified him as Arthur Johns Baker, and because throat-cutting competition doesn't go in covering training-camp baseball, he told the rest of us. We wired the story, because, even if Baker wasn't in John D. Rockefeller's class, he was a plenty good enough millionaire to liven up the routine news. Then we broke the news to Mac, and his language was shocking. Just the same, he did condescend to notice Art the next day.

"What's the idea?" he asked. "Did you want to get a first-hand view of a ball-team? Or are you thinking of buying the club? Because, if that's it, I resign!"

There wasn't any reason for Mac to jump on him like that. Baker was rather a nice kid. Maybe he was a little bit out of his own element, but he hadn't put on any airs, nor shown any sign at all of being the sort who would. Mac was fidgety, though; he'd seen enough of the new material he was supposed to build up a sliding club with to have an excuse for being irritable. And he took it out on Baker because he was handy.

"I don't understand," said Baker, pleasantly enough. "I asked for a chance to try to play third base—and I picked the Comets because it's my home team, chiefly, and because I heard you needed a third baseman."

"Oh, is *that* so?" said Mac, still feeling nasty. "Thought you'd be charitable and help us out, did you?"

Baker flushed a little. Mac made him mad, of course.

"Yes—that's so!" said Baker.

"Well, get in there and play third base! Show me how you think it ought to be done!" said Mac. "We're going to have some infield practice right now."

THE men of the other bags weren't the regulars, but they were first-string substitutes, and so the three other infielders would probably have been welcome to the average second-division team. Mac batted them out himself, and if ever a man with a more fiendish skill in providing difficult chances lived, there is no record of him. He opened up with a hot smash that a seasoned third baseman would have lain back to play. Baker came in fast; the ball jumped up—you see plays like that all the time, when a ball takes a bad bound and goes skipping over an infielder's shoulder for a hit. But Baker reached for it with his right hand as it slipped by and threw, all in the same motion. Mac stared at him, and grunted.

Then he let the kid stand there, getting cold and nervous, while he batted about twenty balls to the others. And after that he laid down a trickly little bunt that just crept along the foul line—the sort of bunt both catcher and third baseman start for, as a rule—and both miss. Baker scooped it up; and his throw was so quick and good that he would have caught Fritz Maisel at second.

"The lucky stiff!" muttered Mac.

But there was one great virtue Mac had. When he was wrong, he wasn't afraid to admit it. And in the next twenty minutes he discovered that as a fielding third baseman Art's equal hadn't been seen since the palmy days of Arthur Devlin.

"I'll say this much for you—with a year or two in a good minor league, you might learn to field well enough," Mac told him, later. And when I saw Mac alone, after practice, he looked solemn.

"Did you see him?" he asked me. "Did you see the way he stopped them on his right—the balls that go scooting down the foul line to the fence for two-baggers? Man—he made stops to-day that aren't possible! They couldn't be made—and he made 'em. I'll bet he can't hit a ball beyond the pitcher's box!"

WELL, Mac was wrong there too. We had seventeen pitchers in the squad that spring, and every one of them tried to find out what Art couldn't hit. A couple of the youngsters threw their arms out trying to fool him—and didn't do it. It isn't safe to bank on the hitting a man does in the spring. We all knew that. All we could safely say about Art was that he could hit any of the seventeen different sorts of pitching he got before the team started north, and that he didn't fall off any when the exhibition games began. By that time Mac grinned whenever anyone mentioned third base, and old Jerry was dickering for a job as a manager on the Pacific Coast. Art was anchored on third for the Comets. With his fielding, he didn't need to hit more than .200 to hold his place, and he gave promise of coming closer to .350.

"He's too good to be true," Mac said. "I don't see why he shouldn't steal forty bases—do you? But he wont. He'll break a leg or something!"

Mac was good and right, too. Art started the season in fine shape—just as good as he had promised to be. He fielded like a streak, and after a little batting slump, right at the start of the season, he came back and began denting the fences. By the time the team came back after its first Western trip, with a five-game lead, people had stopped expecting Art to crack. He was there, in the vernacular, with bells on. And—he had made the Comets. He might have won his bet, technically, I suppose, by playing in a single game, and so getting his name into the league records. But he wasn't looking for any technical victory. If ever a bet was fairly won, his was the one.

And then, having collected his bet, he retired from baseball!

HE did exactly that. He quit. He wouldn't go on. And when a bunch of us from the press-box tried to make him tell us why, he couldn't seem to understand that it was anybody's affair but his.

"Why?" he said. "Just because there are so many things I'd rather do than play baseball! Great Cæsar—what way is that to spend all your time? It'll be getting hot pretty soon—and who wants to spend hot weather in Chicago and St. Louis?"

There was something pitiful about the way Mac took it. He walked around the club offices in circles. And he talked to himself.

"If he was a hold-out, I'd know how to handle him," he said. "If he was a nut, I'd know how to handle him! If he was sore, I'd know how to handle him! But I can't do a thing to him! If I kill him, the jury'll let me off, but he wont be any more good to me then than he is now!"

Mac wouldn't trust himself to talk to Baker except the one time, when Art broke the news of his impending retirement. Mac was Irish, and he knew about how far he could be pushed. It seems Mac laughed at first, thinking Baker was trying to horse him. And of course, when Baker made him see he was in earnest, Mac hit the ceiling.

It is just possible that if Baker hadn't had a rankling memory of the way Mac treated him down in Georgia the first day he noticed him at all, things might have been different. If he'd been fond of Mac, and of the rest of the team, he might have had some sort of feeling of loyalty that would have held him in line for one season, anyhow. But Mac had been pretty rough with him; and the rest of the team, without any intention of riding him particularly hard, or being ugly, had managed to get in his bad books too. It wasn't that the boys had meant to be ugly. But any rookie who looks good and thinks himself good is bound to come in for a little hazing, and Baker had shared the common lot—without being the common or garden sort of rookie.

I suppose twenty or thirty people, more or less, tried to reason with Baker in the forty-eight hours after he touched off the fuse of his explosion. I know I did. Jimmy Clay, of the *Star*, and I spent about two hours trying to make him see that he owed something to Mac—or to the team, or to himself, or to the great American Fan. Nothing doing. You might have got some such idea into his head by blasting room for it with a stick of dynamite, but I doubt it. Art simply didn't understand the idea of responsibility in any of its forms. He'd had to bring himself up, with the rather inept help of a trust company that acted as his father's executor, and a few distant relatives who were sore because whole paragraphs hadn't been devoted to them in Art's father's will, instead of brief sentences. He hadn't had full control of his own money very long, because he wasn't much more than twenty-one. And he simply didn't recognize the possibility that there could be any reason for him to do something he didn't want to do.

The thing was funny. The rest of us could see that, even if poor Mac couldn't. With Baker, Mac would have brought the Comets home in front that year with a ten-game lead, at least; he would probably have broken up the league by the middle of August. Without Baker, the Comets, having a big lead to work with when he quit in June, might still win the pennant, but if they did, it would probably be in a driving finish. And Mac wasn't a bit strong for the driving finish. Baseball was primarily a business, as he saw it, rather than a sport. No, Mac wanted to win as early in the season as he could, and ease his mind for the world's-series strain.

When Mac decided that Baker wasn't bluffing, he bought Sloane from the Eagles. Sloane had been a good third baseman, and still was—in hot, dry weather. When it was damp, he was too much concerned with rheumatism to care much about baseball. He wasn't quite as much of a ruin as Jerry Dunn, and he could still hit pretty well, and so he was better than Carter. But he never had been in Art Baker's class on the best day he ever saw. He slowed up the whole infield and gummed up Mac's carefully devised base-running attack, which had been built around Baker. All the experts said the Comets would begin to slide, and the experts were right. If the Eagles hadn't run into a streak of bad luck, they would have been so far ahead by the middle of August that there would have been no need of playing out the schedule, except as a matter of form.

But after the Eagles had made one grand spurt and wiped out Mac's lead, the jinx got after them, and one thing after another went wrong with them.

The Comets did the best they could; the whole team was strong for Mac, and besides, they wanted their share of the purse from the big series. So they managed to stay in the race. But it didn't take more than half an eye to see that when all the cripples got back in the Eagle line-up, Charley Malone's club would go out and win in a canter. About the middle of August, Mrs. Mac packed up and went out to California to visit her sister. She said California in summer didn't appeal to her very much, but that she liked Mac and wanted to give herself an even chance to keep on liking him, which she wouldn't have, if she had to live with him until that race was over.

The papers wouldn't let either the fans or Mac forget Baker. Mac wouldn't have forgotten him, anyhow. But whenever poor old Sloane had a particularly bad spell some one would run a paragraph about Art. And everywhere that Art went that summer, and he ranged around pretty extensively, space-grabbing local correspondents wired stories to the general effect that he was thinking of rejoining the Comets.

AT that, nothing would have happened, I suppose, except for a freakish chance that mightn't come up again in fifty years. We were making the long jump from St. Louis to Chicago, and the little devils of chance all got together and jumped on the railroad. First a couple of freights piled up all over the tracks ahead of us, in one of those messy wrecks that take hours to clear away. Then something went wrong with a dam, and a bridge went out—also ahead of us. As a rule, that would have meant re-routing and a detour. But there was nothing doing; another wreck, behind us this time, settled that. It worked out as a twelve-hour stop-over and a lost day in the schedule—meaning a double header later on.

We made ourselves comfortable in the car, after one look at the "town" we had stopped at. One look was all it deserved or needed. Mac didn't have any rules against cards. So several games of bridge started up, and five of us, who couldn't appreciate the fine points of auction, started a game of draw poker in an empty compartment in the next car. We'd been playing about an hour when Art Baker poked his head in, grinning.

"Hello!" he said. "Room for one more?"

He didn't get a really cordial greeting, but unless a man is a regular at Sing Sing or Joliet, you don't bar him from a poker game, and you may not even do it then, if the game is short-handed.

"What's the game?" he asked, after he had taken off his coat and squeezed into a seat. "Quarter limit? Oh!"

Now, it may have been sheer accident, but it certainly looked as if his eyebrows went up a bit. Naturally, a quarter-limit game didn't mean anything in his young life. His own limit would be the bright blue sky. Anyhow, I looked over at old Benton, who can pitch better with his head and the remnants of an arm that never was very good than most people with all of Walter Johnson's stuff to put on the ball. And I was just in time to see Benton look over at me. There was a peculiar look in his eye, a very peculiar look. But no one said much. We let Baker do the talking.

"I'm two trains behind," he explained. "Isn't this rotten luck? Did you ever seen such a hole? When I heard you boys were up ahead here, I thought I'd come along and call, just for old times' sake."

It must be remembered that every man in that game, except myself, felt that Baker had cost him a share in a world's-series check, meaning between two and four thousand dollars, by running out on the club. It wasn't exactly the moment for airy persiflage, nor for the silly sort of laugh that went with the words.

"Did you see Mac?" I asked, just for the sake of saying something.

"Did I?" He grinned. "Say—he doesn't love me one little bit! Wouldn't talk to me at all. That's why I passed on, when the porter told me some of you had moved in here. I offered to cut in at the bridge tables, but they didn't seem to want me."

"No accounting for tastes, is there?" said Billy Rand, our first baseman. And the conversation dropped, with what young reporters call a dull, sickening thud.

We played poker for a while after that. It had started out to be a pretty good little game. A quarter was a quarter to all of us—or it had been, until Art butted in. A quarter's a lot of money, when you come down to it. It's more money, anyhow, than you're willing to pay to find out whether a man's bluffing or not when you've only got a little pair your own self, and he drew just one card. But what did a quarter mean to Art? Nothing at all, if he happened to feel curious! If a man doesn't take a quarter seriously, quarter-limit poker isn't much of a game.

We kept on playing just because there wasn't anything else to do. We stopped for dinner, and Art came along and ate with us, because we didn't know how to invite him not to. And then we went back to the game, not because we wanted to, but because a brakeman had come through and told us we'd be held up two or three hours longer than they'd told us we would be in the beginning.

I never expected, before that night, to see the time when I'd be bored in a game of poker. But that was what happened. I may have been six or seven dollars out; Art, naturally, was the big winner, and didn't have enough to do any riotous celebrating with, at that. But it was a deadly slow game. I'll admit I was relieved when Benton got up, suddenly, and stretched his arms.

"Say, I'd as soon play tiddleywinks as this game!" he said.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Art with that silly chuckle of his, piling up his chips. "Pretty good old game, Syd! What's the matter? Want to double the limit?"

"No!" said Syd, sourly. "What's a limit to you? You draw more in a week, sitting back and watching it roll in, than we do for a season's work!"

Art flushed up a little, and I'll say it sounded pretty raw. I was surprised. It wasn't that we weren't all thinking about the same thing, but it wasn't the sort of thing that gets said out in meeting, as a rule.

"It isn't your fault," Benton went on, and he sounded a lot more pleasant. "But it spoils the game. You can see that, can't you? It breaks it all up when the limit means something to the rest of us and nothing at all to you!"

Art got up then, and he did look uncomfortable. He wasn't exactly thin-skinned, but he got Benton's drift.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I'll cash in and drop out—"

"No one wants you to do that," said Syd. "But there ought to be some way to even this thing up. Are you a good sport or just a tin-horn? Are you game to put up something you value as much as we do money?"

His voice was nasty again, and Art came back like a flash.

"I'm as game as you are!" he snapped.

"Prove it!" said Benton. "Here's my proposition! We'll all put up a hundred dollars—except you—and take a stack in three colors. We'll play table stakes. And no one can buy after he's lost his stack. You don't put up any money for your stack. You simply give your word to do anything we say, if you lose—with the understanding you wont be asked to do anything that'll cost you money or be disgraceful or make you look foolish!"

He looked around at the rest of us, and sort of picked us all up with his eyes. I'd hate to tell you how big a hundred dollars looked to me, but I nodded, after one gulp. So did the rest of the boys, and they weren't the sort of ball-players who salt away their pay-checks, either.

"How about you?" asked Benton, still in that ugly, sneering fashion.

"Done and done with you!" said Art. "Come on!"

There wasn't anything dull about the poker that transpired after we started on the new basis—not so that the

naked eye could notice it. It was a revelation to see how close Art could play his cards when there was something he valued in the pile of chips he had in front of him. In the quarter game, he'd been such a liberal player that he'd looked reckless, but now it was different. We played for an hour without enough money or chips changing hands to cut any ice at all.

And then things happened with a rush. It was Syd Benton's deal, and a jack that had been sweetened three or four times. Art was under the guns, and he passed without looking at his cards. I had three aces, and I opened. All the others came in, and Art raised. The rest trailed, around to Benton, and he raised again, and Art came back right away, looking pretty well satisfied. I stayed, but all the rest except Benton dropped, and he studied his cards awhile before he met the raise, and that brought us to the draw.

About all the money in the game was in the pot, by that time. I had the equivalent of about fifteen dollars left, and Benton and Art were in the same case. The three who had dropped hadn't had quite as much; they were pretty well cleaned out. Art stood pat; I took two cards, and Benton one. And believe me, I was sore when I picked up my fourth ace! I had a chance for a killing, and all I could do was to shove out my little pile—when I could have taken all the money in the world if the other two had had it in front of them and I could have tapped them! But being a table-stakes game, we had to trail along with what we had; and the house rule, so to speak, meant that this pot would probably eliminate two of us from the game altogether.

Benton and Art both called, of course. We stacked up the chips, and I drew down a couple, having that many more than either of them. And then I showed down my four aces, trying not to gloat too much.

"Pretty good hand," said Art, with that maddening chuckle. "Hard luck, old man! I've got a straight—flush!"

I felt the way you do in a dream, sometimes, when you start falling a million miles or so through space. And then Syd drawled out just two words.

"What's high?" he asked.

I turned to look at Art. His jaw dropped.

"Seven—" he said.

"King tops, mine!" said Syd. "Hard luck, old man!"

There was a sort of yell from four of us. Art didn't say a word; he just stared at Syd's cards. And Syd didn't say anything, either, for a minute. But when he did speak, he said something, in the current phrase:

"Well—I guess I'm the only winner!" he said. "So—it's up to me to name the terms. Arthur Johns Baker—you're sentenced to pay for the stack you lost by playing out the season with the Comets, and may God have mercy on your soul!"

It took about a second for it to sink into Art's brain. Then he jumped up.

"I wont do it!" he roared. "It's a frame-up! I—"

"Oh, you wont, eh?" snapped Benton. "You *are* a tin-horn, are you? You're a welcher? All right! We can't make you pay a debt of honor, if you wont, but—"

He stopped and stared at him. Art flushed. But the good stuff in him fought its way through.

"I'll pay up," he said. "I was excited for a second."

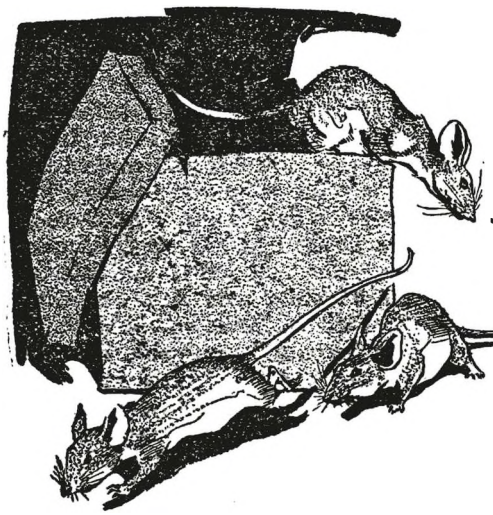
"Good boy!" said Syd, and put out his hand. "No hard feelings?"

"Sure not!" said Art—and meant it.

THE pennant? The Comets won it, in a walk. Art paid up like a little man, and played better than even he could. And by next season there had been time for Mac to dig up a new third baseman, which he had to do, because even Syd Benton couldn't frame up any way to keep Art in line for another year.

"I wouldn't try," he told us, when he got us together, after the blockade was over and he was giving us back our I. O. U.'s. "I'll do anything in a good cause—even stack cards! But I wouldn't want to get a reputation for doing it!"

Another baseball story by William Almon Wolff in an early issue.



Saturday Afternoon

by

Ellis Parker Butler

Author of "Pigs Is Pigs," the "Philo Gubb" and "Jabez Bunker" stories: the foremost humorist in America.

GRANDPA BUNKER, his bright, kindly eyes framed in his gold-rimmed spectacles, sat in his rocking-chair in his room in Mrs. Wimmer's boarding-house in the city of New York, reading the newspaper. On the arm of his chair lay the small yellow paper-bound booklet he found more interesting than the most exciting novel: "The Complete Confessions of The King of Grafters. A Full Exposition of All the Methods of All the Most Celebrated Confidence Men. Price Twenty-five Cents." Not a day had passed since the dear old man, who was as honest as the day is long and as kind of heart as a man can be, had come to New York, that he had not spent an hour studying this admirable little work. He had come to New York from Oroduna, Iowa, some months earlier, to enter the respectable business of confidence-man and bunco-steerer. As Grandma Bunker often remarked: "Stingin' New Yorkers is a nice, clean, respectable business, Pa, and as long as these New Yorkers is bound to get stang anyway, they'd ought to be thankful to be stang by somebody honest and good-hearted."

JABEZ BUNKER, the amateur bunco-steerer from Iowa who comes East to take in the Wise Men of Gotham, evolves a Machiavellian plot and engineers his *coup* with subtle artistry.

It was now about eleven in the morning; Mrs. Wimmer had returned from her daily marketing trip and was at leisure, and Grandma Bunker had taken her knitting and had gone down one flight of stairs to sit awhile with Mrs. Wimmer in Mrs. Wimmer's own rooms and to discuss the remarkable case of Miss Druse and Mr. Prellick. It was of the case of Miss Druse and Mr. Prellick that Mr. Bunker was reading in the morning paper, for Grandma Bunker's reading of the article had been somewhat unsatisfactory, being broken by her interjected exclamations and remarks.

"My land's sake!" she had exclaimed. "Jabez Bunker, what is the world comin' to! If it don't say right here in this newspaper—I declare, a person don't know what to think of folks, no more! Just you listen to what they've got printed into this paper about Mr. Prellick!"

"Our Mr. Prellick?" asked Jabez.

"Our Mr. Prellick, and our Miss Druse," said Grandma with that sort of semi-joy we all feel when our good friends go wrong and get into print over it. "The paper says right out: '—for many years usher at Dr. Holyer's

church, and heretofore one of the most respected members of the congregation.'"

"I swan!" exclaimed Jabez. "What has he gone and done, Ma?"

"My, my!" exclaimed Grandma Bunker. "And our Miss Druse, too! And her suing him for breach of promise and all! Jabez, I'm goin' right down and see Mrs. Wimmer!"

It will be seen from this that Mr. Bunker had gained from Grandma's reading no very exact idea of what had befallen Mr. Prellick, and now he read the entire article, headlines and all. From it he easily gathered that Mr. Prellick was in very considerable trouble.

MR. PRELLICK (as some who read how Mr. Bunker buncoed him in the German-spy wheat-deal may remember) was a tall, slender gentleman who, in a black frock coat, seated those who attended services at Dr. Holyer's fashionable church. He was an elderly bachelor and inclined to diffidence in the presence of ladies. He held a good position in the Stupendous Trust Company and drew an income sufficient to permit him to occupy a handsome bachelor suite in a fine apartment hotel on Riverside Drive, and even the two thousand dollars Mr. Bunker had taken from him in the wheat-deal caused no serious havoc in his admirable bank-account. Mr. Prellick's bank-balance at the Stupendous Trust Company was now larger than it had ever been, and his friendship for Mr. Bunker was quite as strong as ever. He understood that Mr. Bunker had suffered in the German-spy wheat-plot equally with himself.

Mr. Bunker found the newspaper article doubly interesting, because he was also well acquainted with Miss Druse, who had been for some time a boarder with Mrs. Wimmer, although she was now living elsewhere. When Grandma and Grandpa Bunker had come to Mrs. Wimmer's boarding-house, Mrs. Wimmer and Miss Druse were in the throes of one of those intimately chummy friendships that spring up between a middle-aged boarding-house keeper and some guest, burn fiercely for a while and then die suddenly—and often violently. The very first time Mrs. Wimmer had carried Mr. and Mrs. Bunker to Dr. Holyer's church, Miss Druse had accompanied them. Like Mrs. Wimmer, she was already acquainted with Mr. Prellick (who tried to be friendly to all those who attended Dr. Holyer's church), and that day Mr. Prellick had walked home with the four, as he often walked home with Mrs. Wimmer and Miss Druse.

Miss Druse had left Mrs. Wimmer's house rather suddenly, and all Mrs. Wimmer would ever say was that it was a good riddance and that she had "found her out." It would have been hard even for the most nearsighted person to say Miss Druse was one to excite a violently passionate love, and yet that was what she claimed, as the newspaper said, she had excited in Mr. Prellick's breast. Nature had not been kind to Miss Druse, who was thin and yellow, and she had done what she could, by allowing her temper to become as sour and bitter as an unripe grapefruit, to destroy the attractiveness that even a very homely woman may possess. Her eyes were watery and red-rimmed, and the peculiar effect of these was increased by reddish eyebrows and lashes, while her chin was at least two inches long and as flat as a butter-paddle.

In spite of all this, Miss Druse declared that Mr. Prellick, seeing her home from church one evening, had suddenly thrown his arms around her and had, in spite of her struggles and screams, kissed her violently. Several persons, hearing Miss Druse scream, had run to her assistance. One of these was ready to swear he saw Mr. Prellick kiss Miss Druse; and Miss Druse was now taking the matter into court, claiming several thousand dollars damages for the injury to her feelings. As she announced when interviewed: "I wouldn't sue the man if he would marry me, but to be kissed like that, all at once and of a sudden, is what I wont stand from any man living! If he kisses, he's got to pay!"

The newspaper seemed inclined, as is often the case when the parties to such a quarrel are past the bloom of youth,

to make merry over Mr. Prellick and Miss Druse and the whole affair. The article was headed:

ANOTHER LOVE BANDIT!
IS PRELLICK JACK-THE-KISSER? MISS DRUSE SAYS HE IS.

"He never done it," said Mr. Bunker positively as he finished reading the article. "If there's one man in New York that aint a free-and-easy kisser, that man is Prellick; and if there's one woman Prellick nor nobody else would want to kiss, it is Miss Druse. I swan, I would ruther kiss Mrs. Wimmer than Miss Druse, any day, and I'd just about as likely think of kissing Mrs. Wimmer as I would of kissing a wooden Indian that had had its face frost-cracked. A man that would be so anxious to kiss that he'd go around kissing Miss Druse or Mrs. Wimmer by force wouldn't be no Love Bandit; he'd be a lunatic!"

HARDLY had Mr. Bunker muttered these words before he leaped from his chair (as well as a plump, short man could leap) and jumped for the door. From the floor below, where Mrs. Wimmer and Mrs. Bunker were discussing the Prellick-Druse affair, came a series of blood-curdling screams, in a duet, as if some ambidextrous murderer were cutting the throats of two women at once. One of the screams Mr. Bunker knew at once as his dear wife's scream, for it was a thin, heady and agonized screech; the other was what may be best described as a series of yips,—although there is no such word,—and these Mr. Bunker guessed rightly to be coming from Mrs. Wimmer's mouth. As expressions of full-hearted fear, Mrs. Wimmer's yips left nothing to be desired either in volume or quality.

Probably no woman in the world had ever been able to put such agony and fear into her yips as Mrs. Wimmer put into them. One cannot imagine a position of danger into which a woman might fall that would not be amply expressed by the yips Mrs. Wimmer was uttering at that moment, but Mr. Bunker—in spite of the impression one might have gained that both ladies were being murdered in cold blood—paused at the door, turned and going to the far corner of his room, picked up a broom. He then hurried as rapidly as he could to the floor below and opened Mrs. Wimmer's door.

Both ladies were standing on the bed. They were closely clasped in each other's arms, screaming and yipping at the tops of their voices. Mr. Bunker closed the door and began slapping at the floor with the brush-end of the broom. The mouse—for it was a mouse that had started the commotion—darted here and there in fear but in utter safety, for in speed, agility and generalship it was superior to Mr. Bunker in about the ratio of ten to one; and it finally darted out of sight, leaving Mr. Bunker panting and wiping his forehead. In the excitement of the chase he had lost both of his carpet slippers, and he now retrieved them and slipped his feet into them. He then assisted Grandma and Mrs. Wimmer to climb down from the bed. The moment Grandma's feet touched the floor, she swallowed a large breath of air and said:

"Jabez, I don't believe a word on it, and neither does Mis' Wimmer!"

"Hey?" inquired Mr. Bunker.

"About Mr. Prellick," said Mrs. Bunker. "We don't believe a mortal word on it."

"Well, it don't seem a mite like him," said Mr. Bunker.

"And it is not!" said Mrs. Wimmer. "He is a nice, church-going gentleman if ever there was one, and as for Miss Druse, I had my doubts of her from the first minute I set eyes on her."

"You and her and Ma was mighty friendly," said Mr. Bunker teasingly.

"And the friendlier I got, the more I had my doubts," said Mrs. Wimmer, with a woman's (and, often, a man's) privilege of seeing things in a different light after the event. "The way she set her cap for that poor man! I could tell him a few things!"

"I reckon you could," agreed Mr. Bunker. "Well, Ma, if you've settled everything and scared all the mice to death yellin' bloody murder at 'em, maybe you're ready to come back upstairs."

Mrs. Bunker gathered up her knitting.

"The worst of this Druse affair," said Mrs. Wimmer, with her hand on the doorknob, "is that it's going to be hard for Mr. Prellick no matter how it ends. Guilty or not guilty,—and he's not,—a man that has got into such a mess is going to be talked about, and the better a man is, the more talk there always is about him. Just like I say when my boarders come wanting fresh wall-paper on their rooms: 'The whiter a thing is, the more it shows spots.' I shouldn't wonder if Dr. Holyer wouldn't let Mr. Prellick usher any more at his church."

"And him such a pleasant usher!" said Grandma Bunker regretfully. "Nobody ever ushed me so nice as Mr. Prellick ushes."

"And I reckon all his fair-weather friends will go back on him, now he's in trouble," said Mr. Bunker. "But I wunt! These here New York friends don't wear no better'n these here eighty-five-cent, marked-down-from-a-dollar shirts. 'Twa'n't like that in Oroduna."

"But you will not desert him in his trouble, Mr. Bunker!" exclaimed Mrs. Wimmer.

"Why, no, ma'am!" said Mr. Bunker, his little blue eyes twinkling behind his spectacles. "I was just thinkin', when you and Ma started your steam-calliope war-whoops down here, that I'd ought to do something about Mr. Prellick. I guess maybe I see my way clear to do it now."

"Jabez," said Mrs. Bunker, putting her hand on her husband's arm in the affectionate manner she often used, "I've said it before, and I hope to live to say it many a time more—you're a good man!"

"Well, I guess I aint no wuss than a lot of others," said Mr. Bunker philosophically.

When they reached their room, Mr. Bunker stepped out of his carpet-slippers and pushed them under the bed and drew his shoes over his blue yarn socks. It was not his habit to put on his shoes to go down to the dining-room to luncheon, and Grandma noticed this.

"You goin' out, Jabez?" she asked.

"Well, Ma," he said, "I reckon I been loafin' round the house about long enough. I figger a man that's in the bunco-business ought to git out and bunk once in a while. A confidence-man has got to do business now and ag'in or he loses confidence in himself. I been readin' in this 'King of Grafters' book, tryin' to figger out a good graft, until my mind is all balled up like a mare's hoof in a damp snow, but I guess I've got a notion now that I can figger on."

Mrs. Bunker kissed the top of his pink, bald head.

"That's right, Jabez," she said lovingly. "I always feel better workin' at the bunk-business. It aint right for a man to idle too much: the devil always finds work for idle hands to do. . . . . And whilst you're out, Pa," she added, "mightn't you sort of stop in and see Mr. Prellick and tell him we aint goin' to act as if we never wanted to have anything to do with him again?"

"Why, yes, Ma!" said Mr. Bunker, with his cheerful, innocent, baby-like smile: "Yes! I was figgerin' on doin' that very thing myself!"

AND this was true. It is wrong to neglect a friend merely because he is in trouble, and Mr. Bunker had no intention of neglecting Mr. Prellick for that reason. It was because Mr. Prellick was in trouble, and because of the particular kind of trouble Mr. Prellick was in, that Mr. Bunker meant to see him.

After the light luncheon Mrs. Wimmer provided for her boarders, which was in the nature of a souvenir, or memory, of dinners that had gone before, and an excellent meal for stout women who wished to lessen their weight, Mr. Bunker took the subway and was soon in front of the enormous building known as the Stupendous, in which were the offices of that great financial institution, The Stupendous Trust Company. Inside the building he was obliged to wait some time before he was ushered into Mr. Prellick's particular sanctum. He was told that Mr. Prellick was "in conference," which was true, for Mr. Prellick was standing

before the desk of the president of the company in the attitude of a naughty schoolboy before the principal of his school.

"I take it for granted, Mr. Prellick," said the president, "that there is nothing whatever in this story about a Miss Druse that I saw in the morning paper."

"Nothing whatever!" declared Mr. Prellick.

"Just so!" said the president. "And it does not matter to us whether there is or not. Buy her off and end this newspaper talk."

"She—she wont be bought off," stammered Mr. Prellick. "I tried to buy her off. Right at first I knew it was blackmail, and I refused to have anything to do with it or her or her lawyers. Then she brought this suit, and she—she will not take a money settlement."

"What *does* the woman want?" asked the president.

Mr. Prellick blushed.

"She—she says she loves me," he stammered. "She—she wants me to marry her, now. I can't do that. She isn't the kind I *could* marry. I never do marry. You couldn't marry her yourself. Nobody could."

"Well," growled the president, "you ought to know! I don't know the woman, and you do. Then, if you wont marry her, and she wont take a cash settlement, you've got to win this suit! *Got* to, do you hear! As a matter of cold fact, Prellick,—and you know it,—you haven't enough money in this company to amount to a row of pins. You've got barely enough stock to let you qualify as a director. You are only here because of your church connections. You bring us a lot of church-member business. On our board you stand—if I may say so—for sanctity and all that sort of thing. I need not say, Prellick, that this Druse affair is a mighty serious matter—for you! You draw a nice fat salary here, and if your reputation goes black, out you go! You'll not be worth ten cents a year to us. You've got to win that suit!"

"Yes sir," said Mr. Prellick meekly.

"And if there are any more of these ladies," said the president, "you'd better buy them off before they start airing their troubles in the newspapers. If there are any others you've been trying to kiss by force, buy 'em off! Shut 'em up with money!"

"But—" Mr. Prellick interrupted.

"Oh! I know!" said the president impatiently. "There aren't any others! But if there are, you take my advice and buy 'em off. Two thousand dollars is nothing to you, if you can keep one of those women from talking to the newspapers. You know the juries in this town—they all read the newspapers. You let one or two more women begin shouting about you to the reporters, and your jury will say, when they get the case: 'Oh, yes! we know Prellick—gay old hypocrite, going around kissing every dame in town! Soak the old rascal! Give the lady damages!' And, Prellick—"

"Yes?" said Mr. Prellick faintly.

"If another of these stories gets into the newspapers, I don't know that I'll wait for the trial before I ask for your resignation!"

"There'll be no more," said Mr. Prellick.

"There had better not be," said the president. "That's all."

IT was in the state of mind naturally following such an interview that the luckless Mr. Prellick entered his office and saw Mr. Bunker's card on his desk. With the leaping of the heart that comes with the realization that all the world is not against one, Mr. Prellick bade the office-boy to admit Mr. Bunker. He stood with hand extended as the plump little ex-farmer from Oroduna entered, and he clasped the hand Mr. Bunker gave him.

"Bunker," he exclaimed, "this is kind; this is really kind!"

"Me and Ma felt as how maybe you'd be glad to see some of us folks," said Mr. Bunker. "I thought maybe I'd sort of drop down here and let you know we don't believe in any shape or manner that there is any truth in what Miss Druse says."

"There's not!" exclaimed Mr. Prellick. "Mr. Bunker, I give you my word there is not an iota of truth in it!"

"I know there aint," said Mr. Bun-

ker. "I don't believe a word she says about you—only, Prellick, I want to give you a bit of advice."

"Yes?" said Mr. Prellick nervously.

"If you've been kissin' anybody else that way, buy 'em off!" said Mr. Bunker.

"Bunker," said Mr. Prellick earnestly, "I give you my word I have never kissed any woman—"

"O' course not!" declared Mr. Bunker. "You don't need to say so; I know you didn't. But just the same, if you happen to have been kissin' any females, young or old, you buy 'em off. Pay 'em to keep their mouths shut."

"I tell you, I never did—"

"I know! I know!" said Mr. Bunker soothingly. "And to my notion it's worth a thousand dollars to keep a thing like that hushed up just now. A thousand aint much, when a man's got a job like you've got here. Keep your name out of the paper! That's the idee! If—"

"But I never—"

"Well, you might, mightn't you?" asked Mr. Bunker, beaming on Mr. Prellick. "I know mighty well you aint goin' to go *and* kiss anybody whilst this suit is goin' on. You wouldn't be that foolish. But look out! Look out! And if—well, a thousand dollars aint too much!"

"Bunker," said Mr. Prellick tensely, "what do you mean?"

"Well," said Mr. Bunker thoughtfully, "I guess you didn't kiss Miss Druse, did you? And you didn't even try to kiss her! As I take it, you was walkin' home with her, and she grabbed you and hollered. That so? Well, you look out somebody else don't grab you and holler! I just thought I'd tell you to be careful, Prellick, and if you do get into any more hollerin' women affairs, buy 'em off!"

"Bunker," said Mr. Prellick, a little pale, "I thank you for this! I suppose, now that I have gained this unwelcome prominence, many persons will try to make money out of me."

"I reckon they will," said Mr. Bunker beamingly. "If I was you, I'd sort of hide somewheres, when I wasn't down here at the office. I'd go round in taxicabs, lookin' into them first to see there wasn't no ladies in 'em. I'd keep where my friends was and not trust to no apartment-hotel folks that might smuggle a lady into the elevator with me, or something."

"Bunker," said Mr. Prellick, "you are a true friend!"

"There's a room empty at my boarding-house," suggested Mr. Bunker, "and a nicer, quieter place couldn't be found. A man could slip in there, and no reporters nor anybody could find him. And you've got friends there. You've got me and Ma and Mrs. Wimmer—"

"She is a good woman, Mrs. Wimmer is!" said Mr. Prellick, and he was right. If there was a woman in New York in whose hands a man might well feel safe, that woman was Mrs. Wimmer. Like many boarding-house keepers in New York, Mrs. Wimmer had been married once, and that once had been such an unfortunate once that all men were thereafter safe so far as she was concerned. She had about as much flirtatiousness in her as there is in a cast-iron statue of Xantippe. She was about as eager for love as a cat is for a shower-bath.

"Well, I guess you can get a room at Mrs. Wimmer's if you want one," said Mr. Bunker. "If I was you, I'd drop round Saturday afternoon. Saturday afternoon 'most everybody to our boarding-house goes to the matinée, and it's a good time to come. I kin tell Mrs. Wimmer you're comin', and she'll be on hand."

"Thank you," said Mr. Prellick.

"And I'll be right there," said Mr. Bunker. "There aint no use takin' chances, even with a hard-boiled woman like Mrs. Wimmer."

"Bunker—" Mr. Prellick began, with tears in his eyes, but his emotion of gratitude was so great he could not finish. He pressed Mr. Bunker's hand.

"Three o'clock, then, Prellick," said Mr. Bunker, rising.

"Three o'clock, Saturday afternoon," agreed Mr. Prellick, "and I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

WHEN Mr. Bunker returned to the boarding-house, he spoke to Mrs. Wimmer, and that lady was well

pleased to learn that Mr. Prellick was to take a room in her house. She admired Mr. Prellick and was sorry for him. After making the appointment for Mr. Prellick for Saturday afternoon at three, Mr. Bunker climbed the stairs to his own room.

"Well, Jabez," said Mrs. Bunker when he entered, "be you satisfied with the way the bunco-business has been goin' to-day?"

"Fair to middlin', Ma, fair to middlin'!" said Mr. Bunker as he removed his shoes. "Things is workin' along, as you might say. 'Taint no use complainin', nohow. Seems like I was gettin' ahead all the while. I got down nigh to Wall Street to-day."

"Well, now, that's real nice," said Grandma Bunker. "Wall Street sounds real high-toned."

"So it does! So it does!" said Grandpa Bunker, puffing as he stooped to draw his carpet slippers from under the bed. "Ma, I guess we're gettin' up in the world when we git down to Wall Street. Seems like we'd ought to be gittin' into society and all that. Ma, I want you should have some pleasure out o' life, now that I'm gettin' nigh to Wall Street. I want you should give a party or something."

"Oh, Jabez!" exclaimed Mrs. Bunker, her dear old face lighting with joy.

"You can, just as well's not," said Jabez. "Doughnuts, and sliced smoked beef, and lemon pie—like them nice parties you used to give out to Oroduna. We'll show 'em! None o' these cup o' tea and a couple o' sandwiches cut with a smoothin' plane. No ma'am! A real, hearty old Oroduna party! Saturday!"

"Saturday? Oh, Jabez!" exclaimed Grandma, her eyes beaming.

"Yes ma'am!" said Jabez heartily. "Half-pas' two o'clock, Saturday afternoon, an' hang the expense. You get the loan of Mrs. Wimmer's front parlor, and invite all the boarders and some of them folks that is so nice to you at Dr. Holyer's church. Maybe Mr. Prellick will come."

"And fried chicken! And bakin'-powder biscuits!" said Mrs. Bunker, like one in a trance.

Mrs. Wimmer was glad to help Mrs. Bunker with the arrangements for the party. About a dozen of the members of Dr. Holyer's church accepted the invitations, and not one of the lady boarders at Mrs. Wimmer's refused. The preparations went on apace, and the undertaker sent in twenty folding chairs (for a dollar) and six small tables (for another dollar). The only unfortunate matter seemed to be that Mr. Prellick felt it impossible to attend. Of the party, it must be said, Mr. Prellick knew nothing whatever; but both Mrs. Wimmer and Mr. Bunker said it would be best not to invite him. Grandma Bunker, however, learned that Mr. Prellick would be at the house to arrange for a room at three o'clock Saturday, and she filled a tin biscuit-box with doughnuts and asked Jabez to see that Mr. Prellick got them when he came to the house. Mr. Bunker accepted the tin box with a gentle chuckle.

Mr. Bunker was fond of doughnuts, and Mrs. Bunker loved to have him eat them, but she would have been not a little displeased if, late Friday night when she was already asleep, she could have seen Jabez slide cautiously out of bed and open Mr. Prellick's box of doughnuts. Seating himself in the darkest corner of the room, Mr. Bunker ate Mr. Prellick's doughnuts to the last crumb. There were many of them, and toward the last he ate slowly and without the eager appetite he had showed when he began. In fact, he had to force the last three down his throat almost by main force. When the last crumb had disappeared, Mr. Bunker slipped quietly into the small hall-room that was part of the Bunker domain, and when he returned, the tin box was almost as heavy as it had been before, and was tied tightly with the shoe-lace with which Grandma had originally bound it. The next morning Grandma confided the box to Mrs. Wimmer's own hands to be given to Mr. Prellick when he should arrive at three o'clock.

THE party began promptly on time. Dear old Grandma Bunker, in her best flounces and ruffles, stood at the door of Mrs. Wimmer's front parlor

and welcomed the ladies as they came. At five minutes of three Mr. Bunker stood by one of the tables and rapped on it with his plump knuckles.

"Well, folks," he said when there was silence, "I reckon everybody is goin' to have a nice time at Ma's party, the way it is startin' out, and I guess nobody needs no games and tricks to help have a good time. I guess we aint like the youngsters that has to play kissin' games. I guess I'd clear out mighty quick if anybody was to start kissin' games. One man to so many ladies is 'most too few, hey?"

Some one laughed.

"I know what you're laughin' at," said Grandpa Bunker merrily. "You're thinkin' that sometimes one kissin' lady to one man is 'most too much."

Everyone thought of Mr. Prellick, and everyone laughed.

"Well, I aint goin' to start no kissin' games," said Mr. Bunker, "but maybe you aint seen the trick—only it aint no trick—we was always doin' at parties like this out to Oroduna when me and Ma was young, back in the seventies. Now, all of you come up here and stand around this table and put one finger onto it, and I'll show you."

"Oh! lifting the table from the floor by electro-magnetism!" exclaimed one of the ladies. "I've seen it done! Come on, let's try it."

"We got to keep plumb quiet," Jabez said when the entire party was gathered around the table. "Keep sober and don't laugh, and just sort of wish the table would rise up in the air. Now, has everybody got their fingers on the table?"

Mrs. Wimmer glanced at her watch and slipped from the room. It was exactly three o'clock.

"Don't giggle!" urged Mr. Bunker. "Don't whisper! Keep right still."

He heard a taxicab stop before the house. He heard Mr. Prellick come up the steps to the stoop.

"Now, nobody say a word!" he urged, and he himself became silent.

There was utter stillness. From the next room, Mrs. Wimmer's back parlor and bedroom combined, came the only sound: voices dulled by the intervening wall and door.

"Sh!" said Mr. Bunker.

No one spoke. No one moved. Absolute silence, and then, from Mrs. Wimmer's back parlor, came wild yips of agonized fear, the yipping of a woman in terror! On the silence the shrill screams broke suddenly, and every woman in the room stood transfixed. From Mrs. Wimmer's back parlor came, mingled with the shrieks, a man's voice. Mr. Bunker ran to the hall door.

"Stop!" he ordered, turning and holding his hand high, although not a woman in the room had moved. "Stop! I'll 'tend to this! You leave this to me!"

He went out into the hall. At Mrs. Wimmer's door he paused a moment—then opened the door quickly and stepped inside and closed the door behind him as quickly.

"Prellick!" he cried. "Prellick! And us tryin' to help you!"

MRS. WIMMER, standing far back on her bed with her hands holding her skirts close against her ankles, was still uttering little yips of terror.

"I—I—I—" stammered Mr. Prellick.

"Yes, you!" declared Mr. Bunker, his voice in a hoarse whisper. "And shame on you! Tryin' to kiss Mis' Wimmer!"

Mr. Prellick's face turned ashen gray.

"Mice!" he babbled. "Mice! mice!"

"You old rapscallion!" hissed Mr. Bunker. "Comin' and tryin' to grab a kiss from Mis' Wimmer, like you did from Miss Druse, hey? And a whole Bible class from Doc Holyer's church right there in the next room! A nice howdy-do this'll make in the newspapers. Men like you ought to be showed up in every newspaper in town. You'd ought to be run out of town, and I'll run you out!"

"Mice!" chattered Mr. Prellick. "Tin box! Mice!"

"Fiddlesticks!" declared Mr. Bunker. "I don't know what you're talkin' about. Kissin' Mis' Wimmer—poor, helpless widow that she is! I'll tell on ye, fast enough!"

With a sob Mr. Prellick put his hands on Mr. Bunker's shoulders.

"Bunker! Bunker!" he pleaded. "Listen to me! Please listen to me. It was mice, Bunker! She—she handed me a box, and she—she said it was doughnuts from Mrs. Bunker. I—I opened the box. It was mice—the box was full of mice, and they jumped out, and Mrs. Wimmer screamed, and—"

Mr. Bunker looked at Mr. Prellick reprovingly.

"So that's all the story you can think up, hey? Grandma sent you a box of doughnuts, and they turned into mice and jumped out, hey? I'd like to know what the ladies of Doc Holyer's church would think of a story like that! I'll let 'em in, and—"

"Don't! don't!" pleaded Mr. Prellick in a panic of fear as he saw the childishness of the true explanation. Who would believe that Grandma Bunker, dear old soul, would do up a box of mice to be given to Mr. Prellick?

"They *were* mice," said Mrs. Wimmer weakly from the bed.

"Well, I guess you'd say so, Mrs. Wimmer, ma'am," said Mr. Bunker in a kindly tone. "You don't want no scandal gettin' into the paper."

"But they *were* mice!" insisted Mrs. Wimmer.

In the hall several ladies were now knocking on Mrs. Wimmer's door. Mr. Bunker leaned his plump back against the door.

"I suppose," he said sternly to Mrs. Wimmer, "you've fixed it up with Prellick to say they was mice. I suppose he's offered you two thousand dollars to shut up and not make a scandal. I'm surprised at you, Mrs. Wimmer! I am indeed!"

"Oh!" gasped Mrs. Wimmer.

SLOWLY Mr. Prellick's eyes opened to their widest as he gazed at Mr. Bunker. The knocking on the door grew louder. Mr. Prellick slipped his hand into his pocket and drew forth a roll of money.

"Maybe," said Mr. Bunker good-naturedly, "maybe I'm mistaken."

With a frown Mr. Prellick handed the roll of bills to Mr. Bunker. The bunco-man counted them rapidly.

"I *am* mistaken, Prellick," he said frankly. "When I come to think it over, I'm downright sure it was mice. You can climb out of that back window and down onto the shed and climb the fence into the back yard of the saloon. Yes sir, it was mice!"

"Bunker," said Mr. Prellick, "you are a rascal!"

Mr. Bunker held the money toward Mr. Prellick.

"Come to think of it," he said, "I aint so sure they was mice, after all!"

He put his hand on the doorknob.

"I'm wrong! I'm wrong!" exclaimed Mr. Prellick hastily. "You are a gentleman, Bunker!"

"Well, now you're sayin' the truth," said Mr. Bunker with a chuckle. "That's me, exactly—I'm a gentleman bunker. And now you'd better get!"

Mr. Prellick, without more ado, climbed out of the window and disappeared. The moment he was gone, Mr. Bunker opened the door.

"It's all right, ladies!" he chuckled. "Mrs. Wimmer got scared of some mice that was runnin' around. I reckoned you wouldn't want in until I'd chased 'em away."

"Land sakes, no!" exclaimed Grandma Bunker, backing hurriedly into the hall. "I declare, there is 'most too many mice in this house."

Mrs. Wimmer climbed down from the bed.

"I am entirely of the same opinion, Mrs. Bunker," she said severely, but she looked straight at Mr. Bunker. "There are far, far too many mice in this house."

Grandma Bunker put her hand affectionately on Grandpa Bunker's arm.

"If it hadn't been for Pa," she said, "you might have been skeered to death, Mrs. Wimmer; but he aint afeered of mice."

"Afeered of mice, Ma?" said Mr. Bunker. "You couldn't hire me to be afeered of mice—not if—not if you paid me two thousand dollars a box to be skeered of them!"

"NUMBER 17"

by Louis Tracy

A COMPLETE RÉSUMÉ OF THE OPENING INSTALLMENT

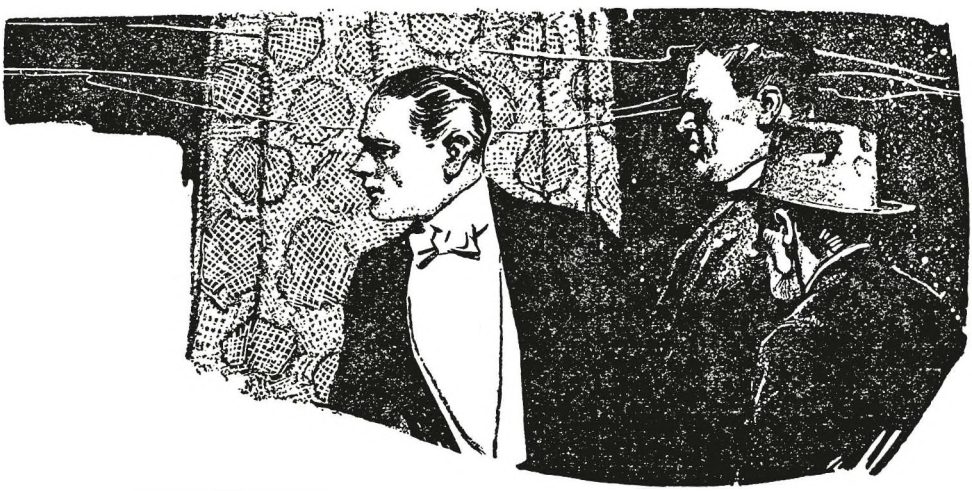
A TRIVIAL enough incident began it all. Francis Theydon, a novelist, stopping outside a New York theater to wait for a taxi he had summoned because of a rainstorm, was much struck by the beauty of a young woman whose distinguished-looking father was just putting her into a limousine. Theydon overheard the man excusing himhelf to his daughter, saying he had an appointment at the Union League Club. The novelist would probably have forgotten all about the matter, but as he neared the Innesmore Apartments, where he lived, he happened to see through the window this same distinguished-looking gentleman striding along in his own direction.

Now the Innesmore is in a very different direction from the Union League, and recalling what he had overheard, Theydon—wondered.

Theydon wondered still more when, poking his head out a window of Number 18, his own apartment, he saw the deceiving parent enter the Innesmore. A moment later a step sounded on the stair, and the visitor rang and was admitted to Number 17, the apartment opposite Theydon's, occupied by an attractive widow named Mrs. Lester. Whereupon Theydon smiled knowingly to himself.

NEXT day, however, the novelist discovers he has come in contact with tragedy rather than intrigue. For on returning from a day spent at an aviation field, he is met at the station by his valet, Bates, accompanied by two detectives, Steingall and Clancy. And they inform him that Mrs. Lester, the lady in Number 17, has been found strangled to death that morning.

Contenting themselves with a superficial questioning, the detectives allow Theydon to keep a dinner engagement upon his promise to meet them later at his apartment. So the novelist goes on to his appointment—and recognizes in his host, James Creighton Forbes, a millionaire and a fellow aviation-enthusiast, the distinguished-looking gentleman whose conduct had so puzzled him the previous night! Returning to his apartment, Theydon meets the detectives, and in his endeavor to throw suspicion away from the father of the girl who has so much attracted him, Theydon turns the scrutiny of the detectives upon himself.



"A MYSTERY OF NEW YORK" is the way Louis Tracy describes this, the most thrilling of all his novels. For in this story he has surpassed even "The Red Year," "The Wings of the Morning," "One Wonderful Night" and the other novels that have given him such wide and well-deserved fame.

CHAPTER IV

A TELEPHONIC TALK AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

THEYDON'S journalistic experiences had been, for the most part, those of the "special correspondent" or descriptive writer. He had never entered one of those fetid slums of a great city in which, too often, murder is done; he had never sickened with the physical nausea of death in its most revolting aspect, when some unhappy wretch's foul body serves only to pollute further air already vile. It was passing strange, therefore, that Steingall had no sooner opened the door of Number 17 than the novice of the party became aware of a heavy, pungent scent which he associated with some affrighting and unclean thing. At first, he swept aside the fantasy. Strong as he was, his nervous system had been subjected to severe strain that evening. He knew well that the mind can create its own specters, that the five senses can be subjugated by forces which science has not as yet either measured or defined. Moreover, he was standing in a hall furnished with a taste and quiet elegance which must surely indicate similar features in each room of a suite that, in other respects, bore an exact resemblance to his own apartments. In sheer protest against the riot of an overwrought imagination, he brushed a hand across his eyes.

The Chief Inspector noted the action.

"You will find nothing gruesome here, I assure you," he said quietly. "Beyond a few signs of hurried rummaging of drawers and boxes, there is absolutely no indication of a crime having been committed."

"Mr. Theydon came prepared to see ghosts," squeaked Clancy. "Evidently he is not acquainted with the peculiar smell of a joss-stick."

Theydon turned troubled eyes on the wizened little man who seemed to have the power to read his secret thought.

"A joss-stick!" he repeated. "Isn't that some sort of incense used by Chinese in their temples?"

"Yes," said Clancy.

"Lots of ladies burn them in their boudoirs nowadays," explained Steingall casually.

"The Chinese burn them to propitiate evil spirits," murmured Clancy. "The Taou gods are mostly deities of a very unpleasant frame of mind. The mere scowl of one of them from a painted fan suggests novel and painful forms of torture. I've seen Shang Ti grinning at me from a porcelain vase, otherwise exquisite, and felt my hair rising."

"I do wish you wouldn't talk nonsense, Charles," said Steingall, frowning heavily.

"Am I talking nonsense, Mr. Theydon?" demanded Clancy. "Didn't your flesh creep when that queer perfume assailed your nostrils, which are not yet altogether atrophied by the reek of thousands of rank cigars?"

"Oh, cut it out!" commanded Steingall, throwing open a door.

"And they christened him Leander—Leander, who swam the Hellespont for love of a woman!" muttered Clancy.

THAT both detectives were cranks of the first order Theydon began to believe. Clancy, whose extraordinary insight he actually feared, was obviously an excellent example of the alliance between insanity and genius. In a word, he failed to understand that when this oddity was mouthing a strange jargon of knowledge and incoherence, when Steingall was inclined to be snappy with his subordinate, and each was more than rude to the other, they were then giving tongue like hounds hot on the trail. Steingall's Christian names were James Leander, the latter being conferred for no more classical reason than his father's association with a famous yacht, but the fact supplied Clancy with material for many a quip. These things Theydon learned later. At present he was giving all his attention to Steingall, who led the way into a daintily furnished bedroom.

The electric lights were governed by two switches. A pair of lamps occupied the usual place in front of a dressing-table; a third was suspended from a canopy over the bed, and was controlled also by an alternative switch behind the bolster. Steingall turned on all three lights, and the room was brilliantly illuminated. Any place less likely to become the scene of a brutal crime could hardly be imagined. It looked exactly what it was, the bedchamber of a refined and well-bred woman, whose trained sense of color and design was shown by the harmony of carpet, rugs, wall-paper and furniture.

Steingall pointed to a slight depression in the side of the bed. A white linen coverlet was rumpled as though some one had sat there.

"That is where Ann Rogers, the maid, found her mistress at ten o'clock this morning," he said. "As you see, the bed had not been slept in. Indeed, Mrs. Lester was fully dressed. My belief is that she was pounced on the instant she entered the room,—probably to retire for the night,—strangled before she could utter a sound, and flung here when dead."

AGAIN Theydon was aware of the subtle, penetrating and not wholly unpleasing scent which Clancy had attributed to the burning of a joss-stick, but his mind was focused on the detective's words, which suggested a curious discrepancy between certain vague possibilities already flitting through his brain and the terrible drama as it presented itself to a skilled criminologist.

"But," he said almost protestingly, "from what I have seen of Mrs. Lester, she was a strong and active woman. It is inconceivable that the man who came here last night could have murdered her while I was writing two brief notes. I am positive he did not remain five minutes, and Bates or I, or both of us, must have heard some trampling of feet, some indications of a struggle. Moreover, you think she was about to retire. Doesn't that opinion conflict with the known facts?"

"What known facts?"

"Well—er—those I have mentioned. The brief visit, the open nature of the arrival and departure, the mailing of a letter—which, by the way, may have been written in his presence."

"It was."

Theydon positively jumped. He would not be surprised now if Forbes' name came out.

"How do you know that?" he asked.

"Mrs. Lester wrote to an aunt in Connecticut, a lady who lives in a village near Hartford. As it happened, this aunt, a Miss Beale, was lunching with a friend in Hartford to-day, and some one showed her an early edition of a New York evening newspaper containing an account of the murder. Instead of yielding to hysteria, and passing from one fainting fit into another, Miss Beale had the rare good sense to go straight to the police-station. One of our men has interviewed her this evening, and she is coming here to-morrow, but in the meantime, the Hartford police telephoned the gist of the letter, which is headed 'Monday, eleven-thirty P. M.' The hour is not quite accurate, but near enough, since the context shows that 'a friend' had just called and given certain information which had determined the writer to leave New York 'to-morrow'—meaning to-day—'or Wednesday at latest.' So, you see, Mr. Theydon, if the unknown is an honest man, he will soon hear of the hue and cry raised by the murder, and declare himself to the police. Indeed, for all I know, he may have reported himself to the Bureau already. In that event, you will probably meet him again quite soon."

An electric bell jarred at the end of the main passage. It smote on their ears with the loud emphasis of a pistol-shot. Even the detectives were startled, and Steingall said, in a tone of distinct annoyance:

"Go and see who the deuce that is, Clancy!"

CLANCY returned promptly with Bates, pallid and apologetic.

"Beg pawdon, sir," said the intruder, addressing Theydon, but allowing his eyes to roam furtively about the room as though he expected to see something ghoul-like and sinister, "Mr. Forbes has rung up—"

Theydon's voice literally quavered. For the first time in his life he knew why a woman shrieks in the stress of sudden excitement.

"Tell Mr. Forbes I am still engaged with the representatives of the Bureau," he gasped. "I'll give him a call the moment I'm free. He will understand. Anyhow, I can't explain further now."

"Yes sir." And Bates disappeared.

"Mr. Forbes—whom you were dining with?" inquired Steingall.

"Yes," said Theydon. He knew he ought to add something by way of explanation, but his heart was thumping madly, and he dared not trust his voice.

"You told him, I suppose, that the Bureau was worrying you, and he wants to know the result?"

Then Theydon saw an avenue of escape, and he took it eagerly.

"I spoke of the murder, of course," he said, "but Mr. Forbes was hardly interested. He had seen the newspaper placards, and that was all he knew of it. The truth is, he is wholly wrapped up in a scheme for reforming mankind by excluding airships and aëroplanes from warlike operations, and found me a somewhat preoccupied listener. He wants my help, such as it is, and I have no doubt the present call is a preliminary to another meeting to-morrow."

"Why not go to him? We'll wait. We can do nothing more to-night after leaving here."

"Speaking candidly, I am not in a mood to discuss such visionary projects. I shall be glad if Mr. Forbes has gone to bed when I *do* ring him up."

Steingall shook his head.

"Excuse me, Mr. Theydon, but I am older than you, and may venture on advice," he said. "A writer who has his way to make in the world cannot afford to sidestep a man of Mr. Forbes' position. Go to him at once. It will please him. Don't hurry."

Theydon realized that a continued refusal would certainly set Clancy's wits at work, and he dreaded the outcome. He went without another word. When the outer door had closed behind him, Steingall turned to his colleague.

"Well?" he said.

For answer, Clancy waved a hand, and tiptoed into the hall. Waiting until he heard the door of Number 18 slam, he opened the latch of Number 17 so

cautiously that no sound was forthcoming. Soon he had an ear to Theydon's letterbox, and was following attentively a one-sided conversation.

NOW, Theydon had thought hard during the few strides from one flat to the other. His telephone was fixed close to the party-wall dividing the two sets of apartments, and he could not be certain that, in the absolute quietude prevailing in the Innesmore at that late hour, a voice could not be overheard. True, he did not count on Clancy's playing the eavesdropper at the slit of the letter-box, but he resolved to take no risks, and say nothing that anyone could make capital of.

So, when he had asked the exchange to reconnect him with the caller who had just rung up, and the connection had been made, this is what Clancy heard:

"That you, Mr. Forbes? . . . . . Sorry I sent my man just now with a message that must have sounded rather curt, but the Bureau people kindly excused me, so I can give you a minute or two. . . . . No, I'm sorry, but I cannot come to luncheon to-morrow, nor go to Hempstead Plains again this week. You see, this dreadful murder which I spoke of will necessitate my presence at an inquest, and the police seem to attach much significance to the visit to Mrs. Lester last night of a man whom I saw in the street, and whom Bates and I heard entering and leaving the poor lady's flat. . . . . Bates? Oh, he is my general factotum. He and his wife keep house for me. . . . . Yes, I'll gladly let you know the earliest date when I'll be free. Then you and I can go into the flying proposition thoroughly. . . . . No. The detectives have apparently not got any clue to the murderer, nor even discovered any motive for the crime. They have taken me into Number Seventeen. In fact, I was there when you called up. . . . . The murderer ransacked the place, it would seem, thoroughly, but did not touch money or jewelry, I understand. . . . . The only peculiar thing, if I may so describe it, is the scent of a burned joss-stick. It clings to the passage and the bedroom in which the body was found. . . . . Ah, by the way, Mrs. Lester wrote a letter, which her visitor posted; and the addressee, her aunt, is in communication with the police. The text tends to clear the man of suspicion. . . . . Yes, if by chance I find myself at liberty to-morrow, I'll 'phone you at your Wall Street office. I'll find the number in the directory, of course? . . . . . Oh, thanks—I'll jot it down—0400 Wall. . . . . Good night! Too bad that this wretched affair should interfere with our crusade—which, the more I think of it, the stronger it appeals. *Au revoir,* then."

IN reality, Forbes had not said one word about his peace propaganda, but he had evidently been quick to realize that Theydon was purposely giving their talk a twist in that direction. A muttered "I understand—perfectly," showed this, and he did not strive to conceal the alarm which possessed him when Theydon spoke of the joss-stick. He murmured distinctly: "Great Heavens! Then I was not mistaken!" and again voiced his distress on hearing of the letter.

But he made matters easy by pressing Theydon to come and see him on the morrow, at either his downtown office or his residence. On the whole, Theydon did not care who heard what he had said, but it was a relief to find that he had to ring for readmission to Number 17.

Clancy opened the door.

"You soon got rid of your friend, then?" said the detective while they were on the way to rejoin Steingall.

"Yes. It was just what I imagined—a pressing invitation to plunge forthwith into a fantastic project for the regeneration of mankind. I had to tell him frankly that you gentlemen had first claim on me. I suppose I shall be wanted at the inquest?"

"Not to-morrow. The coroner will hear the medical evidence, and that of Ann Rogers, if she is in a condition to appear, and there will be an adjournment for a week."

"Ah, that reminds me. Didn't Mrs. Lester's servant admit the visitor?"

Theydon put the question advisedly. He was calmer now, and had made up

his mind as to the course he should pursue. Although he had assured Steingall that he would recognize the stranger if confronted with him, and, if Forbes was brought into the inquiry, the admission might prove awkward, he meant to say that he had, indeed, noticed a remarkable resemblance in the millionaire to the man he had seen looking up at the name-tablet on the corner, but was persuaded that the likeness was one of those singular coincidences which abound in a cosmopolitan city. The smartest cross-examiner at the bar could not shake him if he took that stand. The sheer improbability of Forbes' being the mysterious visitor would justify his attitude, and the notion was so consoling that he faced the two detectives with new confidence and a self-possession that was exceedingly pleasant when compared with his earlier embarrassment.

It was Steingall who answered.

"No," he said. "By a most remarkable chance, Ann Rogers was given leave to spend the night with her father, who lives in the Bronx. He is an old man, and was taken ill last evening. He believes he asked some one to telegraph to his daughter, asking her to come to him. She certainly received a telegram, and as certainly did visit him. Of course, that phase of the affair will be cleared up thoroughly, but the main facts are indisputable. Ann Rogers has her own latch-key. As Mrs. Lester usually sat up late, being a lover of books, and seldom stirred before ten o'clock, the maid waited until that hour before bringing her mistress' cup of tea. That stain on the carpet near the door shows where the tray fell from her hands."

SOMETIMES an artist obtains the strongest effect by one deft sweep of the brush. Steingall, though he would have blushed if described as an artist in words, had achieved a similar result by his concluding sentence. Theydon pictured the scene. He saw the limp form thrown across the bed, the distorted face, the hands and arms posed grotesquely. He heard the shrill scream of the terrified servant, an elderly woman whom Bates described as "a quiet body," and could imagine the clatter of the laden tray as it dropped from nerveless fingers. A sort of fury rose within him. Mrs. Lester had been done to death in a horrible and insensate way, and no matter who suffered, be he millionaire or pauper, the wretch who committed the crime should be made to pay the penalty of the law.

In that moment he forgot Evelyn Forbes, and thought only of the fair and gracious woman whose agonized spirit had taken flight under the compulsion of the tiger-grip of some human brute now moving among his fellow creatures unknown and unsuspected. It was inconceivable that Forbes should be guilty, but why should he not avow his acquaintance with the victim, and thus aid the police in their quest?

He glowered savagely at the telltale stain, and vowed to rid his conscience of an incubus. He would wait till the morrow, and force Forbes to come out into the open. Otherwise—

"You wish you had the murderer here now?"

Clancy spoke softly, and with no trace of his wonted irony, but Theydon was aware that once more the little detective had peered into his very soul.

"Yes," he said, and there was a new gravity in his tone. "I do wish that. I have never before been brought in contact with a crime of this magnitude. It conveys a sort of personal responsibility. To think that I was in my room, reading about aviation, while a woman's life was being choked out of her within a few feet of where I was seated! Oh, it is monstrous! Let me tell you two, here and now, that if I can do anything to bring Mrs. Lester's slayer to justice, you can count on me, no matter what the cost."

"I'm sure you mean what you say, Mr. Theydon," said Steingall soothingly. "Well, I suppose we can do no more to-night. I have little else to tell you—"

"The skull—the ivory skull!" put in Clancy quickly.

FOR an instant an expression of annoyance flitted across the Chief Inspector's good-humored face. They-

don did not see it, because Clancy's odd-sounding words caused him to look with astonishment at the man who uttered them.

"An ivory skull!" he cried. "What has an ivory skull to do with the murder of Mrs. Lester?"

"We cannot even begin to guess at its meaning yet," said Steingall, who after one fierce glance at his colleague had recovered his poise. "That is why I did not mention it. I hate the introduction of bizarre features into an inquiry of this sort. But, now that the thing has been spoken of, I may as well state that when the medical examination was being made at the mortuary a tiny skull, not bigger than a pea, and made of ivory, was found inside Mrs. Lester's under-bodice. The curious fact is that it was loose. Had it been attached to a cord, or secured in some way, one might regard it as a charm or amulet, because some women, even in the New York of to-day, are not beyond the reach of superstition in such matters. But as I say, it was not safeguarded at all—so we may reasonably assume that it was not carried habitually. Of course, Clancy readily evolved a far-fetched theory that it is a sign, or symbol, and was thrust out of sight among the clothing on the dead woman's breast by the man who killed her. But that is idle guesswork. We of the Bureau seldom pay heed to theatrical notions of that kind. Here is the article. I don't mind letting you see it, but kindly remember that its existence must not be made known. I must have your promise not to mention it to a living creature."

Clancy chuckled derisively.

"That is precisely the sort of thing anybody would say who attached no importance to the exhibit," he piped.

Steingall so nearly lost his temper that he repressed the retort on his lips. He contented himself, however, with producing a small white object from his waistcoat pocket, and handed it to Theydon. It was a bit of ivory, hollow, and very light, and fashioned as a skull. Yet, it was by no means an ordinary creation. The artist who carved it had gratified a morbid taste by imparting to the eyeless sockets and close-set rows of teeth a malign and threatening grin. Wickedness, not death, was suggested, but the craftsmanship was faultless. A collector would have paid a large sum for it, while the average citizen would refuse to have it in his house.

"What an extraordinary thing!" said Theydon, turning the curio round and round in his fingers.

"It's wonderfully well cut," agreed Steingall.

"From that point of view it is a masterpiece, but what I meant was the astounding fact that it should have been discovered on the dead woman's body. Was it placed over her heart?"

"Why do you ask that?" came the sharp demand.

"Because—if it is a token of some vendetta—if the murderer wished to signify that he had glutted his vengeance—"

"Oh, you're as bad as Clancy," cried Steingall impatiently. "Give it me. I must be off. The hour is long past midnight, and I have a busy day before me to-morrow."

BACK in the seclusion of his own rooms, Theydon debated the question whether or not he should endeavor to communicate with Forbes again that night. Somehow, it seemed to him that Forbes would be most concerned at hearing of the gray car. And what of the ivory skull? Suppose he knew of that! But a certain revulsion of feeling had come over Theydon since the sheer brutality of the murder had been revealed. He failed to see now why he should be so solicitous for Forbes' welfare. No matter what private purpose the man might serve by concealing his visit to Mrs. Lester, it ought to give way before the paramount importance of tracking a pitiless and callous criminal. So Theydon hardened his heart, and went to bed, and, being sound in mind and constitution, slept like a just man wearied. Nevertheless the last thing he saw before the curtain fell on his tired brain was an ivory skull dancing in the darkness.

Greatly as the many problems attached to Mrs. Lester's death bewildered him, he would have been even more perplexed had he overheard the

conversation between the two detectives when they entered a taxi, and gave the police headquarters as their destination.

"Look here, Charles—" began Steingall firmly; but the other stayed him with a clutch of thin, nervous fingers on an arm strong enough to fell an ox.

"Listen first, James—lecture me afterwards," pleaded Clancy. "I can't help yielding to impulse. And why should I strive to help it, anyhow? How often has impulse led me to the goal when by every known rule of evidence I was completely beaten? That is why I brought that young fellow into Number Seventeen, and watched the story of the tragedy reshaping itself in his imagination. That is why, too, I spoke of the ivory skull. Think what it means to one with the writer's temperament. The skull will never leave his mind's eye. It will focus and control his thoughts and actions. And I feel it in my bones that only by keeping in touch with Mr. Francis Theydon shall we solve this amazing Innesmore mystery. I can't explain why I think this, no more than the receiver of a wireless message can account for the waves of energy it picks up from the void and transmutes into the ordered sequences of the Morse code. All I know is that when I am near him, I am, as the children say, 'warm,' and when away from him 'cold.' While he was examining the skull, I was positively 'hot,' and was half inclined to treat him as a thought-transference medium and order him sternly to speak. . . . . No. Be calm! I even bid you be honest. When have you, ever before, admitted an outsider to your councils? And, if you make an exception of Theydon, why are you doing it?"

STEINGALL bit the end off a cigar with a vicious jerk of his round head. He struck a match, and created such a volume of smoke that Clancy coughed affectedly.

"The real clue," he said at last, "rests with the gray car. What did you make of that?"

"That, my bulky friend, will figure in my memory as a reproach for many a year. When, if ever, I am tempted to preen myself on some peculiarly close piece of ratiocinative reasoning, I shall say: 'Little man, pigmy, remember the gray car!'"

"You think that some one had the impudence to follow us, watch us in the Long Island depot, and take up Theydon's trail when we had revealed it?"

"A-ha! It touched you too, did it?"

"But why?"

"The some one in question wants to know that."

"You mean they are anxious to find out what we are doing?"

"Exactly."

Steingall laughed cheerfully.

"Before long I shall begin to enjoy this hunt, Charles. I like to find originality in a felon. It varies the routine. At any rate, it is something new that you and I should be shadowed by the very people we are in pursuit of. . . . . Oh, I was nearly forgetting. Anything fresh in that telephone talk?"

"It seemed all right."

"Seemed?"

"Well, it was too straightforward. Theydon puzzles me. I admit it frankly. He almost worries me. But let me handle him in my own way. Have no fear that he will use our material for newspaper purposes. With regard to the Innesmore affair, Theydon will lie close as a fish. Why? No use asking you, of course. You despise intuition. When you die, some one should begin your epitaph: 'From information received.' But I'll stick to Theydon. See if I don't, even if I have to go up with him in one of Forbes' airships."

CHAPTER V

A LEAP IN THE DARK

WITH the morning Theydon brought a mature and impartial judgment to bear on his perplexities. The average man, if asked to form an opinion on any difficult point, will probably arrive at a saner decision during the first pipe after breakfast than at any other given

hour of the day. Excellent physiological reasons account for this truism. The sound mind in a sound body is then working under the most favorable conditions. It is free from the strain of affairs. The cold, clear morning light divests problems of the undue importance, or, it may be, the glamour of novelty, which they possessed overnight. At any rate, Frank Theydon, clenching a pipe between his teeth and gazing thoughtfully through an open window at the trees in the gardens opposite, reviewed yesterday's happenings calmly and critically, and arrived at the settled conviction that his proper course was to visit the Bureau and make known to the authorities the one vital fact he had withheld from their ken thus far.

It was not for him to appraise the significance of Mr. Forbes' desire to remain in the background. If the millionaire's excuse, or explanation, of his failure to communicate at once with the police was a sufficiently valid one, the Bureau would be satisfied, and might agree to keep his name out of the inquiry. On the other hand, he, Theydon, might be balking the course of justice by holding his tongue. There was yet a third possibility, one fraught with personal discredit. Mr. Forbes himself might realize that a policy of candor offered the only dignified course. Suppose he was minded to tell the detectives that *he* was the man who visited Mrs. Lester shortly before midnight, what would Steingall and Clancy think of the young gentleman who had actually dined with Forbes before they took him into their confidence,—who heard with such righteous indignation how Mrs. Lester met her death,—and yet brazenly concealed the fact that he had just left the house of one whom they were so anxious to meet and question?

Of course, the radiant vision of Evelyn Forbes intruded on this well-considered and unemotional analysis; but Theydon resolutely shook his head.

"No, by Jove!" he communed. "You mustn't make an ass of yourself, my boy, because a pretty girl was gracious for an hour or so. Be honest with yourself! If there were no Evelyn, or if Evelyn were hare-lipped, and squinted, you wouldn't hesitate a second—now, would you?"

Yet, he had given a promise. How reconcile an immediate call on the Detective Bureau with the guarantee of secrecy demanded by Forbes? Well, he must put himself right with Forbes without delay—tell him straightforwardly that the bond could not hold. Theydon was no lawyer, but he was assured that an agreement founded on positive wrong was not tenable, legally or morally. He would be adamant with Forbes, and decline to countenance any plea in support of continued silence. If Forbes' demand was reasonable, the authorities would grant it. If justice compelled Forbes to come out into the open, no private citizen should attempt to defeat the ends of justice.

"So, that settles it," announced Theydon, firmly if not cheerfully. "I'll ring up Forbes and get the thing over and done with. I'll never see his daughter again, I suppose, but that can't be helped. 'Tis better to have seen and lost than never to have seen at all."

HE turned from the window, walked to the fireplace, tapped his pipe firmly on the grate and was about to go into the hall and call up the telephone exchange, when the door-bell rang. He was aware of a muffled conversation between Bates and a visitor. Then the valet appeared, obviously ill at ease.

"If you please, sir," he announced, "a lydy, a Miss Beale, of Hartford, who says she is Mrs. Lester's aunt, wishes to see you."

Theydon was immensely surprised, as well he might be. But there was only one thing to be done.

"Show her in," he said.

Miss Beale entered. She was slight of figure, middle-aged and gray-haired. The wanness of her thin features was accentuated by an attire of deep mourning, but her pallor fled for an instant when she set eyes on Theydon.

"Pray forgive the intrusion," she faltered. "I—I expected to meet an older man."

It was a curious utterance, and Theydon tried to relieve her evident nervousness by being mildly humorous.

"I hope to correct my juvenile appearance in course of time," he said, smiling. "Meanwhile, wont you be seated? You are not quite unknown to me, Miss Beale. That is—I heard of you last night from the Bureau people."

She sat down at once, but seemed to be at a loss for words. Her lips trembled, and Theydon thought she was going to cry.

"Have you traveled from Hartford this morning?" he said, simulating a courteous nonchalance he was far from feeling. "If so, you must have started from home at an ungodly hour. Let me have some breakfast prepared for you."

"No—no," she stammered.

"Well, a cup of tea, then? Come, no woman ever refuses a cup of tea."

"You are very kind."

He rang the bell.

"I would not have ventured to call on you if I had not seen your name in the newspaper," she went on.

Miss Beale certainly had the knack of saying unexpected things. It was nothing new that Theydon should find his own name in print, but on this occasion he could not choose but associate the distinction with the crime in Number 17; that he should be mentioned in connection with it was neither anticipated nor pleasing. At the same time he realized the astounding fact that he had not even glanced at a newspaper for twenty-four hours.

"What in the world have the newspapers to say about *me*?" he cried.

"It—it said that Mr. Francis Berrold Theydon, the well-known author, lived in Number Eighteen, the flat exactly opposite that which my unhappy niece occupied. I—I have read some of your books, Mr. Theydon, and I pictured you quite a serious-looking person of my own age."

He laughed. Bates entered, and was almost shocked at finding his master in such lively mood.

"Oh, this lady has just reached New York after a long journey by rail; a cup of tea and some nice toast, please, Bates," said Theydon. Then, when the two were alone together again, he brushed aside the question of his age as irrelevant.

"I assure you that since this time yesterday I have lost some of the careless buoyancy of youth," he said. "I had not the honor of Mrs. Lester's acquaintance, but I knew her well by sight, and I received the shock of my life last evening when I heard of her terrible end. It is an extraordinary thing, seeing that we were such close neighbors, but I believe you got the news long before I did, because I left home early, and heard nothing of what had happened till my man met me in the evening."

"You have seen the—the detectives in the meantime?"

"Yes."

"Then you will be able to tell me something definite. I have promised to call at the police headquarters at eleven o'clock, and the only scraps of intelligence I have gathered are those in the papers. I would have come to New York last night, but was afraid to travel, lest I should faint in the train. Moreover, some one in New York promised to send a detective to see me. He came, but could give me no information. Indeed, he wanted to learn certain things from *me*. So, after a weary night, I caught the first train, and it occurred to me, as you lived so near, that you might be kind enough to—to—"

The long speech was too much for her, and her lips quivered pitifully a second time.

"I fully understand," said Theydon sympathetically. "Now, I'm positive you have eaten hardly anything to-day. Wont you let me order an egg?"

"No, please. I'll be glad of the tea, but I cannot make a meal—yet. Is it true that my niece was absolutely alone in her flat on Monday night?"

SEEING that Miss Beale was consumed with anxiety to hear an intelligible version of the tragedy, Theydon at once recited all, or nearly all, that was known to him. The only points he suppressed were those with reference to the gray car and the ivory skull. The lady listened attentively, and with more self-control than he gave her credit for. Bates came in with a laden tray on which a boiled

egg appeared. Mrs. Bates had used her discretion, and decided that anyone who had set out from Hartford so early in the day must be in need of more solid refreshment than tea and toast. Thus cozened, as it were, into eating, Miss Beale tackled the egg, and Theydon was glad to note that she made a fairly good meal, being probably unaware of her hunger until the means of sating it presented itself.

But she missed no word of his story, and, when he made an end, put some shrewd questions.

"I take it," she said, "that the strange gentleman who visited my niece on Monday night, posted the very letter which I received by the second delivery yesterday?"

"That is what the police believe," replied Theydon.

"Then it would seem that she resolved to come to me at Iffley as the result of something he told her?"

"Why do you think that?"

"Because I heard from her only last Saturday, and she not only said nothing about coming to Connecticut, but asked me to arrange to spend a fortnight in New York before we both went to the Adirondacks for the summer."

"Ah. That is rather important, I should imagine," said Theydon thoughtfully.

"It is odd, too, that you and the detectives should have noticed the smell of a joss-stick in the flat," went on Miss Beale. "Edith—my niece, you know—could not bear the smell of joss-sticks. They reminded her of Shanghai, where she lost her husband."

Theydon looked more startled than such a seemingly simple statement warranted. He had realized already that the ivory skull was the work of an Oriental artist, and the mention of Shanghai brought that sinister symbol very vividly to his mind's eye.

"Mrs. Lester had lived in China, then?" he said.

"Yes. She was out there nearly six years. Her husband died suddenly last October,—he was poisoned, she firmly believed,—and, of course, she came home at once."

"What was Mr. Lester's business, or profession?"

"He was a lawyer. I do not mean that he practiced in the Consular courts. He was making his way in New York, but was offered some sort of appointment in Shanghai. The post was so lucrative that he relinquished a growing connection at the bar. I have never really understood what he did. I fancy he had to report on commercial matters to some firm of bankers in New York, but he supplied very little positive information before Edith and he sailed. Indeed, I took it that his mission was highly confidential, and, about that time, there was a lot in the newspapers about rival negotiators for a big Chinese loan, so I formed the opinion that he was sent out in connection with something of the sort.

"Neither he nor Edith meant to remain long in the Far East. At first, their letters always spoke of an early return. Then, when the years dragged on, and I asked for definite news of their home-coming, Mollie said that Arthur could not get away until the country's political affairs were in a more settled state. Finally came a cablegram from Edith: 'Arthur dead, sailing immediately.'

"My niece was with me within a few weeks. The supposed cause of her husband's death was some virulent type of fever, but, as I said, Edith was convinced that he had been poisoned."

"Why?"

"That I never understood. She never willingly talked about Shanghai, or her life there. Indeed, she was always most anxious that no one should know she had ever lived in China. Yet she had plenty of friends out there. I gathered that Arthur had left her well provided for financially, and they were a most devoted couple. Edith was the only relative I possessed. It is very dreadful, Mr. Theydon, that she should be taken from me in such a way."

HER hearer was almost thankful that she yielded to the inevitable rush of emotion. It gave him time to collect his wits, which had lost their poise when that wicked-looking little skull was, so to speak, thrust forcibly into his recollection.

"In a word," he said at last, "you are

Mrs. Lester's next of kin, and probably her heiress?"

"Yes, I suppose so, though I was not thinking of that," came the tearful answer.

"Yet the relationship entails certain responsibilities," said Theydon firmly. "You should be legally represented at the inquest. Are your affairs in the hands of any firm of lawyers?"

"Yes—at Hartford. I contrived to call at their office yesterday, and they advised me to consult these people."

Miss Beale produced a card from a hand-bag. Theydon read the name and address of a well-known Union Square firm.

"Good!" he said. "I recommend you to go there at once. By the way, was anyone looking after Mrs. Lester's interests? Surely she had dealings with a bank, or an agency?"

"Y-yes. I do happen to know the source from which her income came. She — made a secret of it — in a measure."

"Pray don't tell me anything of that sort. Your legal adviser might not approve."

"But what does it matter now? Poor Edith is dead. Her affairs cannot help being dragged into the light of day. She held some railroad stocks and bonds, some of which were left to her by her father, and others which came under a marriage settlement, but the greater part of her revenue was derived from a monthly payment made by the bank of which Mr. James Creighton Forbes is the head."

Miss Beale naturally misinterpreted the blank stare with which Theydon received this remarkable statement.

"I don't see why anyone should wish to conceal a simple matter of business like that," she said nervously. "May I explain that I have an impression, not founded on anything quite tangible, that Mr. Forbes was largely interested in the syndicate which sent Arthur Lester to China; so it is very likely that the payment of an annuity, or pension, to Arthur's widow would be left in his care. I do not know. I am only guessing. But that matter, and others, can hardly fail to be cleared up by the police inquiry."

Theydon recovered his self-control as rapidly as he had lost it. He glanced at the clock—ten-fifteen. Within half an hour, or less, Miss Beale would be on her way to the Bureau. He must act promptly and decisively, or he would find himself in a distinctly unfavorable position in his relations with the police.

"I happen to be acquainted with Mr. Forbes," he said, striving desperately to appear cool and methodical when his brain was seething. "Would you mind if I 'phone him? A few words now might enlighten us materially."

"Oh, you are most helpful," said the lady, blushing again with timid gratitude. "I am so glad I summoned up courage to call on you. I was terrified at the idea of going to the police headquarters, but I shall not mind it at all now."

SOON Theydon was asking for "0400 Wall." He had left the door of his sitting-room open purposely. No matter what the outcome, he no longer dared keep the compact of silence into which he had entered with Forbes. But the millionaire was not at his office. In response to a very determined request for a word with some one in authority, "on a matter of real urgency," the clerk who had answered the call brought "Mr. Forbes' secretary," a Mr. Macdonald, to the telephone.

"It is important, vitally important, that I should speak with Mr. Forbes within the next few minutes," said Theydon, after giving his name and address. "Do you expect him to arrive soon? Or shall I try and reach him at Madison Avenue?"

"Mr. Forbes will not be here till midday," came a mellifluous voice—obviously the utterance of one well skilled in giving answers that conveyed nothing in the way of direct information. "I'm doubtful, too, if you'll catch him at home. Can I give him a message?"

"Do you know where he is?"

"Well, I cannot say."

"But do you know?"

"I'll be glad to give him a message."

"It will be too late then. Please understand, Mr. Macdonald, that I am

making this call at Mr. Forbes' express wish. It is, as I have said, vitally important that I should get in touch with him without delay."

Secretarial caution was not to be overcome by an appeal of that sort.

"I can't go beyond what I have said," was the reply. "If you like to ask at his house—"

"Oh, ring off!" cried Theydon, who pictured the secretary a lanky, hollow-cheeked automaton, a model of discretion and trustworthiness, no doubt, but utterly unequal to a crisis demanding some measure of self-confident initiative; in reality, Mr. Macdonald was short and stout, and quite a jovial little man.

After an exasperating delay, he got into communication with the Forbes mansion in Madison Avenue.

"I'm Mr. Frank Theydon," he said, striving to speak unconcernedly. "Is Mr. Forbes in?"

"No sir."

"Is that you, Tomlinson?"

"Yes sir."

"Can you tell me where I can find Mr. Forbes at once?"

"Isn't he at his office, sir?"

"No. He will not be there till twelve o'clock."

A pause of indecision on Tomlinson's part. Then, a possible solution of the difficulty.

"Would you care to have a word with Miss Evelyn, sir?"

"Oh, yes, yes."

THEYDON blurted out this emphatic acceptance of the butler's suggestion, without a thought as to its possible consequences. He was racking his brain in a frenzy of uncertainty as to how he should frame his words when he heard quite clearly a woman's footsteps on the parquet flooring, and caught Evelyn Forbes' voice saying to Tomlinson: "How fortunate! Mr. Theydon is the very person I wished to speak to, but I simply dared not ring him up." Evidently the butler had neglected to replace the receiver on the hook.

The slight incident only provided Theydon with a new source of wonderment. Why should Evelyn Forbes want speech with *him* at that early hour? Perhaps she would explain. He could only hope so, and trust to luck in the choice of his own phrases.

"That you, Mr. Theydon?" came the girl's voice, sweet in its cadence yet curiously eager. "How nice of you to anticipate my unspoken thought! I have been horribly anxious ever since I read of that awful affair at the Innesmore. The poor lady's flat is next door to yours, is it not?"

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, you cannot choke off a woman's curiosity quite so easily. You see, I happen to know that Mrs. Lester's sad death affects my father in some way, and I realize now that you two were just on pins and needles to get rid of me last night so that you might talk freely."

"Miss Forbes, I assure you—"

"Wait till I've finished, and you will not be under the necessity of telling me any polite fibs. You men are all alike. You think the giddy feminine brain is not fitted to cope with mysteries, and that is where you are utterly mistaken. A woman's intuition often peers deeper than a man's logic. I—"

"Do forgive me," broke in Theydon despairingly, "but I am really most anxious to know how and where I can get a word with your father. I would not be so rude as to interrupt you if I hadn't the best of excuses. Tell me where to find him now, and I promise to give you a call immediately afterwards."

"He's at the District Attorney's office."

"At the District Attorney's office!"

Some hint of utter bewilderment in Theydon's tone must have reached the girl's alert ear.

"Ah! *Touché!*" she cried. "Now will you be good, and tell me why Dad should receive a little ivory skull by this morning's mail?"

Theydon knew that he paled. His very scalp tingled with an apprehension of some shadowy yet none the less affrighting evil. But he schooled himself to say with a semblance of calm interest:

"What exactly do you mean, Miss Forbes?"

She laughed lightly. Theydon was so flurried that he did not realize the possibility of Evelyn Forbes' being as anxious to mask her real feelings as he himself was.

"Father and I make a point of breakfasting together at nine o'clock every morning," she said. "We were talking about you, and he told me of the dreadful thing that happened to Mrs. Lester. I was reading the account of the tragedy in a newspaper, when I happened to glance at him. He was going through his letters, and I was just a trifle curious to know what was in a flat box which came by registered post. He opened it carelessly, and something fell out and rolled across the table. I picked it up, and saw that it was a small piece of ivory, carved with extraordinary skill to represent a skull. Indeed, it was so clever as to be decidedly repulsive.

"I was going to say something when I saw that the letter which was in the same box had alarmed him so greatly that, for a second or two, I thought he would faint. But he can be very strong and stern at times, and he recovered himself instantly, was quite vexed with me because I had examined the ivory skull, and forbade my going out until he had returned from the District Attorney's place. Tomlinson and the other men have orders not to admit anyone to the house, no matter on what pretext, and I'm sure the letter and its nasty little token are bound up in some way with Mrs. Lester's death. Wont you let me into the secret? I sha'n't scream, or do anything foolish, but I do think I am entitled to know what *you* know if it affects my father."

A sudden change in the girl's voice warned Theydon of a restraint of which he had been unconscious hitherto. He tried to temporize, to whittle away her fears. That was a duty he owed to Forbes, who was clearly resolved not to take his daughter into his confidence—for the present, at any rate.

"I really fail to see why you should assume some connection between the crime which was committed here on Monday night and the arrival of a somewhat singular package at your house this morning," he said reassuringly.

"Like every other woman, I jump at conclusions," she answered. "Why should this crime, in particular, have worried my father? Unfortunately, the newspapers are full of such horrid things; yet he hardly ever pays them any attention. No, Mr. Theydon, I am not mistaken. He either knew Mrs. Lester, and was shocked at her death, or saw in it some personal menace. Then comes the letter, with its obvious threat, and I am ordered to remain at home, under a strong guard, while he hurries off downtown. You have met my father, Mr. Theydon. Do you regard him as the sort of man who would rush away in a panic to consult the District Attorney without very grave and weighty reasons?"

"But you can hardly be certain that a wretched crime in this comparatively insignificant quarter of New York supplies the actual motive of Mr. Forbes' action," urged Theydon.

The girl stamped an impatient foot. He heard it distinctly.

"Of course I am certain!" she cried. "Why wont you be candid? You know I am right—I can tell it from your very voice, and your guarded way of talking—"

Inspiration came to Theydon's relief in that instant.

"Pardon the interruption," he said, "but I must point out that both of us are acting unwisely in discussing such matters over the telephone. Really, neither must say another word, except this: when I have found your father, I'll ask his permission to come and see you. Perhaps we three can arrange to meet somewhere for luncheon. That is absolutely the farthest limit to which I dare go at this moment."

"Oh, very well!"

THE receiver was hung up in a temper, and the prompt ring-off jarred disagreeably in Theydon's ear. If he was puzzled before, he was thoroughly at sea now. But he took a bold course, and cared not a jot whether or not it was a prudent one. The mere sound of Evelyn Forbes' voice had steeled his heart and conscience against

the dictates of common sense. Let the detectives think what they might, the girl's father must be allowed to carry through his plans without let or hindrance.

"Miss Beale," said Theydon, gazing fixedly into the sorrow-laden eyes of the quiet little lady whom he found seated where he had left her, "I'm going to tell you something very important, very serious, something so far-reaching and momentous that neither you nor I can measure its effect. You heard the conversation on the telephone?"

"I heard what you were saying, but could not understand much of it," said his visitor in a scared way.

"I have been trying to communicate with Mr. Forbes, but his daughter tells me that the murder of your niece seems to have affected him in a manner which is incomprehensible to her, and even more so to me, though I am acquainted with facts which her father and I have purposely kept from her knowledge. Mr. Forbes has gone hurriedly to the District Attorney. I suppose you know what that means? He is about to give a high official certain information, and it is not for you or me to interfere with his discretion. Now, if you tell the Bureau people what you have told me, namely, that Mr. Forbes was the intermediary through which Mrs. Lester received the greater part of her income, he will be brought prominently into the inquiry. You see that, don't you?"

"Yes. I suppose that something of the sort must happen."

"Well, I want you to suppress that vital fact until we know more about this affair. It will not be for long. Each of us must tell our story without reservation at some future date—whether this afternoon, or to-morrow, or a week hence, I cannot say now. But I do ask you to keep your knowledge to yourself until I have had an opportunity of consulting Mr. Forbes. I undertake to tell you the exact position of matters without delay, and I accept all responsibility for my present advice."

"I know little of the world, Mr. Theydon," said Miss Beale, rising and beginning to draw on her gloves, "but I shall be very greatly surprised if you are advising me to act otherwise than honorably. I shall most certainly not utter a word about Mr. Forbes. When all is said and done, my statement to you was largely guesswork. You must remember that I have never seen Mr. Forbes, nor hardly ever heard his name except in connection with public matters in the press. Oh, yes. I make that promise readily. I trust you implicitly."

CHAPTER VI

CLOSE QUARTERS

THEYDON escorted Miss Beale downstairs. As she passed the closed door of Number 17, the lady shivered.

"To think that within the next few days I would have been staying there with Edith, and planning evenings at the theater before going to Lake Champlain!" she murmured; there was a pitiful catch in her voice that told better than words how the remainder of her existence would be darkened by the tragedy.

At best, she was a shrinking, timid little woman, for whom life probably held but narrow interests. Such as they were, their placid content was forever shattered. The death of her niece had closed the one chief avenue leading to the outer world. She would retire to her quiet backwater of the village near Hartford, to become more faded, more insignificant, more lonely each year.

Theydon commiserated with her deeply, and did not hesitate to utter his thoughts while putting her into a cab.

"Have you no friends in New York?" he inquired. "I don't like the notion of sending you off alone into this wilderness. New York is the worst place in the world for anyone in distress. The heedless multitude seems to be callous and unsympathetic. It isn't, in reality. It simply doesn't know, and doesn't bother."

"I used to claim some acquaintances here, but I have lost track of them for years," she said. "In any event, I shall have more than enough to occupy my mind to-day. The inquest opens at

three o'clock, and I must face the ordeal of identifying Edith's body. The detective told me that this should be done by a relation, while the only other person who could act, Ann Rogers, has been nearly out of her mind since yesterday morning."

"Where are you staying?"

She mentioned a small hotel situated near Madison Square.

"I used to go there with my folk when I was a girl," she added sadly.

"Then I'll get my sister to call. You'll like her. She's a jolly good sort, and a chat with another woman will be far more beneficial than the society of detectives, and lawyers, and such like strange fowl. Keep your spirits up, Miss Beale. Nothing that you can say or do now will restore the life so cruelly taken, but you and I, each in our own way, can strive to bring the murderer to justice. I am convinced that a distinct step in that direction will be taken this very day. You can count on seeing or hearing from me as soon as possible after I have discussed matters with Mr. Forbes. Meanwhile, don't forget to have a lawyer representing you at the inquest."

THEY parted as though they were friends of long standing. Theydon was genuinely sorry for this gray-haired woman's plight, and she evidently regarded him as a kind-hearted and eminently trustworthy young man. He stood and watched the cab as it bore her off swiftly into the maelstrom of New York. He could not help thinking that seldom had he met one less fitted for the notoriety thrust upon all connected with a much-talked-of crime. When the newspaper interviewers, the photographers, the hundred and one officials with whom she must be brought in contact, were done with her, poor Miss Beale would retire to her Connecticut nook in a state of mental bewilderment that would baffle description.

In one of his books Theydon had endeavored to depict just such a middle-aged spinster confronted with a situation not wholly unlike that which now faced Miss Beale. He smiled grimly when he realized how far fiction had wandered from fact. The woman of his imagination had acted with a strength of character, a decisiveness, that outwitted and confounded certain scheming personages in the story. How different was the reality! Miss Beale, rushing across New York in a taxi, reminded him of nothing more masterful than a cage-bird turned loose in a tempest.

He was about to reënter the Innesmore, meaning to telephone to both the Madison Avenue house and the Wall Street offices, and ask for instant news of Mr. Forbes in either locality. He was so preoccupied that he failed to notice an approaching taxicab, though the driver was signaling, and even tooted a motor-horn loudly in the endeavor to attract his attention.

He did, however, catch his own name, and halted.

"Hi!" cried the man, "you *are* Mr. Theydon, aren't you?"

Then Theydon recognized Evans, the taxi-driver who had brought him from Madison Avenue.

"Hullo!" he said. "Any news of the gray car?"

"Yep. Guess I have," was the somewhat surprising answer. "When I dropped you last night, I got a fare to the Pennsylvania Depot. Then I took a gentleman to the Ritz-Carlton, an', as I felt like eatin' a bit, I pulled into a cross-street. I was having some lunch when I happened to speak about the gray car to one of our boys. 'That's odd,' he said. 'Quarter of an hour ago I took a theater party to Fifty-ninth Street, an' a gray landaulette stopped in front of a house where some swell Chinks live. It kem along from the West Side, too.' He didn't pipe the number, so there may be nothing in it, after all, but I thought you might like to hear what my friend said."

"Was the car empty? Did it call for some one?"

"That's the queer part of it. I asked pertickler. *This* gray car brought a small, youngish guy, who skipped up the steps like a monkey, and went in afore you could say 'knife.' Another guy might ha' bin watchin' for him through the keyhole—the door was open that quick. Then the car went

off. My friend wouldn't ha' given a second thought to it if the Chink hadn't vanished like a ghost in a movie. That's why he remembered the color of the car."

Theydon tried to look as though Evans' statement merely puzzled him, whereas his mind was already busy with the extraordinary coincidences which the haphazard events of a few hours had produced. Was the Far East bound up in some mysterious way with Mrs. Lester's death? Did the crime possess a political significance? If so, an explanation by Forbes was more than ever demanded.

"Your informant was not mistaken about the house being tenanted by Chinese, I suppose?" he said.

"No, sir. He's always in that district. His garage is back of Fifty-ninth Street. He knows most of them Chinks by sight."

"Then *that* gray car can hardly have been *our* gray car," commented Theydon, deeming it wise to prevent the sharp-witted taxi-driver from jumping at conclusions.

"I guess not, sir. Still, I just took the liberty—"

"I'm very much obliged to you, of course. I said a dollar, didn't I? Here you are. Keep an eye open for XY 1314, and let me know if you hear or see anything of it."

"Thank you, sir." Then Evans lifted his eyes to the block of buildings. "A nasty business, this murder which was pulled off here the other night," he went on. "One would hardly b'lieve it possible for such things to take place in New York nowadays."

MUCH as he was disinclined for gossip of the sort at the moment, Theydon saw that he must endeavor to dissociate the gray car and the crime from their dangerous juxtaposition in the man's mind, and so he spoke about Mrs. Lester's attractive appearance, harped on the apparent aimlessness of the deed, hinted darkly at clues in the possession of the police, and finally got rid of the well-meaning chauffeur. Back he went to his telephone, and having ascertained that Mr. Forbes was fully expected to put in an appearance in his office before noon, settled down to read the newspapers.

They contained sensational but fairly accurate accounts of the tragedy. One enterprising journal had published an interview with Bates, whom the reporter described as "a typical British manservant," which was amusing, since Bates had "retired non-commissioned officer" written all over his square frame and soldierly features. The same journalist spoke of Theydon himself, and had even ferreted out the fact that Mrs. Lester was the widow of a New York lawyer who had died at Shanghai. On reflection, Theydon saw that there was nothing unusual in this statement. The connection between the metropolitan press and the bar is old and intimate, and scores of juniors must remember Arthur Lester's beginnings.

Resolved to possess his soul in patience till twelve o'clock, the hour being yet barely eleven-thirty A. M., Theydon tackled a page of reviews, since there is always consolation for a writer in learning at second-hand what sheer drivel others can produce. He was growling at the discovery that some hapless assayist had appropriated a title which he himself had marked down for his next book, when the door-bell rang. He did not give much heed, because so many tradesmen called during the course of each morning, and so he was surprised and startled when Bates announced:

"Mr. Forbes to see you, sir."

HAD a powerful spring concealed in the seat of his chair been released suddenly, Theydon could not have bounced to his feet with greater speed. Forbes came in. He was pale, but self-contained and clear-eyed.

"Forgive an unceremonious visit," he said. "I'm glad to find you at home. I meant to arrive here sooner, but I was detained on business of some importance."

By this time, Bates had closed the door; Theydon explained his own presence in the flat by saying that within a few minutes he would have been telephoning again to Wall Street.

"Ah! Did you speak to Macdonald?" said Forbes, dropping into a

chair with a curious lassitude of manner which did not escape Theydon.

"Yes. I have been most anxious to have a word with you—"

Forbes broke in with a short laugh.

"You would get nothing out of Macdonald," he said. "He knows that my visits to the Chinese Envoy are few and far between, and generally have to do with— But what is it now? Why should *you* be so perturbed when I mention the Chinese Envoy?"

Theydon was literally astounded, and did not strive to hide his agitation. But he was by no means tongue-tied. Now, most emphatically, was he determined to have done with pretense. Whether by accident or design, Forbes had placed himself with his back to the window; the younger man deliberately crossed the room, pulled up the blind, thus admitting the flood of light which comes only from the upper third of a window, and sat down in such a position that Forbes was compelled to turn in order to face him.

"Before you utter another word, Mr. Forbes," he said gravely, "let me tell you that in my efforts to trace your whereabouts I also called up Madison Avenue. Miss Forbes came to the telephone. She said you had gone to the District Attorney's office. By some feminine necromancy, too, she divined the link which binds you with the death of Mrs. Lester. She was distressed on your account, and I was hard put to it to extricate myself from the risk of saying something which I might regret. I—"

"What do you imply by that remark?" interrupted Forbes, piercing the other with a look that was strangely reminiscent of his daughter's candid scrutiny.

"I imply the serious fact that I know who visited Mrs. Lester before she met her death. I not only heard her visitor's arrival and departure, but saw him at the corner of these mansions while on my way home from Daly's Theater, and again when he posted a letter in the letter-box on the same corner. If such unwonted interest on my part in the movements of one who was then a complete stranger surprises you, let me remind you that only a few minutes earlier I had stood by his side at the door of the theater, and heard him telling his daughter that he intended to walk to the Union League Club."

Forbes smiled, but utttered no word. His expression was inscrutable. His pallor reminded Theydon of the tint of ivory, that waxen white Dutch *grisaille* beloved of fifteenth-century illuminators of manuscripts. His silence was disturbing, almost irritating—his manner singularly calm. These negative indications conveyed absolutely nothing to Theydon, who, for the second time in their brief acquaintance, found himself in the ridiculous position of one explaining a fault rather than, as he imagined, arraigning a man under suspicion.

"So we had better dispense with ambiguities, Mr. Forbes," he went on, speaking with a precision that sounded oddly in his own ears. "It was you who called on Mrs. Lester on Monday night, you who posted the letter she wrote to Miss Beale, at Hartford, Connecticut, you whom the police are now searching for. I have contrived thus far to keep your secret, but the situation is passing out of my control. I would help you if I could—"

"Why?"

THE monosyllable, sharp and insistent, was disconcerting as the unexpected crack of a whip, but Theydon answered valiantly:

"Because of the monstrous absurdities with which fate has plagued me during the past two days. I appeal now for outspokenness, so I set an example. Had it not been for your daughter's remarkably attractive appearance, I should not, in all likelihood, have given a second glance at my neighbors on the steps of the theater. But I cannot forget that I did see both her and you—indeed, Miss Forbes herself recalled the incident—and the close questioning of the Bureau men who were here last night showed me the folly of imagining that I could deny all knowledge of you. I recognize now that some impish contriving of circumstances forced this knowledge upon me. The sudden downpour of rain, and the

fact that I was delayed by a slight accident to my cab, conspired with the apparently simple chance which led me to overhear the conversation between Miss Forbes and yourself. I tried hard to baffle the detectives—"

"Again I ask *'Why?'*"

Theydon was rapidly being wound up to a pitch of excited resentment.

"Why?" he cried. "Was I not your guest? How could I come from a house where I had been admitted to a delightful intimacy, and tell the representatives of the law that my host was the man they were looking for?"

During some seconds Forbes bent his eyes on the floor, seemingly in deep thought.

"Theydon," he said at last, looking up in his direct way, "I am your senior by a good many years—am old enough, as the saying goes, to be your father. I may venture, therefore, to give you a piece of sound advice. Pack a suitcase, catch the afternoon train for Bar Harbor, and go for a walking tour in Maine. When I was your age, and a junior in a bank, I had to take my holidays in May; each year of ten I tramped that corner of America. I recommend it as a playground. It will appeal to your literary instincts, and it has the immeasurable advantage just now of being practically as remote from New York as the Nevada Desert.

It must not be forgotten that Theydon was a romancer, an idealist. The "lounge suit" of the modern tailor no more hampers the play of such qualities than the beaten armor of the Age of Chivalry.

"If my departure for Maine will relieve Miss Forbes of anxiety in your behalf, I'll go," he vowed.

Forbes regarded him with a new interest.

"I believe you mean that," he said.

"I do."

"But I cannot send you out of town on a false pretense. It was your safety and well-being, not my daughter's, that I was thinking of."

"What have *I* to fear?"

"I do not know. I am like a man wandering by night in a jungle alive with fearsome beasts and reptiles."

"Yet you had some reason for suggesting my prompt departure."

"Yes. It is an absurd thing to say, but I believe I am putting you in danger of your life by coming here this morning."

"Can't you speak plainly, Mr. Forbes? What good purpose do you serve by holding forth these vague terrors? If, as Miss Forbes told me, you have visited the District Attorney, I take it you made yourself clear to the authorities—assuming, that is, you went there in connection with the amazing conditions which seem to be bound up with this crime."

"There is a certain class of knowledge which is in itself dangerous to those who possess it, no matter whether or not it affects them in any particular. I still recommend you, in good faith, to leave New York to-day."

"If my own safety is the only consideration I refuse as readily as I agreed before."

THEYDON'S tone grew somewhat impatient. He really fancied that Forbes was trifling with him. Indeed, a queer doubt of the man's complete sanity now peeped up in him. Forbes was regarded as a crank by a large section of the public on account of his peace propaganda: if that opinion was justified, why should he not be eccentric in other respects? It was fantastic, almost stupid, to look upon him as responsible for Mrs. Lester's murder, but there was always a chance that he might be utilizing the chance which led him to her apartments shortly before the crime was committed to cover himself and his movements with a veil of spurious mystery. In a word, though Theydon had likened his visitor's face to a mask of ivory, he had momentarily forgotten the ominous token found on Mrs. Lester's body, and duplicated in Forbes' own house by the morning's post.

Forbes spread wide his hands with the air of one who heard, but was allowing his thoughts to wander. When next he spoke, it was only to increase the crazy inconsequence of their talk.

"Later—perhaps to-day—perhaps it may never be necessary—I may explain

myself to your heart's content," he said slowly. "At present, I am here to ask a favor. In the first place, is Mrs. Lester's flat in charge of the police?"

"I suppose so," said Theydon.

"Is there a detective or policeman on duty there now?"

"I am not sure. I imagine there is not. When the Bureau men and I came out after midnight, they locked the door and took away the key. The —er—body is at the mortuary, awaiting the opening of the inquest at three o'clock."

"Ah! I hoped that would be so. Can you ascertain for certain?"

"But why?"

"Because I wish to go in there. And that brings me to the favor I seek. The secretary of these flats, even the janitor, should have a master-key. Borrow it on some pretext. They will give it to you."

"Really, Mr. Forbes—" gasped Theydon, voicing his surprise as a preliminary to a decided refusal. He was interrupted by the insistent clang of the telephone.

"Pardon me one moment," he said. "I'll just see who that is."

The inquirer was Evelyn Forbes.

"I've waited patiently—" she began, but he stopped her instantly by saying that her father was with him.

"Please ask him to come to the 'phone," she said.

Forbes rose at once. He merely assured the girl that he was engaged in important business, and would be home soon after the luncheon hour. Meanwhile, she was not to go out, and his orders must be obeyed to the letter.

"Now, Theydon," he said, coming back to the sitting-room, "what about that key?"

The most extraordinary feature of an extraordinary case was the way in which the mere sound of Evelyn Forbes' voice stilled any qualms of conscience in Theydon's breast. He knew he was acting foolishly in conducting a blind inquiry on his own account, an inquiry which might well arouse the anger and active resentment of the police, but he offered a sop to his better judgment by consulting Bates.

Then came a veritable surprise.

"The fact is, sir," admitted Bates nervously, "we 'ave Ann Rogers' key in the kitchen. When she went aw'y on Monday she left it here, bein' afride of losin' it. Of course, she took it on Tuesday mornin', an', after goin' from one fit of hysterics into another, she gev it to us again."

Theydon's face was eloquent of the disapproving view he took of this avowal.

"Did you tell the police?" he said.

"No sir. My missus an' me clean forgot all about it."

"So, while Mrs. Lester was being killed, the key of her flat was actually in your possession?"

"I suppose it might be put that w'y, sir."

BY this time Theydon was becoming exasperated at the veritable conspiracy which fate had engineered for the express purpose, apparently, of entangling him in an abominable crime.

"Why on earth didn't you mention such an important fact to the detectives?" he almost shouted. "Don't you see they are bound to think—"

"Oh, a plague on the detectives and on what they think!" broke in Forbes imperiously. "It doesn't matter a straw what they *think*, and very little what they *do*. This affair goes a long way beyond the island of Manhattan, Theydon. The vital point is that your man has the key. Where is it? Let us go in there at once!"

"You offered me some advice, Mr. Forbes," said Theydon firmly. "Let me now return it in kind. If you wish to examine Mrs. Lester's flat, why not seek the permission of the Detective Bureau?"

"My good fellow, I have spent a valuable hour this morning in persuading the District Attorney that the less the Bureau interferes in my behalf the more effectually shall I be protected. I don't want any detective within a mile of my house or office. But, as I have told you already, explanations must wait. . . . . You, Bates, look a man who can hold his tongue. Do so, and with Mr. Theydon's permission, I'll make it worth your while. Now give me that key."

Theydon was silenced, if not convinced. He realized, of course, that he must make a full confession to the Bureau before the sun went down, but argued that he might as well see the present adventure through.

Soon he and Forbes were standing at the door of Number 17. Forbes curbed his impatience sufficiently to permit of anyone who happened to be in the interior answering the summons of the electric bell. Of course, no one came.

The aromatic odor of the burnt joss-stick still clung to the suite of apartments, and Forbes noticed it at once.

"Where was the body found?" he asked.

Theydon led the way to the bedroom. He related Steingall's theory of the crime, and pointed out its seeming aimlessness. So far as the police could ascertain from the half-crazy servant, none of Mrs. Lester's jewels was missing. Even her gold purse, containing a roll of notes, was found on the dressing-table. He did not know that the detectives had taken away a few scraps of torn paper thrown carelessly into the grate, and had carefully gathered up a tiny snake-like curl of white ash from the tiled hearth, which, on analysis, would probably prove to be the remains of the joss-stick.

FORBES gazed at the impression on the side of the bed as though the body of the woman whom he had last seen in full possession of her grace and beauty were still lying there. The vision seemed to affect him profoundly. He did not speak for fully a minute, and when speech came, his voice was low and strained.

"Tell me everything you know," he said. "The Bureau men took an unusual step in admitting you to their conclave. They must have had some motive. Tell me what they said—their very words, if you can recall them."

Theydon was uncomfortably aware of a strange compulsion to obey. He gave an almost exact account of his talk with Steingall and Clancy. Then followed questions, eager, searching, almost uncanny in their prescience.

"The little one—who strikes me as having more brains than I credit the ordinary New York policeman with—spoke of the evil deities of China. How did such an extraordinary topic crop up?"

"In connection with the joss-stick."

"Yes, yes. But I don't see the inference."

"Mr. Steingall alluded to the habit some ladies have of burning such incense in their houses; whereupon Clancy remarked that the Chinese use them to propitiate harmful spirits."

"Was that all?"

Theydon felt insensibly that his companion was hinting at something more definite, but he was bound in honor to respect the confidence reposed in him.

"I don't quite understand," he temporized.

"Was nothing said as to the finding of some object, such as a small article obviously Chinese in origin, which might turn an inquirer's thoughts into that channel?"

"The conversation I am relating took place the moment after we had entered the flat. We were standing in the hall. It was wholly the outcome of the strange smell which was immediately perceptible."

Forbes passed a hand over his eyes.

"I wonder," he breathed.

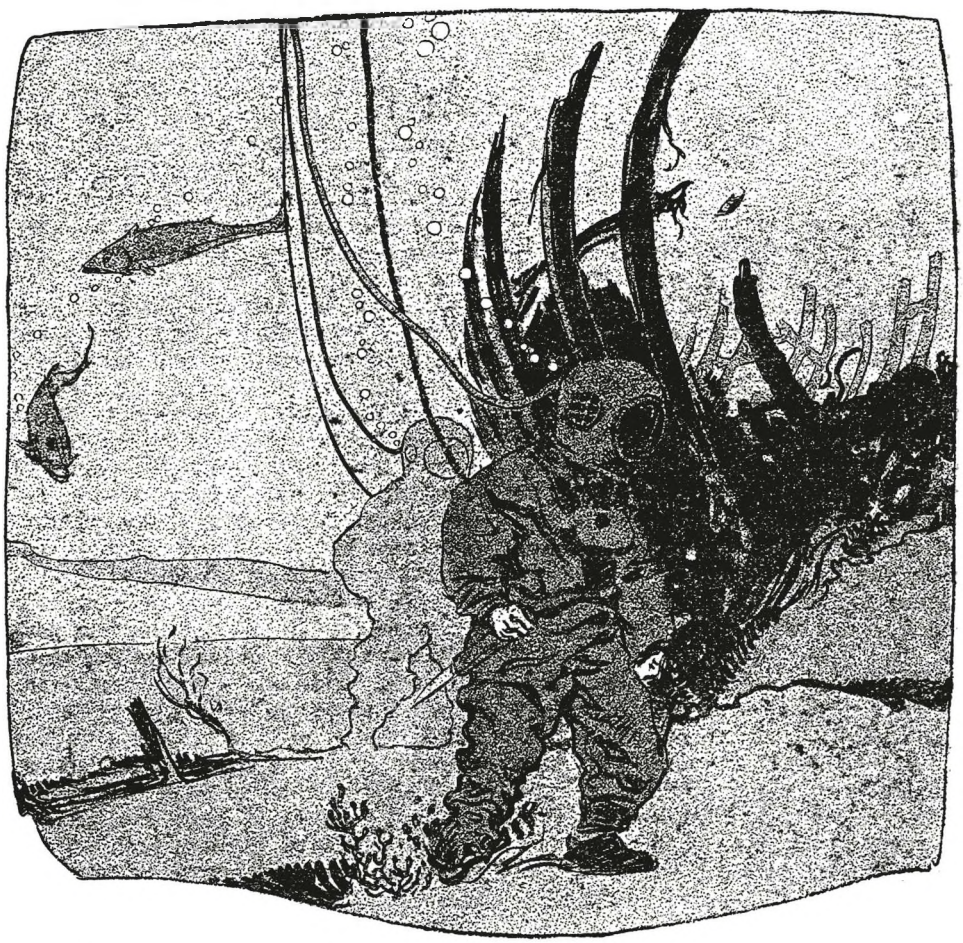
Then, turning quickly on Theydon, he repeated the question.

"Are you quite sure they did not mention the discovery in this room of any object which could be regarded, even remotely, as a sign or symbol left by the murderer to show that his crime was an act of vengeance or retaliation?"

Theydon hesitated. Unquestionably he was in a position of no ordinary difficulty. But his doubts were solved by an interruption that brought his heart into his mouth, because a thin, high-pitched voice came through the half-open door:

"Are you thinking of a small ivory skull, Mr. Forbes?"

The next installment of *"Number 17"* will appear in the August BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE — on the news-stands July 1st.



Loot from *La Lutine*

by

Frederic Reddale

THE Bardeens were coming to New York on one of Matt's periodic furloughs from the Lighthouse Service, and were due to occupy the guest-room in my modest bachelor diggings,—three rooms, bath and kitchenette,—overlooking the Drive.

For Matt Bardeen himself I had prepared a little surprise in the guise of a flat-projected map of the world, mounted on heavy board, framed, and hung conspicuously on the living-room wall. On this I had pricked out with some red-headed pins the scenes of his various exploits as dipsy diver throughout the Seven Seas.

Scarcely had we settled ourselves for the postprandial smokes on that very first night, when Matt spotted that map. Going close and peering thereat from under his heavy thatch of eyebrow, he

traced out each separate location with a gnarled and knotted forefinger, grunting and chuckling his appreciation over each. Then he faced about to where his wife and I had been watching him.

"Here, lad," said the old diver, "give me one of those little red-headed jiggers. Here's a place you've missed."

I gave him a pin and looked over his shoulder as he pressed it home—on a, to me, totally new spot in the North Sea off the coast of Holland! Stepping closer, I caught the locality—the coast of Vlieland, in the Friesian Islands. Matt chuckled as he lowered his huge bulk into my best and widest Morris chair.

"Stole a march on you, eh, what?" he rumbled. "Ya-as, ya-as!"

"Laugh all you like," I countered, "—but you don't stir out of that chair or touch pillow this night until you've got the yarn out of your system and told me what you were doing that time among the Dutchmen."

Matt nodded acquiescence and proceeded to reel off this moving tale:

LIKE many of these treasure salvage experiences, the beginnings reach back anywhere from a hundred to three hundred years. This yarn began 'way in 1797. In that year the British Admiral Duncan captured at the great sea-fight off Camperdown a French frigate named *La Lutine;* she was refitted an' transferred to the English flag.

Well, along in 1799 there was a lot of specie due from English firms and the Government itself to Continental points. So £1,500,000 in gold consigned to Dutch an' Flemish bankers was shipped aboard that same frigate *La Lutine,* under the English flag, thirty-six guns. Remember, Napoleon was tryin' t' sweep the seas, which was the reason they used a warship for that short trip across the stormy North Sea.

But *La Lutine* never reached port, bein' caught in a screamer of a gale an' driven ashore on one of those outlying sand islands that guard the coast of Holland—just like our Great South Beach yonder. Only one of the crew escaped an' carried the news t' London. That much is history.

Ship an' specie were insured at Lloyds, an' the loss almost ruined many of the underwriters. But they paid up like little men an' then began t' cast about for chances o' salvage—'cause by all odds the wreck an' its contents belonged to the insurers. But on account of ill feeling between Holland and England, *La Lutine* was claimed by the Dutch because she had sunk in Dutch waters. Meantime a little of the gold was recovered from time to time by fishermen—no proper divin', you understand.

Well, m' son, the case dragged along for years, until finally, long after peace had been declared an' old Napoleon-One-Eye was bottled up on St. Helena, the Netherlands Government ceded half of whatever might be recovered from the wreck to an English company —which was little enough under the circumstances. Fact was, those Dutch fishermen had found rich pickings, an' hated t' give 'em up. You bet!

In 'fifty-seven a salvage company was organized in London, an' that year took out £22,000; in the next ten years £100,000 additional was recovered. When I came on the job, it was estimated that there was at least a million pounds left in the wreck of *La Lutine,* or what remained of her—call it five million dollars. Those Englishmen mostly employed a divin'-bell, on account of bad under-water conditions, which explains their poor fishin', 'cause with a divin'-bell your field of operations don't begin t' compare with what a real dipsy diver can cover.

Among other things, they brought up a chair, a table an' the ship's bell; these are preserved at Lloyds in London today, the bell bein' used t' call members to order when there's news of a wreck, or somethin'. That's where I saw them an' where I first got this yarn about *La Lutine.*

'TWAS after that whaleback job in the Thames, an' the Vigo Bay job I was tellin' you about, that I first heard of *La Lutine.* Some of the London boys over there—mighty fine fellers, every one—took quite a shine t' me, bein' a Yank, as they said, an' told me about a new salvage company that

was bein' formed t' clean up *La Lutine* for good an' all. So they towed me up t' Lloyds in what they call the City, showed me the table, the chair an' the bell for evidence, an' told me the whole yarn.

Upshot was that I signed on an' went t' Holland with the rest of that English wreckin' outfit—me an' another diver, Archie Blake, as good a man as ever trod in leaden-soled shoes, an' white as they make 'em. Ya-as, ya-as. Poor Blake! 'Twas him that lost his life on the coast of Afriky a year or so later.

On lookin' over the location where lay what was left of *La Lutine* I found that she'd gone ashore between two of those sand islands right in a narrow channel called the Vlie Stroom—or Vlie Stream. There was a patch of a sand island lying south an' east, but that only made things worse, for the whole strength of those North Sea tides, ebb an' flow, poured through that Vlie Stroom, twice every twenty-four hours, out of or into the Zuyder Zee, Holland's great inland lake. So now I began to see why they'd used a divin'-bell an' also why so little of the loot had been recovered all those years. 'Cause why! A regular dipsy diver could only work in slack water!

However, we had the best modern gear an' two up-t'-date men, if I do say it, an' I kinder thought me an' Archie Blake could at least earn our "wyges," as they say in London. But after we'd both been down t' take a look, I says to Archie an' the wreckin' skipper:

"Man alive," says I, "what you want here is an American suction sand-pump."

"I know it, Bardeen," he says, "but the Government wont allow us to use one."

"And why not?" I wanted to know.

"Well," says he, "if you arsk me, I should say they was afraid that a sand-dredge'd spoil the fishin' hereabouts." And he winked knowin'ly.

'Course, m' son, I was wise at once; you don't have t' tap a real dipsy diver on his copper helmet more than once t' get his attention. What I sensed was that those Zuyder Zee fishermen, what with dredgin' an' baitin' dipsy leads with tallow, had been enjoyin' quite a golden harvest for more than three or four generations, an' was consumedly afraid they'd be robbed or jobbed out of half their livin' from *La Lutine*. Ya-as, ya-as. The Dutch may be slow, but they're mighty sure.

Now here's what Blake an' me found out when we'd been under water an' prowled over the wreck—what was left of it, that is: In the hundred years the old frigate had been under water her decks had fallen in, her plankin' ditto, an' only her tough oak ribs were left, like the bones of a skeleton. Of masts, sails or riggin' there wasn't a sign, or else they'd sunk, rotted or been swept away by the swift tides.

As for the treasure itself, we savvied that it lay here, there an' everywhere. Originally, as the records in London showed, it had been packed in wooden chests—mostly golden guineas of the mintage of King George. But the cases had rotted an' the specie had sunk 'way down to *La Lutine's* keel timbers an' would have t' be grubbed for—raisin' planks here, dynamitin' there, scoopin' up what seemed t' be promisin' muck somewhere else. The only good prospect we had was that the gold'd be mostly amidships or aft, and so we didn't trouble ourselves about the fore parts of the ship.

SO me an' Blake mapped out a regular under-water campaign, goin' down in pairs or singly at every slack, workin' by electric torches or headlights. What timbers or wreckage we couldn't pry loose with our crowbars we'd hitch to a chain an' hoist from the wreckin'-tug; what she couldn't handle we'd dynamite on. Our theory was that in order t' get at that million of gold, we'd better first clear away all the muck, takin' plenty of time, knowin' that the gold'd be there or thereabouts when we got down t' cases.

Now an' then we'd come across a keg or a chest that wasn't all rotted away, packed solid with guineas; an' when we did, which wasn't often, we'd send it aloft an' celebrate by knockin' off work till the next tide. Also now an' then we'd spy a handful of gold in a sort of pocket. This we'd scoop up

into a handy bucket. So the dreary job went on, week in an' week out, but all the while the tally of loot from the *Lutine* was pilin' up, bit by bit, in the safe of that wreckin'-tug.

Now, lemme tell you, m' son, it wasn't easy goin' all those weeks. From the very first we had a bitter feud with those fishermen of the Zuyder Zee, though we never so much as opened our heads once. Always there was a lugger or two or three hangin' about when Archie Blake an' I were goin' down or comin' up. The beggars'd cast their nets right over where we was workin', hopin' t' get a case ag'in' us for hurtin' their fisheries, one of the stipulations of the Dutch Government being that the fishin' mustn't be interfered with.

Another time they cut the anchor cable of the wreckin'-boat in a heavy fog at night, an' the whole outfit would have gone ashore on Vlieland if the crew hadn't been on the job. An' when me an' Archie Blake'd be under water at night, only a good lookout on deck an' at the air-pumps kept the Dutchies from sneakin' up in the fog an' darkness an' slashin' our hose. Oh, the beggars exhausted every bag o' tricks they knew t' prevent us from spoilin' their gold fishin'. Ya-as, ya-as. But I wouldn't 'a' missed it for a farm out in Ohio!

Then came the time when we had t' place a couple shots of dynamite t' lift some heavy timbers. Lord, man, you'd 'a' thought we'd blowed all Holland out of her soggy moorings in the North Sea! The holler those fishermen put up! Swore on a stack o' Bibles that we'd killed millions o' fish; that the seining an' the hook fishin' was ruined; that there'd be a famine of herrin' an' sturgeon an' hake from Antwerp t' Rotterdam; that the poor'd starve an' the rich'd go without caviar! All on account of one poor little wreckin' outfit in the Zuyder Zee!

"GUESS that'll hold you fellers!" was what those fishermen said when they sent their bitter protest to the Hague. First thing we know, a Government boat ranged alongside of our outfit. The Johnny lieutenant aboard was very polite, also very fluent, an' he spoke United States like a native. But "no more dynamite" was his ultimatum, under pain of forfeiting our charter!

Our skipper gave his oath, so that settled that, an' for the next month or so we went about our business, Blake and yours truly goin' down regular an' sendin' up somethin' yellow an' hard an' glitterin' from every trip. In fact, we averaged a hundred pound a day, which was pretty good pickin's for dipsy fishin' 'mid sand an' mud an' rushin' tides in sixty foot o' dirty water an' among a lot of hard wreckage that'd snarl life-line or air-hose quick as winkin' unless a man kept a bright lookout all the time.

But never once did those Dutch galliots desert us; some one or two or three were hoverin' about day and night. Take it from me, son, I guess they pretty well sized up what we saved every trip—an' it broke their hearts.

I guess what started the whole rookus was the sight of us sendin' off t' London an iron safe full of guineas, loot from the *Lutine*. By virtue of the truce whereby we'd agreed not t' use dynamite it had been stipulated that the fishermen were not to use nets or tallow-baited dipsy leads or to approach within one cable's length of the wreck. An' the rule was enforced on our part, 'cause the skipper of our tug threatened to open fire from our little machine-gun on the fo'c'stle if they came within range.

But the beggars had a card up their sleeve which they hoped would wipe us out an' discourage any other salvage operations for all time. What it was we only knew after the attempt came off—which is what you writer fellers call bein' wise after the event. Seems they'd sent to Rotterdam for the best dipsy diver money'd procure an' promised him five hundred gulden if he could turn the trick their way.

WELL, m' son, November came along, with short days an' long nights, the latter black with rain an' fog up aloft, but me an' Blake was reelin' off our four trips under water every twenty-four hours an' sendin' up some loot every time. That Zuyder Zee does

certainly breed its own weather—thick yellow mist with snow or rain an' sometimes a howlin' gale off the North Sea, which, take it from me, son, is the meanest stretch of water in the whole Seven Seas.

Blake an' me had gone down, accordin' t' the slack o' the tide, at four bells after midnight,—two A. M., as you'd reckon,—since we weren't losin' a single trick; nothin' but steady pluggin' would ever lift that loot from the *Lutine,* we figgered—an' we was 'most through. Ya-as, ya-as. Besides, we was both sick an' tired of the blessed job. As for me, I was honin' t' get back t' home an' mother. An' perhaps those feelin's made us both a trifle careless.

While we was under water, with a fog thick as mush over the Zuyder Zee, a fishin' smack had sneaked up, all lights dowsed, right over where we was workin'. Remember that for generations those Dutch fishermen had been projeckin' around that wreck, so that they could fairly smell its exact location. On this smack was the Rotterdam diver,—one dam' diver, says you, —with all his gear. They dropped anchor so quietly that no one on our wreckin' outfit suspicioned they was near, an' the fellow slipped overside.

He had only one set of orders, t' cut our air-hose an' make his get-away—thus, perchance, leavin' two dead dipsy divers to discourage all future expeditions after that gold in *La Lutine.*

P'rhaps the beggar had been there before, but anyway, he must have known how things lay about the wreck, for he came on us bold as Billy-be-damned. Blake an' me was both bendin' over a rich little pocket which we'd spotted on an earlier trip that day, an' was scoopin' up handfuls of guineas into our iron bucket.

Now, m' son, I've told you that every dipsy diver has a sixth sense—somethin' that tells him when some matter out of the ordinary is due t' come off. In the case I'm tellin' of it must have been the wash of the water caused by that Rotterdam cuss approachin'. Anyway, we both straightens up at the same instant. He likewise sensed that we'd caught him instead of our bein' caught unawares; an' bein' intent on earnin' his money, he makes a wicked swipe at Blake's air-hose with the big broad-bladed, heavy-backed knife that every dipsy diver carried in those days. 'Twas like as if you'd taken a razor to a pipe-cleaner! Blake's hose an' life-line went like that—*pouf!*

But that same instant—for it was life against life, remember, an' I sensed that this third man meant t' do us dirt —my own knife flashed. I couldn't reach his hose nor his life-line, but I did the next best thing—I let the whole North Sea into his divin'-suit with one broad, rakin' slash! Then I seized Archie Blake around the middle—him suffocatin' an' drownin' by the minute —an' yanked my own life-line. In less'n five minutes we was both on the deck of that wreckin'-derrick an' our helpers was givin' first-aid treatment to a half-drowned dipsy diver, by name Archie Blake, whom they all loved. An' by the token, there must have been a dead Dutchman in the mud an' silt around the wreck of *La Lutine!* How many lives that old hooker had cost, first an' last, I hate to think of.

MATT BARDEEN ceased, wiping away the beads of sweat on face and forehead evoked by the strenuous memory of this most unusual adventure in foreign waters.

"Of course Archie Blake recovered," I wanted to know.

"Sure," said Matt. "He wasn't really hurted—save in his feelin's t' think that a blamed Dutch diver an' some scaly Dutch fishermen could put across a job like that on him—the smartest dipsy diver out of London town."

"And did you get all of the loot from *La Lutine?*" I asked.

"All we got in that five-months' trip was about half a million. Whether there's any more left, I can't say. P'r'aps those Dutch fishermen got a lot in their hundred years' fishin'. But I guess those English underwriters'll have to be satisfied with what me an' Archie Blake sent home, 'cause I don't believe any other outfit'll ever tackle the job again, what with bad water, cruel tides, cunnin' Dutch fishermen an' rascally divers from Rotterdam."

The "WAR BRIDEGROOM"

by
Albert Payson Terhune

THE whole thing started with a dollar cigar. "Corona-Corona" was the brand. Its label was not nearly so garish as that on Jim Hunter's average cigar. The cigar itself was no larger, and it cost only ninety-five cents more.

Cigars of any sort were an event in Jim's life. On thirty dollars a week, a head clerk with a wife cannot smoke even five cents' worth of tobacco at one sitting without feeling the pinch.

Jim Hunter was head clerk for Cawthorpe & Watts. He had been working for the firm ever since he left grammar-school at thirteen. And his rise from errand-boy to head-clerkship had consumed the seventeen most glorious years of life.

He was a good, honest, conscientious worker. He deserved every penny of salary he received. But he did not much more than deserve it. For he belonged to the non-commissioned majority—the majority that does the task set for it and does it well—and does no more; because Nature has withheld from it the curse of imagination and the blessing of initiative.

At twenty-five Jim had married Molly Mercer. Her father was a broken-down clergyman, living on a pension that a secular firm would have been ashamed to give an old employee. And from childhood, her knowledge of practical economy had been of the post-graduate order. When her father died and she married Jim, the bridegroom's salary seemed positive affluence to her—just at first. Soon she knew better; and life became to her what it usually becomes to the careful wife of a New York clerk.

Still, they were moderately happy. Also, there were windfalls. In fat years there was an extra week's pay at Christmas. And there

"WHOSE WIFE?" "Dollars and Cents" and "A Return to Youth—and Trouble" are some of the stories that have made Mr. Terhune famous. This is one of his best.

was always a fortnight's vacation with pay in summer.

Then came a year when there was no extra thirty dollars on Christmas week—when, instead, four men were discharged; and there was an office rumor that salaries were to be shaved. Over on the other side of the world certain monarchs and statesmen, whose names sounded like excerpts from a wine-list, had decreed to turn Europe into an armed camp. Three thousand miles of open water had served as a splendid conductor for the war-shock. And it smote and paralyzed American business.

JIM was not one of the four luckless employees of Cawthorpe & Watts who joined several million other employerless employees in celebrating the Yuletide by a search for new jobs. Nor was he one of the twelve other men whom his firm "let go" during the next year. But all this meant a tremendous access of extra work for him; and he did it tremendously hard—all the harder when Turner, next in succession to him, announced loudly one day (to nobody in particular and standing as close as could be to the glass partition of the junior partner's office) that he stood ready, in case of emergency, to do Hunter's work, and do it well, for ten dollars a week less than the head clerk was receiving.

Worry began to do grotesque things to Jim's eyes and hair. And he was pitifully grateful that he had sternly denied himself luxuries in the better years, in order to lay by a little money for just such a crisis as this.

Two thousand dollars or so in bank, at a time like that, means all the difference between bearable worry and insomnia-torture.

There was no vacation that summer for any of the overworked handful of wage-earners who now kept the Cawthorpe & Watts business alive. In the early winter old man Cawthorpe died, and Hutchins Watts, the junior partner, took sole command.

As a horse feels the change of drivers, so did the staff. The old steady touch on the reins was changed to a jerky, spasmodic tugging. Watts drove his men hard and himself harder. He even lowered the pay-roll by another cut or two; and he let his nerves and temper go to wreck along with those of his workers.

But he had one safety-valve that was denied them. He could—and frequently did—take the razor-edge off his troubles by drinking. And not a soul in his employ dared do that.

But with the dawn of summer, Watts relaxed his savage slave-driving. The wrinkles began to smooth out from his forehead. His manner gained back some of its old jauntiness. Drink now made him jolly instead of ferocious. No more men were fired. Indeed, two extra clerks were taken on. Business was picking up. But it was picking up far too slowly to justify the change in Watts.

Which brings us by tedious stages to the dollar cigar.

HUNTER went into the private office with a batch of papers to be signed. Watts had been out at lunch for an unconscionably long time, that day. And a blind man with a fairly good sense of smell could have told that he had not visited a temperance restaurant.

He was swinging back and forth in his swivel chair, a newly opened box of cigars in front of him, a smile of calm bliss on his plump face. He greeted Jim with positive effusion, signed the papers with a curlycue flourish, and as the head clerk was departing, called after him:

"Hey, have a cigar, Hunter. These are the real thing. First of the kind I've had the nerve to buy, in God knows when. In famine times a man hasn't got the nerve to pay twenty-five dollars a box for smokes."

Hunter gazed at the box in respectful wonder. He usually bought cigars singly—never more than five at a time. And this box held twenty-five. That meant the cigars cost a dollar apiece. It did not seem possible.

He would have lavished still more amazement on the display of wealth had not Watts' manner embarrassed him and made him want to get back to his own desk.

But Watts had caught up the box

and was thrusting it, a little shakily, toward Jim.

"Have one," he invited cordially. "Smoke it after dinner. Don't go wasting a Corona-Corona on an empty stomach. Want you to take it, to celebrate with me. This is an occasion—a real he-occasion. It's custom to hand round cigars when man becomes a husb'nd."

"Husband?" repeated Hunter. "I congratulate you, sir; I didn't know."

"Didn' know I was married? Well, I am. I'm the newly wed husb'nd of—of whole fam'ly of war-brides. Whole harem of 'em. Some of 'em have brought me nice big dowry. The rest are going to. Have a cigar. Oh, you've had one. That's so. My mistake. That's the way to make up for hard times, Hunter—by buying war-brides. I've lost a lot of cash in this leaky ol' concern, this past year. But I'm getting it back an' then some."

"Really, sir? You're fortunate to—"

"Cleaned up more'n two hundred an' twelve thous'nd this past four months. Going to make a bigger killing yet, on Standard Munitions. Got the tip at lunch to-day. Got it from right man. Had to get him lit up to do it; but I landed it all right, an' I placed my order, 'Standard Munitions.' Grabbed a thousand at fifteen. That little stock's going to two hundred, sure as blazes. Then watch me. Have a—Oh, you've got one. Well, I—"

One of the lightning-quick psychic changes of phase that are an unexplained part of drunkenness came over him, in mid-sentence. The babbling mood shifted to cranky suspicion. Watts seemed vaguely aware he had said too much. He glared in peevish uncertainty at Jim, his flushed face creasing into lines of displeasure.

"That will do, Hunter," he said with lofty severity. "This is a business office. Not place to jabber. I'll hear the rest of your story 'nother time."

Majestically he turned about to face the desk. Jim Hunter, dollar cigar in hand, went back to his work.

THAT evening, after dinner, he drew forth from his vest pocket the cigar, and gingerly lighted it. Presently Molly, clearing away the dishes, stopped for a moment beside his chair.

"What a long ash!" she exclaimed. "It's half as long as the cigar itself. Is that the same kind of cigar you generally smoke?"

"Yes," returned Jim. "The very same kind—plus about two thousand per cent. It is a gift from my revered employer. It is part of the dowry of his war-bride."

"His—*what*?"

"War-bride. That's a slang name they have on the Street for stocks that boom on account of the war. Ammunition and copper and steel and all sorts of things like that. It seems Mr. Watts has been recouping his business losses that way. His latest houri is Standard Munitions. He says he's just bought a block of it at fifteen and he's going to hold it for two hundred."

"That means he will make a great deal of money, doesn't it, Jim?"

"Of course. He says he's cleared up several hundred thousand dollars this past few months. And I dare say he has."

"Why don't you do it, too?" she asked wistfully.

"Oh, for several fairly good reasons: First, I'm not a born fool enough to risk all my little handful of coin on one throw. Second, because it takes capital to make capital, and we've got barely twenty-four hundred dollars on earth. It took me seventeen years to save that, and I don't care to lose it in a week. Third, because I don't have the good luck to travel in a crowd that can give me such tips as Watts gets. Then—"

"But," she urged, "you just got a tip."

"This dollar cigar? That isn't the kind of tip I'm talking about. I mean—"

"I know. I know. But this 'Standard Ammunition,' or whatever the name is—the stock he told you he's just bought—isn't *that* a tip?"

Jim Hunter stared dully at his wife.

As a matter of fact, he had so long and so earnestly taught himself that his only means of wealth was by hoarding his salary that he actually had not, until that minute, realized the possibilities

for himself in Watts' half-drunken burst of confidence.

"A tip?" he echoed with stupid solemnity.

"Isn't it?" she persisted.

"Why—why, yes! Of course it is. I—never thought of that."

"And here you're in Wall Street every day!" she laughed. "You've been brought up and educated there. Yet it takes your silly stay-at-home wife to tell you what a tip is!"

"I've seen so many good men go to smash that way," he answered, "that I've always kept as far as possible away from such things. Whenever one of the clerks blabs about a stock-rumor he's heard, I always walk away. It's the only safety. That's the sort of thing that leads to the bread-line or to jail or—"

"Or to a bigger flat," supplemented Molly, "and a maid and new clothes and a whole new set of dining-room furniture and a chance to entertain, and seats at the opera sometimes, and—"

"Don't, old girl!" he begged. "You know I'd do all that for you if I could—all that and a lot more. But playing wildcat tips isn't the way to get them."

"What *is* the way, then?" she asked, a tinge of bitterness creeping into her voice. "Working along at thirty dollars a week, and scrimping and pinching over every penny we have to spend, and wondering how soon we'll be fired?"

"I'm sorry!" he said stiffly. "And I do the very best I can for you. It isn't my fault I'm a dub. I'd be a Malefactor of Great Wealth, if I knew how. If you'd married a live chap— Lord!" He broke off, slamming the cigar-butt to the floor. "The measly thing burned my thumb!"

She was all sympathy, at once, and insisted on inspecting the burn and then on kissing it to make it well.

Thus the cigar both began and ended their mild quarrel.

But memory did not die with the dying end of the dollar *perfecto*. Instead, though no more was said by either of them about speculating, the magic words "Standard Munitions" danced maddeningly before Jim's mental vision all night.

Next morning he did not speak to Molly about the tantalizing stock. But on the way to work and all forenoon he said a great deal about it to himself.

This was no clerk's-rumor tip. It was from on high. By playing just such tips from just such sources, Watts had raked in a fortune in an unbelievably short while. And he, Jim Hunter, with the key to freedom in his own hands, must forever go on drudging and grubbing for a pittance from the man who had inadvertently put wealth within his reach.

It was the chance of a lifetime. Standard Munitions was selling at fifteen. Or, rather, it *had* been selling at fifteen, the day before. Perhaps, by now— Jim unobtrusively pawed over a tangle of ticker tape.

Standard Munitions—16⅛.

AT lunch-time Jim Hunter went at top speed to the savings bank, where his twenty-four-hundred-dollar hoard was industriously, if slowly, increasing itself at the rate of three per cent a year. He drew out all except a few odd dollars, and made for a brokerage house of the less pretentious type which had a reputation for square dealing and whose proprietor he knew.

He had no intention of securing the stock outright. That was a safe but much too petty process for him in his new rôle of plunger. The art of marginal buying and of pyramiding was as familiar to Jim Hunter, through long observation, as though this were not the first time in his thirty years that he himself had put his knowledge to active use. His campaign was already laid out, step by step.

He had asked Watts for two hours' leave of absence from the office that noon, on plea of sickness. When he returned to his desk, he looked still sicker. He had bought Standard Munitions—on a margin so narrow that the memory of it froze his hands and feet. He went home early and straight to bed. He told Molly he had a chill. He had.

That sleepless night preceded many another. But he was following out his carefully arranged campaign—pyramiding wisely, brooding over the stock

as though it were a dying child. All that remained now was for Standard Munitions to keep on living up to his hopes.

And Standard Munitions proceeded to do it.

Though every dollar withdrawn from the investment implied the loss of many more dollars in future, yet from time to time, as the Standard Munitions rocketed, Jim drew out sums varying from fifty to three hundred dollars, and turned them over to Molly for household use. Moreover, he no longer religiously put aside the usual percentage of his salary for the savings bank, but gave that to her too. He had told her of his speculation, and she had rejoiced mightily. She rejoiced a thousandfold more as the driblets of spending-money came in.

It was the first cash she had ever in her life possessed to do with as she chose. Its possession went to her unaccustomed head like strong drink. At first, it was rapture to buy the things she and Jim had so long needed—the new furniture, the extra glass and china that the apartment had lacked. These and more needs were easily supplied. And still the golden stream was not exhausted.

Next she launched out in the things she had always craved but had never hoped to own—the pretty clothes, the maid, the occasional taxicab rides, the Broadway theaters.

People were beginning to be so nice to her, too. Heretofore, she had had rather few friends. But now, at the merest hint of Jim's new prosperity, these friends had begotten new friends until she had a large and fast-growing list of acquaintances.

These later acquaintances, some of them, were charmingly gay people. They were forever on the go, and they took her with them. The men she met at the places to which her new friends introduced her were a revelation to Molly. Jim had always been so tired and logy when he came home from work; and his clothes were anything but fashionable. But these men seemed never tired and had all the leisure time they wanted; and with them dress was a fine art.

Molly was pretty. They told her so. They also told her she danced divinely. They told her a lot of equally charming things—things poor plodding Jim had long since forgotten to say to her. She was seldom at home now. She had never dreamed New York held so many wonderful places to go to; and she looked back in frank amaze to the pleasure she had once taken in a rare gallery-seat show with Jim, or a reading-aloud evening at the flat or a penurious jaunt to Coney Island. She seemed to have been born anew into an undreamed-of and glorious world.

As for Jim, his body remained at his work—from seventeen years' force of habit; but his mind was eternally busy with Standard Munitions. Up, up and up soared his war-bride. And the war-bridegroom—between his now-detested office labors and his worry over the stock-market — was fit for nothing, when he reached home at night, but to bolt his dinner and tumble into bed. Molly could not lure him into going out with her. So she went out alone—or with some group of newly acquired intimates.

One morning, as Jim sat down at his desk, he was summoned to Watts' private office. He went in, listlessly. Gone were the days when a call to the firm-head's presence could thrill him with hope or dread. A man was leaving the office as he entered. Watts pointed to a chair. Jim sat down.

"Did you see that man who just went out?" Watts began. "That was an expert accountant. He and I have been here since seven o'clock this morning going over your books together."

He paused and looked keenly at Jim. Hunter bore the gaze, carelessly. He had scarcely noted what his employer had said.

"We've been going over your books," repeated Watts. "In a job like yours, there's always a chance for a clever chap to steal—not that you're particularly clever."

Vaguely, Jim realized Watts was insulting him. And, vaguely, he resented it.

"My books," he said sullenly, "are—"

"Your books are all right," Watts cut in. "And that's what surprises me. I

made sure it was a case of another good man gone wrong—trusted employee, and all that—with a striped-suit sequel. But it isn't. I can't make it out."

He sat thinking, his plump face a-pucker with perplexity. Jim watched him in amazement. The man was not drunk. But what was he driving at? Suddenly Watts looked up.

"Hunter," he asked, fairly shooting the question at his head clerk, "what's the opening quotation on Standard Munitions to-day?"

Jim snapped out the answer without a second's hesitation. His careless demeanor was gone. He was wide awake and tensely interested now.

"H'm!" mused Watts. "So that's it. I blabbed about it to you when I was lit up, one afternoon. I remembered it afterward. I wasn't too far gone for that. But I didn't think you'd take it up. It isn't your way. And that's where it comes from, is it?"

"Where *what* comes from?" queried Jim crossly, with a feeling that he was somehow caught in a trap. "What do you mean?"

Watts did not answer, at once. He seemed to be marshaling his words with great care.

"You know the firm's rule against speculating, of course?" he said at last.

"I know you've set us the example of doing it!" flared Jim. "But if you want my resignation, because I followed a tip that you yourself gave me, why go ahead and fire me."

"I'm not going to fire you," said Watts with no show of resentment, "—partly because you'll need your job pretty badly when you go broke on the Street, but mostly because I'm interested in you."

"That's good of you," sneered Jim.

"Yes," assented Watts in perfect seriousness. "It is. I'm interested in you. You've been here longer than anyone else we've got. And you've plugged away, hard and faithfully. And my old partner was fond of you. I don't go in for sentiment very much—not in office hours. But I am interested in you and I like you. That's why I kept you on, at thirty dollars in the hard times, when your assistant could have done your work just as well for twenty dollars. That's why I fired him for trying to get your job. That's why I felt as if I'd been kicked in the face when I thought you'd turned crooked. That's why I feel bad to think you've fallen for the stock-ticker game. You're not the man to play it. You're bound to lose."

Jim did not answer. The sharp retort that jumped to his lips died into nothingness at the older man's crude expression of friendliness. He sat dumb and frowning, while Watts went on:

"That's why I'm going to waste my time and your time and the office time by handing out a bit of talk to you. You don't have to listen if you don't want to. You've plunged on Standard Munitions. You've broken your life-time resolutions and turned from worker to gambler. What's it brought you? Some spare cash that you don't know how to enjoy. What's it taken away from you? About twenty pounds of flesh, the power of snoring eight hours a night, the zest you used to have for your work. It's made you sour and nervous and lazy, and it's started you on the toboggan. Is it worth it?"

"*You've* seemed to find it so."

"Yes, I have. It's my own game. It isn't yours. I know how to play it, when to play it and where to stop. You don't. Speculating wont harm me. It will kill you."

"I'll take my chances," was Jim's surly answer; and he added, a little less ungraciously: "Thanks, just the same."

He rose to go, but the other man waved him to his chair.

"Just a minute," said Watts; "I want to tell you something. Or rather, I don't want to, but I've got to. And it'll explain how I found out about all this. Ever hear of the St. Crœsus Cabaret?"

"No."

"No, you wouldn't be likely to. It's a place where decent family men and their wives aren't to be found. I go there sometimes; I went there last night. There was the usual mixed crowd of social gangsters and men of doubtful character and women whose

characters left no room for doubt. There was a nasty little cuss there, named Knox Hinkle. Ever hear of him?"

"No. We don't go to such places; we leave that for—"

"For your disreputable employer? Well, Knox Hinkle is a youth who achieved fame as a society blackmailer and then as a forger. He went to Sing Sing—got pardoned through a pull, and came back to Broadway. He makes a living out of chorus girls and the like. A good looker, in his own slimy way, and a dandy dancer."

"Well?" prompted Jim in undisguised boredom, as Watts paused.

"Well," resumed Watts, "last night when I got there I happened to notice him, among fifty other dancers who were shuffling and wabbling, out on the floor. He was dancing with a mighty pretty little woman. I didn't recognize her, though I know most of the place's 'regulars' by sight. So I asked a man who she was. He told me she was a newcomer and Hinkle had frozen onto her. It's his game to fascinate well-to-do simpletons and then scare them into giving him cash, on threat to squeal to their husbands or fathers. And she was getting fascinated, all right. The man I was with said she had a husband who had just come into a lot of cash."

Watts cleared his throat and looked apprehensively at the politely bored Hunter. Then he continued:

"Some rapid people had taken her up, my friend said, and were planning how to bleed her, when Hinkle got her away from them, so as to grab the lion's share of the loot. I asked some more questions. It seems her husband is a clerk, downtown, who has struck it rich all of a sudden, and she's launching out. That got me to thinking—but not till I heard her name."

Again he ceased speaking, and looked almost imploringly at Jim. But Hunter was very evidently letting his attention wander. Indeed, he was having some trouble in strangling a yawn.

"You fool!" blazed Watts in sudden irritation at such denseness. "It was your own wife!"

Slowly, very slowly, Jim Hunter got to his feet. In his eyes was the glazed stare of a sleep-walker's. He stood thus for a moment, open-mouthed, blank-faced. Then, with a yell, he hurled himself bodily across the desk at Watts.

His employer stopped the maniac charge with a big hand that caught Jim fast by the throat and held him helpless. Hunter writhed, beating in futile fury at the big man's body, which he could not reach, and mouthing wildly incoherent blasphemy and insult.

Presently the paroxysm passed, leaving Jim faint and dizzy. He collapsed panting into a chair, and rocked to and fro—muttering, gasping, choking back a hysteria of sobs. But little by little he grew calmer. From far off, he heard Watts' deep voice saying:

"It was rotten medicine, lad. But it's cured you—or if it hasn't, you'll never be cured."

"I'm—I'm cured," muttered Jim dazedly, as he got to his feet. "I'm going home," he added.

Leaning heavily on the desk-edge until the mists began to clear, he lurched out of the room and on into the street.

A half-hour's aimless wandering in the cold air brought him to his senses. He found himself murmuring stupidly, over and over:

"I'm cured—I'm cured—I'm cured."

Then the power of thought came back to him. Inch by inch he reviewed everything. And to his own amaze, he could feel nothing in his heart for Molly but an infinite pity.

With cold logic he reviewed everything. She was not to blame. It was he who had given her the poison that was destroying her—he who loved her and would blithely have died to make her happy. He forced himself to remember their dear life together, of other days—the sweetly eventless life, when his homecoming had been the day's great event, and when they two had lived for each other alone. She was so lovable, so helpless, so young! And he, by his money-avalanche, had crushed out the good in her and had wrecked the happiness God had given them.

It was the money.

And with a momentary return of his Berserk fury, he cursed it. Then, with

returning coolness of mind, came the solution—the one and only solution. He crossed the street to a telegraph office and scrawled a line or two to Watts:

Thank you for what you have done for me. And forgive me for speaking and acting as I did. I shall take you at your word and keep my job. But first I must have a few days' leave of absence to adjust things. I'll come back as soon as I can. Thank you again.

He enveloped and sealed the note and ordered it delivered. Then he went to his broker's. A glance at the ticker showed him that Standard Munitions was still merrily rocketing. Calling the broker aside, he said tersely:

"Go short a thousand shares on S. M."

Vale, the broker, grunted as though he had been kicked amidships by a mule.

"You're in fun, aren't you?" he asked feebly.

"I don't joke in business hours."

"If you're not joking, you're stark crazy," said Vale. "S. M. is at 100⅛ this morning. In a week or so, at this rate, it'll be at one hundred fifty. This order you've just given me will wipe you out before the stock gets to one hundred forty. D' you understand, Mr. Hunter?" he insisted, speaking as to a defective child. "You'll be cleaned out—broke!"

"That's my lookout."

"It's your clean-out!"

"Either way you like. The order goes."

"It's suicide!" fumed the broker.

"It's resurrection," contradicted Jim; and he walked out.

MOLLY was not at home when her husband reached the flat. On the few times, in the old days, when he had chanced to come back from work and found she was out, the place had had a dead and homeless look that had stricken him to the heart. But now he was glad of the chance to sit there alone, with his own soul for ghostly adviser, through the long hours until her return.

At dusk he heard her key in the lock and her step in the hall. He was ready to meet her now. The hours had brought him counsel. He rose and went to meet her, drawing her into the dimly lighted living-room.

"Have you anything to do this evening, dear?" he asked.

"Why, yes," she made answer. "We're going to the Casino and afterward to the St. Crœsus Cabaret for a dance and some supper. Want to come along?"

"No, thanks. I've a bit of a headache, and I'm sleepy too. You say 'we' are going. Who are 'we?'"

"Blanche Dunby and her husband and the Hutches and Knox Hinkle and I."

"Hinkle? Who is he?"

"He's one of the most interesting men I ever met!" she gushed, "and the very best dancer. He used to be something or other on Wall Street, I believe. But he has retired. He—Jim, do you *have* to yawn in my face, or do you do it as a parlor-stunt?" she broke off.

But it was not a yawn she heard, there in the dusk. It was a sigh of utter relief. Women of Molly's stamp do not refer to men they secretly love, in the way Molly had just spoken of Hinkle. And the knowledge gave Jim his first throb of happiness for many weeks. He was in time! His money was well lost.

"I've bad news for you, little girl," he said gently. "The market has taken an ugly turn. Our 'Aladdin fortune' is gone."

"Gone!" she shrilled.

"We're back where we were," he continued, "—minus our savings. I'm sorry, dear. Try to be brave! I—"

He got no farther. Her soft arms were flung around his neck. Her cool face was pressed to his hot cheek.

"Oh, my poor, *poor* boy!" she wailed. "And it means so much to you! So *much* to you! And the savings you worked so long to lay by! Please, *please* try not to be too unhappy about it. I'll help, all I can. Honestly, I will. And we'll stand it, together. That will make it ever so much easier than if you had to face it all by yourself. Oh, my darling, I wish I could do something to make it easier for you!"

Hot tears, for which he felt no shame, came unbidden into Jim's eyes, there in the darkness. He was happier than ever he had been. His wife was not lost to him. The *real* Molly—not the frivolous girl whose head had been turned by a handful of bank-notes—was loyal and loving and self-forgetting. Her first thought—her only thought—was for him and to ease the blow that had fallen upon him.

He felt an absurd yearning to kneel down and kiss the hem of her skirt. But he steadied his voice and said:

"I want you to do something for me, dear. I want you to go out, this evening, just the same. I—"

"No!" she refused fiercely. "No! *No!* What do you think I am, to leave you like this, when—"

"To please me," he urged. "I mean it. I want you to go, Molly. I'll explain afterward. It's necessary. I can't tell you why till afterward. But it is. You must go. And I want you to tell your friends of our bad luck. It's only fair they should know."

Despite her tearful pleadings, he remained firm. So, heavy-hearted and wondering, she at last consented. She would have consented to anything, just then, to please him.

Jim prepared for six or seven hours of loneliness. But before ten o'clock Molly came back. Her eyes were very bright; her face was very pale. She was not inclined to talk. A single furtive glance at her told Jim the story. But he wanted it in words. So he asked, in excellent surprise:

"What in blazes brings you back at this hour? The theater isn't out yet. And you said you were going to a cabaret afterward. Didn't—"

"I didn't want to stay," she said briefly. "I *couldn't* stay, after—"

"Did you tell them we are broke?"

"Yes—after the first act, I told them all about it. That's why I couldn't stay longer."

"Because you were ashamed of my losing our money?"

"No," she sobbed, all at once breaking down, "—because I was ashamed of *them*—and of myself for having been fooled by them as I'd been. Oh, Jim, I don't want to talk about it, yet! I never knew there *were* such people! You couldn't believe—"

"Perhaps I could," he interposed, drawing her to him. "Perhaps that's why I wanted you to go there, to-night."

"Jim!"

"I think we're both cured now, little sweetheart," he told her. "And I've a scrap of good news for you. Mr. Watts has given me a vacation. It began to-day. We're going to run away somewhere, you and I, for a honeymoon. By the time we get back, we'll be all adjusted to our dear old-time life here."

TWO weeks later they came home—tanned, clear-eyed, gloriously rested, from their country sojourn. A little sheaf of mail was waiting for them. Most of it was in the form of circulars and bills. But one envelope, forwarded from the office, bore the imprint of Jim's broker.

Hunter idly tore open the envelope—half-smiling as he forecasted the politely sympathetic notice that his account was wiped out. But his faintly amused expression melted into blank wonder as he read Vale's informal scrawl:

Dear Hunter:

I don't know how in Sam Hill you ever got the hunch, two days ahead of time, that the Standard Munitions plant was going to be blown sky-high and that Standard Munition stock was going to be blown just as far in the other direction. I've been trying for a week to get hold of you. And when S. M. hit the 60 mark and seemed inclined to start on the upward crawl again, I acted on my own responsibility and sold you out. It's lucky I did. For she's up to 62½ to-day. I enclose our account. You'll see by it that I hold, to your order, $79,894.50 of yours.

"And one week from to-day," yelled Jim deliriously, "twenty-seven savings banks are going to hold it. I'm cured of Wall Street, all right. But money's a grand thing to have—after people have learned how not to use it. Come on, sweetheart, let's celebrate—at the very best movie we can find!"

Another story by Albert Payson Terhune in an early issue.

Free Lances in Diplomacy

The Fight for Holland

by Clarence Herbert New

SIR FRANCIS LAMMERFORD, after six months of valuable and dangerous secret-service work in Petrograd, was on his way home to London for a brief rest. With the friendly assistance of the secret police, he had left Russia in the character of an American with German ancestry—taking the steamer across to Stockholm, then the railway down to Malmo, across the Sound to Copenhagen and down through Denmark to Hamburg, Bremen and Osnabruck, where certain banking-houses received him cordially as a supposed connection of their American branch. Thence he went over into the Netherlands, from where he was to sail on one of the Holland-America liners. His being in the Hague, rather than Rotterdam, from where his steamer sailed two days later, was accounted for by a visit to the Hague branch of his banking-house before he left.

Sir Francis knew the Hague from Scheveningen to Orange Plein with his eyes shut; he could have gone, unerringly, from the Staatsspoor Station to any one of the handsome detached residences in the Willem's Park quarter on a snowy winter night if every light in the city were suddenly extinguished. But in his assumed character as an American tourist, he did what the average American tourist would do, knowing but the one synonym for home comforts—asked which was the most expensive hotel in town, and proceeded directly to the Hotel Paulez, opposite the Royal Theater.

Taking rooms there as the Heer Charles Colmar, of New York, he enjoyed a most excellent dinner — but noticed, while glancing through an English paper, that one of his glasses was cracked. Out of doors, Lammerford's sight was abnormally keen for his fifty odd years, but to read small print comfortably he required lenses of the second power — unusually large, because of the width between his eyes. Sauntering out through the Vijver Berg, after dinner, he strolled into the maze of narrow streets southwest of

the Plaats—coming eventually to an oculist's shop on the ground floor of an old seventeenth-century building with dormer windows in its steeply pitched roof. In the darkness, he failed to notice the name over the door. The place looked clean and businesslike, and the limited display of optical goods in the window seemed to indicate a painstaking craftsman; so he stepped in and looked at various articles in the show-case while the oculist talked with another customer at the further end of it, toward the rear of the shop.

To Lammerford's surprise, he noticed that they were speaking German—not Dutch. A glance at the proprietor gave the impression that he might be Prussian or Saxon, from his facial characteristics—not a Nederlander. Then the other customer turned partly toward the door for a moment, and Sir Francis recognized him as Mr. Phaidrig O'Meara—a junior attaché who had been at the British Legation, there, for over a year, and who had been reported in Downing Street as rather promising diplomatic material. Sir Francis knew, however, what the British Minister and even Sir Edward Wray did not: that Phaidrig O'Meara came of a family with strong Fenian sympathies—was, in fact, a descendant of the famous Smith O'Brien—and had rather expected to find him one of those Irishmen who hoped for British defeat, rather than a loyal supporter in the Empire's hour of need.

The few words of German Sir Francis caught seemed to imply a certain amount of intimacy with this German oculist, but Lammerford was fair enough to admit that O'Meara could very honestly be obtaining information of great value to the Foreign Office by cultivating that sort of acquaintance. If the man were loyal and ambitious for a diplomatic career, as his superiors thought, his being in that shop under such circumstances was proof both of his trustworthiness and ability. On the other hand, if heredity counted for anything, his presence there constituted a serious menace to England.

It was quite evident that he had not recognized Sir Francis or even suspected him as a former acquaintance. It was also evident to a close observer that the pair of them were nervously irritated by the entrance of a stranger just at that time. The oculist purposely ignored the prospective customer for several minutes presumably in the hope that he would take offense and go out. Finally, however, he came over to that end of the show-case and inquired with some abruptness what the stranger wanted. Lammerford passed over his glasses. The German glanced at them briefly, tossed them into a velvet-lined drawer and said: "To-morrow afternoon—four o'clock!" Then he went back to an obviously makeshift talk with O'Meara about—tulips.

TEN minutes after Lammerford went out, the oculist stepped to the door and started putting up his shutters for the night. As he was doing so, he glanced up and down the narrow street—then muttered: "All right!" O'Meara, who had remained leaning upon the inner end of the show-case, sauntered back through a rear door which gave access to the house. The oculist then put out the lights in his shop and followed him up to a room on the fourth floor, under the pitched roof.

Half an hour later, three men were admitted by the street entrance to the house, at one side of the shop—and taken up to the same room. From the conversation which followed, one would have gathered that the well-built, light-bearded man was a secret agent of the Wilhelmstrasse, and that the two companions who came in with him were German business men of the Hague, in good standing among their Dutch neighbors. Schmidt, the oculist,—who appeared to be one of the lesser Wilhelmstrasse agents,—got down to business as soon as the pipes were going and the beer circulating.

"We have been talking of many plans during the last month, gentlemen, but when we came to test them out, each one seemed impractical—not likely to accomplish what we wish. O'Meara, however, appears to have solved the difficulty. He has been outlining a scheme to me which, in my opinion,

cannot fail. We have all agreed that anything producing a definite break with England must automatically compel the Nederlanders to side with *us*. It would place them between two fires, and we now have three hundred thousand men encamped along the border—ready to enter Holland at a moment's notice. It would be impossible for Holland successfully to resist a sea attack from England and a land attack from Germany at the same time—she must side with one or the other. If she breaks with England, that settles it—irrevocably."

The other Wilhelmstrasse man had been thoughtfully smoking, but a gleam came into his eyes at this.

"What is O'Meara's plan?" he demanded. "Let's have it!"

"First to compromise the British Minister, here, so unmistakably that every newspaper in the city will do its best to excite popular indignation against him—stir up rioting against England—and then to have Sir Alan assassinated in such a way as to make it appear that the Dutch Government took no steps to protect him."

"Bah! That's an old game in diplomacy! It was even tried against the Dutch Minister in London, a year ago!"

"And would have succeeded, my friend, had not the plan been discovered and blocked by their *verdammt* Diplomatic Free Lance, of whom one hears such amazing stories. It would have succeeded—don't forget that! The plan is not new, I admit! But tell me, if you please, what plan *is* new in diplomacy? Work out something which you are sure is original in your own massive brain, and the next schoolboy you meet will tell you it was tried in Assyria or Babylonia three thousand years ago! This plan is as old as the human race. And it has been successful in most of the cases where it has been tried!

"But there are features about this scheme of O'Meara's which make it different—more promising. This British Minister has Dutch blood in him. He is a lineal descendant of the Vanden Bempde family—which has made him more than usually persona grata with Queen Wilhelmina. When such a man is caught treacherously planning to betray and annex the Netherlands, it will arouse ten times the public indignation that it would if he were not partly Dutch, himself! Is it that you comprehend? On the other hand, his assassination, not prevented by this Government, will be doubly exasperating to England after her diplomatic care in trusting her representation to a man who is partly Dutch in sympathy and blood. See the point? As O'Meara has blocked it out, the plan cannot fail! All he asks is one of the Cabinet ministers who can be bribed to assist him."

"Hmph! He doesn't ask *much*, this Irish friend of ours! Bribing a Cabinet minister is a trifling detail, as everyone knows!"

O'MEARA grinned at this, and lighted a fresh cigar.

"Faith," he censured, "if it were easy, we'd not be wastin' our breath upon such a matter *now*—'twould have been done long ago! 'Tis not an easy job to pull off a *coup* of any sort in diplomacy, but the fact that it's difficult makes it all the more effective when successful. Let us go into this a bit, now, an' see how it looks: We'll take, first, the Foreign Minister—the Jonkheer Loudon. He's by way of being a strong English sympathizer. Jonkheer Cort van der Linden, Minister of the Interior, is equally so. General Bosboom, the Minister of War, is a bit on the other side—has a strong admiration for the German army and its methods. I've been thinking him over, but I can't see any way to get hold of him without riskin' too much in case he's really loyal to his own country. Captain Rambonnet, the Minister of Marine, is another of the same sort. Doctor Mely, however, I know to be a strong German smypathizer, and he's in business difficulties on account of the war. The house in which he is a two-thirds owner has met with very heavy losses in Belgian investments and accounts; he's been obliged to borrow heavily from banks which are associated with those in Hamburg and Berlin. Can any of you suggest a way of exerting pressure upon him?"

After a moment's silence, Rudolph Kirchwasser, a wealthy German merchant of the Hague, spoke up.

"I should put him in the hands of Fräulein Katrina von Kattenberg for a few weeks; she'll get him infatuated, very easily, and will know just where to put on the pressure."

"No! I object to mixing her up with this sort of thing at all! In the first place, I don't think she'd do it; then, before we get through with this, there's the ugly business of assassination to consider. No! Keep her out of it!"

O'Meara spoke with some heat. It had been through his own infatuation for the handsome Viennese, and his frequent visits in the house where she had lived for years with her uncle, that he was drawn into contact with the German element at the Hague; and he was jealously averse to her being placed in a position where she would have to encourage presumable familiarities from a man of Dr. Mely's attractiveness. The others glanced up in astonishment at his outburst—then, glanced understandingly at each other.

"Look you, my friend," replied Kirchwasser, "the Fräulein has lived in the Hague ever since she came to her uncle, a child of three, after her father's death in Vienna. Von Kattenberg has been here so long in business, has been identified with so many national associations, that he is to all intents considered a Nederlander. He is, however, the private banker of Prins Heinrich—and has kept the Wilhelmstrasse closely in touch with everything that happened here. The Fräulein herself has from childhood been trained to assist him in that sort of thing. More than that—she and her uncle have maintained so entirely a neutral position in this city that they are received by the best Dutch families. A dozen of the young Nederlanders wish to marry her. Mely himself is one of her open admirers—though considerably older. She's the one person who might involve him with us until it is too late to back out—after which it will be an easy matter for her uncle to obtain a number of Mely's outstanding notes, and put on the screws until he doesn't know which way to turn."

O'Meara was shrewd enough to see the force of all this, and knew that further opposition would only make them distrust him.

"Oh, very well! It's a beastly game to drag a woman into, but if you're so sure of her securing Mely's assistance, I suppose that outweighs my objections. You have a talk with her, Kirchwasser, and explain the whole lay-out. All I want of Mely is to conceal a package of papers, during a certain interview, where he can discover them in a compromising position and show 'em to his colleagues. He'll have nothing whatever to do with the killing—no blood on his hands, or anything of that sort. Even so, I think your bribe will have to be so large that he can't refuse it. Don't try a piffling game with him, or you stand to lose out!"

"You need have no fears upon that score, O'Meara! The Kaiser and his Government do nothing by halves."

WHEN Lammerford returned to his hotel, he sat down in the smoking-lounge with a cigar, to think over what he really knew against O'Meara—finding, upon analysis, that it amounted to little more than conviction as to the man's political sympathies, judging from what his family had been in times past.

Altogether, Sir Francis was inclined to suspend judgment.

If he could have gone directly to the British Legation in the Hooge-Westeinde, that night, and had a conference with Sir Alan, he would have done so. But for a man known to German banking-houses as a German-American to visit openly a British Minister in wartime, was a little too raw. He managed it next morning by accepting an invitation to motor with a well-known Hollander who was secretly a British agent—meeting Sir Alan as a stranger, when their Dutch mutual friend invited the Minister to return from Scheveningen in their car. During the opportunity thus offered, Lammerford obtained considerable up-to-the-minute information as to local conditions at the Hague—and some additional points concerning O'Meara which set him thinking.

At two o'clock, he called at Karl Schmidt's shop to ask if his glasses would surely be ready when promised. And Schmidt immediately produced them—with the new lens in place! Now, the one thing a Continental tradesman will *not* do is deliver a hurry-job before the hour at which he has promised it—particularly, if the customer be an American, with his absurd weakness for haste. And so when Sir Francis left the shop, he was convinced that Schmidt had finished his glasses in a hurry for the reason that he didn't want any stranger who was unaccounted for loitering about waiting.

On the spur of the moment, Sir Francis entered a house on the opposite side of the street and inquired for a furnished room. As it happened, there was a vacant one in front, which he promptly engaged for a week—saying that he would sit down and write some letters before going to the hotel for his luggage. From behind the blinds, he watched the oculist's shop until sunset—and was about to give it up when he saw O'Meara coming down the little street ahead of three Germans, one of whom he recognized as a Wilhelmstrasse spy of considerable ability.

These men turned in at Schmidt's door a moment after the Irishman had entered. In the time it took Lammerford to get from his room into the street, he knew it was impossible for them to have reached the nearest corner, had they come out of the shop—yet when he walked past it, glancing in through the window, the place was empty save for one of the apprentices. Obviously, Schmidt and the four men were somewhere in the upper part of the house. After a moment of quick thinking at the next corner, Lammerford decided that what he had seen might prove of the utmost seriousness—too much so for O'Meara to handle alone—supposing him to be loyal. If he was not? If the Irishman was a traitor?

His speculations were interrupted by the appearance of a stylish limousine which spun around the corner, ran smoothly down the block and stopped before the oculist's shop just long enough to permit a woman, muffled in a dark silk opera-cloak, to hurry in at the narrow doorway which gave access to the upper part of the house. In fact, the car didn't appear to lose headway at all—vanishing around a bend in the narrow street before he could make out its number or other distinguishing marks. He had caught a fleeting glimpse of an indistinct but handsome face inside which seemed hauntingly familiar, as the car passed him—but he couldn't place it.

The incident added to Lammerford's conviction that something dangerous was afoot—whether against the Nederlands Government, individually, or the Entente collectively, he couldn't determine. Aside from the Legation attachés—two of whom were detailed in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg—and two secret agents who passed as resident Nederlanders, there was no one available in the Hague for the peculiarly delicate and dangerous service which appeared to be indicated. Inside of ten minutes from the time he left his recently acquired room, he came to a decision, with the result that he took the two o'clock boat next day for Harwich and reached Liverpool Street Station at 11:30 P. M.

A message announcing his arrival having been dispatched from Harwich to a fellow American at the Travelers' Club, that gentleman (secretly connected with Downing Street) casually asked Sir Edward Wray over the telephone if it would be convenient for him to join Lord and Lady Trevor at a late supper in their Park Lane mansion. Consequently, upon Lammerford's arrival in Park Lane, he found the Trevors, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and a hot dinner awaiting him.

ALTHOUGH Her Ladyship's mixed Afghan and English household were absolutely dependable, even to the point of risking their lives when necessary, the dinner-talk was confined to casual topics until they went across the hall into the big Jacobean library for coffee and cigars. There Sir Francis outlined what he had noticed in Karl Schmidt's shop at the Hague—together

with what he had picked up from Sir Alan during the motor-ride from Scheveningen. Sir Edward was inclined to minimize any probable danger to the Entente from such a source—upon the ground that Sir Alan was an exceedingly able diplomat who had his Legation affairs well in hand, and that the resident secret agents were undoubtedly well posted as to everything going on under the surface. But neither His Lordship nor Lady Nan agreed with him.

"The chief point you're overlookin', Ned," commented Lord Trevor (only readers to whom these stories are new will need to be told that it was Lord Trevor who had come to be known to his intimates as the Diplomatic Free Lance), "is the loyalty of Phaidrig O'Meara! If the man is true to his salt, he'll have that situation well enough in hand to give us ample warnin' before the critical moment—though, if it proves as big as Lammy fears, it may easily get beyond him. Sir Alan's tendency, as we know, is to assume that threatening incidents seldom amount to anything. One hears the cry of 'wolf!' so everlawstin'ly in the Service—with so little comin' of it, half the time—that I fawncy we all get a bit careless, d'ye see. However, there's no gettin' around what Lammy says about Phaidrig O'Meara's family. O'Meara's father was among the Fenians under Colonel O'Niel who crossed Niagara into Canada in May, 1866—killin' a good many Canadians before they were captured. We know that the father, an uncle an' three cousins, took the celebrated Fenian Oath—but this boy spent several years as apprentice in the counting-room of another uncle in Bombay, goin' from that into the Consular Service an' then into the Diplomatic. As far as his record shows, there is nothing against him—but he pays frequent visits to relatives in Dublin and Limerick, seemin' to be upon the best of terms with 'em. All his family consider a South of Ireland man who is loyal to the British Government a renegade—they don't hesitate to call him one. Now—is it possible that a man with his blood, on excellent terms with his family, can be loyal to the Crown?"

"Faith, if you put it that way, George, I'd say it's not possible! But—my word, man! If he's a traitor at heart—eh? That means he's actually hand in glove with those bally rotters over yon that Lammy's been nosin' out! Actually conspiring with them while he's connected with the British Legation an' having no end of Governm'nt information to give away if he chooses! What?"

"That's precisely what Lammy's afraid of! If he's right—an' I'll wager he is, because I know that Fenian breed—there's nobody at the Hague in position to handle a matter of such gravity. We've but two resident Downing Street men there, because we've had more work for the force, elsewhere, than twice the number could do. One of 'em's the merchant who contrived that conference with Sir Alan in his motor-car—the other is the editor of *De Haagsche Dagblad,* one of the papers controlled by my syndicate. He knows me as the majority stockholder and general director—but has no suspicion of my diplomatic activities. I'd say, offhand, that he's bright enough to give us mighty valuable assistance—an' my interest in the affair, as a big press-syndicate director, will seem perfectly natural to him. . . . . I say! Why isn't it a good idea for Nan an' me to run over on the *Ranee Sylvia,* via the Hoek of Holland, anchor at Rotterdam—an' run up to s'Gravenhage for a short visit to Her Majesty? I used to skate with her, occasionally, when she was a wee tot in short skirts an' pigtails—she's not forgotten it, either. The *Ranee* will get us to the Hoek of Holland about noon, an' up to the Hague before two o'clock—just twenty-four hours after Lammy left Rotterdam. We'll hope that nothing much has happened since he was at the Paulez."

UPON returning to the Hague, it seemed advisable to Lammerford that he should abandon his German-American impersonation, as it was likely to hamper him in coöperating with Trevor; so he shaved off the beard which had been a distinguishing feature of Mr. Charles Colmar. An innocently worded press-message from London

had prepared Editor Van der Beers for the arrival of his syndicate director; consequently he had a legitimate business excuse for calling upon Lord Trevor at the Hotel Paulez within half an hour after the celebrated peer's arrival. It was also natural enough that Lord and Lady Trevor, accompanied by their friend Sir Francis Lammerford, should return with Van der Beers to inspect the recently built, up-to-date home of the paper in the Spui Stratt—but the real purpose of the visit would have surprised many an honest Nederland who read *De Haagsche Dagblad* every morning.

Opening from the editor's private office at the rear of the top floor, was a sound-proof directors' room where conferences might be held at any hour of the day or night with practically no risk of their being overheard. Connected with the directors' room, was a small suite consisting of bedroom and bath—for the private use of the editor or such of his associates whose business at the newspaper office required their presence there during the greater part of the night. In fact, that floor of the building had been planned with an eye to its use by men or women from Downing Street when the necessity arose.

WHEN Lord and Lady Trevor went to *De Haagsche Dagblad* offices with Van der Beers and Sir Francis, they were shown into the directors' room, where Lammerford described what he had seen at Karl Schmidt's shop and what he suspected—excepting only their doubts as to O'Meara's loyalty. After reflecting a moment, the editor himself expressed this doubt.

"It's a bit rotten, you know, for anyone in the Service to question the loyalty of a brother diplomat, but there's one feature in Sir Francis' story which simply can't be overlooked. If O'Meara *should* prove a traitor, his opportunity for gettin' us all into a devil of a mess is altogether too good! I fancied I knew this town like a book—yet I'd never heard anything against that oculist Schmidt up to this moment. He's German—oh, aye! But he's been in that shop for over twenty years an' hasn't appeared to bother his head over the war, one way or another. He's by way of bein' an expert in his trade—has some of the wealthiest people in town among his regular customers—lives above the shop with his wife and the family of his son, who married the Jufvrouw van Westerveldt. Faith, it looks to me as if whatever German conspirators there may have been in his shop were fetched there by O'Meara as a safe place for a rendezvous! The matter appears serious enough to bear investigation."

"Any suggestions, old chap?"

"Aye—we're rather in luck, as it happens. You noticed the little bookshop next door to Schmidt's, Sir Francis? The proprietor is Jan van Oosten—a Nederlander of very old family, with a lot of pride, who is under obligations to me. I had the luck to save his life and a good bit of money for him—possibly saved his daughter from somethin' worse than robbery at the same time. His sympathies are with the Entente, because he has education enough to know that German success means the death-blow to Holland. Now—I'd suggest that you drop in at his bookshop in the morning, browse among the old editions until His Lordship happens along—as a stranger to you—an' goes in for the same purpose. Then I'll turn up, go back into the house with Van Oosten an' tell him who you are. Watch your chance an' slip through the door from the shop, behind a long bookcase—you'll be taken up to his parlor, where you can explain whatever occurs to you. Your Lordship prob'ly wont care to mess into this affair too deeply, because it will mean unnecessary risk before we're through—but a few hours in Van Oosten's house may be of decided 'news interest.'"

THIS suggestion of Van der Beers' (who was the Hon. Henry Wyndham, in England) was acted upon, next morning. When the three men had been taken up to the spotless Dutch parlor by Jan van Oosten and his pretty daughter, the Jufvrouw Geertje, it appeared that Lord Trevor had been known to them by sight and reputation

for several years. Geertje, who had a capable business head and managed her father's accounts, was a social favorite among the younger set at the Hague and had been present at functions where His Lordship was the guest of honor—partly from his record as a daring aviator, but largely because of his personal charm and great wealth. In fact, her interest was so evident that he found it very flattering, and courteously drew her into a tête-à-tête in one corner while Sir Francis and Van der Beers were discussing the house next door with her father. In the midst of their talk, she caught a word or two of the other conversation—listened for a moment, her eyes opening widely in surprise and apprehension—then turned to him for a more complete explanation.

"Is that true, Your Lordship? You really believe the Schmidts are German spies!"

"I fancy there'll be little doubt of it, Mejufvrouw. We're by way of hoping that you and your father will not object to our watching the house for a few days from behind one of your window-blinds. With your permission, we may even get into the house from one of your dormer windows in the rear. It may seem to you that we are meddling with what is none of our business—but Sir Francis was formerly connected with the Diplomatic Corps, and since the beginning of the war he's been working to prevent complications among the neutral countries, as far as possible. As a commanding officer in the British navy, it is my duty to assist him where I can."

For a moment, she appeared to be hesitating over something she had in mind. "Your Lordship!" she said then, "I—something has just occurred to me which I think you should know! Listen, please! My room is on the next to the top floor—under the slope of the roof. I have, up there, one of the old Dutch stoves with tiles outside, and a tiled flue which connects with the chimney. Between the stove and the chimney there is a space of eighteen inches. These houses are more than two hundred years old—I think this one must have been originally connected with the Schmidt's, next door, for my chimney appears to have a flue from a fireplace in the corresponding room on their side of the wall. The opening on my side was bricked up, at some time or other, and faced with tiles. I know the bricks can't be very thick, because I frequently hear the sound of voices from the next house, through my stove. Two nights ago, I heard some men talking in that room until long after midnight—I could even catch an occasional word, but had no reason for paying attention to it beyond wishing they would keep still and let me sleep."

"Would you—er—be willing to have us mess up your room by taking out some of those tiles and bricks, Mejufvrouw?"

"That's what I was going to suggest to Your Lordship! Would you—I'm quite sure there will be nobody on that floor in the next house at this time of day—would you care to come up with me and look at the chimney now? Father has a number of house-tools—we may be able to pry some of those tiles loose."

TELLING her father what she had in mind, Geertje took His Lordship up to her room—it being quite evident, when he saw it, why she didn't care to have the three other men invade its privacy all at once. It was as neat and dainty as the boudoir of a bride. While he examined the tiling, evidently very old, judging by the depth of the cracks between, she found a couple of sharp chisels and a miniature crowbar. With these he had no difficulty in prying off a number of the tiles—the mortar and fragments falling upon papers which she had spread underneath. Back of the tiling, there was a single thickness of bricks, and by carefully manipulating the little crowbar he succeeded in prying two of them loose with so little noise that it would have been difficult to hear it in the next room. Working patiently for more than an hour, he succeeded in removing enough of the bricks to permit his crawling through into the space behind them. Flashing a small electric torch about him, he discovered that the chimney must have

been originally used as a secret passage between the two houses, for there was a hinged panel six feet beyond the fireplace in the other room.

Sending Geertje for the oilcan from her sewing-machine, he lubricated the hinges and the old spring-catch—ascertaining from the exposed mechanism on the passage-side just where the secret spring must be in the wainscoting of Schmidt's room. After listening until quite sure there was nobody on that floor in the other house, he pulled back the catch and pried open the secret panel—then worked it back and forth as he oiled the hinges and lock-mechanism until he could open and close it without a single protesting squeak. From the appearance of the room on Schmidt's side, he had no doubt whatever that it was used by the conspirators for their secret conferences. Hoping to get a glimpse of them before long, he picked a hole between the bricks at the back of their fireplace and found that he could see practically all who might sit around the big table. Then he rejoined Geertje, helped her to remove all traces of his work and concealed the opening in her chimney by standing a low Japanese screen in front of it.

AFTER explaining to the others in the parlor just what they had done, and arranging that they should be called by telephone the moment any of the conspirators were noticed going into the oculist's shop, Trevor and his two companions left the house. That night passed without developments—as did several more. At the end of the week, Van der Beers received a telephone message at his editorial office that O'Meara was then reading a newspaper in the oculist's shop—evidently awaiting Schmidt's return. Sir Francis happened to be with the editor at the moment, and they soon located His Lordship by telephone. Inside of fifteen minutes all three of them had entered Jan van Oosten's bookshop, which was open during the earlier part of the evening, and managed to slip back into the house without being noticed—the door being concealed behind a long and high bookcase.

When they were taken up to Jufvrouw Geertje's room, His Lordship and Lammerford crawled through the hole into the narrow passage behind the fireplace and sat down with their eyes at the little crevices Trevor had made in the fire-bricks, to await developments. They had been there scarcely five minutes when they saw the oculist enter the room, followed by O'Meara, Kirschwasser and Stolb, the Wilhelmstrasse man.

Sitting down by the table, they waited until Schmidt had produced cigars, pipes and beer. Then Stolb told them of the Fräulein's progress with the Cabinet Minister. (As it happened, he did not mention either of them by name.) It was her impression, he said, that the Minister was completely infatuated. She anticipated little difficulty in getting him to carry out their plan, and had told Stolb the papers should be in her hands as soon as possible. While he was talking, O'Meara had drawn some documents from an inside pocket—unfolding them on the table.

"I have them all ready for her, Stolb—will hand 'em to her to-night, while I'm at the house. But first I'd like your opinion—there may be something I've overlooked. This one is a memorandum of just where every troop and company of the Nederlands army is stationed at this moment—it betrays a knowledge of what he's not supposed to know, upon Sir Alan's part, that will make the Cabinet Ministers open their eyes. Here is a tracing of the War Department map, showing the location and armament of all the recent fortifications—together with the available munitions stored in each. Then comes this letter from Sir Edward Wray, in the Legation cipher, with forged initials which are rather convincin'. Of course, the Intelligence Department of the Netherlands Government could probably decode it, with time and patience, but I've slipped in a pencil memorandum of the translation. The first third of the letter refers to matters under discussion between the two Governments—innocent enough. But, following that, comes this paragraph:

" 'Concerning our arrangements for the immediate future, we now have

five hundred thousand men, equipped for instant departure, where they can be embarked on transports within six hours. The transports are ready—field artillery loaded upon them, with ample munitions. We can have a dozen transports, disguised as cargo-boats under the American and Argentine flags, up the Nieuwe Water and Holland Deep before their real errand is suspected.

"'With the German troops massed along the border and half a million of our troops actually landed in Holland, the Netherlands Government will not resist us. It must join forces with the Entente, and we shall be able to smash the German lines of communication. In the future, of course, we must control Holland, absolutely, and garrison her German border with our own troops. She must become to all intents a part of the Empire.'

"The letter then goes on to deal with other matters—but when the Dutch Cabinet Ministers read that paragraph, it will be enough! Now—the plan is this: Our man will frame up good reason for a call upon Sir Alan at the British Legation, with two of his colleagues from the Cabinet. If for any reason he leaves the room for a moment, these papers will be dropped by our man under the chair in which he sat. If not, our man will tell his fellow Ministers after they leave the Legation that he saw the papers drop from Sir Alan's pocket and quietly picked them up with the idea that, in times like these, it might be well to get all the side points on other Governments which might be obtained."

STOLB banged his fist upon the table with an exclamation of delight. "And the natural inference," he commented excitedly, "is that Sir Alan was interrupted here in decoding that cipher letter when the Minister arrived—and stuffed letter and translation hurriedly into his pocket as he went out from his private office to meet them! Capital! Splendid! I didn't see how you were to account for such stupidity as his having anything of that sort upon him during such a conference—but, as you've laid it out, the thing is entirely possible! What happens next?"

"Our man is so indignant that he can't restrain himself when talking at his club with the editor of *De Vaderland,* who is strongly pro-German. That editor at once confers with the editors of two other pro-German papers. In half an hour, the story is on the bulletins—an extra edition on the streets. If the story doesn't arouse a dangerous burst of popular fury against Sir Alan, I don't know much about the Nederlanders. There will certainly be a rioting mob gathered in front of the Legation, demanding that the Minister come out and show himself. You can't scare Sir Alan,—he's not that sort,—and he'll have perfect confidence in the ability of the Dutch Government to protect him. He will promptly appear at the door or one of the windows. Stones will be thrown by the mob—injurying him—smashing windows—and a few shots fired. We will attend to that.

"One of the shots will come from a man who hates England—and never misses. Sir Alan will be killed. The Dutch Government, with proof in its hands of Entente treachery, will admit the German troops and side with them."

AFTER a moment's silence while the probable effect of the plot sank into their minds, there was a chorus of admiring exclamations. Shortly afterward, the conspirators left the house. When the listeners crawled back into Geertje van Oosten's room, their faces were bitten deep with consternation. Briefly, they told the editor and Van Oosten what they had overheard—Lammerford summing up the difficult features in the situation:

"We don't even know which of the Cabinet was referred to as 'our man!' That's something we'll have to find out within a very few hours—also the identity of the woman mentioned as 'the Fräulein,' who is undoubtedly the one I saw in the limousine. We can't go to the Foreign Minister with the story, because we haven't a shred of proof against any of his colleagues at present, and while it seems quite impossible, we're not entirely sure that he isn't the man himself. We can and

must warn Sir Alan to receive nobody at present without witnesses—but he'll laugh at the story when he hears it. He's just that sort!"

Van der Beers had been thinking over the various details of the plot and trying to match them with other things he knew.

"I say," he observed, "you know the woman *must* be Katrina von Kattenberg, who keeps house for her uncle, the banker. They've been very circumspect in what they've said or done since the war started, but every German of any prominence who comes to the Hague is entertained at their house. O'Meara has been openly one of her admirers—calls there almost every evening, when he can find a decent excuse. And I know of at least two Cabinet Ministers who are crazy about her. My word! I'm even rather sure of the man whom she is to use as a cat's-paw! Van Kort had a quarrel, recently, with Loudon, the Foreign Minister. They don't speak to each other—take opposite sides in every Cabinet meeting. And Katrina von Kattenberg has been openly siding with Van Kort, who owes his portfolio to Prins Heinrich. Van Kort is, I should say, the only Minister whom it would be possible for her to use in any such way as this!"

"Then I fancy we may take at least one step which appeared dangerous until you explained this. If Van Kort has quarreled with Loudon, the Foreign Minister will at least listen to what we know and what we suspect. Of course, he'll take no action without more proof—but against an enemy like Van Kort, you may wager he'll keep his eyes open, and Trevor can describe the whole plot to Her Majesty so that the Government will be forewarned. H-m-m—Van Kort gets those papers tonight at the Von Kattenberg house; he probably wont be able to arrange with his colleagues to call at the British Legation to-night—and yet, he may! More likely, though, it will be fixed up for to-morrow morning—just about the time Sir Alan will naturally be goin' through his morning post from London. Well, we must shadow Van Kort and O'Meara—every moment. Harry, you know Van Kort better than we do—so we'll put him in your charge. Lammy will keep track of O'Meara. And I will ask for an interview with Her Majesty—at once!"

As the others preceded him down the stairs, His Lordship turned back to Geertje van Oosten, who was standing just outside the door of her pretty room.

"Geertje," he said, "Her Majesty and England both owe you a debt which it will be diffic'lt to pay, adequately. Had it not been for your tellin' me about the chimney, an' helping us to overhear that conference in there, we might have been groping in the dark until it was too late to save the Nederlands from the consequences of this beastly conspiracy. If it is ever in my power to do anything for you, there will be no need of asking twice."

Some woman's instinct told her this courteous English peer—who had been one of her secretly admired celebrities for years—was an even greater man than he seemed. Some expression in her face revealed her liking for him. He bent his handsome head until her lips touched his and her arms crept around his neck—then he joined the others, downstairs. As she glanced at her face in the muslin-framed mirror, she knew the memory of that kiss would remain among her most cherished ones until she died.

THE three men were about to drift out, singly, through the bookshop, when the bell of Van Oosten's private telephone rang insistently in his study, back of the parlor—and that sixth sense possessed by all who play the great game prompted them to wait until he answered it. In a few moments he came out of the study, rather breathlessly.

"Gentlemen—Lady Trevor is now waiting at the Heer Van der Beers' office in the *Haagsche Dagblad* building, and wishes all of you to meet her there at once!"

They immediately left the house—one by way of the shop, and the others by the house-door—joining each other two blocks away, as they hurried down through the Groenmarkt to Spui

Stratte. Had it not been for this urgent telephone message, they would have separated in different directions after leaving Van Oosten's, and might not have been again in touch with each other before morning. At the newspaper building they found Lady Nan calmly looking at her watch in Van der Beers' private office.

"I don't know whether *you've* discovered anything of importance, but *I* have stumbled upon something which looks dangerous—and if we're to block it, we haven't fifteen minutes to lose! I had been having tea with that pretty Jufvrouw Van der Emde at the Paulez, and thought I'd enjoy the walk through the Lange Voorhout in the rain on my way back to the Paleis. About halfway across, there was a limousine drawn up by the edge of the promenade, and a man, leaning through the window, was talking to a woman inside. I caught a glimpse of his profile against one of the Park lights, recognizing him as Dr. Mely—the Cabinet Minister. Something about the limousine appeared familiar. I don't know why I thought of such a thing, but I stepped down from the curb as if crossing the tramway to the sidewalk on the other side—and stopped when I was just behind the car. The Doctor's back was toward me—so he didn't notice anyone approaching. I caught the words, 'Your uncle, Herr von Kattenberg'—which identified the woman at once.

"Then I heard her say that she would have certain papers ready for him this evening—that when she delivered them to him in her boudoir on the second floor, he must not wait until morning but hunt up two of his colleagues in the Cabinet and insist upon their accompanying him to the British Legation to-night, to demand a certain explanation from Sir Alan—and that, when there, he would know what to do with the papers. From one or two references she made, I'm quite sure that she must have made him believe the British Minister—though a man of fifty-eight, with a charming family of his own—had grossly insulted her at a moment when she happened to be in his power, and that if this plan of theirs could be carried out, it must ruin Sir Alan.

"Then she kissed him—Dr. Mely; and he walked away so completely hypnotized that he wouldn't have seen me if I had crossed the street directly in front of him. It is raining quite steadily, as you know—I'm positive that no one else was anywhere near that limousine!"

They listened to her story in amazement—fitting it in with what they already knew.

"Are you quite sure, Nan," asked Trevor, "that the man wasn't Jonkheer van Kort—instead of Dr. Mely? It simply couldn't be Mely, you know—unless we're altogether on the wrong track!"

"Oh, I know Dr. Mely by sight as well as I know Harry Wyndham here—and all the rest of the Cabinet, too! It was Mely."

"Then—my word! What! If your telephone message had come to Van Oosten two minutes later, we should have scattered to different parts of the city—shadowin' Van Kort an' O'Meara! An' the fat would have been in the fire before we knew where we were at! I say! . . . . . I'll go get Loudon, the Foreign Minister, at once—for a witness! We must figure out some way of gettin' into the Von Kattenberg house within an hour, an' taking Loudon with us—"

Van der Beers spoke up, quickly:

"That's the simplest feature in the whole affair! The Fräulein is giving a dance to-night—from ten till two! The paper was requested to send a representative, of course—which lets me in as a very desirable guest. Loudon and His Lordship would be more than welcome on their own account—in fact, invitations are probably waiting for them at this moment—including Her Ladyship, as a distinguished visitor at the Paleis. Your Ladyship's car is at the door; you and Lord Trevor can run back and dress in twenty minutes, while Sir Francis gets hold of Loudon! Meanwhile, I'll change right here and go on to Von Kattenberg's ahead of you. Afterward Sir Francis can keep track of O'Meara for the remainder of the night! His Lordship and the Foreign Minister will meet me in the men's dressing-room.

A LITTLE less than an hour later—while Lady Trevor was the center of an admiring group in one of the drawing-rooms—His Lordship and the Foreign Minister stepped through a doorway on the second floor which Van der Beers had indicated with a nod, in passing. For the moment it was empty. Hurrying across it, they slipped behind a portière into the Fräulein's bedroom, beyond—taking the precaution of opening a closet-door in case they were obliged to conceal themselves. They had been there scarcely ten minutes when the Fräulein Katrina came into her boudoir with O'Meara—who gave her the papers he had prepared, repeated a few particular instructions and went out again. At the end of another ten minutes, Dr. Mely cautiously poked in his head at the door, and entered when she beckoned—closing it behind him. Handing him the papers, she impressed upon him the necessity for action that night.

"I have sure information that Sir Alan will be at the Legation between half-past eleven and twelve o'clock. After showing the papers to your fellow Ministers and leaving them in their possession, will you please go at once to your club, where Belrode of the *Vaderland* will be waiting for you. It will be easy to appear very much excited by what you have discovered and tell him the facts before you remember that it may be indiscreet. Two other editors are likely to be somewhere near, and may overhear enough to make them confer with Jonkheer Belrode. As you see, there is nothing in all this which can possibly injure *you*, my friend—the most that can be said is that you were a trifle indiscreet in dropping too much of it to Belrode. He will have the story on his presses by one in the morning. Oh—you don't know what this means to me! I feel that I shall never recover my self-respect until that man is ruined for life! And your diplomatic position forbids your challenging him on my account. May I depend upon you? Then kiss me, and go—quickly!"

It was certainly a lingering caress. Just as he turned to go, the Foreign Minister stepped back upon a loose board in the bedroom—which creaked slightly.

"What's that! Is there anyone in there?"

"Impossible! That is my bedroom!" They tiptoed over to the portière and drew it partly aside. The room seemed empty—but the door of the closet in which her clothes were hanging was slightly ajar. With that subconscious modesty which most women possess, she went around the foot of the bed, pushed the door shut—and shoved the bolt! Then she left the room—a moment after Dr. Mely.

INSIDE the closet there were a few explosive remarks, as the sound of her footsteps died away. The two men tried to force the bolt from its fastenings, but the framing was of solid oak; they couldn't stir it. The Minister began to realize that discovery in such a position meant ruin to his career. Lord Trevor was concerned only with the fact that Dr. Mely was getting out of the house with the papers—and that, once inside the British Legation with his fellow Ministers, the affair would be exceedingly difficult to handle. Suddenly they heard a man's voice speaking to the Fräulein's maid in the boudoir,—a voice which they identified as Van der Beers',—asking if she could find her mistress at once, as Lady Trevor wished to pay her respects before leaving. As the maid went down the hall, he ran into the bedroom and unbolted the door—exclaiming, softly:

"Get out of here as quickly as you can! That maid is likely to return at any second! I noticed you didn't come out and was sure you must have been locked in, somewhere!"

In the hall, the Foreign Minister shook Van der Beers' hand with heartfelt meaning.

"I shall not forget that little service, my friend! You may have a Legation for it, if you wish! But I must telephone the Oranje Barracks at once, and have a detail sent out to arrest Dr. Mely before he does any harm with those papers!"

"Your Excellency need have no uneasiness upon that score! Sir Francis Lammerford was looking out for him

as he came down the stairs—and had three men waiting outside in a motor-landaulet. We will find the Doctor, handcuffed, in that landaulet—not more than a block away—awaiting your further instructions."

AT eleven o'clock, Editor Belrode was called to the telephone at his club. A voice which he recognized as that of Schmidt, the oculist, nervously gave him totally unexpected instructions.

"Mely was arrested for treason fifteen minutes ago. They put him in a cell in the Oranje Barracks, with a guard sitting outside—where no political influence can get him out! You must kill that story—quick! Get word to the other editors! If a scrap of it appears in print, it will set the police tracing out everyone connected with the affair."

A cautious inquiry by telephone confirmed the report of Mely's arrest. Not in the least knowing where he was at, Belrode set about killing the story—which had been in type for three days, waiting for the word to release it. At a conference in Van der Beers' office, shortly after midnight, the Foreign Minister announced his intention of arresting all the conspirators before morning—but Lord Trevor put the affair in a light he had not considered.

"I say, old chap—you arrest the Fräulein and her uncle, for example? Suppose she calmly admits giving those papers to Mely an' says *she herself* took them from Sir Alan's pocket? Eh? Gave them to Mely to place before the Cabinet! Suppose those pro-German newspapers come out with the whole story, rearranged on that basis, a few hours after the arrest? Of course, they wont have the documents to back it up, and your being a witness of what actually occurred will carry a good deal of weight—but it's a story that neither my governm'nt nor yours can afford to have made public, just now! It's too much like a match in a powder-magazine! What you can do, is quietly hint to the Fräulein and her uncle that it may be just as well to sell their house, close out his business interests and leave the country inside of three days. Kirschwasser also. That'll 'keep 'em guessing,' as the Americans say—they'll not know how much proof you have against them or whether you really mean to have them shot if they don't take the hint. I fancy they'll go—without a word. Mely, of course, your Cabinet will deal with as severely as you like. You've proof enough to give *him* the limit—but it will be safer to let it happen 'way off, somewhere—say in Batavia. As for O'Meara, we'll attend to him ourselves."

When the Minister had left them, Van der Beers asked:

"Would Your Lordship mind telling me why you oiled the mechanism of that secret panel in Schmidt's house so carefully? Did you anticipate concealing a force of men in there to arrest the whole crowd? Seems to me you'd make a corking good diplomat yourself, sir!"

"My word, no! That would have been showin' our hand much too clearly, an' would have marked the Van Oostens for trouble! I told our friend who had just left us that it would be good policy not to interfere with Schmidt for the present, or even let him know he's under suspicion. If the Wilhelmstrasse gets an impression that he escaped all implication in this affair, they're quite sure to use him an' his house again, very soon, d'ye see. It's even quite pawssible they may kidnap Sir Alan or some of the Dutch Cabinet, an' conceal them in that old building. In that case, don't you know, we have a means of gettin' in without their knowledge an' havin' the game in our own hands."

THE affair ended as it had begun—with O'Meara.

He expected arrest upon the charge of complicity with Dr. Mely, but, apparently, there was no suspicion of his connection with the affair. After a few nerve-racking days, he learned with astonishment that the Von Kattenbergs were selling their handsome residence and going back to Germany. As he had avoided the house in the fear of compromising them, he knew of no reason for this sudden move—and finally called there in the evening for

an explanation. To his amazement, the butler took his card in a contemptuous manner which made him exceedingly angry—but he was stunned when the man came back with the message that Fräulein von Kattenberg was not at home to men who betrayed their own country.

As he walked slowly away from the house where he had been for so many months an apparently welcome guest, he gradually sensed the fact that he had been merely used as an unscrupulous tool to further the underhand diplomacy of the Wilhelmstrasse—and that the conspirators felt for him nothing but contempt while taking advantage of the secrets he betrayed to them.

It seemed as if rumor had been everywhere blackening his name, even among the Nederlanders. When he dropped in at his club, every former acquaintance cut him dead—unmistakably. Even at a little restaurant where he was known, in the Spui Straat, the waitress served him in stony silence, and the cashier treated him as a stranger. During the day, it had seemed to him that his fellow attachés at the Legation spoke rather abruptly upon several occasions, but he noticed nothing else unusual until he returned, about midnight. No one appeared to see him as he came in and went up to his room. He had been sitting there in the dark for half an hour—facing what he now realized to be the utter ruin of his career, if nothing worse—when the door opened and Sir Alan entered, followed by Lord Trevor and Sir Francis Lammerford. They locked the door, turned on the lights and seated themselves. He noticed, subconsciously, that none of them cared to smoke. Presently Sir Francis Lammerford remarked in a reflective way:

"There's a difference, you know, between a man who is an open rebel against the Governm'nt—riskin' his life in a fair fight—and the sort of creature who cuts its throat in the dark, while pretendin' to be its loyal servant. The Fenians gave us a good bit of trouble, back in the fifties and sixties—but they were men who fancied they had a grievance against England, an' were not afraid to risk their lives by showin' it. Even to-day, the Irish who still profess to hate England are quite open about it. In the Orient, you know, one searches rather far before he finds a man who'll actually betray his salt. O'Meara, if we send you back to the Tower, it's a hanging matter, as you must know—an' the whole story will have to be known. It will blacken your family name for generations. On the other hand, if you happen to die here at the Hague, while presumably on duty in the Legation—why, there's nothing more to be said. The people here know vaguely that you betrayed your country, but they don't know the story in detail. If you die, you're where you can do no further mischief—and the situation in Holland under present conditions is too delicate to risk dangerous complications by allowing the facts of this affair to leak out."

THE man's throat was horribly dry. He kept moistening his lips with the tip of his tongue—looking from their stern faces to the window and back again—realizing that, incredible as it seemed, he was going to die—very soon. He had determined while sitting there in the dark that he would go to America, where nobody knew him—where he would be received as if nothing had happened. But he had forgotten what sort of men these were, whom he had betrayed. He would never see America. He would never see another sunrise. For a moment, he thought, wildly, of begging for at least that privilege; then some remnant of the courage which had been that of his Fenian ancestors made him straighten up in his chair.

"You—you have some particular way in mind—Sir Francis?" he asked.

Lammerford took a small capsule from his pocket and soberly handed it to the doomed man.

"It's a matter of scarcely three seconds—after the gelatine dissolves. Er—cyanide, you know."

O'Meara put the capsule between his lips and managed to swallow it. For a moment he sat there looking at them while the horror deepened in his eyes. Then—there was a convulsive shudder. The body sagged down in the chair.

WHOM GOD HATH JOINED

A COMPLETE RÉSUMÉ OF THE PREVIOUS INSTALLMENTS

CHRISSEY DESELDEN, a beautiful heiress, has been left to the guardianship of John Warburton, a self-made man of great wealth. She has many suitors, of whom the most favored is Richard Neyland, an attractive but profligate young adventurer. One evening, however, Neyland takes too much wine at dinner, and deeply offends Miss Deselden by his overardent love-making. As a result, she turns from him and accepts the proposal of Warburton, her guardian, even though he confesses to her that he is presumably of illegitimate birth.

The marriage takes place with great pomp and ceremony, but immediately afterward, when she arrives with Warburton at the hunting lodge where their honeymoon is to be spent, she realizes that her feeling for him is only filial and begs him to leave her free. He consents—and next day news of the sudden death of Chrissey's mother brings them back to New York.

A few days later Chrissey goes alone to Bermuda, there to recuperate from the shock of her mother's death and to seek a solution of her matrimonial mistake. The solution that presents itself, however, is most unfortunate, for Richard Neyland appears, and persuades her that he is the one whom she loves, after all.

And now suddenly Warburton comes unexpectedly on the scene and finds Chrissey in Neyland's arms. A fight follows, in which Neyland is only saved from death by Chrissey's interference. All three return to New York,—on separate boats,—and Chrissey sets out for the necessary sojourn in Nevada to obtain her divorce.

NEYLAND, with his friend Alton and others, engineers a combine with the object of "breaking" Warburton on "the Street." It fails, however—even though Chrissey has lent Neyland her fortune to help him. Meanwhile, Chrissey has obtained her divorce—and found that she does not want it; the meeting between the two men in Bermuda has shown her that it is Warburton whom she really loves. She writes Neyland, breaking off her engagement to him, and soon afterward follows her letter back to New York.

This letter reaches Neyland after his attack upon Warburton has failed and when Neyland has just returned from a three-days' debauch. Realizing his degradation, Neyland feels himself unworthy even to read Chrissey's letter, and leaving it unopened, commits suicide.

Chrissey arrives in New York and learns from her friends—Colonel Tayloe, his daughter Rose and her husband, the Duca di Attavanti—of Neyland's suicide. Ignorant of his business defeat (thinking him, indeed, the victor and Warburton impoverished) and of his dissipation-destroyed self-respect, Chrissey believes his suicide caused by her letter of rejection and exclaims: "I have killed him!"

by Cyrus Townsend Brady

Author of "The Island of Regeneration," "Web of Steel," etc.

FOR Chrissey there were great searchings of heart. Her pursuit of happiness had led her, as such quests often do, to a hideous impasse. She found herself fettered by circumstances, bound by conditions which she conceived herself powerless by any effort whatsoever to alter in the least degree. Although her career had been marked by horrifying indecision, by a complete and utter failure to comprehend the situation, by a blind inability to discern her own heart and a strange want of power to see where her true happiness did lie, she was yet a woman of determination and will.

Neyland's death had been a horrible shock to her, especially as she had not spoken lightly or unadvisedly when she had told the Duke and the Duchess that she herself had killed him. Reflection had but intensified her in that appalling conviction. She would have given her life itself, she thought, if she could have restored him to life; but she was absolutely clear-headed enough, even in the midst of her passionate remorse, to realize that she never could have married him. No, not even to have saved his life, his character, his soul, even, could she have brought herself to that.

Her grief was founded on the fact that she had not realized that before. She had been blind. Some inexplicable infatuation had possessed her. Once her eyes had been opened, she had seen clearly that she could not have gone through with that marriage. It was impossible, and the very fact that she had experienced the horrors of the demands of a loveless marriage, as she had fancied it, made it the more impossible for her to have given herself to Neyland.

Therefore, in all her humiliation and reproach and contrition, which were genuine and abiding and which would probably never leave her altogether, even though they might be mollified by time, she never for one moment allowed herself to say that she would have prevented the catastrophe by marrying him. Nor could she delude herself by arguing that if she had had a chance to talk with him she could have averted this melancholy consummation, this deplorable ending of all his hopes and struggles.

There is no illuminant like a great passion, and this in spite of the proverb

about the blinding power of love. She knew now, and she frankly admitted it, that she loved the man who had been her husband. That she had irrevocably put him from her, and that he had suddenly become unattainable, had but intensified the depth of feeling with which she longed to give herself to him.

PERHAPS after all there is a sense in which love blinds. It blinded Chrissey Deselden to the state of Warburton's heart. It did not occur to her for a single moment that he could still love her. He ought not to love her. Certainly he could not. She looked upon herself as a bad woman and one deserving of punishment.

Sometimes we have to pay a higher price for folly than we do for sin. The sinner usually gets some sort of an exchange, the fool nothing. She heaped ashes and dust upon her head. She had indeed played the fool and had been buried beneath the debris of her folly. In that condition she asked nothing. She could not ask. She had forfeited any right to appeal. Her punishment appeared greater than she could bear; yet she had to bear it. She expected nothing. She hoped nothing.

She approached the matter again and again from every angle. She sat silent for long hours threshing it out. But for her love for Warburton she would have said she was a *Frankenstein,* a woman without a soul, without a heart. She was almost frightened at the fact of her not only not grieving for Neyland but of actually being relieved at his death—not that she wished him dead, but she could not escape the consciousness that her relationship with him was ended—the problem that he presented so far as he was concerned had been solved by that pistol-shot.

As she saw herself mercilessly, she saw Neyland in the same way. She realized his weakness, although she was fain not to dwell upon it; and yet there was a certain fascination in so doing, because that weakness justified her action. It was that weakness that would have made impossible even the sacrifice of herself if she could have otherwise brought herself to marry him. She sought earnestly to think upon his good qualities, but other things would obtrude. *De mortuis nil nisi—malum!* And for that there was bitter reproach and shame!

She had accepted, condoned and even forgiven that insult at Sorrento, but she had never forgotten it. Now it bulked large and hateful in her thoughts. It seemed to her that he had somehow branded her, put his sign-manual of evil upon her, and although she did not love him, and felt a vast pity for him, she was still his possession because of that. And when she allowed herself to dwell upon that, she hated him.

If there had been a possibility in her mind that Warburton still cared for her, and that fate which had played her so many tricks could by any means bring husband and wife together again, that now-again-loathed touch would have prevented. She had thrown Neyland's bracelet away. She had burned his letters. She would fain have put him out of her memory, but that was the one thing that would not be denied or obliterated.

She had sought to put everything of Neyland's out of her life. There was one thing, however, that still remained to be dealt with. A few months before, he had sent her a large, legal-looking envelope not to be opened until he should die, although he had neither expectation nor premonition of death then. She remembered the letter which had brought the sealed packet to her, and how full of the joy of life it had been. In the days that intervened between Neyland's death and his funeral, she had opened that envelope. It was the only letter of his that she had preserved. When she destroyed the others, it had been in her mind to return that one to him as perhaps containing something of importance.

It was a copy of his will. He had left his not inconsiderable fortune entirely to her. His letters had convinced her that his operations on the stock exchange, which she yet had not the faintest idea had turned out unsuccessfully, had materially increased that fortune. Of course, as she had put her whole means at his disposal, she too had shared in the profits.

THE newspapers that night, anticipating the next day, had coupled a prophecy of the failure of the great combination with the announcement of Neyland's suicide. Indeed, the newsboy at the entrance to the hotel had shouted out that news, but she had heard nothing but that he had killed himself—nothing but that had penetrated her consciousness. The shock of that horrible event had left her incapable of receiving or comprehending anything else. Nothing else mattered, anyway. He was dead. She did not dream that he had failed. The idea, the confidence, of success had been too thoroughly established in her mind for her to suspect anything.

There was one decision to which she had come. She would use none of Neyland's money. Under the circumstances, she could not take one dollar of it. It would all have to go to good works. Her share of the profits of the big deal she was firmly resolved in some way to make over to Warburton, whom she conceived to be poor, ruined, without resources. Neyland had said that she ought to double her fortune, and so, with the large amount her holdings involved, a man like Warburton would have enough soon to recoup himself in some measure.

She could not go to Neyland's funeral, not even disguisingly veiled. There had been publicity enough about the whole matter. Her name had not been coupled with Neyland's suicide—which was universally ascribed to nervous depression following his last debauch, brought about by the excitement of his deal in the stock exchange. But society had expected a marriage between the two since her divorce, and much unpleasant comment and speculation was already current.

She had sent for no papers. The fact that he was dead, the manner of his death, had been enough for her. The details had been given by her reluctant friends. She did not wish to read comment, gossip, speculation.

STRICTLY incognito in her apartments at the Biltmore, visited at first only by her good friend the Duchess, who had been charged strictly by her father to tell her nothing of the course of events, she knew nothing. The wild excitement of that short day following the suicide, which in the fierceness of the battle that was waged on the stock exchange surpassed in dramatic intensity anything that New York had ever known, passed her by quite unheeded and unheeding. Of the tremendous climax of the battle she heard nothing. Nor in the few things she did discuss with Rose was there any mention of it.

The suicide of Neyland on the eve of the deciding moment, after an absence of four days from the scene of conflict, might alone have wrought the ruin of the combination so carefully engineered. Indeed, to the unthinking and uninformed, it seemed to be the actual cause of the failure of Warburton's enemies; but those big operators who on that last day came out in the open, dispossessing Alton and taking Neyland's place and fighting as they had never fought before, knew differently. At the end of the day, ruined, beggared, bankrupt, desperate, they were forced to confess that Warburton had beaten them at their own game—and that without regard to the suicide. He would not have been beaten though a thousand Neylands had essayed to stop him.

The world looked on in a state of mingled admiration and terror at this struggle of Titans. It was a battle for life and death. The close of the day found the greatest of them all greater than ever—his enemies discomfited, routed, in headlong retreat.

For the love of a woman, for the hate of a man, to wreak his revenge, Neyland had brought hundreds to ruin—nay, even thousands, for in the general crash that followed the battle, remote and subsidiary interests extending in out-reaching ramifications through the whole country were involved. Indeed, it was Warburton himself who, having ground his enemies to powder, stopped an incipient panic by no little sacrifice of himself and the profits of the day, and who enabled small holders at least to get to cover and protect themselves. Warburton's endeavor had always been constructive

rather than destructive; and as usual, having gained the victory, he had used it mercifully.

This terrible battle, with its far-reaching influence even upon the innocent, would have added to Chrissey's misery if she had sensed it. Happily, she knew nothing of it. Her own fortune had been so placed that with the best will in the world Warburton had been unable to protect it. Neyland's, of course, had disappeared in the maelstrom. Instead of inheriting any considerable sum from him, instead of having doubled her own holdings, she was a ruined woman; and but for the money upon her person, her jewels and her private belongings, she was without resource.

Of course it was Warburton's intention to restore Chrissey's fortune to her, and to that end he and Colonel Tayloe consulted long and planned variously. Inevitably the duty of informing Chrissey Deselden of that determination, or the bringing of it about without her knowledge if possible, had devolved upon Colonel Tayloe. He had not seen her since the suicide. His presence had been necessary in the battle on the stock exchange; and the next day, Sunday, the funeral arrangements of Neyland had also devolved upon him. Billy Alton, who had also lost everything he possessed,—materially, that is, and who bade fair to lose everything else,—was incapable of giving help.

Colonel Tayloe had arranged through his daughter Rose to see Chrissey Deselden on Monday afternoon, the day after the funeral. Rose had been Chrissey's only support. When the latter would talk, Rose had talked and only of what Chrissey wished to talk. When she would sit silent, Rose had fallen in with her mood. She had shown herself that rare thing, a perfect friend.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A BEWILDERED AMBASSADOR

"MY dear girl," began the Colonel, "I am sick at heart over the present situation. I know what the death of poor Richard Neyland must have been to you. Just as you had secured your divorce and were about to marry him—"

"Colonel Tayloe," said Chrissey, interrupting him swiftly, "I have neither father nor mother. I have no one to advise me. You have known me since I was a child. You are the soul of honor and wisdom."

"My dear girl, surely not the last."

"Yes. And I am going to talk with you freely, concealing nothing. You will respect my confidence?"

"Yes—absolutely."

"Well, then—I was not going to marry Richard Neyland."

"What?"

"No."

"I thought—"

"Yes, and I thought and he thought and we all thought; but we all thought wrong—I more than anyone. Ever since that day in Sorrento—you remember?—I have been in a—a whirl of excitement. Until I went to Nevada, I didn't take time to draw a quiet breath, I think. One thing succeeded another. I was swept, as it were, by a mighty current. But out there in the mountains, alone, quiet, I fancied God near, and I saw things differently."

"You mean?"

"I found I didn't love Mr. Neyland."

THE Colonel stared in undisguised astonishment.

"You will think me weak of will, vacillating, despise me."

"Despise a woman for not knowing her own heart? Not I."

"That is good of you. I didn't know it. I think the man somehow fascinated me. It is a horrible thing to refer to, but Rose has told you about Sorrento?"

"Yes."

"Well, since he—since that, I somehow felt as if I belonged to him, and—but I saw at last that I did not. Then I realized his weakness. I knew in my soul that not even with me could he conquer his—weakness. Oh, perhaps if I had believed that he could, I might have gone on; but his letters, everything, showed me that he could not, and if I could not and did not love him, what was to be gained by sacrificing myself to him?"

"Nothing."

"I knew what the obligations of a loveless marriage were; at least, it was an unloving marriage then."

"Chrissey," said the old Colonel, coming closer to her and taking her by the shoulders with both hands, "look me in the face. Do you love your husband?"

"He is not my husband, but—I do."

"What!"

"Why should I hesitate to confess it to you? He shall never know. Nothing can ever come of it now, but I know at last that I love him. I'm not fit to be his servant, but I love him just the same, the more because I didn't realize it until too late."

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the Colonel, releasing her, sinking back into a chair and wiping the sweat from his brow.

"It surprises you? It surprises me. I wont reproach him, but he should have known better than to have allowed a mere girl to have had her way. He was older than I. Why didn't he—take me?" she went on desperately. "If he had made himself my master, it would have brought me to my senses. I see it now, too late."

"But when did you realize it?"

"I didn't let myself realize it until the day I got my decree of divorce, but I know now, although I would not allow myself to acknowledge it, that I began to love him that evening in Bermuda—has he told you of it?"

The Colonel nodded.

"WHEN he seized Mr. Neyland," went on Chrissey, "and would have killed him, had I not prevented—it was then. That was the day he told me to get the divorce, after what he had seen; and I thought he hated me. I was sure he loathed me, despised me. He might well have done so, not because I had committed any but venial sins in my heart. Save for what has been outward and visible in my course, I am as fit to be his wife, or anyone's wife, as Rose."

"I know, of course. No one ever dreamed otherwise. No one ever whispered it—at least not in my presence," said the old man grimly.

"I thank you. And now that I have told you the truth,—and I had to tell you so that you can understand,—you will never breathe it to a soul, not even to Rose; and we wont speak of it again."

"But—"

"Oh, don't interrupt me. I've got more to tell you, and if I'm stopped I couldn't gather up my thoughts again."

"Go on."

"Although I do not love him and I cannot feel that personal sense of loss in his death, although I had determined not to marry him and would not have done so, because it would have been of no use,—I couldn't have saved him, no woman could,—still, I feel that I killed Richard Neyland."

"It would have come sooner or later."

"Yes, but that it came when it did I know is due to me."

"What do you mean?"

"I wrote him a letter in which I told him the truth, at least so far as it concerned him, that I had found out at last that I did not love him, that I could not love him, that marriage with him on that basis was impossible, that even if I married him I could not conceal the fact that I did not love him, and that such a knowledge would probably render it more difficult than ever for him to—you understand?"

"Of course."

"He got that letter. The Duke said he had been drinking heavily afterward. It took away the last of his resisting power. When he read it, I think it drove him out of his mind; and when he came to himself, in part at least, and realized that his hopes were without fruition, that I was lost to him, that he had fallen, he killed himself."

"But, my dear girl—"

"There is nothing you can say that can change that conclusion."

"Isn't there?" asked the Colonel grimly, feeling in his pocket for certain papers which he was suddenly minded not yet to produce. "Go on."

"I have suffered greatly ever since that night at Sorrento. I have been the cause of all this unhappiness and sorrow. Through me Mr. Neyland is dead and Mr. Warburton is ruined and

I am alone; but it does not seem to me that I have suffered enough. I ask myself how much I have believed in the goodness of God. I ask myself how much of my sorrow comes from the knowledge that I have offended Him, that I have broken the laws of Holy Church, and how much of it comes from the facts that I did not know my own mind, and that Mr. Neyland is dead and that Mr. Warburton is ruined and that we are separated forever.

"Oh, I do not know—but, I feel that I have not been punished enough. Do you know, I think I've been a— What do you call that ancient philosophy? Oh, I recall it—hedonism. I've been a hedonist. Pleasure has been the end of action. I wanted to be happy. You see, I was so young. It didn't seem fair, and so I have defied God and man, and I am the unhappiest woman on earth. Neyland is dead, and Warburton is ruined, and I am alone," she repeated with a sort of monotonous desperation

"As for poor Neyland, I cannot say; but Warburton is the unhappiest man on earth," said the Colonel impulsively.

"Does he take his ruin so hardly?"

"It's not altogether that—but go on."

"And I must be punished more. If I could expiate my weakness, my indecision on this earth, I should be so glad; and so I look to you to help me. I am always asking some one to help me, am I not?" she questioned piteously.

"You shall not ask me in vain. What is it that you wish? But if I may offer a suggestion, I think you ought to go away. Rose and the Duke are returning to Italy next week, and—"

"Italy! I couldn't go there; it was there—besides, I have other plans."

"And what are they?"

"I am going to Bermuda. You can advise me on all business matters and things of that kind—no one better; but there is an old priest down there, Father Smith—you have heard of him?"

"Yes, I have even met him—when I was last in Bermuda myself."

"He was very good to me. He pointed out the right way and strove to guide me therein. I am going to him. The *Bermudian* sails next Thursday. I wish you to get me passage for myself and maid, and if it is not taken, engage 'Whileway' for me again."

"Humph," said the Colonel. "Go on."

"And here," continued the woman, producing that sealed packet, "is Mr. Neyland's will. He sent it to me in Nevada and told me it was not to be opened unless he died. I destroyed everything else connected with him, even that bracelet which I showed to Rose, and which I suppose she has told you of?"

THE Colonel nodded again.

"I threw that away, but I could not destroy a paper like this with his other letters, because I thought it might be important, and I brought it back with me intending to return it to him. After he died, I felt as if I must open it. It is his will. He leaves me everything of which he dies possessed—being, as it happens, without other relatives and no friends so dear as I, he says." Her voice faltered. "Oh, I feel only relief. I am ashamed, but I cannot grieve as he would have grieved. But, there, I must not inflict that upon you. I want everything that comes to me by this will to be turned into money and all the profits he made from that great combination against Mr. Warburton to be added to the sum, all of it."

"What are you going to do with it?"

"This—and I want you to attend to it for me: He said that it would be perhaps doubled by his operations if they succeeded. Is the amount a large one?"

"I'm not good at understanding business propositions, but these securities," said the Colonel, glancing over the list quickly and striving to think more clearly, "have a face value of over a million dollars; if they were doubled, the total estate would be between two and three millions."

"Yes. Well, I'm going to devote that to—'good works.' I cannot, will not, touch it myself, but I can make somebody happy with it, and perhaps in that way win some blessing upon his memory. You know him; you know his family history; you know how he struggled, how he was tempted—don't you think that he has some chance?"

"Dear Chrissey," answered the Colonel quietly, "as I am sure even the best of us is not good enough to be saved on his own merits, so I believe even the worst of us is not bad enough to be damned for his own sins—no, nor for those of his fathers."

"I wish I could believe that."

"You must believe it. It is the only sensible view to take."

"Perhaps—I hope so. Well, you will attend to this, wont you? I suppose I'll have to sign papers or something to give you the power?"

"That will be easy."

"And then there is my own fortune. You remember in what shape it was?"

"Perfectly."

"I gave it all to Mr. Neyland to use. He said he would not use it until the last minute, but he wrote me that it was necessary. In fact, he said that what I put in had finally decided the battle."

"I see."

"And I presume it has doubled too."

"Your logic is irrefutable," was the evasive answer.

"I don't want to crush Mr. Warburton. As I see it now, I would have been glad if he had beaten the others; but as I thought of it before, if he were beaten I wanted him to have something to start again with."

"Dear girl—"

"Yes. It was no loyalty to Mr. Neyland, but he thought so; and I let him think so, and I was cruelly wrong in so doing, for I knew it then, and would not admit it. I was forcing myself to be on his side."

"I understand."

"But what was really back of my action was that I might have something to give back to Mr. Warburton to enable him to start again. All that has come to me is to go back to Mr. Warburton. You will arrange that also?"

"My dear Chrissey," cried the Colonel, "do you know what you are asking? Can you think of any power on earth that could make John Warburton take that money or any dollar of it?"

"I don't know; I'll have to leave it to you."

"But you can't leave the impossible to me."

"I must. I should like to give him everything. It wouldn't be a tithe to what he had lost through me."

"My dear," said the Colonel, "when he lost you, he lost everything that made life worth living."

Chrissey Deselden's heart leaped in her bosom. She stared at the Colonel a moment.

"It is good of you to say so," she said at last, fighting for self-control, "but I think it can't make much difference to him now. He told me to get a divorce, and—"

THE Colonel was in a delicate position indeed. He was the recipient of so many confidences and the pivot of so many different aspirations that he did not see his way clear at that moment.

"We will let that pass," he said; "meanwhile—what you ask is impossible. Warburton wouldn't take the money from you."

"Since he is ruined, he must accept the inevitable."

"I couldn't persuade him to do it."

"I don't want you to persuade him. I know as well as you that he would have nothing from me—he hates me; but you've got to find some plan for saving something out of the wreck. There must be some way in which you could justify it to him. Make him believe that some things have been overlooked that he had forgotten."

The Colonel laughed.

"*I* deceive a man like Warburton in a business transaction! Make him believe that he had overlooked anything at all! Why, Chris, dear, have you gone mad?"

"Indeed I think I have," said the girl. "Now I really can't stand much more. I've told you everything just as frankly as I know how to tell you. I have opened my whole heart to you. You must do these things for me. Turn Mr. Neyland's fortune into money, even at a loss, and hold it for me. Put John Warburton in possession of every dollar that I have won, and when I go to Bermuda, I will write you further what I want to do."

"But my dear girl!"

"Oh, Colonel, I'm tried beyond en-

durance; wont you leave me alone now and come again to-morrow?"

"I'll be here early in the morning—say about half after nine; and perhaps I shall have news for you," said the old man as he took his departure.

CHAPTER XXXVII

BROKEN HONOR

INDEED the Colonel was glad to leave. He wanted time to collect his thoughts and to decide upon some course of action in that difficult situation.

He went home to the Duke and the Duchess; and as he went, he revolved the situation in his mind and considered above everything the obligation he had taken to keep silent. It was an obligation that was absolutely impossible for him to keep. When he had given his pledge, he had not dreamed in what it involved him. But as nice customs courtesy to great kings, so even invariable laws must sometimes be broken, and this is even true when they are laws of honor.

The Colonel had two counselors in whom he could confide and whose advice he could ask, counselors who held the two parties concerned in as deep an affection as he held them and to them he repaired. It was still early in the afternoon. The Duke, having no business, had not yet gone downtown, and he and Rose were in the library; they had not ceased to be lovers, although they had been six months married.

To Attavanti and Rose, Colonel Tayloe stated his problem: Chrissey had come to realize that she loved Warburton, the man she had divorced for the sake of Neyland. Chrissey believed that her letter had been the provocation of Neyland's suicide. And she believed herself wealthy—rich with spoils won from Warburton by Neyland, when as a matter of fact she was all but penniless. Warburton had pledged Tayloe secretly to restore to Chrissey the money she had loaned to Neyland and which Neyland had lost. Now Chrissey, in her ignorance, asked Tayloe somehow to convey to Warburton at least a part of the money she believed Neyland, with her aid, had won from him. What was the Colonel to do with this tangle? What advice would the Duke give?

"Advice!" said the Duke, getting up and pacing the floor nervously. "I must think. It is no easy problem."

"Easy! I repeat, it's impossible."

"I'll tell you one thing you can do, Father," said the practical Rose, "you can relieve her mind in part of the thought about her letter causing Neyland's death."

"How can I do that?"

"By giving it back to her."

"By giving it back to her? I don't understand."

"Oh, Father, Father," said the girl, "you're so interested in business that the little things of life escape you. Where is that letter she wrote him that you took from Mr. Neyland's hand and have suppressed and did not give to the coroner?"

"Here it is," said the Colonel, drawing it from his pocket. "I intended to give it to her this morning, but in view of this strange complication I do not know what to do."

"Look at it, Father; look at it, Enrico, See—it has never been opened."

"Of course! It's quite evident."

"Ah! He started to tear the envelope to extract the letter, and then thought better of it—for what reason I cannot imagine; but no one could get the letter out of that opening. Is it not so, my Rose?"

"It is so indeed, Enrico," said the Duchess. "Therefore," she continued, "if she is imagining that her letter caused the downfall that resulted in that suicide, it will be easy to prove her wrong by returning to her the letter."

"It is very simple," said the Duke.

"Well, that helps a little," said the Colonel. "But how about Warburton? There is the greater problem. I really couldn't bring myself to violate my promise to her by revealing to him all that she said about her not loving Neyland and her loving Warburton."

"No. You couldn't, but I could," said Rose promptly.

Both men stared at her in dismay.

"Rose," said the Colonel, "I charge

you as my daughter to say nothing whatever about this matter to either Chrissey or John Warburton until I give you leave."

"It grieves me to oppose you in anything, *mia carissima*," said the Duke gravely. "And I am very far from wishing to exercise any undue authority, but I am sure you will respect your father's request, which is my own."

"Oh, very well," said Rose, somewhat abashed by the gravity of the two men, "I wont say anything until you give me leave, but if you would let me, I could settle it in ten minutes by telephoning Mr. Warburton and sending him instantly to Chris. I'm sure they could adjust their differences after the briefest of conversations."

"I'm not so sure of that," said the Colonel, "but there may be something in the idea. At any rate, we've got to decide upon some course of action, and whatever we decide will be wrong from one point of view and right from another."

"Exactly, my dear Colonel," said the Duke gravely. "Let us reflect upon it."

"While you're both reflecting," said the irrepressible Rose, "try to take out of your mind the point of view from which it would be wrong and think only of the point of view from which every thing that you do would be right."

THERE was a tap on the door at this moment. Bidden to enter, one of the footmen brought in a card which he handed to the Duchess.

"Speaking of angels," she exclaimed, although no one had been so doing. "This card bears the name of Father Stuart-Smith of Bermuda."

"He is the priest who tried to help Chrissey. I remember him perfectly," said the Colonel; "and by the way, she told me she was going down to Bermuda to ask his counsel and advice as to her future career. I have an idea that his counsel may be of service."

"I couldn't share Chrissey's confidence even with a priest of the church," said the old Colonel, "but he comes at an opportune time. We will make him welcome and then send him to her. She has refused to see everybody, but she will see him I am sure."

Father Smith's presence was soon explained. He had come up from Bermuda on a well-earned vacation. He had called on Warburton to seek tidings of his wife. Warburton had insisted upon taking him into his house, and as he was detained at the office, had sent him up with a letter assigning him to the care of the Duchess, who was dispensing its hospitality and who was indeed an old acquaintance of the priest's, with her father.

The two men and the woman were fascinated with the sweetness and light so wondrously mingled with the shrewd worldly wisdom of the old ecclesiastic. They gathered around him and told him the whole story.

"I will go to see her at once," said the priest. "It is still early in the afternoon, and I am sure to find her in."

CHAPTER XXXIX

OVERRULED

AS it chanced, Warburton and Father Smith met at the door of the house, an hour or so later. Warburton had been detained by a call from his beaten enemy, Neyland's friend Billy Alton. Poor Alton had not only lost his fortune but his wife as well, for that fickle lady had promptly decamped when she learned her husband had been impoverished. Warburton, with characteristic magnanimity, had forgiven his defeated foe—had even recognized the really excellent qualities Alton had shown in the battle by offering him a place in his office. And Alton had accepted.

The interview with Alton over, Warburton had returned home. His car and Father Smith's approached the curb simultaneously.

"Have you only just arrived, Father Smith?" asked Warburton in some surprise. "You should have been here hours ago. Has the chauffeur—"

Father Smith had been sent up to the house in Warburton's car while the financier himself had come home in a taxicab.

"On the contrary," answered the priest, "I was delivered with commendable promptness and received with

charming hospitality by your friend Colonel Tayloe and the Duke and the Duchess. I have been out to—"

He stopped abruptly. The two gentlemen had reached the door. Father Smith looked long and earnestly and meaningly at his host.

"I have been out to make a call," he resumed at last, suddenly deciding on his course.

"Indeed! I didn't think that you were acquainted in New York. I thought—"

"I know few people beside you, Mr. Warburton, and your wife. I have never been in New York before; save for you two I am a practical stranger here."

"I have no doubt you mean well, I am sure," said Warburton, bending forward to hide the wave of emotion which had swept over him and which he could never help when his former wife was mentioned, "but that lady is no longer named in this household."

He turned the key. The door opened.

"Forgive me," he continued briefly. "Will you enter?"

Father Smith pulled out his watch. There was still time.

"Is there a place where we can talk just a moment undisturbed?" he asked.

"There's the little reception-room yonder."

"Give me a few minutes, then."

"Of course; but may I repeat that I do not wish to hear anything about—"

"Mr. Warburton," said Father Smith, closing the door of the little room behind the two, "sometimes in pursuance of a man's duty he has to disregard the injunctions of men and follow what seems to him to be a clear indication from God."

"Surely, sir, I am not transgressing the limits of hospitality in asking you as my guest to refrain from one topic?" But Father Smith was not abashed.

"The laws of hospitality," he went on indomitably, "must bow before such an obligation as is laid upon me."

"Have you by any chance a message for me from that lady, that you are so persistent?"

"A thousand," was the amazing answer.

"I don't understand," said Warburton, forcing himself to remain erect and look this strange old man directly in the face.

"Not one of which I can deliver."

"What then?"

"I am bound in honor to silence."

"Well, sir, why speak?"

"But I was not bound in honor to inaction."

"And what would you do?"

"Send you to call upon your wife."

"Impossible."

"Look at me, Mr. Warburton: do I look like a man carried away by transient emotion, distraught, apt to give counsel not to be heeded, indiscreet?"

"You look sane enough, but your words, your excited bearing—"

"I swear that I am as composed as you are yourself."

"But I am not at all composed, sir; you have annoyed me greatly with your doubtless well-meant attempts at—"

"Nay, I am certain that I am more composed than you are, for I know your agitation must be extreme, despite your iron self-control. Let me ask you one question sir. Upon your answer will depend my further course. At the risk of your displeasure I ask you: do you still love your wife?"

WARBURTON drew himself up more erect than ever, if possible. This was passing all bounds. He was righteously and properly indignant.

"I recognize no right in you," he began sharply to the priest, smiting his hands together with a fierce gesture of indignation.

"Your answer," cried the other as imperiously as if he had been the soldier he started out to be.

"Why should I disguise it?" said Warburton at last. "Although you have no right to know, I will tell you that I do. A man of my temperament and my years loves but once, sir."

"My dear sir, men of different temperament, who have long passed your years, can say the same thing. I myself—"

"You?"

"Even I. Well sir, your answer has decided me. I have one injunction to lay upon you."

"Injunction?"

"A command to give you, if you will. Go to your wife at once."

"Did she ask you, suggest it to you?"

"She didn't hint in the remotest way. She doesn't dream that I am saying this to you, and I am coming as near violating my plighted word in doing so as ever a man came."

"I will think on it," said Warburton, strangely moved.

"To think is to say no in a man like you. Go now. Who hesitates—"

There was a knock on the door.

"May I come in?" asked Rose, and without waiting permission, she opened the door. "Excuse me, Father Smith; but Father and the Duke want to see you in the library, Mr. Warburton. They have something to say to you."

"Duchess," cried Father Smith, "you came at an inopportune time—forgive me that I say it. I had just about persuaded Mr. Warburton to do what I asked him, and you gave him a chance to hesitate and refuse."

"And what did you ask?"

"I forbid you to discuss the matter further," cried Warburton.

But the indomitable priest went on: "I told him to go to his wife."

"No man was ever given better advice," said the Duchess, to the great amazement of both men.

"Madam, you will help me?" asked the priest, greatly relieved.

"Help you? Of course I will. Wait."

She turned to the door and called her father and husband. In a moment the two gentlemen presented themselves.

"Father Smith," began the Duchess, "has just come from Chrissey Deselden. He and Mr. Warburton came in together. I saw them meet just outside the door. When I heard them come into this room and close the door, I waited as long as I could and then I came in. Father Smith has just given Mr. Warburton a piece of advice."

"It's a frightful piece of presumption," cried Warburton, "that my affairs should be discussed in this public manner. I must request—"

"John," interrupted the Colonel, "we are all friends of yours, the best friends you have, and we all love Chrissey Deselden. We want her happiness as much as yours. She is lonely; she is miserable; she is heartbroken."

"Do you want me to go and console her for the death of Neyland or for the loss of her fortune?" was the bitter question.

The Colonel snapped his fingers.

"Don't be a fool, John," he said brusquely. "She doesn't need consoling for the death of Neyland."

"You are verging on a violation of confidence, my dear sir," cried the priest warningly.

"Can anything be plainer than that?" said the Colonel, appealing to Warburton. "And as for her fortune," he went on bluntly, "she thinks you are a ruined man, and she has it all. There isn't anyone on earth, or anyone dead, for that matter," continued the Colonel recklessly, "whom she would rather see right now than you."

"Does she expect that I—"

"Of course she doesn't. She thinks we are all honorable men. She thinks she has trusted to men who would not violate her confidence, and we have all done it."

"As for me, sir, I am glad we did it," said the priest. "But go now, Mr. Warburton, before I completely ruin myself."

"She wouldn't receive me."

"I have thought of that," said Father Smith. "If you will allow me to go with you, I will gain you access to her."

"I wont do it."

"Oh, Mr. Warburton, if a woman's heart, a woman's soul, a woman's love, mean anything to you, go to her," cried Rose, coming over to him.

"I second my wife's appeal," said the Duke.

WHILE the others watched him in silence, Warburton thought a long time. It was Rose's plea that finally decided him—that and the wild craving to see his wife that was always present in his heart.

"Very well, since you will all have it so, I will go," he said at last; and the anticipation of seeing her overwhelmed his reluctance to submit to the overruling of the others.

He seized his hat again and not dar-

ing to speak another word turned toward the door.

"I come, sir," said Father Smith following him.

"Just a moment," interrupted the Colonel, and he proffered two papers to Father Smith—Chrissey's unopened letter to Neyland and the copy of Neyland's will. Briefly he explained their purport.

Father Smith took the papers, nodded, and with Warburton turned to the door.

"Always remember, Warburton, that she thinks you are a ruined man and she a rich woman," cried the Colonel after his departing friends.

CHRISSEY DESELDEN was very much surprised to be informed that Father Smith wanted to see her again so soon after his departure, but she knew that nothing unimportant would cause him to trespass upon her privacy a second time. According to his habit he went directly to the matter that had brought him back, so soon as he was in her presence again.

"Colonel Tayloe was so surprised this afternoon that he did not give you these," began Father Smith.

Chrissey Deselden seized the two papers, dropped one and concentrated her gaze upon the other.

"My letter!" she exclaimed. "The last one I wrote."

"Exactly. You will notice that it has not been opened. Evidently Mr. Neyland started to break the envelope and stopped. The letter was never read."

The woman rose to her feet and flung her hands up with a great cry of relief.

"He didn't know, he didn't know! Oh, thank God, he didn't know!"

"True," said the priest. "He didn't know what you said to him, and whatever he did was not caused by whatever that letter bore."

"Oh, how thankful I am! What is the other paper?"

"His own last words to you."

She tore open the envelope. She read the passionate, hopeless, almost bitter farewell, the manly effort at exculpation, and then she dropped the paper on the table by her own still unopened letter.

"Poor man!" she said quickly. "Poor man! But I'm glad he didn't read that letter. It takes away some of the burden that has so heavily borne upon me."

"Just so, madam. And please God we shall soon take away the balance. Mrs. Warburton,"—she was glad he never called her anything else but that, although she had no right to the title,—"if you will indulge me a little—" He stepped toward her and took her gently by the arm and, turning her face to the window, led her there. "Wait just a moment; don't look around until I speak again."

"What do you mean?"

"Just promise me that."

"Very well."

He stepped softly to the door. He beckoned with his hand. Warburton, white and nervous, came through the door. The priest pointed to the little figure outlined against the fading light of the late afternoon before the window. Warburton stood trembling and staring, his whole heart outrushing toward that slender figure whose drooping curves suggested melancholy and sadness inimitable. He forgot Father Smith; he forgot everything but that he was here and she was there. But a few steps intervened. Father Smith stepped back of the man, passed through the door, drew it after him until it was almost shut.

"Mrs. Warburton!" he called sharply, and then closed the door.

CHAPTER XL

THE SURRENDER

WITHOUT premonition or suspicion, the woman turned. Her glance swept the room, until it rested upon the figure before the door.

He was in the full illumination of whatever light there was. She saw him clearly. His self-control had not entirely deserted him, but she thought never in her life had she seen him so moved.

"You!" she faltered at last, her voice low and tense, almost a whisper. "Why did you come?"

"I hardly know," he answered, forcing himself to speak and taking refuge in commonplaces. "If I am unwelcome, I mean if I cause you disquiet, I will go, of course."

She made no answer for a moment. She could not. She was trying desperately for composure and self-control. She had known that she loved him, but until that moment she had not dreamed how much.

"I was badly advised," he went on. "It was not my wish. I came against my will. I should not have intruded—"

"I would not have you stay a moment if it should not be your pleasure," she said at last, her heart sinking as she averted her head.

"Christianna," he burst out suddenly, and now the formal name she had disliked sounded sweetly in her ear, "I haven't told you the truth." He threw reserve and restraint to the winds and made a step nearer her. "They did urge me to come, all of them. They would not tell me why. I resisted them a long time, but not because I did not wish to come. At last I consented. I made them think I yielded to their entreaties when all the time I longed to look at you again, just to see you once more. I know that you care nothing for me, that you cannot. During these long months I have thought it all out. I don't blame you. I should never have married you. But my love for you—which has not abated, which has grown more and more until it obsesses me—made me come. In the end my heart, not their urging, compelled me. Forgive me."

"There is nothing to forgive," she murmured, but he went on unheeding, the words rushing forth torrentially:

"I thought I would speak to you as a stranger, that I would hear your voice, that I would see you, that by some happy chance I might even touch your hand, and then that I could go away and in the strength of that touch and that sight and that memory I could live on. I thought it would help me to ease this horrible pain, to bear my lonely lot. I was mistaken. It makes it harder. I am not one to take defeat easily, and the sight of you after all these months. . . . . I'll have to go now. I can't stand it. I should not have come. I miscalculated my strength. Good God, Christianna, wont you even speak to me?"

"I'm very glad you came," said the woman, thrilling to the passionate tenderness of his appeal. "I have a great deal that I want to say to you, now that you are here. I should never have presumed to invite you. I am not worthy of that love you say you feel."

"Say I feel?"

"I'm not worthy of any man's love. I hate myself and—but we mustn't go on this way. Sit down there, and I'll sit here. Now let me talk to you a little, and then you can bid me good-by and it will be—all over."

FOR the life of her, for the soul of her, she could not help the break in her voice then. Warburton noticed it, but he did not dare to presume.

"It will be necessary for me to say things that pain you, I am afraid," she began.

"I would rather hear you say things that pain me than hear anything from anybody else, so long as it is you who speak," he protested.

"After I got that divorce which you told me to get—" She could not resist that thrust.

"Would that my tongue had been paralyzed before I made the suggestion, but I thought—"

"Yes, you thought, and I thought, that I loved Mr. Neyland; but I found out that I did not; and until this afternoon I thought that my telling him so had caused him to kill himself. But now I know that he did not open my letter and that the burden has been lifted from me—thank God! But I do not wish to talk of him. Now I know that you are a ruined man, and I want to give you my share of the profits of Mr. Neyland's combination that were made by the investment of my fortune. I want you to take that to start with. I shall have my own fortune left, which will be ample for my needs. And I want you to know that I am not going to take Mr. Neyland's money. That shall be given away where it will do the most good. What I am giving you is my own, or rather it is your own."

"But I could not."

"You must," she returned promptly, with a pretty insistance that delighted him. "I know what my father left me was only a trifle compared with what you made of it by your judicious investments. Colonel Tayloe told me that; so really it is your own. Oh, please, wont you take it from me? I'll tell you something else," she went on as he stared at her in growing surprise. "I had this in mind when I gave my securities to Mr. Neyland. I thought when the battle was over I would be in a position to give you back all that had been made for me, so that you could start again. You will take it? I told Colonel Tayloe that he must make you take it by indirection, but he said that was impossible, that you were smarter than all of them put together—that you would know and he could not do it. I did not know how I was to bring it about, but since you came to me here,—and I wouldn't for a moment have you feel that I am not glad that you came,—I think the best way is to tell you plainly, and ask you please to give me this chance to make amends."

"Christianna," he said, "before I accede to your request—"

"Oh, then you will?"

"Let me ask you a question. Will you answer it?"

"Yes."

"You refused to marry Richard Neyland?"

"Yes."

"Was it because you found you did not love him?"

"Yes," said the woman, her voice a low whisper, her heart at a standstill.

"Was it because you—"

He could not bear to put the question.

"Do you think you could learn—ah!" he cried desperately, rising and coming toward her.

SHE drew back a little, but did not rise or lift her head.

"Do you think that you—I scarcely dare to ask. My whole future turns on the question. Life or death are in your answer."

"Speak on," she whispered.

"Do you think you could learn to—care—a little—for me?"

She shook her head.

"Ah," said the man almost as if he had been stabbed, "I was a fool to dream it."

"Not fool," she interposed swiftly, "but blind."

"Blind!"

"Yes."

She rose slowly to her feet and forced herself to look at him. Into her cheeks came a flame like a flag. Boldly she spoke and well.

"I couldn't learn to love you a little, because I—I—"

"Christianna," he cried, seizing her in his arms.

He lifted her little figure up in the air and then brought her down and held her close against his heart. And then he kissed her upon the lips as he had never kissed her before, and she did not withdraw her own from him. At last he released her a little, and as soon as she could free an arm she slipped it around his neck and gave him back caress for caress, met endearment with endearment, heart-throb with heart-throb. The man sank down on his knees before her. He stretched his hands up toward her as a devotee of old might have worshiped a divinity.

"Not that way," she said, stooping over him and raising him up. "It is I who should be there. I've been such a wicked woman. You don't know everything."

"I don't want to know," he said stoutly, although his heart sank a little and she was quick to see his fear.

"Oh, I'm as fit to be your wife, any man's wife, as any woman, but I've been such a fool. I've wrecked your life and my own and—"

"You can repair mine, and if you give me the chance I will repair yours."

"I can't. You don't know. You remember he—he—insulted me at Sorrento and I condoned it and he—kissed me that evening you saw us at Bermuda and once again at Billy Alton's house before I left. I don't feel fit to have such love as yours given to me."

"I don't see how you can help it," said Warburton practically. "I'm sorry for those things; I hate him for them; but you are mine now and I'm not going to give you up."

"You must. I shall expiate. I want to do some good in this world."

"You can do all the good you want to, but you're going to begin by doing me good and then I'm going to help you do good to everybody else. I've had enough of business, and—"

"Yes, but if you only had what you had before. My fortune wont go very far, but you'll take it, wont you?"

"On one condition."

"And what is that?"

"That you give me yourself with it."

"I cannot. It would not be right for any human being who has behaved as I to have such happiness."

"Very well, then, I'll go out a beggar, such a beggar as I never dreamed I would be, having your love and not having you."

"But don't you see I can't? It would be absurd—I—what would the world say?"

"What do I care for what anyone says. You can and you shall."

THE old masterful John Warburton, whose dominance in the past she had hated, but which now she loved, released her and then turned to the door.

"Where are you going?"

"To call Father Smith."

"What for?"

"To marry us again."

"Oh, I—"

He paid no attention to her protestations. Father Smith was close at hand. At his name he came.

"Well," he said to Warburton, "was I right?"

"Right," exclaimed the man, "God bless you forever!"

"Did you tell him what I said?" asked the woman.

"Not one word."

"Then how?"

"I just brought him here. You did not swear me not to do that."

"I'm glad that you did," said the girl, "and now that you're here I want you to tell him that I cannot marry him, that I have not been punished enough, that I should not—"

"Can't marry him!" exclaimed the old man to their great astonishment; "why, you are married to him already."

"But the divorce?" faltered Chrissey.

"Whom God hath joined," said the priest, "no power in the state can put asunder."

"You see," said Warburton, "he agrees with me. You are my wife already. You have never been anything but my wife. I was going to ask you to marry us again, but it is not necessary."

"Of course," said the zealous old churchman, "you are already married by the church, and by nothing you can do, by no means that you can employ, can you unmarry yourselves."

"Is that the church's view?" asked the woman.

"Most certainly, as I understand it."

"But if you can't marry us, what about the divorce?"

"Let the state undo what it has done," answered Father Smith tersely. "If the state unmarried you or pretended to do so, in order to comply with all the requirements of the law and to stand legally man and wife as you are morally man and wife, go and get yourselves married again by the state."

"Do you mean a justice of the peace? I couldn't bear that," exclaimed the woman.

"You must, but after that come to me," said the inexorable old man. "I'll get Dr. Houghton to let us have the use of the Little Church Around the Corner. I have had correspondence with him, and after you have been remarried by the state which presumed to unmarry you, come to the church—"

"And you will marry us again?"

"No, but I will give you the church's blessing on your amendment and reparation. And may you both be very happy; I am sure you will be very happy."

CHAPTER L

ONCE MORE A WEDDING

IT was quite a different service and ceremony—that little sacramental rite of prayers and blessing—from that at St. Thomas' less than a year before. There were present only the Duke, the Duchess, old Colonel Tayloe

and the faithful maid—and lurking in a far corner, poor, forlorn Billy Alton.

The benediction pronounced, the farewells said, the two who had come together after such far voyaging through such troubled seas were at last alone in the big car once more.

"Where are you taking me?" asked the girl.

"To the house in the hills where we went before. We will take up the thread of life just where we broke it off."

"Yes," whispered the woman, nestling close to him and slipping her hand within his own and resting her head against his shoulder.

They would have much to talk about of the future, these two; but as they swiftly sped over the smooth roads toward the lodge in the wild hills overlooking the great river, it was heart that spoke to heart, hand-pressure that met hand-pressure in the silence. Once only did Warburton venture upon a bit of rational conversation.

"My dearest wife," he began in that somewhat old-fashioned way, choosing an opportune moment, "I can't begin our married life without perfect confidence; and I have a confession to make."

"Do you love me still, John?"

"More than ever."

"So long as that is true, nothing else matters."

"Good. You make it easy," but he hesitated nevertheless.

"Go on," she said at last.

"Well, the fact is, I'm not quite the beggar you thought me."

"Did you save something from the wreck?"

"Er—yes—a little."

"Then that added to what I made will be a great deal, wont it? For now all that I have is yours."

"Yes, but, well—the fact is I did not lose!"

"What!"

"No. I was not beaten."

"Did you win?" she asked in an awe-struck voice, thinking that, since that were true, poor Neyland had lost in everything.

"I did," he answered, and somehow he seemed to experience an odd feeling of shame in the situation.

"Then you don't need my poor little money?" she said at last in deep disappointment, "and I was so glad to give it to you."

"You have given me yourself, Christianna, and no gift could equal that."

"I know but—John Warburton," she exclaimed suddenly, seeing the truth at last, "if you won, I lost with the rest."

"I tried my best to save your fortune; I would have given it back to you; I—"

"And have I anything of my own?"

"Only me. And all that I have is yours," he added softly.

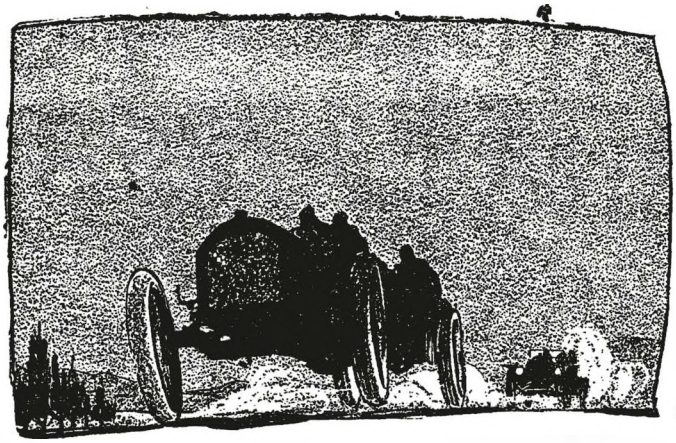
"You are enough," said the woman, nestling against him at last.

EVERYTHING at the lodge was just as it had been before. The same servants, carefully trained to give no expressions of their surprise, awaited them. They sat for a little time after breaking bread together, while the sun set and the darkness came. Through the open windows the night wind stirred softly the pines in the hills. How she loved the wholesome fragrance of the great conifers—so much more appealing to her soul than the heavy cloying perfume of oleanders—ah! At last the woman rose, putting her hand upon her husband's shoulder to keep him where he was in his chair. She bent and kissed him; then she left the room.

Warburton rose and walked to an open window looking out upon the river-side. It was a heavenly night; the moon high in the heavens flooded the valley with light. The great, still, slow-moving deep of the river gleamed white before him. His love was like that river. And she? The moon was not fairer, purer or higher above him. He thanked God for the strong, sweet odor of the pines. No tropic sweetness of oleander—ah!

He heard a step behind him, and turned to meet his wife. In her hand she held something bright that gleamed like gold and silver. It was the key of a door.

THE END



The CHASE OF THE NICKEL-CHASER

THIS "Tale of the Wayside Garage" is by all odds the most joyously thrilling story in Mr. Sabin's delightful series.

by Edwin L. Sabin

IN the Wayside Garage the driver of the Kissel-Kar taxi had just finished his story (except the trimmings) of "A Hold-up in the Sierra." There were present the usual gang—The Tourist, the Motor-cop, the Young Chap with the One Arm, the Chauffeur of the big Locomobile, the Boss, Joe the Garage Mechanic, and myself; also, in the beginning, the Jitney-man had been there, but he had been called away much to his disgust.

However, as the Taxi-driver was winding up with the words "But they never did get those thugs," the Jitney-man had bolted in, afoot and disheveled and wild-eyed, panting his frenzied appeals.

"Holy smoke!" exclaimed the Boss, interrupting the story and springing out of the Tourist's Old Renault, in which we all were sitting. "Here's a wreck, b'gosh!"

We others scrambled after him.

The Jitney-man's Adventure

"WHAT'S the matter with you?" demanded the Boss.

"Hold-up! Hold-up!" gasped the Jitney-man; and his voice cracked to a wail. "They took my car and all my money. Gimme something to chase 'em with. Quick!"

"How many?"

"Two. They took my money and throwed me out and went off with my car, I tell you. And look at my pants!"

"Where?" demanded the Motor-cop.

"Where do you suppose, you big dub?" snarled the Jitney-man. "On my legs, of course. What are you standing there for? You're a police officer, aint you? Didn't you hear me say I'd been robbed?"

"I mean," answered the Motor-cop meekly, "where did all this happen?"

"Out on Quincy Street—right near Fortieth."

"How much did they get?"

"Eighty cents in money and my car. I'll put 'em in the pen' for it, too," raved the Jitney-man.

"You can't," called Joe unfeelingly. "That's only petit larceny."

"Which way did they go?" asked the Boss, moving with a jump.

"On down Quincy."

The Boss had sprung to his Blue Bug, an old Flanders roadster cut down to a stripped speedster type, with torpedo body painted a bright blue—his private machine which served him between home and office, and on his peregrinations about town.

"Out of the way, everybody," he bawled, setting spark and throttle and lustily twisting the crank.

"What was the number of your machine?" yelled the Motor-cop, to the Jitney-man, who, perspiring and belligerent, was running around the Blue Bug to climb into the seat.

"Three, four hundred, eight," yelled back the Jitney-man.

"Three - four - n a u g h t - naught - eight. That it?"

"Naw. Three, four hundred, eight —three-four-eight."

"Oh. Three hundred forty-eight."

"Naw. Three, forty-eight hundred."

"Three, four, e i g h t, n a u g h t, naught?"

"Naw!" screamed the Jitney-man. "It's in the three-forty-eights."

"How can it be in three hundred forty-eight, and not be three-forty-eight?"

"'Cause it can, you boob!" snarled the Jitney-man. "Three-four-eight and then some. Two more numbers."

"Well, what are they?"

"I don't remember. That's near enough. It's the three, forty-eight hundreds, I tell you."

"That's certainly close," retorted the Motor-cop sarcastically, with studied dignity strolling for the office, and at the same time writing in his memorandum book.

"What in the name of mud's the matter with this car!" puffed the Boss, —whose wind was short by reason of overuse of the Blue Bug,—still pumping with the crank.

"You aint got any gas, you fathead," accused Joe. "You drained that tank to solder it."

"Why didn't you say so?" grumbled the Boss. He dropped the crank and made for the service car—an old Mitchell thirty-two rebuilt to a light truck body.

Out from his seat in the Blue Bug popped the hopeful Jitney-man, to follow.

"All aboard, some of you fellows," bade the Boss, as at his lusty heave the service car burst into a resonant roar which seemed to arouse all the garage to energy. No longer we stood puzzled, inert. At the challenge of adventure we rushed the truck and piled in, helter-skelter.

"Where you going?" yelped Joe, while the Boss, rasping and grinding in first, described a reckless half-circle and traversed the lane of headlamps, for the door.

"Jitney-chasing," answered the Boss. "We're on the trail."

Opposite the open door of his office he halted with a jerk that doubled four of us over the seat, and leaped out.

"Wait a second," he panted, darting in. The Motor-cop was at the 'phone, talking rapidly. The Boss immediately reappeared, bearing in his hand a sawed-off shotgun, maintained for emergencies. "Hold this," he ordered, thrusting it between the knees of the One-armed Young Chap, who had seized a front seat; and releasing brake and jamming backward the gear-shift lever of the outside control, at his right, the Boss started again with a jump.

On the threshold he shot into second, and at the curb into third; and with a veer that careened the car on two wheels and us passengers on one leg, he headed down the street.

"You can't make time with that old boat," shrilled Joe, after us, from the doorway. "Your tires are soft."

"Twenty-six miles," retorted the Boss. "Down Quincy Street, you said?" he queried over his shoulder to the Jitney-man.

"Right near Fortieth. That's it."

WITH harrowing jar and rattle the service car forged into full speed, taking every bump and hole in the pavement very hard, and hurdling the street-crossings like a stiff-legged horse. Pedestrians stopped and stared, in their eyes visions of a fire, riot-call or horrible smash-up. Disregarding halted street-cars, street intersections and all

other "safety first" crises, the Boss drove—the sparks from his incinerated cigarette streaming backward.

"Shoot it into her! What's the matter with you? Open up," besought the Jitney-man, caroming into the Tourist and thence narrowly escaping pitching out altogether."

"Who's driving?" demanded the Boss. "She's giving all she's got. If you want more, tumble out and push."

"Plenty fast for me," gasped the unhappy Taxi-driver. "She's running away from her rear wheels now."

"What are we making?" chattered the Tourist, in haste lest he bite his tongue.

"'Bout twenty-five," responded the Boss.

"Sounds like a hundred—with this silent Knight engine," criticised the Chauffeur.

There was no speedometer (of course), but our gait was fearsome to hear. *Squawk, squawk,* blared the horn, in feeble attempt to clear the road.

"Quit that," warned the Chauffeur. "Every time you blow it, she stops."

"How'd you get held up, anyhow?" shouted the Tourist at the Jitney-man.

"I got out there on that call, and there was a couple of fellows waiting—sitting on the curb, they were—" attempted the Jitney-man.

"Hold hard," warned the Chauffeur, as the obstacle of more car-tracks crossing our path at the usual nasty elevation again disorganized us.

"For the love of Mike!" implored the Taxi-driver. "You hit me in a new place every time."

"They gimme the stop sign," resumed the Jitney-man, while the Tourist dug his fingers deeper in my shoulders, "so I picks 'em up. 'Are you the guys that 'phoned for a car?' asked I. 'You bet,' says they. 'Will your old bug roll as far as Quincy and Fortieth?' Think of that, after calling a man out when he'd put his car up for the night!"

"They certainly were no gentlemen," agreed the Boss.

"'It will for two bits apiece,' says I. 'I aint coming all this distance for nothing.' 'All right,' says they. 'Shoot.' And in they clumb—into the back seat."

"Gee!" jerked the Boss. "Two bits apiece? You ought to be ashamed. Those rates are awful. The railroad commission'll get after you."

"Ha-*huh!*" giggled the Tourist, his applause cut short by reason of excessive vibration.

"By jiminy, I lose money at that," assured the Jitney-man, much in earnest. "So in they clumb, and I turned into Quincy, and—"

"Whoap!" warned the Tourist, as we wrestled again for position.

"Hooray!" cheered the Taxi-driver, righting himself.

"And out to Fortieth, and just—when I was stopped—*uh!*—they grabbed me round the neck—"

"Strong-armed you, eh?" commented the Chauffeur.

"And while one guy held me, the other guy went through my pockets, and then they trun me out, so I lost my hat and tore my pants, and they went off in my machine. I'm a ruined man."

"Naw, they're ruined if they went off with that bug of yours and only eighty cents," commented the Boss.

"And they hadn't paid me, either," wailed the Jitney-man. "But I'll give 'em twenty years for this. Nobody can't highway-rob *me!* That car was a good car, and these pants I aint had six months yet."

WITH terrific staccato a motorcycle bolted by—leaving us as if we were standing still. The Motor-cop flung high his hand—in farewell from the seat. We cheered.

"Old Sleuth!" announced the Boss. "God pity the king of the bandits! We're on our way, ourselves."

Rattle-ty-bang, thumpity-biff, down the long street we pelted, an eddy of pavement-dust and a swirl of smoke trailing in our headlong course. A block and tackle danced madly upon the truck floor, adding to the clangor. We had left behind us the main traffic, and at this hour of the night the thoroughfare stretched before, lonely and open, while we awakened the slumberous suburbs.

"Fortieth, b'gosh!" exclaimed the Boss, throwing out the clutch, and braking. "They slugged you here, did they?"

"Right under that tree," yelped the Jitney-man, excitedly. "Strong-armed me in the neck. I stopped to let 'em out, and the first thing I knew, one guy—"

"Well, they aren't here now, that's a cinch," vouchsafed the Boss, racing his engine, with slipping clutch, and starting on again violently.

"Where you going? Wait a minute!" interrupted the Jitney-man. "Hold on. I see my hat." And out he jumped, landing on all fours, to stagger up and dart for the curb.

From the shadow he rescued a hat and hurried back, dusting it en route with vigorous slaps.

"Didn't I tell you?" he appealed. "Maybe you fellows thought I was pipe-dreaming."

"Aw, you don't want a hat. Let your brain air," growled the Boss, breaking into speed again with a jerk as the Jitney-man literally fell in. "And we don't stop to pick up nickels, either."

Rattle-ty-bang, thumpity-biff! Full tilt we were once more, the block and tackle merrily clog-dancing on the truck floor.

"Where you going now!" yelled the Taxi-driver from the rear. "Next thing you know you'll brain me with this here block."

"Sit on it," bade the Boss. "Going? We're going to get this man's nut factory back before those two fellows sue him for damages."

"Just remember I'm fighting death every minute," complained the Taxi-driver.

"You'd know those two thugs if you saw them, would you?" queried the Tourist of the Jitney-man.

"You bet I would."

"Smooth-shaven, or did they have mustaches? Didn't wear masks, did they?"

"Naw, they didn't wear masks. I didn't see their faces—too dark! But I know their build, all right."

"Big men, eh?"

"Big enough to manhandle *me*. Six feet tall and weighed two hundred apiece."

"Sure they went straight out Quincy, are you?" asked the Chauffeur.

"How do I know? I wasn't there."

"You said they did."

"Well, if I said they did, they did," retorted the Jitney-man.

"They didn't turn off Forty-first, or you'd have seen 'em," shouted the Boss, above the din. "Or on Forty-second, Forty-third, Forty-fourth—those streets closed for grading. Forty-fifth doesn't go anywhere—"

"Hold on! Stop!" ordered the Jitney-man. "This aint my hat. Too small. Doesn't fit."

"Keep it for a curiosity, then," retorted the Boss. "Didn't know there was a hat made smaller than yours."

A SECOND shock, caused by the Boss braking viciously, doubled us forward—and by a howl aft I judged that the Taxi-driver had turned a back somersault.

"Maybe they switched off here at Forty-sixth," rapped the Boss, vaulting out and leaving the motor coughing and sneezing while it presumably idled, badly winded. "For the Highland Boulevard. Let's look."

Obediently, out piled we all, except the One-armed Young Chap (who sat fortified and vigilant), and quartered the right-hand exit feverishly.

"Plenty tracks, anyhow,' proclaimed the Chauffeur.

"All kinds," grumbled the Boss, scrutinizing the dust of the unpaved road. "How in thunder—"

"Where does this road go to?" called the Tourist, who had wandered to an opposite exit. "Fresh tracks here. Looks like Ford tires, too."

"Let's see," answered the Boss, hustling over. We all followed.

"That's them! That's them!" shrilled the Jitney-man, peering where the Tourist pointed. "I know my tires. Come on. Now we got 'em."

The wheels of an automobile, striking from the pavement-edge, had cut sharply through the dirt of the crossing.

"She skidded," quoth the Chauffeur wisely.

"How do you know those are your tires?" demanded the Tourist of the Jitney-man, who was fidgeting impatiently.

"Because I do. Don't you suppose I know my own tires?"

"You ought to," interjected the Boss. "You've had 'em long enough. Where's that Fisk I sold you?"

"There it is!" exclaimed the Jitney-man. "There's the mark. What's eating on you?"

"You owe me a dollar and a half on it yet. Don't forget that," rebuffed the Boss. "All right, boys. Ford in a hurry with a scrapped set of tires. That's his." And away we ran, for the rumbling service car. We clambered in.

"Gimme a hand-holt, this time," pleaded the Taxi-driver—grabbing impartially at the Chauffeur and the Tourist, so that we formed a group of five. "I don't take any more chances of being brained."

"You're safe from that, wherever you are," rebuked the Boss. "Wait a minute. Got to have a light." We had been trusting to luck and the city electric company, but now the crossroad lay unillumined and dark.

Out tumbled the Boss again and bustled around to the car's single head-lamp, set atop the radiator like a cyclopean eye.

The Boss jerked open the glass, struck a match; it sputtered and failed—struck another, with an exclamation that helped to ignite it—applied it—and swore.

"What the—? No carbide! Hang that Joe. Told him to fix this lamp yesterday. Have to use the oil."

"Bet you haven't any oil, either," challenged the Chauffeur.

The Boss had slammed shut the cover of the head-lamp, and was sticking a match into one of the kerosene side-lamps.

"Oil in this one," he grunted, as the reek of the smoking wick drifted back to us. He sprang to the other one. "Dry as a bone," he reported. "Doesn't matter. One's enough." He climbed aboard, released brake, threw into first, and twisting the helm hard aport, headed into the road.

"Now give her blazes," implored the Jitney-man.

"Where does this road go to, anyway?" invited the Taxi-driver.

"Search *me*," replied the Boss. "But we're on it—or half on it," he added, as we barely swerved from a ditch that suddenly threatened close abeam.

IT was one of those narrow, sandy, rutty, crooked roads, hedged by trees and brush and twin ditches, and murkily dark. The one feeble, smoky oil side-lamp flickered with treacherous glimmer, and the Boss drove more by instinct than by eye.

Lurching and clinging as we pounded along our blind way, we all were prayerfully silent, scanning either side as well as before, prepared to yelp and jump, our hopes focused on the Boss, hunched and phlegmatic, gripping the steering wheel and nursing the throttle.

"I see it! I see it!" on a sudden yapped the Jitney-man.

"Shut up!" ordered the Boss.

"Shoot her! We're catching 'em, I tell you," bawled the Jitney-man, almost climbing over the front seat. "Open up. Why don't you open up? Now's your chance."

"You *shut* up," reproved the Boss. "How can I make time?"

Before appeared the red tail-light, at the side of the road. Answering to the throttle, the old service truck surged fiercely, grinding through the sand. Tenseness seized us, our eyes on the light, which waxed plainer and larger.

"Ford light," said the Chauffeur.

"Ditched, by thunder!" ejaculated the Taxi-driver.

The Jitney-man murmured belligerently, and trod on my toes.

"Somebody there," cautioned the Tourist. "Saw him cross the light."

"Be ready to jump," grunted the Boss.

The red light seemed stationary. A figure did cross it. Evidently somebody was working around it. Down we rumbled, the One-armed Young Chap carrying his shotgun ready for action. The moving figure momentarily obscured the tail-light completely, as if

standing, waiting. Our villainously impotent side-lamp faintly revealed the outlines of a Ford—so close we were when the Boss abruptly stopped, at last; and to earth we leaped with the celerity of artillerists on the battle-line.

The One-armed Young Chap was first.

"Hands up!" he blared, in the rush.

"Surrender!" hailed the Tourist. "Turn it over!"

"You gimme that car, blankety-blank you!" demanded the Jitney-man.

The car was canted in a sandy ditch —rather, a fill—at the side of the road. A white-faced boy (of fifteen or sixteen, I judge) immediately confronted us. That much the single oil-lamp of the truck revealed. Beyond, in the gloom, was another figure, shadowy, merely outlined by the murky side-lamps of the Ford, whose head-lights had quit when the engine quit.

Our antagonist's mouth was agape, as if he were badly scared.

"'Taint your car," he faltered with desperate stammer.

"It'll be our car in just a second," retorted the Boss. "Watch him, fellows. Grab that other guy, too. Now let's lift this boat out of here."

We crowded forward to help. We were anxious to lend our hands to anything. I had a glimpse of the Tourist reaching to clutch the white-faced youth; the One-armed Young Chap leveled his sawed-off shotgun awkwardly and summoned the shadowy figure with a bold: "Stand still, you!" And then, as we braced to strain at the wheels of the stranded car, a quick diversion straightened us.

THE service truck had been rumbling and snorting, but on a sudden it burst into a loud, warning staccato: it moved; there was clash of changing gears and a shrill cry of "Come on, Bob!" from the figure on the seat; then the prisoner held by the Tourist writhed loose, butted the Tourist in the stomach and dived for the truck—pitched in flat, with waving legs. "Hey! Hold on!" bawled the Young Chap, and *bang!* went his gun, discharged into the trees. The truck swept irresistibly past, scattering us (the Boss grabbing vainly at the control-lever and being promptly sent sprawling), and to an exultant backward cheer and threat, "We'll get you for this," it faded away.

The One-armed Young Chap leveled his gun afresh, but the Boss frantically stayed his aim.

"No. Don't shoot! Gee whiz, Jake's in there!"

For in our startled sight lingered adown the blind vista a flash (to quote from moving-picture analogy) of the Jitney-man frenziedly out-reaching for the rear end of the truck, and being jerked into the darkness.

"Great Scott!" expostulated the Tourist.

"Jumping Jerusalem!" bellowed the Boss. "There goes my truck. Holy smoke! Grab a-holt of this jitney. Yank her out. I'll settle those fellows' hash. You can bet on that."

We bestirred. We clustered about that Ford and heaved, even the One-armed Young Chap helping. Hauling and tugging and hoisting, we lifted it out bodily, to firmer ground; and scarcely had it settled again upon four wheels when with a "Climb in, if you're going," the Boss savagely spun the engine. Into raucous song exploded the Ford; its twain head-lights awakened to life and flared expectantly; the Boss sprang for the driver's seat; the One-armed Chap nimbly swung over the gunwale opposite; and as the little car lurched forward with harsh growl of imperative gears, we swarmed upon it. The Chauffeur and the Tourist plunged inside over the unopened doors and butted heads. But no matter. The Taxi-driver and I hung upon the running boards; and changing to high, racing the engine ruthlessly, the Boss cut loose up the adventurous road.

"Where's the sign? Must have torn it off," proffered the Taxi-driver.

"That's right. Probably did that first thing," panted the Tourist.

The paper sign, "5c BROOKVALE-EUREKA BUS 5c," across the lower part of the windshield, was gone. This alone was proof of guilt.

"I'll put the Indian sign on 'em," quoth the Boss, between his teeth.

"And Jake said they were six foot tall and weighed two hundred," accused the Chauffeur.

"They're big enough to soak in the reform school," declaimed the Boss.

THE little Ford fairly flew. It made no account of sand, now; it skidded, it bounced, it tilted, it swayed, it lunged—but it never hesitated; neither did the Boss. The head-lights danced upon foliage and road giddily hurling themselves against our course—and presently fitfully picked out the fleeing truck.

There were the three figures in the truck—two on the seat; one of them turned, gazing backward; in the rear crouched the Jitney-man, well shaken.

The lights, flinging their beams alow and aloft as the little Ford bumped the bumps, now found the truck, now lost it, as we rapidly shortened the distance. Around a curve careened the truck, in a cloud of dust—and like a farewell salute left in its yellow wake a dull but unmistakable *whang!*

"Blow-out, by Henry!" jubilated the Tourist.

"Four perfectly good tires on that car, when it rolled out of the garage. Remember that, you fellows," enjoined the Boss.

Ping!

"Another!" jubilated the Tourist.

"Suffering Moses!" ejaculated the Boss; and around the curve we whirled.

The truck had stopped. In the glare of our head-lights two white faces instead of the one were turned at our venomous approach. An instant more, and from one side of the seat had leaped like a frog the driver; from the other side had leaped his partner; and as they went crashing through the brush in terrified flight, the Jitney-man stood up and we arrived.

The two rear tires of the truck were flat. The Jitney-man grinned.

"I did it!" he chortled. "And I did it right! They didn't make no getaway with *me.*"

"Did what, you jabbering goat?" demanded the Boss.

"Punctured their tires for 'em. Worked my knife. They couldn't make speed on flat tires, and they mighty soon knew it. I had to reach some, you bet, but I did it."

"You double-barreled, crazy-headed mutt!" berated the furious Boss, inspecting. "That'll cost you just seventy-two clinkers. Tires are up fifteen per cent—mind that?"

"Why didn't you come sooner?" accused the Jitney-man.

"Why didn't you throw those two kids off and climb on the seat yourself? Seventy-two clinkers—get that?"

But the Jitney-man's face had assumed a blank expression as he stared at the Ford.

"Say!" he uttered. "That's not my car."

"For the love of Mike!" gasped the Boss slowly. "It aint? Whose car is it, then?"

"Damfino," confessed the Jitney-man. "Must have belonged to those kids, after all. They *said* it wasn't ours."

"And they think we held 'em up!" spoke the Tourist in pained accents.

The Boss collapsed and sat down in the dirt. His eyes rolled in his grimy, perspiring face.

"For the love of Mike!" he reiterated helplessly. "And we stole a hat, too!"

WE called and we hooted for the boys to return, but they didn't show up.

"All right," wearily interrupted the Boss. "Let's turn around and beat it to the garage. Some of you take this flat-head with you in the Ford. He can't ride with *me.* I'll run the truck. Maybe we wont be pinched, and maybe we will. I don't care. But those kids are working the 'phone, by now. You can gamble on that."

We found a spot where we could turn by backing and filling; and we proceeded for the garage—the service car leading, rattling and jarring on its bared rims, the Boss and the Young Chap on the seat, and guided by the head-lights of the little Ford, which, with the rest of us, the Jitney-man at the wheel, sedately followed.

"They *said* it wasn't our car," reiterated the Jitney-man.

But we and the cars were very tired.

So we trundled out of the road into the boulevard and turned for home.

"Believe I'll have time to catch that train yet," was remarking the Tourist —when up the boulevard came bowling a motorcycle—on it a motor-cop, but he wasn't *the* motor-cop.

Scarcely had he passed us when he wheeled, as we could tell by the sound.

"God save the queen!" uttered the Chauffeur. "We're spotted! Catch up with that truck, you!"

The truck evidently had sensed something, for the Boss had opened wide and was tearing the atmosphere more vigorously than ever. The little Ford leaped to the pursuit. But we were too late. The staccato of the motorcycle reverberated louder, and in a jiffy it shot beside us.

"Stop that car," its rider ordered, his hand on the front fender.

The Jitney-man obediently shut off, applied the brakes and stopped. The truck rapidly drew away—and the Boss never looked behind; neither did the Young Chap.

The copper stiffly dismounted, and circuited us, before and behind, examining. He glanced into his notebook.

"Where'd you get that car?" he demanded.

"We found it," stammered the Jitney-man—a very unfortunate remark.

The truck, bearing the Boss and the Young Chap, was booming on.

"You did!" rasped the copper. "Well, you're pinched. Turn around. It's all of you for the station, see? Turn around, I say."

"Here! Wait!" implored the Tourist. "By Jiminy, this wont do, Officer. It's a mistake. Ask those men on that truck."

"Yes, stop that truck," we chorused. "Get after it, quick."

The cop grinned malevolently. The truck was now much farther away, still hastening, businesslike—and the Boss and the Young Chap *never had even glanced in our direction!*

"Turn around, I say," repeated the cop. "And stay in the car, the whole five of you. Twenty miles an hour, and no funny work. Drive to Twentieth and Spruce."

"But, Officer! I've got to catch a train!" bleated the Tourist. "That truck will explain. We all—"

"Never mind trucks and trains. Around with you," bade the cop. "Just for safety we'll joy-ride together now. You can tell your troubles in the morning."

The Jitney-man turned us. The motor-cop accompanied, easily keeping pace beside. We tried to make the matter clear—we assured him and reassured him, all taking a voice. We endeavored to interest him in the service truck; but evidently he had not heard about any truck. His mind was centered on the Ford and the haul that he had made.

So under his escort we drew up at the curb in front of the suburban police station—and the Jitney-man immediately yelped excitedly.

"There's my car!" At the curb just before us stood another Ford; and by every appearance it *was* the Jitney-man's car! Now I could recognize it myself. "Where'd you get my car?"

He was tumbling out, to make for it, when the copper halted him.

"None of that," he warned. "Claiming every car in sight? Why don't you pick a good one? Into the station with you, now. One, two, three, four, five." And he hustled us ahead, through the door. He was an energetic officer.

The sergeant was at his desk—and on the bench against the wall were sitting two other men, in resigned attitude, as if under surveillance.

"Five more of 'em, Sergeant," reported the copper with pardonable pride. "*And* the car, Number Forty-eight thousand, seven hundred and one."

But the Jitney-man interrupted. With a leap he had reached the two men.

"You're the thieves, are you?" he bawled. "You dirty robbers! Gimme that lid!" And he exchanged hats in fierce proprietorship. "And my eighty cents!"

He seemed about to commit assault, when the vigilant copper ruthlessly hauled him back by the collar.

"None of that, either," admonished the cop. "First it's the car, and then

it's a hat, and next it's eighty cents! What's the matter with you? Splitting on your pals? Stand in line, now, and be decent."

AT this instant, from a side-room, the two boys entered. One moment they stared, only to yap with a simultaneous:

"That's them! That's the gang! The little guy" (meaning the Jitney-man) "is the one who rode the truck with us."

"There!" we accused, of the copper. "What did we tell you about that truck?"

The copper looked a little worried, but he was game.

"Truck nothing. I wasn't scouting for no truck—see?"

"Did you let that truck get away?" demanded the sergeant.

"I let *a* truck get away, sir. Sure I did. I had no orders about a truck."

"Didn't you hear what I said?"

"Yes sir. I did, sir. I heard what you said about Ford Number Forty-eight thousand, seven hundred and one. And she's out in front. If you said anything about a truck I didn't catch you. There's a beehive on the wires to-night."

"Now listen here, Sergeant," besought the Tourist. "Let me explain."

"Cut it short, then," begrudged the sergeant.

"Yes," said the Tourist pleasantly, "I will, because I've got to make a train." And he looked at his watch. Forthwith explain he did, to the best of his ability—closing with: "If you'll just telephone the Wayside Garage, and ask for the proprietor, he'll corroborate everything I've said."

"Lock 'em up," said the sergeant, gruffly, to the cop.

We howled, frantic. The Tourist almost burst, in his vehemence.

"Shut up!" ordered the cop. "The whole seven of 'em, Sergeant?"

"All together," nodded the sergeant.

This aroused from the twain on the bench a strenuous protest.

"Not on your life!" they pleaded—as if mindful of the malevolent actions of the Jitney-man. "We'd get murdered, sure. It's all right. You caught us with the goods. If the little guy wants his car, he can have it. We weren't goin' fur in it, anyhow."

"Lock the two of 'em up, then," bade the sergeant. "You other men sit down there and be quiet."

He took off the receiver of his desk 'phone. The copper hustled the two thieves into the detention-room. The sergeant called the number of the Wayside Garage. While he waited, it was an anxious moment for us. Supposing the Boss had not returned—or had closed up? He had seemed not interested in us, and he was a wight of strange humor.

Presently the sergeant spoke guardedly into the transmitter. Scarcely a syllable reached us. The two boys continued to eye us savagely. And as like as not we had the aspect of desperate criminals, for the chase had been prolonged and dusty.

The sergeant hung up, and faced us.

"He's coming down," he vouchsafed sourly. "Says he doesn't know you!"

"He's a liar," berated the Tourist.

This did not affect the sergeant, who laboriously scribbled a report about us on his blotter. We waited. The copper joined the assembly—and significantly stationed himself between us and the exit.

The Tourist repeatedly looked at his watch and fidgeted.

"Took me car and lid and eighty cents," rehashed the Jitney-man.

Not soon, but later, a car stopped before the station; and the Boss debonairly entered, followed by *the* Motor-cop.

"There he is!" we hailed defiantly.

"I understand you say you don't know us," accused the angry Tourist. "Why, you—"

But the Boss was too smart for him.

"Oh, *you* dubs," be observed, with his grin. "Gee, but you're a tough lot. All right, Sarge. It's straight stuff they've been giving you. I'm afraid I'll have to recognize 'em."

"What do *you* say?" invited the sergeant, of the Motor-cop.

"Just a mix-up. I was there in the garage, when I reported," admitted the Motor-cop.

The sergeant scratched his pen across his blotter.

"You," he said to the two boys, "take your car and go home. You," he blared, at the unfortunate Jitney-man, "take *your* nickel-chaser, and go home. And the rest of you," he curtly directed, "can go to the devil. My head aches."

"When do I get my eighty cents?" appealed the Jitney-man.

"When I give it to you," retorted the sergeant. "And that wont be till after the trial."

"But they've plead guilty," attempted the Jitney-man, obsessed—when the Boss deftly whirled him to the doorway.

"Love of Mike! Quit your kicking and go home. Your name's Trouble with a big T, and you ought to be in the bug-house."

"WELL," quoth the Boss, outside, where stood his Blue Bug, "I'd got here sooner, boys—honest I would; only I had to fill up with gas. Let's go back to the garage and tell another story."

"Not *me*," hastily denied the Chauffeur, the Taxi-driver and I, all in one breath. "Home, sweet home, by the street-car route."

"Not *me*," denied the Tourist, again looking at his watch. "I'm going to catch that train while I have a fighting chance. What'll you charge to take me down to the station?" he asked of the Jitney-man.

The Jitney-man calculated.

"Fifty cents," he ventured.

"You thug!" denounced the Motor-cop, severely. "You with that blow-out in your pants charging four bits to take a gentleman only twelve miles. Aren't you ashamed?"

"All right," accepted the Tourist, nimbly climbing in. "Good-by, everybody. See you later," he added, to the Boss.

"Good-by. Good luck," we called; and with the Jitney-man at the helm he rolled away.

With wave of hand the Boss and the Motor-cop darted off in the Blue Bug. We three boarded our respective cars, for north and south. And this concluded, for the time being, the regular sessions in the Wayside Garage.

Nothing in Tennis

by Frank Condon

"LOVE," says the dictionary, "is an affection of the mind caused by that which delights; a devoted attachment for one of the opposite sex." This is the story of such an "affection," told in Mr. Condon's characteristically engaging style.

TO begin with, this is a story which concerns itself almost exclusively with love. It is an out-and-out love-story, and readers who prefer not to read love-stories, for reasons for their own, will oblige by turning over to the Mystery and Adventure Departments, which will be found two aisles to the left, behind the elevators.

For the benefit of the few remaining human beings who do not know what love is, it may be announced, on no less fragile authority than the dictionary, that love is "an affection of the mind caused by that which delights; a devoted attachment for one of the opposite sex"—which, in a manner of speaking, and as far as it goes, is an accurate and broad definition. On the other hand, the same dictionary states, in almost the same paragraph, that love is "nothing, in billiards, tennis and *other games*."

One can almost see the wrinkle of grim cynicism on the parchment-like countenance of old Henry J. Lexicographer, as he sat there writing down the statement that love is nothing in "other games." What games? What did Henry J. know about it, anyhow?

ALL of which brings us around to Mr. Irving Colgate of New York, who was in love and who was finding

out that love certainly was nothing, nothing at all, in some games, and particularly in one game he was playing.

Mr. Irving Colgate lived in the best part of New York, labored in Wall Street, occupied a prominent place in the social scale and possessed wealth, a valet and a motor-car that had cost six thousand American dollars. In a stately, formal, dignified and genteel manner, he had engaged himself to marry the person of Dorothy Lederer, who was from the flakiest section of the upper crust.

Dorothy Lederer belonged to the Lederer family that met the *Mayflower* when it landed. The Sunday newspapers published her photograph five times a year, and when she sneezed, all Society had a cold.

Those who knew said that Irving and Dorothy would make a fine couple and that it was a most excellent match. Both were well liked, rich and socially perfect—and yet there was something lacking, something that both Dorothy and Irving Colgate knew was lacking.

"There is nothing to be gained by disguising the truth," Dorothy said in cool tones to Irving. "You are a business man, Irving, and your life is given up to business. It is difficult for one of your training to realize that there is such a thing as romance. I doubt if you know what romance is."

"Perhaps not," Irving agreed thoughtfully. "I am very fond of you, Dorothy. You know that."

"I know that," she responded with a smile, "but it is not sufficient. I must have romance in my life. I have everything else, and I desire romance. You have courted me calmly and quietly. You have never thrilled me; nor have I thrilled you. It is almost a business arrangement, and I do not approve of it."

"I am sorry," Irving said. "I thought I understood you, but apparently I did not. It is true that business occupies a great part of my time; that is something which cannot be helped. My affection for you is sincere, and I will try my best to make a good husband."

"Every word you say only makes matters worse," Dorothy exclaimed impatiently. "I will not be married in the same matter-of-fact way in which one buys bonds or stocks. This world is filled with beautiful romance, and yet you pass by unseeing. You live surrounded by a stone wall, which is business. You are blind to the richness of life."

"What is it you want me to do?" he asked meekly.

"I want you to go out into the world and discover romance," Dorothy answered. "Search for it until you have found it. Look for it among people of whose very existence you are now ignorant. Mingle with those who know what romance is and whose lives are colored and made bright by it. Find romance, and when you have found it, bring it back and share it with me. Then and only then will I marry you."

AND so Mr. Irving Colgate shook hands with Dorothy and walked down the ornate front steps of the Lederer home in search of romance. True, he did not know what romance was, or how he would find it, or whether he would recognize it. Behind the lace curtains, Miss Lederer watched

her fiancé depart, a calm and possessed smile upon her perfect countenance. Then she summoned her secretary and began the day's dictation on matters concerning the right of women to vote, which was a subject that interested her.

"Dorothy is right," young Mr. Colgate remarked to himself. "I have been hopelessly immersed in business, and romance has passed me by. She is a woman who craves a different kind of love from that I have offered her. I shall find romance and bring it to her. I wonder where one starts on such a hunt."

He stepped into his motor-car and bade the driver go through Central Park, which, when you come to think of it, is as likely a breeding-ground for romance as may be.

The big machine glided slowly through the leaf-shaded drives, and Irving leaned back in the cushions with a wrinkled brow. It was Saturday, and Wall Street was dull. As the car passed by the Mall, Colgate glanced forth and beheld a young woman sitting on a bench, and after a momentary stare he returned to his thoughts. The young woman was clad in a neat blue suit, with a roll of fluffy white lace about her throat, and upon her small head a mannish hat containing a purple feather.

It occurred to him, after his machine was a mile off, that he had previously seen the blue suit and purple feather. The girl was pretty, he remembered, and she usually occupied the same bench at certain hours in the afternoon.

On Sunday afternoon Irving Colgate drove his car himself, and as he sped smoothly downtown he wondered whether he would call at Dorothy's home. He decided to refrain from the pleasure. She would again bring up the subject of romance. She would ask him if he had made progress, and he would be forced, mournfully, to admit that he had not.

He whirred onward through the pleasant green of the Park, and opposite the Mall a small wire at the top of one of his cylinders slipped the fortieth of an inch, and the engine instantly complained.

Mr. Colgate pressed his foot upon the brake and descended to the ground, where, after some slight tinkering, he righted the motor-wrong, replaced the hood and prepared to climb back. Then it was, again, that he saw the young woman in the blue suit, with the roll of white lace about her throat and the purple plume in her masculine, but becoming, bonnet.

IT occurred to Colgate, after a rapid glance toward the lady's bench, that other wires might be on the point of slipping. He reopened the engine-hood and pretended an interest in the greasy insides, which he did not feel. At intervals he glanced over the top of the car at the girl in blue, who, with a magazine in her lap, was wholly unaware of Mr. Colgate, his car and his existence—whereby he had opportunity to study and to ponder.

She was frail, slight, bloodless of cheek and vaguely pathetic. Her hands, as they lay in her lap, were white and very slim. She was undeniably pretty, and she looked as if she might be very jolly. Weariness was in the droop of her mouth. The hollows under her eyes suggested long hours of labor, and presently, when she looked up from her magazine, Colgate was so deeply buried in the thoughtful stare he was bending upon her, that he recovered himself guiltily and banged a wrench upon the innocent motor.

The girl lowered her gaze again to her reading, and Colgate began to wonder whether he had better stop trifling with his well-ordered engine before he put it out of commission. He was not a young man accustomed to breaking ice. When he met women he was properly introduced to them. It made him uncomfortable to think of speaking to this lonely, silent young stranger, and yet he was attracted by her. He reflected that a ride in his car would certainly bring the blood to her cheeks. He thought this over for some time, tapping thoughtfully at the cylinders. Then he grasped his courage, coughed twice and spoke.

"Pardon me for speaking," he said hurriedly, "but would you like to take a ride through the park?"

The girl in blue looked calmly up. She gazed for a moment without speaking.

"No," she answered coolly, "I would not."

"Very well," Colgate said, banging down the hood. "I thought you might."

"I don't ride with strange men in motor-cars," the girl remarked, and her glance returned to her magazine.

"I only asked you because I thought you looked worn and tired," Irving replied. "I am not trying to flirt with you or 'pick you up,' as the saying is. You may not realize it, but your eyes look very tired. Good-by."

He hurled himself into his seat, grasped the gear-lever and started, amid a great rattle of clashing machinery. The girl made no answer.

"Some men can do that sort of thing," Colgate muttered irritably, "but I can't. It is always a million to one that I get turned down. I wont try it again."

WHEN the car was out of sight, the young woman ceased reading, raised her eyes and slowly smiled, and if Irving Colgate could have seen the smile he would have returned at a high rate of speed.

"Well, Margy," the young lady remarked whimsically, "it came at last, and you lost your opportunity. And now you must go back to work and forget all about it."

She rose, gathered up her bag and magazine and walked slowly away. Each afternoon she had come to the park. Each afternoon she had sat on her bench, watching the motor-cars whizz past, staring at them wistfully, wondering about their occupants and the sort of lives they led.

They were rich and she was poor. Unquestionably their daily lives were the exact antipodes of her life, and she yearned with all her young soul to step into one of those expensive machines and be whisked away. She wondered how it would feel to recline upon soft cushions and to speed through smooth roads, with the fresh breeze blowing and never a thing in the world to worry about. She envied the beautifully dressed women whom she saw each afternoon. And now her chance had come and she had driven it from her . . . . .

Ten minutes after she left her bench, Margy — Miss Margaret Roberts — turned into the Monopole Hotel, which is an uptown hostelry of considerable pretensions, and directed her footsteps toward the telephone switchboard. There she found Nella, the red-haired cynic, already putting on her hat and staring reproachfully at the little clock. At five every afternoon Margaret relieved Nella. Between the two they connected the Monopole Hotel with the outside world, answered distracted female residents, ordered ice-water and called traveling salesmen at unearthly hours in the morning. They were the twin geniuses of the switchboard, the difference being that Nella was red-haired and freckled and Margaret was brown-haired and very comely.

It was at the switchboard that Margaret got her pale cheeks and the hollows beneath her pensive eyes. Ordinarily she worked twelve hours a day, in a stuffy, dusty little room, and after a year of it she had come to crave the fresh air of the Park. Hence she went daily along the green-bordered walks to watch the squirrels and birds and the breath in the delicious zephyrs that whirled across the Reservoir. And on her favorite park bench, she often sat and wondered why some people have so much money and the comfortable, luxurious things of life, while others have so very little. Margaret was a lonely young woman whose parents lived in a Vermont village.

TWENTY-FOUR hours rolled around, and again Margaret Roberts strolled through the Park and took her favorite seat. She stared at the Sunday parade of automobiles, endless as the very wind, and she thought of the nice-looking man who yesterday had halted to tinker his engine and invite her to ride.

Usually the Park benches are multitudinously occupied of a Sunday afternoon, but Margaret's immediate neighborhood was deserted, and she sat in solitary state, without even the comfort of her favorite magazine.

In the long, twisting line Irving Colgate maneuvered his big car, treading upon the heels of a saucy French machine, whose driver jerked and stopped in a most irritating fashion. It is very annoying to be forced to shift your gears every ten seconds, but you must do so if you are caught in a Park jam with a slovenly driver immediately ahead. Presently young Colgate swore softly at the bungler and dropped out of the long line, intending to fall in again under less irritating conditions.

He did not intend to stop beside the road directly in front of the Mall. Not at all. He had no intention of halting his machine in almost the identical spot where, yesterday, he had fixed his slipped wire. Indeed, if he had reflected, he would have remained where he was, suffering the inexactions of the eccentric chauffeur before him.

Now he looked up, and his startled gaze rested upon the same blue-clad figure, with the waving purple plume and the bit of white lace at the throat. He colored. The calm blue eyes of the telephone-girl gazed upon him, and she remarked that he was even a more attractive-looking young man than she had thought. Colgate intended immediately to look away, but he did not. He perceived what he took to be the very faintest trace of a smile upon the somewhat melancholy lips—and before he knew it he had broken bounds again, in spite of his word to himself.

"Well," he heard himself saying coolly enough, "do you feel like riding to-day, or do you still think me a flirt?"

His car was ten feet from Margaret Roberts. It was a large, comfortable-looking, beautifully upholstered machine, and its cushions were deep and velvety. A traffic policeman was cantering up to see what held Mr. Colgate, and Colgate glanced apprehensively at the officer. He saw the hesitation in the girl's eyes. The cold indifference of yesterday was gone.

"You have five seconds to decide, before this policeman arrests me," he laughed. "Better hop in, young lady."

Margaret rose. Colgate flipped open the tonneau-door and helped her ascend.

"Where to, Miss?" he smiled, touching his cap in the manner of our best chauffeurs, and for the first time, the girl smiled outright.

The mounted officer was almost upon them. Colgate jumped into his seat, and the big car darted out from under the nose of the Law, leaving the traffic cop glaring.

If an afternoon can be worth a million dollars, it was worth that to Margaret Roberts, reclining dreamily on the soft cushions. Colgate drove through the Park twice. Originally he had intended to call upon Dorothy Lederer, but he postponed that delight.

Ten minutes before her time to report at the Monopole Hotel—Margaret toiled on Sundays, like all telephone-girls—the big car stopped at the edge of the Park and the girl descended.

"It was a very lovely ride," she said gratefully. "I enjoyed it more than I can tell you, and I am sorry I was rude to you yesterday."

"I thought it would do you good," Colgate answered. "You have a much better color than when we started. Perhaps—some other day—"

"Perhaps," Margaret said. "Now I must hurry. Thank you—so much."

THERE are those who will censure Margaret Roberts for riding with a stranger, but they must remember that she was lonesome and poor and frankly envious of those who owned big automobiles.

Three afternoons later Irving Colgate drove by the bench in the Park and found it occupied by the lady in blue. Again she rode with him, and this time she sat by his side, while he drove the machine. They became acquainted.

And so it happened that the big touring-car came often to the Mall in Central Park, usually late in the afternoon, when Margy was off duty. Colgate discovered in the girl a friendly sympathy that quite astonished him, and on a certain evening he drove her out into the country to a quaint roadside inn, where they had chocolate and cakes under a canopy of ivy leaves.

"I'm going to ask your help," he said to her with a smile, when they had finished eating. "I am up against it. Do you happen to know what romance

is, and if so, where I can find some of it?"

"What a funny question!" she made reply.

"It's funny enough in some ways, and yet it has a serious side. Let me explain."

Then he told her of the strange command of the stately lady whom he had asked to marry him. Margaret listened with a sympathetic smile.

"I suppose I'm too matter-of-fact," Colgate continued cheerfully. "I am certainly lost when it comes to the *Romeo* business, and I don't believe I would recognize Romance if it came up and bowed to me."

Margaret laughed.

"Perhaps I *can* help you," she said slowly. "But I don't see what good romance will do you, if it is the romance of other persons. You must yourself be filled with it—if I understand."

"And how can you be, if you don't know what it is?" he answered.

"I'LL tell you a little story about myself," she continued, spreading her napkin carefully over her knees, "and you can decide whether it is romantic. Perhaps it will give you a start in the right direction, and then you can return to—to your sweetheart and things will be satisfactory to her. You may have noticed the Italian who shines the boots at the Monopole?"

Colgate nodded. "I saw him once or twice," he said.

"Well, the story is about him. His name is Tony. Really, it is not Tony at all. And that is the story. His name is very long and hard to pronounce, and actually, he is an Italian who belongs to a great and ancient Roman family."

Colgate smiled.

"Laugh if you like," Margaret went on calmly, "but the shoe-shiner at the Monopole is really an Italian count, and he is shining shoes and taking orders from cigar salesmen simply because he is in love."

"With whom?" Colgate demanded.

"With me," said Margaret coolly. "He is only nineteen years old, and we are waiting until he reaches twenty-one, for then he will have his own fortune. Six months ago a party of distinguished Italians passed through New York. They were appointed by the King of Italy as delegates to the San Francisco Exposition. There were ten in the party, and they stopped at the Monopole Hotel. The young Count—now Tony—saw me at the telephone-board—and fell in love with me. He went to his uncle and told him. The uncle first laughed at him, but Tony was in earnest.

"'I am not going to San Francisco,' Tony said. 'I will remain here in New York.'

"The uncle was furious. He threatened and pleaded and swore, but Tony was firm. Then the uncle, who controls Tony's estates in Italy and will do so until Tony becomes of age, flew into a terrible rage and swore he would shut off the boy's monthly allowance. If he did not give me up and go to the Coast, he would be penniless. Tony laughed at the threat. The uncle carried it out. The Italians went away and Tony remained behind. And now you find him shining shoes—an Italian nobleman. He is waiting until he is twenty-one, and then he intends to marry me, when he comes into his fortune. . . . . That, Mr. Colgate, may be the romance you are seeking. At least, it is sacrifice, isn't it?"

"My Lord!" Colgate exploded. "You aren't going to marry him, are you?"

"I don't know," Margy replied. "Time will tell. Perhaps yes; perhaps no."

"Do you *love* him?" Colgate persisted.

"What does it matter? He loves me, doesn't he? Isn't that plain, from the humiliation and drudgery he is suffering, when he might have everything that money will purchase?"

"Why, it's preposterous," Colgate growled.

"But it is romance, isn't it?" Margaret insisted.

"I suppose so," he agreed. "But there is one thing as certain as the rising of the sun: you will not wait two years to marry. I make a prophecy: you will marry before two years—much before."

THEY drove back to town in thoughtful silence. Mr. Irving Colgate, having come upon romance, exactly as directed to do by his fiancée, did not seem superlatively exuberant over the discovery. He had known Margaret Roberts but a comparatively short time, and yet he had come to look upon her as an old friend, one whom he trusted with his secrets and to whom he told his troubles. To her he opened up his soul, and the humble telephone-girl knew intimately parts and corners of his mind that had never been shown to the stately lady in the big Fifth Avenue house.

He had been neglecting her, of late. On Tuesday afternoon he was called to the telephone and a peremptory voice demanded to know why he remained away.

"I will come this evening," Irving replied pleasantly. "There is something I wish to say."

"I shall be waiting," Dorothy said in the dignified, somewhat icy tones he had begun to dislike.

Promptly at eight o'clock his machine stopped before the Lederer home and Colgate ran up the steps. Dorothy came down presently, and he remained standing by the fireplace.

"Aren't you going to sit down?" she asked, after a moment.

"No," he answered quietly. "I am going to stand, because what I have to say will take but a few moments. You and I have made a mistake, Dorothy, and it would be senseless to carry it further."

The lady stared at him uncomprehendingly.

"You sent me out of here to discover romance," he continued slowly. "Well, I found it. There is such a thing as romance, after all, even though I was previously unaware of its existence. And most certainly you were right in seeking it. It was missing between us. It exists, without a doubt, and its other name is *sacrifice*. It means to give up certain things in this life, and I will follow its commands. I am going to give you up, Dorothy."

The lady whose social doings put bread and butter into a score of chatterers for society papers, and whose family went back to the days when Miles Standish smoked cigarettes behind the woodshed, glared in amazement at the young broker.

"We made a mistake," he repeated in embarrassment. "I am trying to explain that we should not continue. We were not made for each other. It would be the height of folly to marry. Therefore I am permitting you to break off our engagement and—well, that's about all I have to say."

Miss Lederer flushed, but made no reply. She rose, walked to the doorway and pulled back the portières. Colgate bowed, picked up his hat and strode out and through the hall. She heard the outer door click and presently the roar of Colgate's motor.

"The shrimp!" she murmured, and presently her mother came down the stair.

"Wasn't that Irving Colgate?" Mrs. Lederer inquired.

"It was," Dorothy replied crisply. "He has gone—and for good. Thank heaven, I discovered his true character before it was too late."

THE big machine bearing the freed man turned north, and twenty minutes later it paused before the Monopole Hotel—something that it had not done before, because persons will talk about a telephone-girl who rides in a big motor-car. Margaret Roberts appeared, and there was surprise in her glance.

"I will explain my stopping here for you," Irving remarked as he held open the door.

"It wasn't very thoughtful of you," she said.

"Yes, it was. Hop in, and we'll go somewhere. I feel full of words, and I'm going to heap them on you until nothing can be seen of you."

They drove into the country again. The cool night wind fanned them briskly, and from the roadside as they whirred by came the croaking of frogs and the chirp of crickets. Margaret was silent. Colgate whistled blithely.

"The reason I stopped at the Monopole," he said finally, "was that you are not going back there any more. So it doesn't matter what people say."

"Not—not going back?" Margy repeated, puzzled.

"No; you have resigned," he continued gayly. "You are a young lady of tremendous leisure and unexampled idleness. You are not going to work any more. You have worked enough."

"You are in a joking mood to-night," she said, faintly smiling.

"A happy mood, yes; joking, no. To-night I had an interview with Miss Dorothy Lederer, who, as I told you, has been my prospective partner through the years to come. I may state at this point that all is now changed. She is no longer my prospective partner, and I am *not* going to marry her."

"You're not!"

"No," he continued gravely. "I am not going to marry her—because I don't want to, and second, because I am going to marry you."

Margaret Roberts grasped the rail at her side.

"I meant to say this better and with less abruptness, but I'm a booby and I can't talk very well. I was going to be nice and romantic about it. I made up the beginning of a speech that *Romeo* himself might not have been ashamed of, and I've been trying to get it started ever since we left the city. But I can't do it. The point is that since I met you and learned to know you and become fond of you, the chances of my marrying Dorothy Lederer or anyone else in this world, except you, were as the chances of a butter dog chasing an asbestos rabbit through our well-known and popular Hades. I was sent out into the cold world to find romance, and I most assuredly found it when I found you, Margy, dear. I will state, with my hand on my heart, that I want to marry you and nobody else, and that I love you deeply and will continue to do so until the end of the universe. Therefore you are not going back to the Monopole. I am going to make a princess out of you and hang beautiful flowers and diadems all over you, and you may sleep in the morning until fifteen minutes after ten."

The girl laughed.

"Are you in—in earnest?" she faltered, after a time. The car was moving slowly now, as a car should move when the driver is steering with but one hand and the other hand is elsewhere occupied.

"I'm in earnest, all right," he said, "but I feel too buoyant to be serious. Anyway, it's all settled, isn't it? You *will* marry me, wont you? I wouldn't have spoken if I thought I didn't have a chance."

"Marry you! How can I?" she laughed. "You already know the story of Tony."

"Tony! Oh, Lord! Yes, I know about that. But I insist. If you will agree to marry me, turn your head this way, just the very slightest bit, because I can't—because I—well, turn it, if you mean you will— Say! how do you expect me to drive this car and make love unless you help a little!"

AND thereupon, the shades of night seemed to become even more opaque. At least the gentle reader cannot see what happened in the big touring-car, which wobbled along the broad highway in a most uncertain fashion, safe from collisions and casualties only because the roadway was free of all traffic. There were two extremely contented persons in it.

After a long and occupied pause Margaret raised her head from Irving's arm and spoke.

"But," she said, "what about Tony?"

He laughed cheerily.

"It was nice of you to help me," he answered. "Your intentions were friendly, and I appreciate them. But you should have chosen some other subject than Tony. That particular son of sunny Italy has been shining shoes downtown in the building where our offices are for the past fourteen years, and—well, naturally, I couldn't spoil your little fairy-tale."

"But—it was romantic, wasn't it?" Margy protested.

"Yes," he said doubtfully, "but not as romantic as this is."

He leaned over and kissed her, and a very grouchy person driving a seven-passenger car shrilled his horn bitterly at Mr. Colgate, who was steering whichways.

And so t. w. m. a. l. h. e. a.

Princess Bill

A Complete Novel

by Frank R. Adams

CHAPTER I

RIGHT in the middle of my topical song in the second act, the entire performance of "The Pink Widow" came to an abrupt halt. There was no use going on while a counter attraction was sitting in the right-hand stage box making more noise than I was.

It was Mardi Gras week in New Orleans, and we had become accustomed to noise and good-natured interruptions from our audiences, but the whiskered individual in the stage box was so continuously obstreperous that it became necessary to take drastic measures in order to proceed with the performance.

"Look at them legs," shouted Whiskers, addressing an imaginary friend somewhere back in the gallery. "Funnies' legs I ever saw; durned if they aint."

Now, my legs, as you may remember, if you ever saw them in the lemon-colored tights I wear in "The Pink Widow," are my chief claim to being one of America's best known comedians. I have been aware of this ever since I was a chorus man in "The Wizard of Oz," when I had to be discharged because the audience got to laughing at me instead of at Johnny Slavin, who was playing the part of *The Wizard*. In our business there is nothing gained by hiding your light under a bushel, and so I have always since that time played parts which called for tights.

I am rather tall and thin, and my knees bulge out as if they had knobs on them. When I use my feet in a slow dance-step which I have never varied since I first learned it from Julian Mitchell in "The Wizard of Oz," it seems to amuse an audience almost to the point of hysterics. As I have been known to get as high as seven hundred and fifty dollars a week for doing that step, I consider that nature has been equally generous with me and Frankie Bailey, who has kept the pins under even more tottering musical comedies than I have.

That accounts for my being a featured comedian. I have not always been on the stage. No one has, not even Eva Tanguay. My career was carefully planned out by my father, who was a Senator from south of the Mason and Dixon line. I was to become a soldier. He secured an appointment for me at West Point. Parts of the life there I liked. I was an excellent student in the engineering department. But the restraint was too much for me. I couldn't stand the ceaseless routine of drills, regulations and inspections of every last thing you did, from cleaning your teeth to saying your prayers.

In my third year, when I was a second-class man, I left. I had to do it

IF you read Frank Adams' "The First Assistant Wife," "Five Fridays" or "Taking Care of Sylvia," we don't need to tell you how captivating his stories are. And this is even better—more humorous, more whimsical and clever—than his previous stories. You'll cheer for Princess Bill.

or blow up. Father secured an honorable discharge for me and notified me that he had ceased either supervising or financing my affairs. In other words, I was now "on my own."

The fact that I lived after that was due to luck and my legs. By luck I happened to step on the lowest rung of the theatrical ladder; my legs carried me to a comfortable position near the top.

At thirty I was a recognized star, with a contract that assured my presence on Broadway at least one season in three. I was a member of the Lambs and the Friars, clubs devoted to the interests of my profession; and I was unmarried. I found life very pleasant under those conditions.

The appearance of "The Pink Widow" in New Orleans was part of a tour which included the principal cities of the United States outside of New York. We had spent a year and a half on Broadway, and our road tour was in the nature of a triumphal procession. Our fame had gone before. Everybody in the audience knew the famous "Pink Widow Waltz" and sang it with the prima donna in the big finale of the first act.

THE party in the right-hand stage box had shown his approval during the successive stages of the performance by audible comments and applause prolonged indefinitely after the balance of the audience had worn their hands out. This time his merriment was too much, and I signaled the ushers to close in on him. It was an absolute necessity to eliminate my admirer in order to entertain the remainder of the audience at all.

The ushers had their work cut out for them, because Whiskers had the solid, short-legged build of an adult hippopotamus. When he planted his feet wide apart they seemed to be glued to the spot, and the best way to move him would have been with a derrick from above. Finally, by calling in the entire theater staff and getting a police officer from the street, they managed to exclude the boisterous gentleman from our audience.

I proceeded with my song and thought no more about the interruption. What I did think about was the supper

party I had arranged with the ingénue of our company. I was having a very pleasant friendship with her which verged delicately on a love-affair. If she hadn't always called me "Skinny," I think it would have done more than verge. But how can a man talk sentiment to a snip of a girl who laughs merrily at his figure seven nights and two matinées a week? Perhaps if she had never seen me except with my trousers on, things might have been different.

She was a tiny, demure little thing with big black eyes. Off the stage she was very quiet, with a biting wit that only struck occasionally but, like lightning, demolished what it touched. On the stage, when she got into that blonde wig and knee-length dresses called for in the part of the little girl she was playing, she became quite a different person. She was a rowdy tomboy.

It was her fancy to call me "Nurse." One of her favorite tricks in connection with this was to go to the theater and get made up and into her costume before I arrived. I almost always came late, because I did not make my entrance until midway of the first act. She would be waiting on the stage, and as soon as I opened the stage door she would make a rush across the stage shouting, "Hello, Nurse! Catch me." And then she would jump haphazard in my direction, expecting me to catch her right end up. I nearly always did, but the uncertainty is what amused her, I think.

Her name was Ethel Sardam, but everyone called her "Beautiful," which was a nickname she approved of herself—because, as she stated, it saved such a lot of silly compliments by taking it for granted.

SHE was waiting in the wings when I came off after my song.

"Gee, but you're funny, aren't you, Skinny? If the upper half of you were only as funny as the lower half, we could charge four dollars a seat and get it." She kicked me playfully on the shins, and when I started to retaliate, she murmured, "Excuse me, darling; there's my cue," and dashed out on the stage, where I could not follow her.

She was doing a number with little "Skeeter" Herrold, our dancing juvenile. My opinion of him is probably not a fair view of his doubtless admirable character, because at that time he was doing his level best to cut me out with Beautiful. In my estimation there was nothing in a farm dairy at milking time any fresher than Skeeter.

Skeeter was exactly the same size as Beautiful, that is, just five feet; and he could dance in a way that would have made his fortune if George Cohan had not done it first. He owned forty-five suits of clothes that I know of, all of which he carried with him on the road. This entire wardrobe he managed to wear during the course of a week, never appearing in the same suits for two consecutive performances and changing several times during each act.

He also owned and displayed a collection of jewelry that would have made many a débutante envious. The various rings, stick-pins, watches and fobs in his possession were souvenirs of ladies who had thought him "too cute for anything." In nearly every town we played, some middle-aged adventuress, whose husband had discovered an underground passage to the mint, would eat too much catnip some day and send Skeeter a mash note enclosing a splinter off from the Kohinoor.

But Skeeter had no eyes for the misunderstood-at-home grandmothers, and he stuck persistently to the trail of the only girl I ever loved—that season.

Between us, we kept Beautiful dated up like a popular freshman during his first week at college. If he took her to dinner, I usually had the privilege of buying her after-theater supper, and sometimes when the rivalry grew a bit strenuous, one or both of us would contrive to see her at breakfast, or rather at the first meal of the day, which occurred about twelve o'clock. She called it "brunch," which is a descriptive word covering two meals, invented by Bonnie Magin, the prettiest girl in the old Weber and Field's chorus.

During the performance Skeeter saw a great deal more of Beautiful than I did, as most of their scenes were together and he did two dances with her

for a partner. On the other hand, she always kissed me once a day the first time we met, no matter whether it was in the hotel, at the theater or on the train bound for the next town.

But flirtations cannot go on forever even in the show business, and as I stood in the wings watching my rival whirl her about in a wild variation of the one-step, I determined to put my fortunes to the test that very evening. At supper I would propose to her. I would win out over that young shrimp if I had to lose my freedom to do it.

Beautiful must have been reading my thoughts, because as they danced near the wing in which I stood, she made a face at me over his shoulder and said sotto voce: "Dare you to come out and catch me!"

I HAD not had time to remove my costume after the performance, however, when the door-man rapped at my door, saying a gentleman wished to see me immediately.

I asked who it was.

"The gent didn't give any name, but he said you would know him the minute you saw him."

"Do you think he's all right?"

"Sure," replied the door-man.

I have since had reason to suspect that the door-man's certainty was inspired by the gift of money from my visitor.

"Then ask him to come in."

I felt sure that it must be one of Father's old friends, of whom he had a great many living in New Orleans. The door-man left, to return in a few moments with the information that the gentleman could not come down, because he was with a party he was unable to leave, but that if I would come to the stage door immediately he would only take a minute of my time. Inwardly cursing the interruption which would delay my supper engagement with Beautiful, I nevertheless decided to see who my friend could be.

I went to the stage door. Like most entryways to the realm back of the footlights, this one was vestibuled. The vestibule is a precaution to cut off drafts from the stage and also to deaden noises from outside.

There were two men in the dark entryway, which was illumined only by a window in the door I had just closed behind me.

Before I could see who they were, each of them took me by an arm in a grip that fairly made me wince, and before I could utter any protest they pushed me firmly ahead of them through the outer door and into the alley.

CHAPTER II

AT first I was too surprised to protest. Then it occurred to me that this must be some joke on the part of a friend who wanted to get me out into the streets in the absurd costume of the last act of "The Pink Widow." In any event, they were apt to make me late for my appointment with Beautiful, and I struggled with my captors.

"Here, wait a minute," I expostulated. "I can't go out on the streets this way. I'm not dressed."

"It's all right, my friend," said a hearty voice. "We don't want you with your clothes on. You got the funnies' legs I ever saw."

With a chill I recognized my abductor. It was Whiskers, the man who had sat in the stage box.

"Port a little, Bill," he commanded the other figure on my left.

"Port she is, sir." This in a respectful voice came from somewhere over my head. I'm a tall man myself, but this fellow must have been built in a clothes-pole factory. We veered around to the left in front of the theater, and I was impelled swiftly and firmly toward Canal Street. Only during Mardi Gras could it have happened that I could walk through the streets of one of the largest cities of the United States wearing lemon-colored tights, a red-and-blue jacket and a white chef's hat without exciting attention and inviting police interference. But the streets were filled with grotesquely clad people, some of them even more wildly garbed than I.

There were clowns in spotted Pierrot costumes, harlequins, Happy Hooligans, Columbines, girls in boys'

clothes, men in women's clothes, girls dressed as Highlanders, shepherdesses, ballet dancers and Oriental beauties.

The street was weirdly lighted by pans of red fire and by gasoline torches. Everyone made all the noise possible, either with the vocal organs given by nature or with some of the whistles, bells or fiendish rattles invented by mankind.

"What's the meaning of this outrage?" I demanded, struggling furiously with my captors.

"Easy, son," cautioned the man on the right. "We aint going to hurt you —leastways not unless we have to."

"Help!" I shouted.

The two men laughed.

"That wont do you any good, son," said Whiskers. "Everybody is plum nutty in this town to-night. Here's a policeman. Tell it to him."

I realized how absurd it would be to try to get anyone to believe my story. Dressed as I was, everyone would naturally take me for one of the masquers.

Some of the crowd spied me and began to laugh.

"Look, kid," said a Columbine to her escort. "Look at the guy doing an imitation of Donald Daniels in 'The Pink Widow.' He's got legs almost exactly like Daniels."

Her escort surveyed me critically. "This guy is funnier, I think. It's a clever make-up. He's got the same kind of shoes and everything. Hey!" he shouted to another group. "Pipe the Donald Daniels make-up."

BEFORE long we were being followed by a large crowd of motley merry-makers. Everyone applauded my imitation of myself. I tried to tell some of the nearest that I *was* Donald Daniels. They laughed uproariously and said that was a clever idea to pretend to be the man himself that I was imitating.

I saw how hopeless it was and ceased to struggle, because those two ruffians could have sand-bagged me right in the principal streets of New Orleans and all the bystanders would have thought it was a joke and would have been glad to help.

Girls passing by threw ribbons of paper at me, blew horns in my face and batted me across the shins with the inflated bladders so dear to the heart of the comic acrobat. Perfect strangers pinched me on the kneecap to see if it was real, and one man who said he was the king of Baton Rouge invited me to go with him to a French ball which he said was to begin at two o'clock.

The two men on either side of me did not relax their hold or I would have broken away and run back to the theater. They pressed steadily onward, and at St. Charles Street, in front of the old hotel there, they found a cab, into which they tumbled me unceremoniously and gave the darky driver an address on the water front. I didn't know it was the water front then, but discovered that later when we arrived at the river's bank.

I had rather suspected that the gentlemen with whose company I was honored were seafaring men. The heavy-set party on my right had the manners of one accustomed to command, and that voice of his would have been useless except for issuing orders to a lookout in the crows'-nest.

When they untied a boat at the wharf the seriousness of the adventure began to dawn on me. I might not be able to get back that night. Beautiful would think I had played a trick on her, and she would be so angry that I would have a terrible time squaring myself. Skeeter would have an advantage it would take me weeks to overcome.

As they bundled me into their boat I made a final desperate struggle and shouted "Help!" as loud as I could, while I twisted my wrists in the iron grip of the two men.

At my summons a watchman came running up with a lantern.

I breathed a sigh of relief. I might still have time to get back to the theater before my supper companion would have given me up. I could make it, if that cab had not gotten away yet.

"What's the trouble here?" questioned the watchman sharply, holding his lantern where he could see inside the boat.

"I'm being shanghaied," I said excitedly.

"You better come back," said the watchman to the men, who had begun to row slowly.

"Certainly," replied the captain, backing water.

"Now let's see what this is all about."

I started to explain. The captain interrupted me. "Keep him quiet a minute, Bill."

The tall man placed a large, calloused hand firmly over my mouth. "This is one of my men," the captain continued. "He went ashore a couple of days ago to celebrate and forgot to come back. I wouldn't have found him at all with them clothes on if it hadn't been I recognized his funny legs. You can see for yourself he's drunk, but he's a good sailor and I hate to leave him behind without any money. I always like to treat my men kindly. Aint that so, Bill?"

The other admitted it without removing his hand from my mouth.

The watchman looked me over carefully. He smiled as the details of my costume struck him, and when he examined my legs in the lemon-colored tights, he laughed outright.

"He is a comical kind of a cuss, Captain," he confessed. "It's all right. You can take him back to his ship. Sorry I interrupted you, but we have to do our duty."

"That's all right," the captain returned, flipping the watchman a half-dollar. "Have a drink on me when you're off duty."

"Thank you, sir."

"All right, Bill; let her go," the captain ordered, picking up his oars.

When I was free to speak once more I saved my breath. I could see it was no use. That comedy costume of mine, invented for the purpose of getting laughs, had served its purpose too well. No one would take me seriously with it on.

CHAPTER III

THE little boat slipped away from the dock and was swallowed up in a darkness that to a landsman seemed impenetrable. The captain and his mate, however, rowed steadily without looking around.

I sat sullenly in the stern, cursing my luck and my legs and wishing I had something besides silk gauze between them and the damp river-mist.

We must have rowed half an hour, and I began to wonder if they were going all the way to the Gulf with oars, when the captain rested a moment.

"She ought to be along somewhere in here, Bill."

The other grunted and turned around.

"There's her riding-lights just off the port side," the mate returned.

"*Shandon Belle,* ahoy!" I knew now where the captain had developed that penetrating voice of his.

His hail was answered from the boat, and another light appeared on board.

The two seamen pulled in the direction of the light, and we soon reached a landing-stage over the side of the boat.

"Step lively," said the captain. "I mean you, Yellow Legs."

I obeyed and tumbled out of the boat onto the landing-stage, where I was followed by the captain. The mate apparently took care of the boat.

The lantern which had appeared at the side of the ship was in the hands of a half-dressed man, who, I afterwards found, was the second mate. At first I thought he was a negro, but his hair was wavy rather than kinky, and his color had a tinge of red in it. He wore a pair of ragged trousers and an undershirt.

"Steam up?" inquired the captain.

"Shall have plenty quick," the mate replied.

"All right. Tell McClosky I'm on board. Call the hands."

What happened further on the deck of the vessel I was not permitted to learn. The captain invited me below-stairs, into a tiny stateroom, where he left me locked in.

I was agreeably surprised with the looks of my prison, which was small but apparently clean.

This was something new in the annals of shanghaiing. I had read enough popular fiction to know that the kidnaped sailor is usually beaten up and thrown unconscious into the "fo'c's'le." I was not sure what the "fo'c's'le" was,

but I suspected it of being something like an ash-can, and I felt sure this was not it.

If they were short-handed in the crew, why on earth had the captain sought to recruit his ranks from the stage? If I were a sea-captain, that would be one place I would not look for sailors. I have seen lots of actors whom I suspected of being better plumbers, but none that I would recommend for any ship save *"Pinafore."* Most of us hate water undiluted, and many use ginger ale even then.

NO, I was obviously not wanted as a sailor; otherwise I would have been on deck with the other hands getting up the anchor. I could just picture the poor sailors pulling up the cable hand over hand the way they do in the Gilbert and Sullivan opera, and I was glad I was not among them.

After a while the engine started up; there was a lot of preliminary thrashing around, and then finally we seemed to be under way, quietly and steadily.

I was agreeably surprised at not being seasick. I have since discovered that I never am when navigating a river.

Considerable time elapsed. As I had no watch-pocket in my tights, I don't know how many hours it was, but I suspect it was three or four.

In common with most actors, I always eat my heartiest meal after the evening's performance, and I began to miss it. The longer I waited, the more often I missed it. I don't suppose sailors eat a broiled lobster before going to bed, or else they would have offered me something.

I rapped politely on my door, but nobody answered. I looked around the stateroom for a button to summon the steward. There was no button. I afterwards discovered there was also no steward. In that stateroom there appeared to be facilities for doing only one thing—namely, sleeping. I didn't think there would be much use in going to bed, but as there was nothing else to do, I turned in. I debated some time as to whether or not to remove my costume, but as there was so little of it and I had nothing to put on in its place I compromised by taking off the comedy shoes with turned-up toes, and climbed into the berth.

The things I thought of that night, if published, would necessitate getting out a new "Encyclopedia Britannica." For one thing, I thought bitterly of the girl I had left behind me. Then I thought even more bitterly of the understudy I had also left back there. I would never be able to get back for the next night's performance. Would the understudy be able to get away with the part? First I was afraid he wouldn't, and then I was afraid that he would. After I got to thinking about it, I found out I was more afraid that he would than that he wouldn't. Supposing the management should discover that Jones at fifty dollars a week could get all the laughs that Daniels did for seven hundred and fifty! What would it mean to Daniels?

After I had thought all these thoughts over until they were merely hash in my brain, it began to grow light and I fell asleep.

BEFORE the sun was fairly up, however, somebody came around to my stateroom and began knocking on the door. I told him where he could go for waking me at that hour in the morning. But instead of apologizing, whoever it was unlocked the door and came in. I was too sleepy to argue with him, but that did not seem to deter the intruder. He shook me roughly. I turned over and looked up at him. It was the man who had met us on the deck the night before.

"Get up," he commanded. "See Captain top side, plenty quick."

"All right," I said, and turned back for another little nap. I never wake up the first time I'm called. That seems such an agricultural custom.

The brown man did not seem to understand this. He said nothing further, but he took hold of the bedclothes firmly and with a single motion yanked them off. I don't think he had taken a good look at my tights the night before, because now he gazed at them in open-mouthed wonder for a moment and then started to laugh.

I got up and led him to the door.

"You wait outside until I dress," I commanded, and shut the door. After a survey of the stateroom, I discovered that the only clothing I did not have on was my shoes. After I had put my feet in those, I was completely dressed. Not that the result would have passed muster as a morning costume on Broadway, but it was the best I could do with the facilities at hand. The costume seemed even more inadequate in daylight than it had the previous evening. Sunlight is more searching, I find, than the brightest footlights.

The sailor led me up on deck. I hope I never have to appear before another audience like the crew of the *Shandon Belle*. They seemed to sense that something unusual was about to occur, and the idle ones were carelessly gathered near the companionway through which I made my exit. I think I satisfied their wildest expectations. A stupefied silence was succeeded by wild yells and appreciative laughter. Most of the sailors were brown men. They wore very little clothing—a pair of trousers here, a kilt there. A few were white men, the riffraff of the seafaring world, the kind of men I had read about in Stevenson's novels but never expected to meet face to face.

THE Captain's cabin was up forward just back of the chart-room. The Captain was shaving when we entered. As he wore a full set of chinchillas, all he shaved was a small spot on each cheek. His back was turned to the door as I entered, but he caught sight of me in the mirror and cut himself when he started to laugh.

He turned and surveyed me critically.

"I was afraid you were too good to be true," he murmured with admiration. "I had to have a look at you as soon as it was daylight, for fear you looked funny last night just on account of those New Orleans gin fizzes I had. But honest, I think I appreciate you more when I'm sober. Anything you want you have but to ask for."

"Then," I said eagerly, "what I ask for first is a pair of pants."

An expression of pain crossed the features of the Captain.

"Why," he exclaimed, "did you have to ask for the one thing I can't give you? Your value to me ceases when you are fully dressed."

I reflected bitterly and said: "If I can't have clothes, then give me breakfast."

"Aye, aye, sir," responded the Captain heartily, and then shouted through an open door which led to another apartment: "Joe, make hurry. Cook breakfast two times."

A pleasant voice answered, "Aye, aye, sir."

The Captain finished his shaving and led the way into a private dining-salon adjacent to his cabin.

It was tiny but comfortably furnished and, like everything else on this surprising vessel, remarkably clean.

My ill humor gradually melted with the appearance and disappearance of food. My other emotions were supplemented temporarily by curiosity. I was committed to the voyage and no harm seemed intended me, and so I was free to speculate upon our ultimate destination. "Now, Captain—" I halted over his name, looking at him inquiringly.

"Captain Corbett," he supplied.

"Captain Corbett," I went on, "suppose you give me an explanation of why you have run the risk of a penitentiary sentence merely to acquire the pleasure of my society."

"Well, you see, son, the reason I kind of took a fancy to you was because you've got the durndest funniest—"

"I know what I've got," I interrupted him. "I heard you when you said it the first time last night, but that's no reason why you should want me as a sailor on board this old tramp."

"Old tramp!" The Captain bristled with indignation. "Young man, have you any idea what this vessel is?"

"No, but I'll guess. Is it one of Columbus' caravels—or is this the ship Dr. Cook used to write his lectures in?"

"This vessel is *H. M. S. Shandon Belle,* and is the entire royal navy of the kingdom of Tamaloa."

I tried to look impressed. "Oh!" I said.

"Ever heard of Tamaloa?" the Captain asked.

My knowledge of geography is rather vague. "I must have heard of it," I stammered, "but I can't just seem to place it."

THE Captain drank a second cup of coffee at a gulp and polished off his whiskers with a napkin before he replied. "Tamaloa is one of the islands out in the ocean between here and Australia. Some people think it belongs to Great Britain, but King George don't bother about it much, and the real ruler is King Kandavu. The reason he is king is because he's the only man on the island who owns a plug hat. It was given him by a missionary who claims he converted him. I don't know about the truth of what the missionary says, because he disappeared, soon after, no one knows where."

The Captain meditated the mystery a moment and murmured a fragment of his thoughts: "The natives aint been cannibals for fifty years, as far as anybody knows, either."

"All very interesting," I commented politely, "but I can't see how that accounts for breaking up the performance of 'The Pink Widow' and trying to make a sailor out of me."

"That's the second time you said something about making a sailor out of you. Nobody said anything about making you a sailor." Captain Corbett looked critically at my figure. "I don't think it would be humanly possible to make a foremast-hand out of you. That aint the purpose of this expedition whatever. If you'll just sit patient a minute I'll tell you my story, and you'll see where you come in.

"I used to be part owner of this here boat, the *Shandon Belle,* which we run as a freighter among the islands in the South Pacific, picking up a cargo of bananas or copra wherever we could and bringing them in to the States. A couple of years ago I run across a load of pearl-shells at the island of Tamaloa. It was a rich cargo, and my company made a bunch of coin from it. I went back, and for a long time King Kandavu treated me pretty white. He was mighty wise for a savage, and he got to asking questions about how much his pearl-shells was worth in the States. I told him some of the truth, and he sort of figured that he could make more money if he had a boat and handled his own export trade. He asked me how much it would cost to buy the *Shandon Belle.* I told him a figure high enough to make my share plenty to keep me the rest of my life.

"I didn't take old Kandavu seriously even when he said he'd buy her. But the old boy brung out the darndest cargo of gold you ever laid your eyes on. A lot of it was French money, and some English and German. The dates of some of them coins was nearly two hundred years back. That's about the time them islands was discovered by white men. I couldn't back down on my bargain, so the *Shandon Belle* became the property of King Kandavu. He hired me to run her and pays me more than my share of the profits ever was before I sold her. Do you see?"

I did.

SO the Captain continued: "Because the King treated me so fair I tried to do all I could for him. One voyage I brought him a phonograph with a lot of comical records, and another time I made him a present of a bunch of them comic picture-books by the artists who draw supplements to the Sunday papers.

"It was a mistake.

"The King laughed himself sick and told me to bring him some more. Well, last time I got hold of all the funny pictures I could find. They amused him for about two days, and then he begun to get restless. He felt like he was being cheated out of part of his life. He was sure there was something over here in the States he was missing. From the pictures and the songs on the phonograph he's got an idea that most Americans has got funny red noses and spend their time playing jokes on each other.

"I tried to explain to the King that Americans were just the same as him, only most of them wore pants. But he's an obstinate mule and he gets sulky. When I saw him begin to pout, I knew I was up against it and come back this time for some distinct novelty to amuse the old bear with. Instead of

going to 'Frisco, like we usually do, we slipped in through the Panama Canal and landed our freight at New Orleans. I picked up a cargo I'd ordered sent there from Kansas City. It's almost entirely things to amuse Old Kandy with. There's plunder down here under our hatches to fill out a full-sized department store and two or three theaters besides. But I didn't feel safe until I saw you, and then I knew my troubles was over." The Captain paused as if he expected me to applaud his cleverness.

I didn't.

"Humph," I retorted. "My job is to be the continuous comic supplement of the King, is it? What if I refuse to be funny?"

The Captain laughed. "You can't," he said, and glanced at my feet.

"I know," I replied bitterly. "That's what every dramatic critic from New York to San Francisco says, but I'm going to prove you're all wrong. How can a man be funny when he isn't happy?"

Captain Corbett interrupted me: "You'll be happy, son. This King is a regular fellow. You'll be better treated than you ever have been before in your life."

"That isn't it, exactly," I explained. "Think what I'm leaving behind in America. Do you know how much salary I was getting?"

"No. How much?"

"Seven hundred and fifty dollars a week."

"Well, King Kandavu will double that."

"It isn't only a question of salary."

"Oh," the Captain reflected, "some woman, then, eh? Are you married?" He answered himself. "No, of course you're not, or else you wouldn't mind so much being taken away."

"I didn't say it was any woman."

"I know you didn't, but *I* did. Which one is it—the tall, husky blonde, who sings, or the little runt with the big black eyes, who dances?"

I must have blushed at his description of Beautiful, because he laughed.

"Oh, she's the one." Captain Corbett jumped upon the damning fact alertly. "Well, there's no accounting for tastes. I would have picked the big one myself. There's more meat to her. Are you engaged to her?"

"No," I replied sullenly, "I'm not."

"And you mean it's none of my business, too, don't you? Well, rightly speaking, it aint, but I like to see everybody around me happy. If I'd only known this sooner, I'd have brought her along too."

"I'm glad you didn't know it, then," I hastened to assure him. "If you had, we would have all been sorry. Because, believe me, Ethel Sardam has got some temper."

"Sardam," the Captain repeated. "So that's her name. I must remember it."

I had cause later to regret the slip of my tongue that led me to mention Ethel's name to Captain Corbett, but then it seemed a casual enough utterance.

WE left the river that afternoon and began our voyage across the sunlit Gulf of Mexico. Aside from the fact that I was an unwilling passenger, there were no unpleasant features about the voyage. We had beautiful weather for the ten days it took us to reach Panama.

I had the freedom of the ship. The meals were good, and there were no duties as yet attached to my position as comic supplement.

I roamed at will over the decks of the freighter. She was a large ship for her class, although not nearly so big as the ocean-going liners I had traveled on between New York and Europe. Fore and aft she carried a couple of small cannon. These were for saluting purposes, the Captain told me.

The crew were a good-natured lot of men, and after I got used to the semi-savage appearance of the brown men, I could see that some of them were good-looking fellows. They were all well formed, well built, and their skins were as clear as a European's, although much darker, of course.

The first mate, Bill Hopper, the one who had accompanied the Captain on his kidnaping expedition, was a white man. So was Roderick McClosky, the chief engineer. The second mate, a Kanaka, had a name which I have for-

gotten. Everybody called him "Slicer," a nickname which I afterwards learned came from his skill with the long-bladed kris.

After a few days I convinced the Captain that if I wore my costume continually during the voyage it would not be presentable when I reached Tamaloa, and he finally outfitted me with some nondescript clothing from the slop-chest of the *Shandon Belle*. As we were now in the tropical zone, the need of clothes, except for protection from the sun, was very slight. A pair of white trousers, such as some of the crew wore, a loose shirt and sandals, woven from grass, made me perfectly comfortable.

As I grew more friendly with the Captain, or rather as I began to forget the injury he had done me, we discussed more and more his problem of furnishing the King with amusement.

One day I asked him what he had meant when he said that his cargo this time was a complete outfit for a couple of department stores.

"What have you got on board?" I inquired.

"I can't begin to remember," the Captain replied. "I will tell you how I ordered it. I was afraid I would forget something we would need, so I took the catalogue of one of these big mail-order companies, and I told them to give me enough of everything in it to last a town for a year. There seemed to be an awful lot of it."

"Have you got one of those catalogues?" I asked.

"Sure," he replied, and led the way to his cabin. "I've got one in my desk. Maybe you better look it over. It might suggest some ideas to you."

I took the bulky volume and sat in the shade on deck all day, absorbing a partial list of the contents of the vessel under my feet.

THAT catalogue was the most complete enumeration of human needs that I ever looked upon. Everything was mentioned in it, from ladies' underwear to steam boilers. I asked the Captain about some of the items.

"It says in the catalogue that they sell taxicabs. You didn't by any chance order any of those, did you?"

"I did if they are in the book," the Captain replied. "There's an awful lot of boxes labeled 'Machinery' in the hold. I wouldn't be surprised if some of those was Texas crabs."

I turned over the pages of the book. "How about this complete electric-lighting equipment," I inquired, putting my finger on page 1185.

"We've got it."

"And these brass-band instruments?" I asked confidently. "You got those, of course."

"Sure. Kandavu loves music."

"But," I expostulated, "who's going to play them?"

"That's easy. I've got instruction-books to go with each instrument. They guarantee anybody can learn to play them in two weeks. Of course, the first two weeks while the King's band is learning are going to be sort of terrible, but after that everybody is going to be sorry for what they thought of them when they were practicing. I can just picture the scene on a Sunday evening, the band-stand in the park—"

"The park?" I interrupted him. "Have you got a park?"

"No, but we're going to have. What you want to do is to let your imagination have more play, my boy. All that is necessary is to suggest a thing to King Kandavu, and it's as good as done."

CHAPTER IV

IN the course of time we reached Panama. Although we were perfectly friendly, the Captain took the precaution of locking me in my room while we coaled, because, as he put it, I might get homesick if I saw a good chance to leave.

The next time I was allowed on deck we were in the Pacific, headed southwest, into an endless rolling expanse of sunlit green topped with a blazing sky of blue. It was so hot that we stirred about on deck very little and then only because of necessity. I was sorry for McClosky down in the engine-room. I was sorrier still for the poor stokers who fed the insatiable boilers. The

Captain told me my sympathy was wasted there, because a few degrees of heat outside would not change the temperature of the boiler-room appreciably.

The second day out from Panama I noticed a strange flag flying from our masthead. It was green, with a gold star on the middle of it. I asked the Captain about it.

"It's the flag of Tamaloa," he explained. "I designed it myself. Rather pretty, don't you think?"

"Yes," I assented, "but why didn't you fly it before? I thought you sailed under the American flag?"

"I do when I'm in American waters. You see, the flag of Tamaloa aint exactly recognized by most of the foreign nations. So to save trouble I'm still registered as an American ship, but out of sight of land I raise the banner of Tamaloa."

I pondered his explanation for a moment. "Then," I concluded, "when you fly this flag you are practically pirates, aren't you?"

"Some people might say so, but pirates is as pirates does, and we would hardly think of robbing people—at least not often."

The suggestion of piracy put a new angle on my adventures. I wondered if that accounted for the high-handed method of Captain Corbett and his mate when they had yanked me from the stage so unceremoniously.

Tripping across the Pacific is no child's play, especially in the vicinity of the equator. Anybody who chooses to be a sailor on the Pacific must be fond of water. I lost all track of days and weeks, and if I hadn't had that mail-order catalogue to read, I would probably have gone mad with boredom.

ONE morning my worst suspicions of piracy received a terrifying confirmation. I was sleeping peacefully when suddenly the vessel shook, and the deep boom of the cannon brought me to an upright position in my berth. I found myself awake some seconds after I got up. The first shot was answered by a second—then after a short interval by two more.

I looked about for my clothes to go on deck, but I couldn't find my trousers.

The firing continued, distinctly vibrant. I was not exactly frightened, as I had been used to artillery when at West Point. But a cannon fired in earnest was a new experience to me, and I did not care to go down shut in my stateroom if the ship sank. I preferred to take a chance on deck.

High and low I searched for my trousers. Nothing doing! Every dud of sane clothing had been abstracted from my room while I slept. All that was left was the absurd costume from "The Pink Widow." Rather than die below decks, I put it on and hurried out.

The firing had ceased suddenly, and I hardly knew what to expect. Maybe we had sunk some innocent merchantman, or possibly we ourselves had surrendered to the warship of one of the powers.

At any rate I expected the deck to be strewn with the mangled corpses of our crew.

As I climbed the stairs there was a hearty cheer on deck, answered by another from a distance.

I stepped out into the air. There wasn't a corpse in sight. The crew lined the rail, waving hands and detachable pieces of clothing.

I climbed the ladder leading to the bridge to get a better view of what they were waving at. I nearly lost my balance in astonishment.

Not five hundred yards away was land, and on the beach were hundreds of people, waving and cheering over our arrival. I climbed on, up to the bridge. "What's the excitement, Cap'?" I demanded.

"We're here," Captain Corbett returned. "That is Tamaloa."

"But why all the artillery?"

The Captain laughed. "That was just the royal salute of twenty-one guns. I always do that when I come into harbor. It tickles old Kandavu almost to death."

The Captain and I disagreed as to how I should make my entrance before the King. He was in favor of putting me in a box and carrying me in just

the way I appeared on the stage in "The Pink Widow." I had ideas of my own on the subject, however, and finally prevailed upon him to let me try my scheme.

IN pursuance of this plan I went ashore with the rest of the crew, in no way conspicuous from the others except by my personal peculiarities.

It seems that the custom is, on making the home port, for the Captain to report to the King. He is usually accompanied by all of the crew except the dog-watch, left on board for an emergency.

I went ashore in the Captain's boat. He was greeted with a cheer as he set his foot on land. Apparently my kidnaper was a popular personage.

The inhabitants of the island assembled on the beach were very similar in appearance to the men of our crew, save that they wore even less clothing. In general, the men were better looking than the women, as the latter were without exception too fat and most of them looked old. I believe this is quite common in tropical countries. The women mature early and become aged at a time when our girls at home are just beginning to grow up. Most of the clothing that was worn was brightly colored, and consisted chiefly of bandanna handkerchiefs, and girdles and kilts made of figured calico. Shoes were apparently considered superfluous.

Captain Corbett spoke a few words to the crowd in a sort of pidgin English which I did not entirely understand and then went up the beach toward a collection of huts built on bamboo poles, with ladders leading up to the front doors.

I followed with the men, walking, as it happened, beside Bill Hopper, the tall mate. On our way we met a sort of a palanquin carried by two stalwart natives which was headed in the opposite direction. Seated listlessly in this conveyance was a young native girl. She was a mere child of thirteen or fourteen, but for a youngster was rather striking in appearance.

The first thing I noticed was the fact that she was fully dressed, which distinguished her from the others. She wore both halves of a suit of pink-silk pajamas. Her color was a trifle lighter than most of the natives, being a rich cream rather than brown, and the skin on her neck and face was like velvet. Her black hair, unlike that of the other women, was unornamented and piled European-fashion on top of her head. The entire attitude of this old young person seemed one of languorous abandon. She lay back at ease and gazed at the world through half-closed eyelids, while she smoked a cigarette.

I stood still in admiration.

"By George," I exclaimed, "but that's a pretty little girl. It's a shame that if she lives in this climate, in six or seven years she'll be old and fat like all the rest of them."

The mate did not reply.

The girl in the litter spoke a single word in the native tongue to her bearers. They halted.

FOR a space of ten seconds she sat looking me over coolly, contemptuously, from head to foot. Never for an instant did her eyelid flicker or the corner of her mouth turn up with amusement.

"The pretty little girl thanks you for the compliment," she said in excellent English, "and is sorry she does not find you attractive even in your youth."

At a word from her the bearers went on again.

She was quite out of earshot before I even dared to move. I turned to Bill and looked up at him. "Who is she?"

"The King's daughter," Bill replied laconically.

"But the English," I began.

"There's a missionary on the island. He taught her."

"It's lucky she's only a little girl or I might have offended her more."

"She aint very little. Over here they marry at twelve." Bill was not wasting many words to make me feel comfortable.

We walked on glumly after the others. I hoped earnestly that I had not offended the little princess beyond apology, but I feared it might be a long

time before I should be able to square myself with her. While I was still meditating on what I could do to placate her, we arrived at the King's palace.

You could tell it was a palace in a minute, because it was at least twice as large as the other huts around it, and over it on a bamboo pole flew the green flag of Tamaloa.

Captain Corbett climbed the ladder that led to the front door. On the top rung he bowed, an operation which nearly broke the ladder, and entered on his hands and knees. Personally I couldn't see what use King Kandavu would have for a comedian while the Captain was about.

Meanwhile the rest of us stood around outside—waiting, as Bill informed me, for the King to make a speech to his crew according to his custom. The morning sun had been up long enough by this time to make the waiting very sultry. The air seemed like warm water, heavy and unbreathable.

After I had sweltered long enough so I didn't care what happened to me anyway, and had pessimistically decided that I was probably due to be garroted for insulting the Princess, the King appeared.

KING KANDAVU was one of the finest looking old men I ever set my eyes on. He was so big that he completely filled the doorway of the palace. Like his daughter, his skin was lighter than most of the natives. In his eye was a look of childish eagerness. The Captain had told me that the King was over sixty, which is old age in the tropics, but his eye gave an appearance of youth that made me doubt the veracity of the Captain.

The King was dressed in his royal robe, which was about the size of a handkerchief, worn kilt fashion. In addition, his costume included the royal silk hat, the emblem of his kingship.

The King smiled down into the faces of his men: "Sailor mans of Tamaloa, I, Kandavu, say plenty much welcome back home. Kapetini Kaybit make talk about much good trip. Thank you. Kapetini say you bring plenty nice things from—"

The King halted in the midst of his speech. His eye in roving over the assembly had lighted on my unfamiliar face and figure. Apparently the surprise robbed him of the power of speech. He started to say something, was interrupted by his grin and finally gave way and laughed heartily.

Throwing aside the official dignity without more ado, the King turned around and backed down the ladder like a child eager to explore the contents of his Christmas stocking. He came to me, still laughing.

"How you do, Donal' Daniel'," he exclaimed, holding out his hand.

I took it wonderingly. The Captain had managed to get down the ladder and join us by this time. "Did you tell him my name?" I asked, turning to Corbett.

"No, I didn't even tell him you were with us yet."

"I show how I know name," the King interrupted. "Come."

HE took us each by the hand and raced away joyously to a tent or marquee which stood apart from the huts in a spot that commanded a view of the ocean. The walls of the tent were rolled up so that the interior was open to any breeze that might wander by. It was generously large and had a wooden floor on which stood a strange assortment of the Grand Rapids brand of furniture, mixed in with home-made conveniences such as bamboo stools, native pottery and drapery improvised from remnants of calico. At one end of the floor was a huge chair draped in the prevailing red, which was obviously a sort of throne. Exactly opposite and facing the throne stood a cabinet-style talking-machine. A library table stood between it and the throne. The table was strewn with New York newspapers and books of cartoons.

King Kandavu led the way directly to the table and opened one of the newspapers. He pointed to a full-length picture on the dramatic page.

The Captain and I looked eagerly over the King's shoulder. The picture was of me in the costume I had on, and

under it was my name, with a little note to the effect that I was playing with "The Pink Widow" company.

"I laughed 'most till I cry when I see that picture," said Kandavu. "But this picture not one-half so funny as you are, Missi Daniel'."

He led me to the throne and directed me to sit on a stool at his feet. The Captain was dismissed, and the King began to question me about America.

It's hard to believe that an old king off there in the South Pacific had just as much information about what was going on in New York as the average loafer in front of the Cadillac Hotel, but he did. Of course his data were about four months old, as it took that long, generally, for Captain Corbett to deliver the papers, but what the King lacked in up-to-dateness he made up in the completeness of his knowledge. There was a man who had just been hungering for entertainment all his life, and he had had to take it out in reading about things that were going on in a town ten thousand miles away. He knew who was playing in the Ziegfeld Follies last year, and he had heard how much Gaby Deslys received for her engagement at the Winter Garden.

Of course he knew a lot of things that weren't true. For one thing, he thought that the tango was a disease, until I showed him how to dance it to music played on the phonograph. He also thought Mr. Erlanger was king of America. I suppose he got that idea from reading the theatrical gossip. Even in the United States there are a number of people in the show business who think pretty nearly the same about him.

The more I talked with the old King, the more I got to like him. Evidently he liked me too. I could see a lot of ways I could make life pleasant for him as long as I stayed, which I calculated would be until I could flag a passing steamship. In the meantime I might as well make the best of my forced sojourn on the island and give the old Kandavu the time of his life.

I WAS in the midst of these happy reflections when my optimism was suddenly dashed to the ground by the appearance of the Princess. Her litter drew up alongside the tent, and she got out languidly and came over to her father, who put his arm around her affectionately. I could see, now that she stood upright, that she was taller than I had first thought. Her figure was very slender, however, and so girlish and graceful that she seemed tiny.

The King introduced me.

"Missi Daniel', my only child, Princess Vililiti—"

She nodded her head negligently. "I have heard of Mr. Daniels." I afterwards learned that it was she who read the papers to her father. "How are your friends, *Mr. Mutt* and *Mr. Jeff* and *Captain Katzenjammer?*" she inquired with chilling composure. Then she turned to her father and lowered her voice slightly, but not so that I could not hear perfectly distinctly. "It's too bad, Father, that he has legs like pieces of bamboo. I wonder if all Americans are as ugly and weak looking as he is."

The King seemed to sense that there was some sort of a feud on between his daughter and myself, and he tried to quiet her.

"But Father," she protested, "he is ugly and he is weak. He is not strong enough to conquer even a child."

She turned away contemptuously and left the tent.

I must confess that I was glad to see her go. It is rather unpleasant to admit that a mere child like that could make me feel so ill at ease. I never considered myself as a Samson for strength, but at that you know I had been physically competent to enter West Point, and I had had enough football training in the early days to be a fair hand in a rough-and-tumble fight.

I suppose the Princess merely desired to get back at me for what I had said about her when we first met. She succeeded. She accomplished more even than that. She got me so mad that I couldn't keep my mind on the conversation with the King. We talked for a while longer, but I could see that I was losing my audience, and in the course of half an hour the King went to sleep sitting up on the throne.

I wondered what I had better do. Would it be etiquette to shake a royal person by the shoulder and tell him he was snoring, or ought one to pretend not to notice it? Several attendants had been waiting just outside the tent at a respectful distance to obey His Majesty's pleasure. I looked about to see if they had noticed the King's lapse from royal dignity. Each and every one of them had followed the example of their august ruler and in various attitudes had passed into a deep slumber. It made me think of "The Sleeping Beauty" as it would be done by Williams and Walker.

The midday siesta I recollected is a custom of tropical countries.

There seemed to be nothing further for me to do, and as I had not yet acquired the habit of sleeping in the daytime, I tiptoed out of the tent to look for the Captain.

CHAPTER V

I STARTED in the general direction of the ship but found walking on the beach too hot for comfort and struck inland a few hundred yards or so in order to take advantage of the shade of the trees. Just beyond the last hut of the village I discovered the greatest natural asset of the island of Tamaloa. It is a big crystal-clear pool of water, nearly round and about a hundred yards in diameter.

I stood on the grass enjoying the cool look of it, when suddenly without any warning a strong arm was thrown around my neck, a knee was planted in my back and I was hurled unceremoniously to the ground. Thanks to the grass, I was not jarred as much as I might have been.

When I started to get up I felt that some one was sitting on my chest.

It was the Princess.

She removed her cigarette.

"I thought I could do it," she said.

"Do what?" I asked.

"What I just did," she explained, "—throw you. I wanted to make sure that I hadn't called you names unfairly. If I wasn't able to whip you myself, I would have taken back what I said."

She got up unconcernedly, and I followed suit rather stiffly from the jolt of my fall.

She eyed me coolly.

"Maybe," she said, calculating my height and weight mentally, "maybe it wasn't quite fair for me to come up in back of you that way when you weren't ready. I suppose by right I ought to throw you when you are looking. I guess I will." She tossed her cigarette to one side. "Are you ready now?"

My pose of defensive inaction was a mistake. The slender young whirlwind made a quick rush at me, and as I leaned forward to meet the attack, she laughed, dived low, grabbed both of my legs below the knees and threw me neatly forward on my face by removing my supports.

I bumped my nose forcibly on the ground. Unfortunately for a nature otherwise strongly addicted to peace, a tap on the nose always arouses in me a desire to fight. At school I never used to get mad no matter how much I was teased, until somebody punched my nose. The boys found this out, and after that the only way I could keep from a daily fight was to wear a nose-guard.

I rolled over and scrambled to my feet hastily. The girl laughed. She stopped suddenly when she saw my face.

"What? Do you want some more?" she cooed tauntingly. "All right."

THIS time I blocked any attempt on her part to throw me off my balance by crouching low and bracing my feet wide apart. In a moment she was upon me. I managed to grab her around the waist and bend her sideways so that she could not get her arm under my chin, as she seemed bent on doing.

I exerted all my strength, twisting her sideways. All at once the resistance ceased, and before I knew it she had turned a somersault, using my arm as a pivot and my strength as a motive power. Before I quite realized that she was on the other side of me, she had me by the neck and had pinned one arm in back of me.

Straining and struggling to throw off the grip that was choking me, I

managed to get my free hand under her knee and lifted her off the ground.

An unforeseen event prevented me from throwing her over my head as I intended. The rough treatment proved too much for the little lady's hairpins. They went off duty all at once, and a mass of brown hair fell over her shoulders and mine and got into my eyes so that I could not see what I was doing.

The momentary respite was all she needed. She slipped from my grip somehow and kicked me sharply in back of the knees so that we rolled to the ground together.

I managed to land on top, but when I tried to pin her down, she twisted her wiry body in my arms and got a fresh grip around my waist that I was powerless to dislodge.

Panting, we paused for breath. The girl laughed joyfully with the glee of combat.

"It's hot, isn't it?" she asked impartially.

"It is," I answered grimly, making a futile attempt to get to my knees.

That girl's muscles must have been steel wire. She couldn't have been as heavy as I, by twenty-five pounds anyway, and yet she held me. I remember that, as I stood there gripping that feminine volcano tightly in my arms, I planned on writing to Lucy Page Gaston in the States that cigarette-smoking is apparently not so bad for athletes as she thinks it is.

WHILE I was thinking such irrelevant thoughts as that, and wondering how long before she would be tired, a sudden heave under my left side threw me over on my back. The fight was on again. Not caring to gaze up at the sky, I kept on rolling until I was on all fours again. Not alone, of course; the Princess was a faithful attachment.

I wouldn't have minded the wild scramble which followed if I had been sure whose clothing was tearing. I heard the ripping sounds, but not being free to locate the sources, all I could do was hope for the best.

Over and over we rolled, a tangle of legs, arms and long hair. For skill, persistence and sheer muscle I believe she had all the best of it. I had superior weight. I don't think that otherwise I would have had a chance.

As it was, the result was inevitable. By carefully planning my moves I managed finally to get my feet again. Still the Princess hung on, choking me with a stranglehold. Things were beginning to get black before my eyes. I was staggering. I gathered all my strength for a final effort, tore her arms from my neck and threw her from me.

There was a loud splash.

I had thrown her in the pool. The surface of the water was covered with ripples, but the Princess was not in sight.

I waited a few anxious seconds, but she did not appear.

What had I done? I, a full-grown man, had thrown a child into a deep pool of water. Probably she was drowning.

I swim very little and only with great effort. I knew I could not save her, but I at least had to make the trial.

So I plunged in.

The water was cool and bracing. If I had not been so anxious over the fate of my late opponent, I should have enjoyed the sensation. I struck out boldly for the center of the pool, knowing that I could not swim far enough to get there and back. I was winded before I started, and that made my endurance even less.

I had gone nearly as far as I could and had seen no sign of the Princess, when my wildly threshing legs were grasped from below and I was drawn sputtering beneath the surface.

My breath departed in bubbles; the

clear water closed over my head and I went to a calm, peaceful rest.

WHEN next I gazed upon the world I was on the grass once more beside the pool, and over me bent the Princess anxiously. Her eyes, which had seemed so contemptuous before, were now filled with girlish concern and tenderness.

My lungs hurt when I breathed. I don't wonder. I have since seen the South Sea Island method of reviving drowned persons.

At last the Princess seemed satisfied that I was safe, and she smiled.

"Good!" she exclaimed. "You'll feel better soon."

She sat down a short distance away to await the return of my powers of speech. Her clothing, like mine, was wringing wet and clung to her slender figure like a porous plaster—save in the places where it was torn. One arm of the pajama coat had been ripped off during our struggle, and the trousers were torn over her knee.

"I'm sorry I tore your clothes," I managed to gasp at last.

She was knotting up her hair carelessly on top of her head. The lithe, sinewy grace of her struck me anew as she paused, arms over head, to smile at me.

"That's all right. I tore yours too."

I forbore to ask where.

"I take back what I said," she apologized. "I can't whip you on land. In the pool I took an advantage of you. You are not used to fighting in the water, are you?"

"Fighting in the water?" I repeated. "What do you mean?"

"Don't you fight in the water?" she asked. "Then what did you come into the pool after me for?"

"Why," I explained, "I thought I had drowned you."

"Thought I was drowned?" The girl laughed long and loud. The exhibit would have interested any collector of pearls. "I've spent more hours in there than I have on dry land."

She stretched her bare brown arm toward the crystal pool with an air of proprietorship.

"But,"—a sudden thought struck her,—"what did you expect to do? You don't swim very well."

"I know it," I admitted miserably. "I never could learn."

"Yet you followed me."

"I had to," I said, not knowing how to explain the attitude of the Anglo-Saxon man toward women and children.

I could see that the point of view was a novel one to her. Her eye lighted up with appreciation.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "I take back again what I said. You are braver than I am, even in the water."

Moved by some childish impulse, she came over and touched my cheek.

"You shall be my friend, Donald Daniels," she said softly. Then she added with a smile: "We will try wrestling again. Maybe, once in a while, I can beat you—but not often; I don't want to."

"Thank you," I said, wondering why I was beginning to like this rough little imp of Satan. I had never cared much for children before. "I should like to be your friend, Princess Vililiti."

"You may call me Bill," she suggested with engaging camaraderie. "Father does."

"All right, Princess Bill."

She laughed joyously. "And I will call you—let's see—what?" She looked me over appraisingly. "I will call you Pudgy—that's on account of your legs. Now we are friends." She stood up. "While you are getting your strength back, I think I will finish my swim."

She stretched her arms lazily above her head and then with a single swift movement in some magic way wriggled out of her scanty clothing and stood a bare, brown little elf on the brink of the pool.

She smiled over her shoulder at me.

"I'll be back in a minute. Wait for me." Then she dived.

I disobeyed her orders.

With a sudden strength I did not imagine I had left, I found my feet and beat a retreat through the forest.

A fairly well brought-up young man, even an actor, finds it difficult to adjust himself instantly to the customs of another race without blushing, especially if that other race is only semi-civilized.

I had to have time to grow used to the bathing-suits of the children of Tamaloa.

Mentally I made a resolution to practice swimming, every chance I got, until I got to be at least as handy in the water as a mud-turtle.

CHAPTER VI

AT DINNER that noon I met the Reverend Gilbert Quackenbush, who represented the Church of England on the island and by virtue of weekly services kept up the legend that Tamaloa was a converted community.

He was a broad, pompous man with opinions that would remain unshaken through earthquakes.

He regarded me kindly. "I have known a number of the members of your profession in England. I once had the honor of taking tea with Sir Henry Irving."

The food served at the palace consisted chiefly of boiled grains and native fruits served in compotes. We ate at a table, which was a large concession to European customs, as the native habit is to sit on the floor around a kettle from which everyone helps himself.

Princess Bill presided indolently at her father's board and smoked incessantly during the meal. The missionary sat at her right, and I had the position of secondary honor at her left. From time to time Mr. Quackenbush made a suggestion in an undertone to the Princess, which she always carried out without question. I could plainly see that it was owing to him that she had a veneer of civilized manners.

The King allowed me to eat in peace, because he was absorbed in the glowing account Captain Corbett was giving him of the cargo of the *Shandon Belle.* The monarch could hardly wait to begin a personal investigation of the wonders contained in the vessel's hold, and he rushed through his dinner like a small boy on circus day.

After dinner the missionary and I walked over to the tiny structure he called a chapel, where he daily instructed the young savages in civilized arts and on Sunday conducted a service with a handful of regenerates—who were not quite sure what it was all about but were powerful willing.

"Princess Vililiti," he volunteered, "is my most astonishing pupil. She speaks English as well as anyone and reads and writes intelligently."

I expressed my amazement.

"I presume the only way to account for such truly remarkable progress in education is to attribute it to her English ancestry."

"English ancestry?" I repeated. "What do you mean?"

The missionary sighed.

"One of my predecessors in this field forgot his high mission and fell in love with a woman of the royal family several generations ago. He was Princess Vililiti's grandfather."

"I see. That accounts for the light color of her skin."

"I feel an added responsibility for her on account of her connection with the Church," he continued, "although that connection, strictly speaking, is one the Church does not officially recognize. I have reared her as if she were my own daughter, cared for her tenderly and taught her everything that I know. The only branch in which she shows lack of application is religion. I fear that down deep she is not a Christian."

I laughed indulgently. Everybody seemed to take that female youngster too seriously. What she needed most of all was to be treated like other children of her own age, spanked occasionally and sent to bed.

I left the Reverend Quackenbush to his afternoon school and reported to the King to make myself useful or comic as occasion demanded.

CHAPTER VII

THAT afternoon they began unloading the *Shandon Belle,* one gang of men bringing the stuff ashore on rafts and another building a warehouse just up the beach in which to store it. I never saw a building put up so quickly. For one thing, they do not build very solidly in that region on

account of earthquakes. Another reason for speed was the fact that so many worked on the job, the women taking an equal hand with the men. The King stood around on the shore examining with childish glee his new possessions. Some of the most fascinating-looking packages he opened himself and would allow no other hand than his to touch. Soon the beach around him was strewn with paper and various articles, unfamiliar to him but everyday commonplaces back home.

He kept me by his side to explain the uses of things as he unpacked them. A pair of roller skates caught his fancy particularly, and he wanted to try them then and there on the sand of the beach. I explained that a hard floor of considerable extent was needed, and when I had finished my description of a modern roller-skating-rink from memory, he called up his boss carpenter and directed him to have such a building ready the following day.

The big brown fellow, whom I afterwards got to know as Peter, simply nodded at this amazing command and went on his way. A stage carpenter in the United States with Peter's willingness to execute impossible-sounding orders could make his fortune working for Ned Wayburn.

Unfortunately I could not do a thousand things at once, or before nightfall the King would have had an electric-light-plant installed and street-cars running up and down the beach.

The more I looked over the stock of raw materials Captain Corbett had provided, the stronger grew my resolution to carry out a tremendous plan forming in the back of my brain.

The more I thought of it, the more the idea appealed to me. Old King Kandavu was wild to spend a night on Broadway. He hadn't a chance of ever seeing New York City while he lived. Therefore I would give him a taste of Manhattan life right at home.

WITH this end in view I walked down the shady path between the huts of the village, and right in the center I marked a spot and had one of the natives dig a hole in which we placed a post ten feet high. On the top of it I nailed two crossed signboards. On the one pointing the long way of the street I lettered in black paint "Broadway." The one pointing crossways blossomed forth with the legend "Forty-second Street."

When I had finished, I stood in the street looking up at my handiwork with a thrill and took off my hat while I hummed softly to myself "Home, Sweet Home."

CHAPTER VIII

IT SEEMED as if I had only just dropped off to sleep when I was awakened by something tickling my nose. I tried to shoo it away, but it kept coming back; and finally I opened my eyes, determined to squash the darned bug.

Sitting on the footboard of my bed was Princess Bill, playfully wielding a long feather on the end of a light bamboo stick. She had on a spotless suit of white pajamas, unrelieved save for a red sash at the hips.

"Go away," I said, and turned over for another nap.

"You have to get up," the Princess commanded.

I brushed away the feather with one hand and opened a single eye so as not to get too wide awake.

"Does the King want me?" I asked.

"No, but the Princess does. You've got to get up and play with me now, because after Father wakes up he wont let you out of his sight all day long." She looked at me with pleading eyes. "If you knew how lonesome I get for somebody new to play with you'd come."

"All right. What shall we do?"

"We might go for a swim," she suggested.

"And then again we might not," I demurred, with a hasty recollection of the episode at the pool the day before.

"Then shall we go for a ride in a catamaran?"

"What is it—a bird or a fish?"

"Oh, didn't you ever see one? A catamaran is a kind of a boat, and we ride the breakers in it. It's nice in the early morning before the sun gets hot."

"What if I fall off?"

"I'll pick you up," she reassured.

I wasn't particularly charmed with the idea of a lungful of salt water for breakfast, but I could see that if life was to be bearable in Tamaloa I would have to be popular with the daughter of its ruler. So we rode the breakers in the catamaran.

A catamaran consists of two logs lashed parallel, with two cross-pieces holding them a certain distance apart, and a small sail on one of them.

I have since seen some that were constructed of two boats lashed together in that way, but this one of Princess Bill's was of the more primitive kind. The passengers sit astride the logs with utter disregard for any sharks who might care to nibble their feet and legs, which hang over. Of course, no self-respecting shark would have done more than look at my pins, but Princess Bill was taking terrible chances.

She seemed to delight in getting wet. She also seemed rather to like getting me wet. There was a good morning breeze blowing, and under her deft management we went out through the rough breakers and then zigzagged back and forth along the coast of the island. For a young girl of her age, she handled a boat remarkably well. I was constantly being surprised at the amount of knowledge both of a practical and literary nature that she had picked up in the few short years of her life.

"I'M going to be married this summer," she remarked apropos of nothing at all as we rode in a comparatively quiet spot.

"Married!" I echoed blankly. "Go on! You are just a kid. You don't want to think of getting married for ten years yet."

She laughed cynically. "You forget that in six or seven years I'll be old and fat like the rest of them."

She had evidently not forgotten my blunder. I sat silently wishing I were dead. There was nothing to do. Of course, what I had said about the native women was true.

Finally I broke the silence. "Whom are you going to marry, Princess?" I asked.

"Lalou, the war chief of Ateua. That's the next big island south of us."

"War chief?" I mused over the sinister sound of his title. "What does that mean?"

"The people of Ateua are very warlike and powerful. Openly they are supposed to be at peace with everybody, but we are so far from the English government of the islands that nobody knows just what happens. So most of the kings try to be friendly with Lalou, because it's better to be allied with the strong people than have them against you."

"So that's why you are to marry him." I bristled with indignation at the thought of the sacrifice of this child for the sake of peace. "Surely, you don't love Lalou."

The girl answered thoughtfully. "I thought I did—until yesterday."

I ignored the obvious interpretation of that remark. The absurdity of this infant talking about whom she did or did not love was ridiculous. It might be a matter of politics to marry off a youngster of that age, but to expect her to take the point of view of a grown woman was nonsense.

"Lalou is supposed to be the best catch in the Islands," the Princess explained, "and it is really a great compliment for him to want to marry me. Father is not really a very powerful king, and he is very lucky to be chosen for an alliance with Ateua. I suppose Lalou wanted me because I am part English. Did you know about my grandmother?"

"Yes, Mr. Quackenbush told me."

"He feels badly about it. I think he believes my grandmother deliberately planned to hurt the Church, when all she did was to love my grandfather so much that nothing else in the world mattered. The fact that his father was a missionary sort of accounts for my father's only having had one wife instead of four, as the Mohammedan rulers do. My mother was married to him in a church at the government island, and when she died, Father never took another wife."

"But Lalou," I questioned, "has he more than one wife?"

"Not yet," she replied, smiling. "I shall be number two. I'll bet his other wife will hate me. She needn't, though, because it wont be long until we both have to take a back seat for the next one."

The life of a woman in the Oriental tropics is a butterfly existence—a brief, brilliant period of beauty, then a swift, ugly decline.

I dismissed the thought from my mind.

"How about breakfast?" I suggested.

"I'm afraid it's ready, but I don't want to go in."

"What's the matter? A big, strong girl like you can't afford to miss any meals."

"I would rather have you than breakfast," she admitted frankly. "But Father will be furious. I guess we had better go home."

We beached the catamaran on the shore.

THE King was waiting for me.

While we were at breakfast, I outlined a portion of my plan to him, and he placed at my disposal the assistance of several hundred of his best workmen. After breakfast I set my men to work excavating on the corner of Forty-second Street and Broadway.

Down the street about a block from where I was working, Peter, the boss-carpenter, was putting up the skating-rink. The King spent his time like a shuttle between the two places, impatient for results, carrying a pair of skates in his hand. His daughter sat on the corner of Forty-second Street, trying to distract my attention.

Along towards the middle of the afternoon the King came running to me gleefully with the announcement that the skating-rink was finished and he was ready to learn to skate.

As I walked over to the rink, I had some misgivings. It might have been better if I had told the King that the skates were a new kind of weapon for hunting polar bears. I resolved then and there to be sparing of the truth in the future.

I was in for it now, though. King Kandavu was too impatient of temper to be put off with any subterfuge.

The rink was completed. A smooth, elliptical floor some hundred feet long by fifty wide had been laid, and over it was raised a thatched roof of palm-leaves such as was used for all the buildings in the island. The only way in which it differed perceptibly from the average roller-rink back home was in the fact that there were no sides to the building, and there were a great many supports in the middle of the floor to hold the roof up. Peter had found it impossible to eliminate them, in the only style of construction he was familiar with.

At the King's suggestion I tested the rink first to show him how to use it.

As it happened, I had been a pretty fair skater in the past, back home; so I put on the ball-bearing devices and spun around the floor quite easily. The King and Princess Bill were entranced and gazed in open-mouthed wonder as I swept past them. The floor was very good—almost too good, I feared.

I had only been around a half a dozen times or so when King Kandavu signified his intention of appearing on the floor.

I voiced my doubts diplomatically. "Hadn't you better wait until to-morrow, King?" I suggested. "Watch me awhile; then you can do it easier."

"No." He overruled my objection. "Do now. You can do. I can do. I am a king."

There was no disputing his last statement. Roller skates can't tell who is wearing them, however, and I doubted whether a king would have any more control over them than a washerwoman.

I strapped the skates on the bare royal feet and prayed inwardly when His Majesty stood up.

I BREATHED easier when he was securely seated on the floor once more, although he had attained that position with a jolt that shook some of the leaves off the roof.

I hurried to the King's side.

"Shall I take them off for you, Your Majesty?" I asked, kneeling at his feet.

"No," he roared. "Who dared to strike me from behind?"

I explained what had happened. A baleful but determined look flashed in the eye of King Kandavu.

The record of that afternoon should go down in history—not as often as the King did, but still it should go down.

Kandavu was the gamest king on skates I ever saw. If King George ever fell down as often as King Kandavu did, Queen Mary would be mending trousers for a week. King Kandavu had one advantage. He had nothing to rip. Trousers aren't much protection against splinters, anyway.

For a while the King had a good deal of trouble making his intentions clear to both of his feet at the same time. He'd get his right leg started off nicely in a northeasterly direction, and when he'd look around for his left leg, he'd find it going off by itself sort of southwest. Then of course he'd have to sit down for a moment in order to get his bearings. No matter what happened, the King always met his troubles sitting.

Presently a brilliant idea struck His Majesty. He ordered the villagers to get skates from the warehouse and use the rink. Some of the natives, who had seen the King practicing, silently crawled away on their hands and knees in the rear of the crowd, but enough were so pleased with the novelty of the thing that they did as they were told.

HAVING a number of people on the floor complicated matters. Even a beginner who is skating along fairly well is up against it when a sizable lady sits down on the floor directly in his path. The difficulties were increased in the neighborhood of the posts. Two ladies, formerly friends, would start for the same post determined to wrap themselves around it. Whichever one got there first would take a firm grip on the upright. The other lady, equally determined, would sail up with blood in her eye and possibly a little on her elbow, depending, of course, on where she landed last. Despite the fact that the post was occupied, the second lady would reach for it madly. She usually connected with the first occupant's features or hair. At this, one or the other of them would raise both feet simultaneously from the floor and kick her friend carelessly in the slats with her skates. Then she'd sit down. The effect was like two rifle shots followed by the explosion of a shotgun—thus: *"Crack, crack, boom."*

The King laughed until he got a stitch in his side. He refused to go home, however, until one sizable skater rammed the center-post so hard that the roof fell in.

Then the King reluctantly tore himself away and limped off to supper, after instructing his carpenter to have the building fixed in the morning.

CHAPTER IX

AFTER Princess Bill and I had effected a compromise in the matter of a bathing costume, we frequently went swimming in the crystal pool. She consented to wear exactly what I did and no more, and remembering what Annette Kellerman had once said to me about the absurdity of women's trying to swim in skirts, I did not oppose her.

In a pair of trunks and a shirt, the Princess looked almost exactly like a boy and swam a lot better than most youngsters. I say she looked something like a boy, but by that I don't mean that you would ever mistake her for one. You didn't have to come within ten feet of that girl with your eyes shut to know who it was. I have met only a few people like that; Mary Garden is one of them; Colonel Roosevelt is another.

She was so slim and strong, with only the slightest hint of a curve at the bosom and hips, and with creamy, satiny skin where the bathing-suit left off at neck and arms and legs, it was a pleasure to watch her dive cleanly from the bank and idle through the water with the sure grace of a trout in a mountain pool.

Personally my method of swimming had nothing of grace or sureness about it. Where the Princess scarcely left a ripple to betray her progress across the

still surface I managed to stir up every thimbleful of water in the entire pool, besides frightening the birds in the surrounding tree-tops with the racket I made.

But I was persistent, and I learned some things from the girl. For a while every time I dived I had to be brought ashore and bailed out, but in the course of time I got so I could hit the water with my head instead of my stomach.

Most of all, I learned to swim for a considerable distance. That was due partly to the superior endurance in every way I was acquiring from living constantly out of doors and trying to keep pace with Princess Bill's thirst for athletics.

WORK on the construction of a Broadway was progressing favorably. We were even building a theater. The Hotel Knickerbocker—three stories high, not counting the grill-room in the basement—was nearly completed on the corner of Broadway and Forty-second. In the next block, near Forty-third, another gang of men had erected a scaffolding for the "New Amsterdam Theater and Roof Garden."

I already had a traffic policeman stationed at the intersection of Broadway and Forty-second. There was no traffic yet, but he was there in case there should be any. He wore a blue helmet and had a star painted on him. It was the best we could do until the women had time to sew up a uniform. He offered to paint himself blue all over, but we compromised on the star.

The *Shandon Belle* had picked up a cargo and was off to the States again. Captain Corbett, with the beneficently mysterious air of a parent at Christmas-time, had promised to bring back something to surprise us.

My days were crammed to the utmost, carrying out my plans for transplanting metropolitan life to the tropics.

The King was absorbed for a week learning to skate, and so I had him off my mind and was free to devote my attention to building operations. Princess Bill was not so easily side-tracked, and she made the business of waking me up at the crack of dawn a regular and annoying habit. She claimed that by rousing me an hour before I would ordinarily get up, the time thus gained belonged to her. When I was foolish enough to contest this proposition, she proved it to me.

Therefore the first hour of my day was devoted to athletic exercises with the tireless heir to the throne. I found that she was hard to teach to box. That is an Anglo-Saxon form of fighting which does not appeal to savages. With the foils and broadsword she was handier, although she admitted that she thought golf clubs were the ideal weapons.

She was fascinated by my description of football as played in the United States, and to satisfy her I had to see if there was a football in the stock of goods from the States. There was. Almost before I knew it, Princess Bill had organized two teams and was playing a game which she thought was football, in a clearing back of the village. I promised to watch them practice soon, and tell them where they were wrong, but as yet I had been too busy.

The day I had set for the opening of the Hotel Knickerbocker was approaching, and I had to train my entire staff as well as the orchestra for that occasion. It was no small task, but the natives were wonderfully adaptable, and finally I had bell-boys, cloak-room boys and musicians all trained.

The work on the hotel progressed rapidly. Peter, the boss carpenter, was a brick. He seemed to get ideas as soon as I mentioned them to him. The Knickerbocker Building, as I had planned and Peter had carried out, was quite pretentious, and as far as we could possibly make it, modern in its conveniences.

The main floor was devoted to the office and parlors. The two floors above were divided into sleeping-rooms and suites. The basement, as I have said before, was the grill-room and contained also the electric-lighting-plant, which was run for the present with a gasoline engine.

At last Peter and I had done all we could; the furnishings were all in place; the cooks had been taught to make indigestible French pastry; and

the waiters had been instructed how to treat the guests with just the proper degree of insolence. I set the date for the opening of the hotel for the Saturday of that week, and notified the King. I told him to invite all the noble people of the neighboring islands. The King dispatched swift canoes in every direction with his royal commands. The guests were notified that they were expected to arrive at dusk and to stay over the next day.

Saturday was two days off. I spent the interval laying a plank road down Broadway as far as the palace and in making an electric sign to put over the skating-rink.

CHAPTER X

SATURDAY night, after I was sure that everything was ready, I went to the room I had picked out for myself in the hotel and put on evening clothes. They were ready-made, of course, and did not fit perfectly, but the total effect was not so bad, and I could see that I was due to startle the King 'most to death. Then I left Peter in charge of arrangements at the hotel and took a taxicab to the palace.

I had to drive the car myself. We had only managed to get it together that afternoon, and I had not had time to teach one of the natives how to run it. As I proceeded down Broadway, such of the inhabitants as happened to be abroad fell down on their knees and offered up a prayer for their lives to the strange steed with the gleaming eyes.

The King and Princess Bill were waiting when I drew up to the palace. I'll bet they were scared too at the motor, but neither of them batted an eyelash. They were thoroughbreds down to the ground, and royalty is royalty even in the South Sea Islands. It was dark, so I could not see them very distinctly, but I opened the door and invited them to sit inside.

In order not to frighten them, I drove very slowly back to the hotel. As soon as we started, the strains of "Alexander's Rag-time Band" came floating faintly on the night air. It sounded great, and I could have hugged every one of those dingy musicians for the thrill they put into it. There was an exclamation of delight from the royal couple.

"What a loud phonograph," said Princess Bill.

Neither she nor the King knew about the band.

Suddenly the street leaped into radiance. Peter had turned the current on the electric sign. The dynamo at the hotel would not furnish current enough yet to run the building and the sign at the same time, so I thought I'd give the King a treat as we went along.

There it stood, a great white hole in the tropic night, spelling in letters of lightning:

KNICKERBOCKER KOCKTAILS
KNOCKOUTS FOR KINGS

Kandavu and his daughter were speechless before the glare, as so many have been before in the light of the Grand Cañon of the Almighty Dollar.

I heard a sigh of content from the joy-loving monarch and an excited giggle from his daughter. Personally, I was even more pleased than they were. Some day in the not distant future I'd have some ad's for corsets and underskirts and grape juice and automobile tires, but the "Knickerbocker Kocktail" display was pretty good for a starter.

"It's perfect," at last said Princess Bill behind me.

"Damn' nice," the King confirmed in words of approval he had learned from Captain Corbett.

I smiled to myself. The music increased in volume as we drew nearer, and when I finally stopped in front of the dark building a deaf mute could have told that the noise came from no phonograph.

When the car stopped, Peter turned a switch which shifted the electric current from the sign to the hotel.

I GAVE the royal visitors a moment to take in the splendor of the scene. At one side of the carriage entrance, resplendent in brilliant red uniforms, was the band, led by a drum-major in

white, banging away cheerfully on the melody which was soon to become the national anthem of Tamaloa.

A door-man in a livery hurried out and opened the door of the taxicab, while I hopped from my seat and ran around to a side door so as to be in the office when the guests arrived. I gave a hasty glance around the lobby. All was in place. Comfortable chairs were strewn about; the door of the elevator stood open; the clerk was on duty behind the desk; a couple of bell-boys stood at attention, and a trim young woman dressed in a black waist and skirt stood behind the cigar counter idly fixing her pompadour—which I believe is the correct employment for anyone occupying that position.

I had just time to make this reassuring survey of the lobby when the revolving door began to move. We didn't have any real use for a revolving door in that climate, but I had put it in because I thought it would amuse the King.

The door turned a half circle, and into the brilliantly lighted lobby stepped the King and the fighting chief of the island of Tamaloa.

King Kandavu to the ordinary eye would not have seemed any more dressed-up than usual, but I who had known him for many weeks now detected at once the note of ceremony in his costume. The gold bracelets on his arms, the jewelry on his feet and the brilliant coloring of the kilt he wore all pointed to a more than usually careful toilet. Even the regal silk hat had received an extra touch by being wound by a strip of red calico. In his hands he carried the royal roller skates.

But Princess Bill!

I HAD seen her around so much in pajamas that I never pictured her in any other costume. I didn't know she had one, in fact. But she had apparently sensed the fact that this was a dress occasion, and she had come décolleté. To be strictly accurate, she was décolleté to a point considerably below the waist. I did not look closely, but my impression is that she was wearing a sort of a fringe around the equator made of brilliant grasses. She too wore heavy ornaments on her slender arms and legs. Her hair as usual was piled high on her head.

She stared in wonder at me as I came forward to welcome them. Evidently my costume startled her nearly as much as hers did me.

"I am glad to present to Your Majesty the freedom of the finest hotel on the island of Tamaloa," I began—a speech I had carefully rehearsed for the occasion.

"Gee, plenty much light," the King ejaculated, dazzled by a mere minor feature of his surroundings, it seemed to me.

The Princess murmured, "Beautiful!"

"What do you like the best about it, Princess Bill?" I asked, preparing to give it to her if it was anything movable.

She looked at me with shining eyes. "You, Pudgy," she replied. "I never saw anything so beautiful as your legs. You ought always to wear pants."

I hastily changed the subject by inviting them to look about the building with me.

I showed them everything—the elevator (which frightened them half to death), the telephone, the apartments I had arranged for them on the second floor. And with everything they were vastly pleased.

WHEN we returned downstairs, we found the lobby filled with guests in gala dress. As in our own country, it appeared that the more formal the occasion, the more the ladies took off. I have never seen so much hide outside of a tannery. I hadn't noticed it before, outdoors against the background of trees and water, but the effect in a hotel, decorated and furnished in the modern manner, was startling beyond description.

Standing in front of the desk was a strange man of commanding aspect, and at a respectful distance from him were four warriors wearing their hair cut in tufts and carrying shields and spears.

At the sight of them Princess Bill halted on the stairs. With a smothered exclamation she drew a little

behind me. I stopped to wait for her, and the King went on.

"Who is it?" I asked.

"Lalou," she murmured.

I looked the fellow over carefully as he stood listening to the welcoming speech of the King. He was big and handsome in a sort of a ruthless way. His skin was darker than that of my friends, but his lips were thin and his eyes were lighter than theirs, and crueler. He was what we people in the show business call a "bad audience." By that I mean he looked as if he had no sense of humor and was stuck on himself worse than two sheets of sticky fly-paper. Just now he was listening to gentle old Kandavu with a sort of sneer on his face as if he thought the King was a bush leaguer trying to break in on the Big Time. Right away I could see that Lalou would make a swell villain for a stock company. But when he was doing *Simon Legree* I would hate to be *Uncle Tom.*

I doubt whether Lalou had seen us. If he had, he did not betray it by a glance in our direction. Princess Bill turned and ran swiftly upstairs again. I followed her.

"What's the matter?" I demanded.

"I don't want to see him."

"Why not? I thought you were going to marry him."

She dragged me away from the top of the staircase.

"Oh, I am, but I want to be free from him until then." The Princess was nearer to losing control of herself than I had ever seen her. The hand which she laid on my arm was trembling. "I didn't think he'd come," she explained nervously. "I wasn't expecting him."

I calmed her the best I could. "Don't be silly, Princess."

"I'll be all right in a few minutes, Pudgy. Just keep me away from him until I get time to think it over. Isn't there some of the hotel we haven't seen?"

"Yes," I answered, "but it's downstairs—below where your father and Lalou are standing. The only way to get there without their seeing us will be by the elevator." I indicated the shaft with the grilled iron doors.

She shuddered and then looked up at me trustfully. "If you say it's all right, Pudgy, dear, I'll get in it. But I'm scared to death, and you will have to hold my hand until I get out."

This arrangement was agreed upon, and I pressed a button for the tiny cage to come and get us. She entered and got into the corner as far as possible, where she could brace herself against two walls of the car. Then, taking a firm grip on my hand, she signified her readiness to start, and I told the elevator-boy to let us off at the grill-room.

The journey was made without accident, except that I had one finger nearly pinched off.

CHAPTER XI

THE grill-room was nearly full of people. I had instructed Peter, who had charge of affairs, to invite our guests down there as soon as they tired of the lobby.

The cloak-room boys bowed and smiled as we passed, and took my opera hat. I had kept it closed the entire evening for fear the King might suspect me of lese majesty. The head waiter deferentially showed us to a table near a square in the center of the room which was cleared for dancing.

Every move we made was the object of careful attention. Until our arrival the belles and beaux of Tamaloa had been doubtful what to do with the silverware and napkins on the tables. Now each gesture I made was copied sedulously, first by Princess Bill and then by the entire roomful.

To get the Princess' mind off her troubles, I ordered a couple of cocktails made from a combination of native wines and fruit-juice, frapped with ice I had made in the refrigerating plant, which was built into the hotel. The coldness of the drink amused the Princess greatly, and she would have ordered a dozen if I had let her. The natives around us began sampling it too, and I was obliged to send word to the bar that only one cocktail was to be served to a person.

I dispatched one of the cloak-room

boys with a message to the King to join us, and another to the leader of the band to divide his strength and send an orchestra of ten men down to the grill-room.

By this time Princess Bill's spirits had revived and she was chattering away gayly, having the time of her life.

"What do you think of it, Princess?"—looking proudly around at my handiwork.

"It's too beautiful," she replied with a sigh. "But after all, Pudgy, I'd like it better just to be with you alone by the crystal pool." She banished the personal note from this speech by saying with a laugh: "I'm afraid I'm not as much civilized as Father, although I speak better English. I think that down deep inside of me I'm just a sort of a wild animal."

I was almost inclined to agree with her. Grace such as Princess Bill's belongs only to the wild members of the cat tribe, and her brown skin and tawny eyes reminded me of a Bengal tiger. Even her muscles rebelled at confinement, and under the golden bracelets I could see the sinews of her arm swelling and constantly moving as if only waiting to break the jeweled band.

THERE was a sudden and noisy commotion at the grill-room door. Yells of pain split the air, and there was a dull thud as some solid body struck the floor. Of course I started for the scene as soon as possible, but before I could get there the harm had been done.

The cloak-room boys had attempted to make the King give up his silk hat on entering the grill-room. They were simply obeying my instructions that no one was to get in wearing headgear. I had forgotten about the royal crown.

The boys, faithful to their orders, had insisted on having the King's hat. When he refused to give it to them, they barred his way with more nerve than I thought they had, and while one of them engaged his attention in front, the other took a cane and knocked off the lid from the rear and ran with it as fast as he could and hid it in the cloak-room. The cry of pain which I heard came from the other boy when the outraged King picked him up and tried to push him through the partition.

When I got there I was able to prevent further bloodshed by ordering the boys to give up the hat, which they did reluctantly. The King grumbled like an enraged bull when I led him to our table and gave the waiter the high sign to feed him two cocktails in rapid succession. This mollified the King so thoroughly that when I explained that the action of the cloak-room boys was exactly similar to the way it is done in New York, he sent for one of them and voluntarily relinquished his hat.

By the time the orchestra had taken their places everyone had been served with a light supper consisting of clams, broiled fish and ice-cream. The last-named dish was an instant success, and the King ate so much of it that he had a chill, the first he had ever experienced in his life.

When interest in the food had begun to flag, I gave a signal to the orchestra and they played "Too Much Mustard," which I had taught them from memory. I got up from the table, and asking Princess Bill to accompany me, went to the middle of the floor. I had shown her half a dozen steps of the tango, and we now proceeded to demonstrate what restaurants were for besides eating.

Princess Bill was a natural dancer, and of course I've had some training on the stage, and so it was not difficult for us to put on some figures that had never been done before even by the versatile Mr. and Mrs. Castle.

When we had finished, we were greeted by a tremendous outburst of applause. The dance had caught the fancy of the audience, just as it had wherever it was performed in the world. I made the announcement that the floor was open to everybody, and that the next time the music started up everyone was welcome to try.

At the request of the others, Princess Bill and I kept going over and over the simple steps that we knew, so that they could pick them up from observation. We danced between the tables up one aisle and down another, stopping a moment at intervals to explain the position of the feet.

IT was on this tour of instruction that we inadvertently neared the entrance. I was facing the center of the room, when all at once the orchestra stopped and a sudden frightened hush fell on the crowd. It was as if they sensed trouble with some subtle instinct more keenly alive than my own faculties.

Before I could turn to the door to see what had caused this phenomenon, a heavy hand was laid roughly on my shoulder and I was separated from my partner and sent spinning into a near-by table. With a crash the table, chairs, china and myself went over onto the floor.

I picked myself up nimbly and squared off in the correct boxing attitude before I looked to see what had struck me. In the doorway stood Lalou, the fighting chief of Ateua and the betrothed husband of Princess Bill.

I had almost guessed that it was he before I hit the table. No one on the island of Tamaloa would have dared touch me except the Princess herself, and I had my arm around her at the time.

Lalou was a wonderful picture of a savage. Body bare, except for a tufted girdle and a fringe of fur around each leg below the knee, carrying a spear in one hand, he might have stepped out of one of the old-time geographies from the page labeled "Types of Primitive Mankind."

Just now he was bent slightly forward, still tense from the blow he had struck me. His eyes were lighted with cruel satisfaction.

Princess Bill still stood in the exact spot where we had been dancing, her face expressing hopeless bewilderment.

When I saw that he made no further attack, I stepped up to him.

"What's the idea?" I demanded as evenly as possible. "Did you mistake this place for an East Side barroom?"

Remembering the methods employed by "bouncers" back home, I seriously considered grabbing this trouble-maker by the seat of the trousers and throwing him out. Of course, I realized on second thought that he was not dressed for the part.

He looked me over contemptuously.

"No dance. Warriors dance sometimes. Women no dance."

This picturesque ruffian was trying to tell me that it was any of his business whether I tangoed or not in the Hotel Knickerbocker which I had built myself to the strains of an orchestra I had trained!

THE nerve of him must have released a catch somewhere inside of me that controlled my temper, because all at once I found myself seeing red, and my mind seemed to lose all control of my right fist, which drew back to land on his jaw.

In the middle of the swing my arm was suddenly paralyzed and dropped to my side numb.

Wonderingly I looked at it. There was no feeling in the forearm. I could only raise it limply.

I looked up. Lalou had not changed his position.

"Fool! Dog!" hissed Princess Vililiti.

I turned to her in amazement. She was apparently addressing me. Her arm was raised as if to strike.

"Don't dare to lay a hand on an honored guest," she exclaimed in a low voice, vibrant with excitement. "It was I who struck you to save the noble Prince Lalou from the ignominy of being molested while accepting the hospitality of my father, the King."

I must have looked the reproach I felt at having a supposed friend turn traitor, but her eyes did not soften.

I shrugged my shoulders. I was not in the business of fighting women and children in earnest. I had evidently made a mistake in applying civilized standards to savages, but I could not change my point of view. I must pay uncomplainingly the penalty of my folly in trusting her.

The Princess spoke in the native Maori tongue to the head waiter, who was hovering about anxiously, undecided what his official position required him to do.

He seemed relieved to receive orders from some one in authority, although I could see he was not particularly pleased at the commands imposed upon him.

He called up two or three of his

staff. They surrounded me and two of them took hold of my arms on either side.

"Come," said the head waiter to me apologetically.

I obeyed. Resistance would have been useless. Besides, I did not have an ounce of fight left since the Princess had betrayed me.

I was marched up the stairs, across the lobby and, to the amazement of the bell-boys and clerks, up the main staircase to the second floor, where they took me to my own room and locked me in. I was a prisoner awaiting sentence!

CHAPTER XII

THE electric light burned brightly from the chandelier overhead; the mirror of my dresser revealed me dressed in the conventional clothing of a gentleman about to attend a ball; I could easily imagine myself as but a stone's throw from the Lambs Club: and yet downstairs under my very feet was a throng of half-naked savages planning my destruction!

I went to the window and looked out on Broadway. The taxicab still stood in front of the hotel, its brilliant headlights cutting a wedge out of the darkness. In the path of that illumination stood the signpost reading BROADWAY and FORTY-SECOND STREET. Leaning against the post fast asleep was my policeman, dressed now for the first time in a brass-buttoned blue uniform we had made for the occasion.

I laughed bitterly. What did the representative of the law mean to me? I had created him out of nothing, as I had everything else about me, but the veneer was so thin that I did not dream for an instant that at heart I could depend on anything or anybody.

I sat for a long time looking out of the window, wondering whether I would be allowed to see the sunrise. After a while the electric lights grew dim. The engine running the dynamo probably needed attention. I started up automatically to go to it and then realized that it was impossible and sat down again. The lights went out.

I sat in my chair by the window interminably. The night was hot and moist and dead. Somewhere in the world clocks were still measuring time, but here in this God-forsaken, sweltering, dripping hole, the machinery of civilization had stopped, and time with it. Nothing ticked. No moon crossed the sky. Even my blood did not register a vivid pulsation in my wrists. Outside there was no sound, no wind, nothing. The headlights on the taxicab burned dim and went out.

I did not sleep, but my mental alertness sagged from the long vigil. My head rested in my hands; my eyes saw nothing.

A touch on my shoulder aroused me, and I started to my feet. A warm hand was placed over my mouth to stifle my involuntary exclamation, and I was gently forced back into my chair.

"Hush, Pudgy. Don't say anything."

It was Princess Bill.

I TOOK her hand from my mouth and pushed her from me.

"I knew you would feel that way," she said hurriedly. "I was sure you wouldn't understand. That's why I came to tell you about it just as soon as I could get away. Let me sit right here at your feet so I wont have to speak very loud, and I'll explain everything. Please."

I could not see her, and I could scarcely hear her move or breathe, but in a moment I felt her bare arm across my knees, and her fingers plucked at my coat-lapel to pull my face down near hers.

"Lean over, Pudgy, so I wont have to talk so loud."

I inclined my head until her hand touched my cheek. She patted it lightly.

"Haven't you any idea yet why I had you arrested?" she inquired with an anxious note in her voice.

"No," I replied, "nor why you did not let me hit Lalou when I started to. I didn't suppose you were so mad about him and he looks as if he would be able to take care of himself. He struck me first."

"I know, but you see you don't know

Lalou as well as I do. He is a head-hunter."

"What?"

"Lalou is a head-hunter—cuts off the heads of his enemies. The custom is prohibited by law, but who can make laws in England to say what a man shall do in the South Pacific? If you had struck him, he would have been obliged to kill you and take your head or be disgraced forever."

A realization of the motives of Princess Bill flooded my head and heart with shame. I could not conceive of stupidity as crass as mine had been. With a feeling of contrition that this savage child had outdone me in quickness of perception and duration of faith, I took her hand as it lay in my lap and raised it to my lips.

With a happy sigh she moved closer and pushed her soft, boyish young shoulder under my arm.

"There, it's all right again, isn't it, Pudgy, and we are friends once more?" she asked.

"Of course," I answered; "but, at that, I wish you had let me hit him."

"I don't want you to fight with anyone but me," the Princess explained with mock petulance. "Besides, it wouldn't have done any good. You would only have gotten yourself killed, and I would have gotten myself killed."

"Why you?" I demanded.

"Because I wouldn't have let him touch you until he had killed me," she explained simply.

I began to see that there were angles to this young lady's character I had scarcely dreamed of.

"I don't see why he started the row in the first place." I expressed my thoughts aloud.

PRINCESS BILL laughed softly under her breath. "Lalou was jealous."

"Jealous?" I repeated. "He had nothing to be jealous about."

The slender figure under my arm stiffened. The Princess was silent.

I went on: "I suppose he thinks I go around wanting to marry infants out of the cradle, too. He makes me tired. Did you finally make him understand that I don't intend to break up his happy home?"

"Yes," the Princess answered coldly. "I had to promise that you would go back by the very first boat, though, and I'm to marry him in October."

"And this is July. Only three months."

"That's all. It is enough."

"Enough?"

"Yes. You will go back before the time is up, and then I wont care."

I passed over this childishly impulsive remark without comment.

"You convinced Lalou, then, that everything was all right?"

"Yes. I think so."

"Wasn't it foolish for you to come to see me, Princess Bill?"

"Maybe, but I couldn't bear the thought of your being angry at me all night long, Pudgy, so I just had to come as soon as I was sure everyone was asleep." She rubbed her cheek affectionately against my knee and sighed contentedly.

"But think if some one saw you! How did you get past the guards outside my door?"

"I didn't come in by the door." She laughed at my exclamation of amazement. "I came in through the window."

"How on earth could you do that?"

"That was easy. Didn't you know there is a ledge under your window that runs all around the building? All I had to do was go out of the window of my room and walk around until I came to yours."

I saw that I should have to cease applying conventional limitations to the things Princess Bill could do. Where else in the world would a man possibly be prepared for a young woman who made no bones about crawling around the edge of a building at night and climbing through a window in order to hold a few minutes' conversation?

A slight breeze swayed the curtains at the window. Like myself, the world had decided to come to life again.

"It's nearly dawn," interpreted Princess Bill, nodding at the curtains. "Always a breeze and then sunrise quick. I must hurry."

Already a faint gray filtered through the blackness of the night.

Giving my arm a friendly little squeeze, the Princess went to the window and swung one leg over the sill.

"Lalou goes home to-day. Until then you must stay inside," she admonished. "Good-by, Pudgy."

"Good-by, Princess Bill."

The Princess blew me a tiny kiss from the palm of her little brown hand and drew her other leg outside. Then suddenly she was gone.

What a funny, high-strung, lovable little imp she was!

I removed my clothes by the light of the rising sun and crawled into bed.

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN I was released the next day, nothing was said by the King to indicate that I was in disgrace.

"Ateua people plenty strong," he commented. "Must have for friend."

I hunted up the Reverend Mr. Quackenbush at the mission school.

"What do you think of the arrangement to marry Princess Vililiti to Lalou?" I demanded as soon as he was free and I could talk to him alone.

He shrugged his shoulders and looked at me keenly.

"Why not?"

"It seems a shame. The Princess is too fine; and he—"

"He is supposed to be the most eligible man in the islands." The missionary laid his hand on my shoulder. "The less we Europeans mix up in the love-affairs of these people, the safer it will be for us—and them. Do you understand?"

"You mean that this is a political alliance?"

"Yes, and I mean besides that the Princess has been brought up to look forward to just such a marriage. Any other would probably mean unhappiness to her. As the queen of the island of Ateua, she may not have absolutely everything in this world, but she will at least be in an assured position. If you had seen, as I have, the many, many native girls among these islands who have been the wives, as they thought, of white men, you would understand what I mean. When their beauty fades, their sailor spouses come back to them no more, and they have to face the world alone except for their children, who grow up to scorn the mother whose skin is darker than theirs. If that should happen to Vililiti, I would forget my calling until vengeance was secured."

As he spoke, I could feel a fiery blush spreading over me from head to foot.

"I shall not feel that she is safe," went on the missionary, "until I have seen her wedded. That child has a great capacity for sorrow."

"If you mean all that for me," I retorted good-naturedly after I had myself well in hand, "you're barking up the wrong Tannebaum. I haven't any intention of treating her as anything but what she is—a nice, sweet little girl who I wish were my sister."

He looked at me searchingly.

"Besides," I added as a clincher, "there is somebody back in the United States, waiting for me, and I am going back there by the first boat."

I think I flattered myself when I stated that Beautiful was waiting for me, but I hoped she was, and it relieved the old boy a lot. Beautiful was probably waiting for me the way the Twentieth Century Limited waits for the Jayville Accommodation to make connections at Squeedunk, Ohio.

He shook hands with me warmly on a tacit agreement not to interfere with Bill's love-affairs.

GOING home, I took a widely roundabout course, stretching my muscles in the joy of being free. I had a number of plans for the day, but I was in no hurry to put them into execution.

In a mood for exploration I followed a winding path which sloped upward, probably toward the peak of the volcano. Inland a way all attempts at cultivation ceased, and the main body of the island was a tangled tropical forest.

Strange trunk-trees rose on all sides, some straight and shiny as if the bark were peeled off and the under surface polished, others gnarled and twisted,

their course to the upper sunshine like a spiral stairway.

Higher up the slope, the lesser vegetation thinned out and the forest assumed more the look we are accustomed to expect in a wooded country in northern climates. Nearly at the edge of the extinct crater I stepped unexpectedly into an open space paved with flat pieces of lava.

At first I thought it was a souvenir of some ancient eruption that had killed out vegetation and buried the soil so deep that no new growth could reach it. Then I noticed that the slabs of lava were approximately the same size and that they were laid in a series of circles or rings.

As soon as I looked in the middle I guessed what I had stumbled onto. Standing on a high stone block and carved out of black lava was the rude figure of a man or rather a monster with the feet of a bird and huge wings folded over its shoulders. I could not see the face on it, inasmuch as I had entered the temple, for such I knew it to be, from the rear.

From the other side of the image rose a column of blue smoke, and in the air hung the faint unpleasant odor of burning cloth. I halted, torn between doubts as to whether I ought to go ahead and find out what was happening or discreetly withdraw before my presence was discovered. Evidently the missionaries had not converted the natives so thoroughly that they had dared destroy their ancient gods and temples. I wondered if Quackenbush knew about this place.

Some one was unquestionably on the other side of that pedestal, no doubt worshiping the sinister deity who crouched above. The fire would indicate that a sacrifice was going on. Where lay my duty?

I have not had very intimate associations with religion since I was a boy, but the idea of pagan sacrifice was repellent to me. I owed it to the kindly old missionary to try to stop it if I could. So I stepped back into the shelter of the trees and skirted the clearing, keeping just out of sight until I judged I was on the opposite side of the open-air temple.

A few paces brought me to the lava flag-stones again. The image was facing me now, and it was more hideous even than I expected. It had a bird's beak and cruel, narrow-set eyes.

You have seen savage deities in museums or at world's fairs, but I assure you they look different set in their proper surroundings. In the museums they are only grotesque; in their temples they are terrifying. To transplant them strips them of their dignity and dissipates their power.

The image claimed but little of my attention, because my eyes fell almost immediately on a tiny white-clad figure at the base of the pedestal. One glance was enough. I knew who it was.

MY heart sickened. Was Princess Bill, the lovable little imp, making a burnt sacrifice to this terrible heathen god? The idea disgusted me. I knew she was a little savage, but the suggestion that she would kill and burn a living thing ran too far counter to my ideal of her to accept it without a mental protest.

She had built a small fire in a hollowed-out stone set in front of the god, and at intervals between bobbing up and down in a rather acrobatic prayer she fed the flames with something. I drew a little closer. Whatever she was burning lay on the ground before her. It was black. When the fire burned low, she would take a long, heavy, cruel-looking knife and hack a piece off from the black object in front of her. The odor was very strong and unpleasant.

The Princess was so absorbed in her devotions that she failed to notice my approach. I looked over her shoulder as she raised her knife to mangle her sacrifice still further. And all at once I recognized that black object: it was a small remnant of my dress trousers, hideously mangled but still recognizable.

I must have made some sort of an involuntary exclamation, for the Princess turned a startled, tear-stained face toward me over her shoulder, meanwhile continuing the bobbing motion which seemed to signify devotion. When I would have spoken, she

put her finger to her lips as a sign for me to be quiet. There was no resisting her silent but tearful entreaty.

At every bow the tears dropped faster, but she went on busily cutting up my trousers and feeding them piecemeal to the flames, until the last shred was burned up and all that was left of my nether covering was a handful of steel buttons in the bottom of the sacrificial vessel.

With a sigh she rose to her feet and turned toward me with the sweet expression of one who has done something for humanity. Then, keeping her finger still on her lips, she took my hand and led me away on the tiptoe from the sacred neighborhood of that sinister divinity.

WHEN we were in the woods, I stopped and made the Princess face me squarely.

"Now, Bill," I demanded sternly, "why did you burn up my dress trousers?"

"Why—I did it as a sacrifice."

"You did it as a sacrifice. As a sacrifice for me, I suppose?"

"No, for me." She eyed my legs gravely through her tears. "You looked so beautiful in them, Pudgy. When I think that I shall never see you in them again, I can't keep from crying."

"If you like them so much, then why burn 'em up?"

"Oh," she assured, "you have to give up something you like, or a sacrifice doesn't do any good. I thought and thought for a long time this morning, and I couldn't think of anything I liked so much as those trousers; so I went and got them and offered them to the god Ai."

"I suppose there's no use being cross about it; they're gone."

"Oh no, Pudgy; they're not gone. They've just changed their form."

"Oh—they've become spirit pants, have they?"

"Yes."

"How about the buttons? Doesn't the god wear spirit suspenders? How does he keep 'em on his nebulous legs?"

She looked at me sadly, the way my maiden Aunt Martha used to when I skipped Sunday school.

"We don't ask such questions," she answered. "We just have faith."

"It would be safer if he at least had a belt."

Then I remembered the missionary in the little chapel down below.

"I thought you were a Christian, Princess," I began accusingly.

"I am." Princess Bill made the statement simply. "Only sometimes when I want something very much I pray to Ai also for fear Mr. Quackenbush might be wrong. I don't come here very often."

"There is something you want very much now?" I suggested.

"Oh yes, more than anything else I can remember."

"Tell me. It may be that we've got it in the storehouse, or if not, Peter and I can make it for you."

"No." Princess Bill was firm. "No one shall know but Ai and myself."

After we had descended the mountain a way, she stopped and said:

"If you please, don't tell Mr. Quackenbush about Ai."

"Oh," I jeered, "you're afraid Mr. Quackenbush might get angry and destroy your stone god."

"No," she returned soberly. "I'm afraid the god Ai might get angry and destroy Mr. Quackenbush."

Which, I think, proves conclusively just how much of a Christian convert Princess Bill was.

As I found out later, no one could tell Mr. Quackenbush about Ai because he knew about that ossified gentleman all the time.

BY a curious coincidence Quackenbush spoke about it the next day after supper while I was walking with

him from the hotel to the mission, a nightly custom of ours, born of longing for companionship on both sides.

"I shall never feel absolutely assured of the conversion of the natives while the temple of Ai still stands on the mountain-side," he volunteered. "They say that no one ever goes there, but I am inclined to believe the contrary."

I expressed polite interest and let him describe to me the location and appearance of the place of worship.

"It's quite impressive, you know," he went on, "and rather curious, too, that a place so long unused should not be overgrown with vegetation."

We proceeded awhile in silence; then:

"I wonder how to explain it and what I ought to do."

"Explain what?" I asked curiously.

He eyed me speculatively.

"I stopped there this afternoon," he said, deciding to be frank and share his secret with me. "I often do when I am out walking. It is a restful spot. Besides, the stone image interests me from an archæological point of view. In many ways it resembles the work of the ancient Egyptians, although I can see no reason for connecting the two.

"At any rate, I was paying my scornful respects to Ai when I noticed something in the hollow stone cup which used to be employed in the rites of sacrifice. I emptied the cup and confiscated its contents."

He put his hands in his pockets and drew forth a fistful of trousers buttons.

I laughed.

"Apparently the custom of contributing buttons to the cause of religion did not originate in the United States," I suggested as a possible solution of the mystery.

"It worries me a bit, though," he went on, contracting his brows thoughtfully. "I would swear that the ancient customs have been all stamped out, and yet this looks to me as if there has been human sacrifice to Ai, and recently."

I was tempted to tell him, but remembered my promise to the Princess.

"What makes you think it was human sacrifice?" I asked lightly.

"These buttons are the kind ordinarily used on pantaloons."

"Admitting that," I argued, "who is there on the island who wears pantaloons?"

"No one but you and myself."

"And you and I are both here, alive and in full possession of our pantaloons; so there is nothing further to worry about."

We had arrived at the mission house, and we stood a moment outside, letting the cool, moist evening breeze from the Pacific fan our brows.

"I think," he said before we parted, "that I will go up the mountain-side late some night and destroy my friend Ai. I don't like his looks, and I think he would serve the community better if he were broken up into tiny bits and used for paper-weights."

I laughed and went back to the hotel.

CHAPTER XIV

I KNEW that at the longest I had only a couple of months to remain on the island, and I devoted myself assiduously to the task I had set myself of providing gala entertainment for these people who had proven themselves so conclusively my friends.

Across from the Knickerbocker we put up a two-story skyscraper which had an electric sign on it reading "Times Square." In it I installed a small job printing-press that was included in the mail-order shipment on the *Shandon Belle*.

I made one of my cloak-room boys from the hotel editor of *The Tamaloa Times*. He had spent some time in the mission school and could read and write a little, besides being more than ordinarily intelligent. He had a name in his own language, but he answered when I shouted "Brisbane," so to all practical intents and purposes that was his title ever after. I will say this much for Brisbane. He was a poor speller, but he could empty waste-baskets as well as any editor I ever met.

It took us three days to set up and run off an edition of two hundred

copies of the first issue, but it was worth all the trouble it cost.

It was printed on one side only of a sheet of typewriter letter paper. And a short time everybody got used to having the last part of the sheet set up that way, and it seemed perfectly natural.

TAMALOA TIMES

Vol .I, NO. 1. Tam&Loa, Monday, July, cwfp, 191= PRiCe 8One

POSSI=LY FaTAl AssAUL T oN CoUedIa=

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dAniels migHt haᴧe beon kilɪed. A last repor-ts heis said to b reCvering oWing to th unwilli-Ngness to mr. fp DaniəLs to involv =am&loa In HIS peɹsonl ąffiars an internat has b n aveɹtd·

SpOrtiug NewS & TheatRcal

The FootbaLL $quad wiLl meat daLy on SoLdievrs Fəild 4 PrfcTice.

HeAd Coaɔh dAniels has promi d to inspct the woɹk of ɥls assis tant Princess Vililiɪ in th ner Futre.

R3hearsal o f the RoyaL SıLVeR cOrnet BanD Thursd. on toP of thə TamaioA voLCAnO Their is a vacensy in thr band for a gooD trombony pl-ayEr. The presnt incumbənt of tht positIon =z Mɪ. Geor, Paiai wishes 2 re ir becaws he stut-ters to much for rAgtim

KinG Kandavu was aRRested last wek for sppeding hiS taXicab downe daNiel bullevard Go it Kandy King. ofFiceR Patrick FIYNN mad the arrest. Kin Kandavu was sen 10ced to 1 weak in jaLe. OfFiceR Fylnn is seraıng his tərM 4 him.

Nu THeatr to Shrdlu!

MamɯotH Oprea HouSe NcarɪnG Co=pleTion

Work on thx Nzw Amsterdam Thxatzr ıs bx-ing pushzd rapidLy ahzad,

ManaGer Danixls spzaking for Mxssrs. kLaW & XRLAngx - r and C h n & haRrıs announcz thaɪ whn complztzd it wilL bx the bezt zquipped amuz-mznT placz iN Tam&Loa.

Thx opaning aTtraɔtion wilL bz thx "PiNK WiD0w."

Szats on salz

sixtzzn wxxks in advancz. —to sp-culators only.

POLitICal NoT=s

ConGrzss wilɪ convznz nxxt Thusrday to dıScuss & xnect laWs govzrning thz tarrıF and Currznçy laws. Mxmbxrs of ConGrZss who arz also Mzmbzrs of ths foOtball $Quad will bx zxcuszd.

SOCIXTY ITXMs

Thxrx wıll B a masquzradz balɪ at thx HOTXL KNIɔKerBOCkER tomoɹɹow Xvzning AlL guzsts will goe disguıseb as AMXRICans.

Masks, costumzs and dırztions for putTing thzm On may be had from thz manɐgzmznt.

pmqdrgp nckwt5,umd nvbgfc—

as you can well see, we ran out of *e*'s before we got the paper all set up, and so I substituted *x*'s and *z*'s of which we had plenty. After we had been running

THAT announcement about the mas-querade ball at the hotel aroused feverish curiosity, as I had expected it would. The hotel was besieged with

potential guests, seeking costumes. Everybody who was anybody wanted to be there. Peter and the clerks were busy all day giving out ready-made mail-order clothing and explaining its uses.

Late in the afternoon on the day of the ball I was in the office of *The Times* helping Brisbane run the last edition, which was on the press, when the telephone-bell rang.

"Hello," I answered.

"Hello, Pudgy," came the faint, far-away voice of the Princess.

"What's the trouble, Bill?" I asked. "You sound as if you were crying."

"I am," she whimpered. "I can't get this darn dress on. Come on over quick and help, before I tear it up."

I had selected the costume for her myself from the entire stock. It was a dream of spangles and silk almost the exact shade of Princess Bill's complexion. I did not intend that the dress should be destroyed, and so I left Brisbane in charge of the final work about the shop and hurried across the street to the Knickerbocker, hastily dodging the King, who was learning to drive the taxicab himself.

Princess Bill's room was a picture of mad disorder. Lingerie, stockings, ribbons and all sorts of intimate feminine belongings were piled on chairs, bed and dresser and strewn on the floor.

In the midst of the wreckage on the rug sat the discouraged owner of all the finery, alternately swearing at the dress, which lay across her knees, and crying over it. She had managed to get on the stockings and underwear and even a lace petticoat, but the outer casing had proved too much.

"I don't want to wear the old thing, anyway," sobbed the royal little lady. "Can't I go just as I am, Pudgy?"

"Of course not!"

"Don't I look pretty enough?" She stopped crying to put this question directly, challenging me with her eyes.

"Of course you are pretty," I replied soothingly, "but I honestly think you would look perfectly gorgeous if you had this dress on."

"Honest?" This in a pathetically eager voice.

"Yes."

"Then you put it on me."

"All right. Stand up."

She got to her feet and handed me the filmy frock.

I made her slip it on over her head and turn around so that I could hook it in the back. I began at the waist. It didn't meet by a couple of inches.

"Breathe out," I commanded.

She did. I pulled on the two sides of the dress, but the chasm did not close perceptibly. Finally I put an arm around her to squeeze it together while I hooked the dress with the other. She put her own hands on my arm and made me squeeze her even tighter, but it was no use.

"Never mind, Pudgy," she said regretfully. "I guess I haven't the right kind of figure for anything but pajamas. I wont go to the ball. My stockings keep falling down, anyway."

"Your stockings fall down? Why don't you fasten them up?"

"What shall I fasten them to?"

"To your corset. Haven't you got a corset on?"

The Princess was mystified. "I don't think so, but you can look."

I did, but not around her waist. I looked in a box on the dresser which had a familiar-looking oblong shape, and there, untouched by the hand of woman, lay a lovely pink dream of steel ribs and closely woven mesh adorned with innumerable hose-supporters.

I found a picture on the cover of the box which showed how the thing should be worn, and after explaining it to the Princess I retired to the hall temporarily while she pitted her untamed strength against the judgment of Paris.

When I came in again she was apoplectic but shapely, and the dress went on without any more difficulty than the average man always makes over concealed hooks and eyes.

THE result was a great credit to nature and the mail-order company.

"You'll do," I said approvingly after a careful survey to see if anything was missing from the picture.

Princess Bill smiled.

"Thanks," she said, dropping her eyes before my scrutiny.

Our embarrassment was relieved by the ringing of the telephone. Princess Bill answered it, and after she had listened a moment spoke a few words over it in Maori.

"Father wants you to show him how to put on his things," she told me when she had hung up. "He says he has spoiled three shirts already and he's only got one left."

I laughed and went to the rescue of the King. My difficulties with His Majesty were purely of a physical nature. The effort required to put evening clothes on a giant savage who had never worn anything but kilts before (or aft, for that matter) is tremendous. I had to call in Peter to hold down the King's Adam's apple while I got a collar on him, but the result was accomplished at last and the King was so pleased with himself in the mirror that he didn't discover until later how much his shoes hurt him. Before I left I showed him how to put on the mask.

Dressing myself took only a few minutes, and then I rounded up my impatient charges and took them down to dinner.

Most of the chairs and tables had been moved out of the grill-room in order to make room for the dancers, but a few places had been retained around the edge, and at one of them we had our dinner.

I ordered only soup and spaghetti, because I did not dare trust the mail-order clothing to stand another ounce of breaking strain if we put any wide food inside of it.

IMMEDIATELY after dinner the masquers began to arrive. I don't think I had conceived what an efficient disguise clothing would be. In savage tropical countries you get to know a man as much by a scar on his shoulder or the exact shade of his skin as you do by his face. I could tell Peter in a million without looking higher than his feet; the King could never fool me if I could see his back; and the Princess—I could recognize her by an ankle, a forearm or even by the tiny tip of her finger.

Now when they wore suits and dresses, I found that I did not know a soul. Everyone there was my friend, but as far as I could tell I was among perfect strangers.

I don't mean by that to say that all of the guests were completely dressed or even that all of them had their garments on exactly as the designer had intended they should be worn, but in the main they were pretty well covered. Here and there you could see a bulge of brown meat in the middle of a lady's back where the hooks and eyes had given it up and let go their grip; some of the gentlemen, too, had taken the precaution of wearing their kilts over their trousers, which led me to suspect that possibly the stitching had not proved equal to the emergency; dress collars were not in every instance correctly worn or spotless; but, by George, those people had done their level best to dress like the pictures.

The one thing that saddened the whole affair was the late arrival of Paiai, the ex-trombonist of the Royal Cornet Band. He was alone and obviously distressed. His wife, a huge woman, of great good nature, was a good friend of mine, and I hastened to ask him why she had not accompanied him.

"S-s-s-s-she c-c-c-couldn't c-c-come," Paiai stammered.

"That's too bad," I commiserated. "What is the matter? Not ill, I hope."

"N-n-n-no, M-m-mister D-d-daniels, b-but the only p-p-part of the c-c-costume that w-w-was b-b-big enough f-for her t-t-t-to g-g-get on was the m-m-mask."

AFTER the first hour of dancing I had one of the waiters sweep up the trains that had been torn off and place them with the shoes that were being discarded right and left, so to speak, by the gentlemen.

I danced systematically once with every lady myself, keeping tab on the progress made, by the colors of the dresses. Thus I danced with all the pink dresses first, then the blue ones,

and so on, going through with each color completely so that I would not offend anyone.

When I had quite finished, I found Bill. I was hot and wilted and fagged. Just to look at her youthful beauty was refreshing.

"Come on, Bill," I said; "let's go outside for a minute and cool off."

She agreed, a trifle constrainedly, I thought; and we went upstairs and out on Broadway.

The night was absolutely dripping with tropical moonlight. It sifted on the world in a soft flood that made the electric lights seem impudent.

The Princess asked me for a cigarette, and I lighted one myself as we sat down not far from the water's edge.

"It's so beautiful it hurts, almost, isn't it?" I asked.

"What?" she asked, smoking moodily.

"The ocean, the moonlight and everything."

"Oh yes, I suppose so," she returned without enthusiasm. "I'm afraid I'm so uncivilized I take nature for granted."

She laughed unhappily.

"I've always loved the ocean before, but now I hate it."

"Why?"

"Because so soon it is going to lie between you and—us." She threw her cigarette into the water.

"Pretty soon you people wont need me any more," I replied lightly. "All the buildings will be done, and Peter can run the machinery. Why, in a year I'll bet the King wont be able to think of my name, and you—"

"Give me a match," she interrupted me with a strained, tense little voice, taking a cigarette from my case.

I found a match in my pocket and handed it to her.

Before I thought to warn her, she started to strike it the way she was accustomed to on the leg of her pajamas.

The match struck all right, but a tiny bit of blazing phosphorus lighted in the loosely woven mesh which composed the overdress of her costume. With a cry she sprang to her feet, tripped on her skirt and fell.

I found my mind and my muscles simultaneously, and leaped to her side.

Picking her up, I ran as fast as I could out into the ocean, where with a mighty hiss a wave extinguished the flames.

My hands were burned, and the salt water hurt cruelly, but I held her tightly, overwhelmed with the thought of how close she had come to destruction.

"How badly are you hurt, dear?" I asked, scarcely knowing that I had called her by a new name.

"I don't know," she whispered, reaching up her dripping arms and slipping them around my neck. "I only know that I've been trying all the evening to keep from telling you I love you, and I can't do it."

CHAPTER XV

I LEAVE it to you if any girl you know would have acted like that. Not a word about the most beautiful gown in that latitude being burned and soaked to a frazzle, no suspicion of fainting away, no fuss about getting her hair wet; all she thought of was to go right on with our conversation.

I demand more conventionality in my love scenes, though. Besides, my hands hurt like the devil, and I imagined I had lost an eyebrow and part of my pompadour. So I merely grunted an answer to Bill's remark and stood her up on her feet on the beach.

There wasn't enough of her dress left to protect her from the moonlight, but otherwise I don't believe she was damaged much.

"Any burns?" I queried with brotherly gruffness.

She shook her head. "I don't think so."

I looked her over myself and found a blister or two on her arms. Until I touched them, she didn't know her flesh had been scorched.

"I know just the dope for that." I led her toward the hotel. "Those spots will be very painful about to-morrow unless we put something on them."

She looked at me with dumb re-

proach. I knew she was thinking that I was a great disappointment as a lover. I admit it. If it wasn't so, I suppose I would have been a tenor instead of a principal comedian. Besides, I had promised old Father Quackenbush I'd behave.

At the Knickerbocker, I took the Princess to her room and sent one of the bell-boys after a concoction of linseed oil and lime-water we kept in the kitchen for burns. I made Bill put some of it on her arms, and I bound them up with remnants of her underskirt and then she put a bandage over my hands.

The party was still raging violently below, but neither Princess Bill nor I cared about dancing any more that evening. We weren't exactly presentable-looking objects, anyway.

AS I started to leave her room, Princess Vililiti barred my way.

"Did you hear what I said out there in the ocean?" she demanded.

"Was I expected to hear it?" I countered, feeling my way.

"Yes."

"Then I heard it."

"If you heard it, why don't you say something back?"

"Look here, Bill," I said with the gruff familiarity of one man addressing another, "the customs of my people are different from yours. Back home, a girl of your age wouldn't cut any ice with men at all. I think you're a darn nice kid, and I want you to be my pal, but there's one sure way to spoil it, and that is to put me up as a rival for the handsome barber from the next island. You're the most attractive youngster I ever saw. If you want me to continue thinking so, I'll play with you as much as you like, but if you expect any *Romeo* stuff out of a comedian who is old enough to be your father, all bets are off."

"Do you mean that?" she asked, her eyes flashing a species of poisoned lightning.

"I certainly do," I returned unequivocally.

She opened the door.

I took that as an invitation to leave, and I did so with as much dignity as Lord Chesterfield could have commanded if his eyebrows were singed.

As I started down the corridor a voice trailed after me: "Mr. Daniels!"

I turned. The Princess was looking at me with amused contempt.

"I just wanted to tell you," she said, "that as long as you keep on feeling the way you do, you are perfectly safe from Prince Lalou."

The white anger mounted to my tongue, but I checked myself before I made any reply, and after a moment inquired quite calmly: "Was there anything further you wish to say, Princess?"

"Nothing, nothing."

I bowed as courteously as possible, said good-night and turned once more to my own room. I heard the sound of a door closing gently at my back.

I TOSSED and turned a large part of the night, debating this thing with myself, knowing that I was right but tormented by my recollection of the exquisite loveliness of what might be mine. I went to sleep after a while and dreamed ugly dreams of a hideous old woman whose face seemed faintly to resemble Princess Bill's, who threw what seemed to be an arm around my neck, but which afterwards turned out to be a sharp edge which cut my head off.

I woke with a start. It was broad daylight. On the edge of the bed regarding me calmly was the Princess, clad once more in the familiar pajamas in which I had first met her, smoking a cigarette.

All the hideous nightmares of the night before faded away when I saw what a little girl she really was.

She smiled as she noticed my glance of approval at her costume.

"Am I all right again?"

"Yes."

"I couldn't sleep, Pudgy, until I was sure you approved of me again. I have decided that as a grown person I make a terrible mess of things, so I wont grow up until after you are gone. As soon as I decided that, I came to find you. I have been waiting here almost an hour for you to wake up."

"How did you get in? Not through

the window this time? Didn't I lock the door?"

"Yes. I came in through the transom," she explained naïvely.

I laughed. That was more like the monkey I had always considered her.

"Now that I have promised to be good," she smiled, "will you come out and teach me how to play football really and truly like they do in America?"

I promised. It seemed to me much better that she should have an outlet for her energy, and I preferred to direct it elsewhere than in my direction.

That is how we came to have a football squad in Tamaloa. I organized two teams and made the overjoyed Princess quarterback of one of them. Quackenbush came and helped, and soon we had some thirty or forty young ruffians super-enthusiastic about the game. Quackenbush, it is true, taught his men the soccer game, and I the American, but that made little difference. Indeed, we arranged for a public match game between our teams—which we called the British Stars and the All Americans. Even the King wanted to play, but I showed him that football was a bit overstrenuous for his years and dignity and introduced him to golf instead. He proved an excellent and eager club-swinger, and soon became as much of a pest as Colonel Bogy himself.

CHAPTER XVI

HAVING provided thus for the entertainment of the royal family, I was free to go on with the building up of the greater Tamaloa. Peter had made remarkable progress with the New Amsterdam Theater, and when I saw that the building was going to be completed soon I began to rehearse my show. I called it "The Pink Widow," but it was a lot better than that. I wrote it myself from memory—only I had a great advantage over the original authors, because I was going to play to an audience that had never seen a show in its life. Can you imagine the kind of a musical comedy you could put together if you could use all Weber and Fields' gags, Bert Williams' stuff, Francis Wilson's best lines as far back as "Erminie" and select the music from anything and everything since "The Belle of New York?" I would like to play that show with a cast I could pick out at the Lambs any Sunday night when there is a gambol on. Anyway, it was some show. Every line, every melody, every bit of business in it, was the best of its kind that has been done for twenty years.

An ad' in *The Tamaloa Times* brought me an avalanche of chorus girls, and though they needed a lot of training, I finally made a fairly presentable chorus out of them.

I didn't have much trouble filling my cast of principals. The most difficult part, that of the principal comedian, was already filled. I intended to do that myself. The leading lady had to be the Princess. There was no question about that—not if I expected to live. If he would have been available, I would have cast Lalou for the villain, because he wouldn't have had to act any; but as it was I had to put Paiai in. I cut his part 'way down, but he made it nearly as long as mine by stuttering. Two minor comedy parts were played by a couple of gentlemen of the King's guard, called, I believe, Tali and Toulou. I named them *Colonel R. E. Morse* and *General Cussedness*. Both of them had lived so well at the King's expense that it had been years since they had seen their own feet.

In connection with the theater I did one thing for which the Princess never forgave me. That was the founding of the "Lambs." I erected a small clubhouse just around the corner from the theater and confined membership in it to members of the male sex. The very first day the club opened, the Princess started to go in, and the doorman had to send for me to keep from being murdered.

"This is a club for men, Bill," I explained. "Women are not supposed to come in here."

"Why not? Aren't women just as good as men?"

"Of course, of course; that's understood—but a woman's place is in the home."

Unconsciously I had introduced the subject of women's suffrage into an otherwise peaceable community. And that very afternoon while we were meeting to elect the King as shepherd of the flock, we were interrupted by having all the windows in the building broken with a shower of bricks. When we gazed out into the street, we discovered that the heavy portion of the population, dressed in white cheesecloth, an emblem of purity, I suspect, was having a parade through the village. They carried banners with the motto "Clubs for Women" painted on in large letters.

THE "Lambs" was a great adjunct to the quiet life of Broadway. Like its namesake, its doors never closed, and the bar ran from sunrise to sunrise. Even the Knickerbocker grill was closed at one o'clock, but at the "Lambs" you could find refreshment and companionship any time of the day or night.

I discovered that the South Sea Islanders were inveterate gamblers, and the card-room of the club was very popular. The King would sit there for many hours at a stretch, playing a game which closely approached poker. I wonder if the missionaries taught it to him. The King played a rotten game, but none of his subjects dared win anything from him, and so he thought he was pretty good.

CHAPTER XVII

THE day of the football game between the British Stars and the All Americans brought with it many visitors from the archipelago. Our grandstands were crowded. I was surprised to notice Lalou among our guests, surrounded with a small army of his retainers.

The game itself was a very tame exhibition. The English style of play was a good deal like croquet, and the scrub-team which I had put together an hour before time was called, punched holes in their defense that made it look like a sieve. Coach Quackenbush had taught his men some tricks in kicking that were very pretty, but there was nothing like the closely coördinated team work of the All American eleven. Even the coach confessed that we had the best of it, although he wouldn't admit that there was anything wrong with the soccer style of play.

For a long time during the first half I kept wondering what was missing from the picture to make it a typical football scene. There was the field, twenty-two people playing the game, a thousand or so upon the bleachers, linesmen, referee and umpire busily following the course of the ball. What was lacking?

All at once I knew. There wasn't any yelling. The audience had no way of giving vent to their enthusiasm; they didn't know how to cheer. Why, before each play you could hear the quarterback giving the signals; that's how quiet it was.

My heart leaped as I thought of the treat I had in store for these people. If they liked football, now how much more they would appreciate it when they could take part in a big contest by yelling their lungs out. I had an idea I could get actual noise out of that crowd, too.

AFTER the game, while I was in the training quarters with the team, telling them where they were wrong, Prince Lalou hunted me up. He greeted me pleasantly enough, although a trifle contemptuously. I could see that in his eyes I did not look much like a fighting man.

"My people play football," Lalou informed me, coming to the point at once.

"Good," I said with approval.

"Kill two men last week," he observed proudly.

"Do you play yourself?"

"Sometimes."

"Good—here is hoping."

"My people play with people of Tamaloa next week," he announced, issuing a challenge.

That was something that hadn't occurred to me. What should I answer? It would be as much as their lives were worth for our team to play against eleven men from Ateua. They were

heavier, taller and more powerful in every way than King Kandavu's subjects. Yet it was difficult to explain to their chief any reason for not meeting them in a friendly contest. He would think they were cowards.

I referred the matter to Princess Bill.

"Of course we will play them," she decided. "It will be good sport and a lot more fun than lining up against our own boys."

"But I'm afraid," I protested, "that the Prince means some harm. He has a nasty look in his eye, and I'll bet there is some trick about this."

"Nonsense!" Bill retorted. "Besides, what if he has? I'd rather play football with him than be married to him, any day."

So we accepted Lalou's challenge not without great misgivings on my part, but with joyful anticipation by the Princess and most of the squad.

I hurried over to the hotel and dressed for dinner. By the time I got down to the grill-room, the King was already there entertaining the visiting chief.

The King invited me to sit at his table. I would really have preferred to dine by myself, but a royal command must be obeyed in Tamaloa as well as in any other country; so I went over.

"Prince Lalou and I make arrangements for my daughter's wedding." Since he had been speaking it almost constantly, the King's English had improved considerably. "The wedding will be a week from to-day."

I WAS stunned. That the King really meant to sacrifice the poor kid seemed some way impossible, and I had felt all along that something would happen to stop it.

"The warship *Shandon Belle* ought to be back before then, bringing my wedding present," the King continued evenly.

"Wedding present not matter," interjected Lalou. "I want wife, not present."

My mind was turning over some expedient to delay the marriage.

"I was going to open the theater a week from to-day," I told the King.

"Good," the King ejaculated. "That will be fine for a wedding celebration. We'll have the marriage the next day after the opening."

"How about the football game?" I strove desperately to think up excuses.

Lalou dismissed that objection. "Play football same day get married—no trouble."

Before we got any farther with our dinner Princess Bill came in from a rub-down at the training quarters. She had on a simple sort of a tailored skirt and waist of very light material which she had adopted as a sort of an everyday costume. It was mighty becoming, although it made her look older.

The King told her about the arrangements for her wedding.

FOR a moment she held herself absolutely still. I remember she was unfolding a napkin at the time, and the pause came when she had it half open. For a second she was rigid, and her face paled perceptibly; then she caught her breath with a little laugh.

"Very well," she said. "What kind of soup did you order for me?"

No society leader in New York could have handled things better than she did, and I am sure the average American girl would have shown her feelings more clearly. As it was, she discussed everything but her own affairs, laughed and made jokes with me, listened respectfully to her fiancé and mothered the King in the way that daughters have with their fathers when their own mothers are dead.

After dinner, however, she professed to be sleepy and excused herself and went to her room.

The King took Lalou over to the Lambs.

I went along as far as the theater, where I stopped off to help Peter and the property man, who were having a little trouble constructing the property horse on which I make my entrance in the second act.

When I let myself out of the stage door, I found the taxicab pulled up in the alley.

"Who are you waiting for?" I inquired of the chauffeur.

"For you, sir." He touched his cap politely and opened the door.

"Oh—I suppose they want me at the club."

I climbed into the dark interior and sat down as the motor started.

I jumped as something stirred on the seat beside me. They say there are no snakes or wild animals on the island, but I couldn't remember it then.

"It's only me," laughed a voice, Princess Bill's, as she slipped her hand confidingly in mine.

"What are you doing out at this time of night?" I scolded after the fashion of a stern parent.

"I always go out as much as I like," she retorted. "Besides, it isn't 'this time of night,' yet." She mimicked my tone.

"Suppose Prince Lalou or some of his men should see you with me?" I was very sensible of Lalou's groundless jealousy.

The Princess laughed lightly. "That is why I called for you in the taxicab."

WHILE we were talking, the taxicab wheezed its weary way down Broadway as far as the pavement lasted, and then turned up a narrow trail leading toward the summit of the volcano. There was no one about, and the head-lights of the car revealed only the tangled tropic growth which decorated the hill.

A short distance up the hill the trail became so narrow that it was impossible for the taxi to proceed, and the Princess got out and motioned me to follow her.

She told the chauffeur to remain where he was for fifteen minutes so that we would have the benefit of his lights in making our way up the hill. Then he was to return to the Lambs to await the pleasure of the King and Lalou, whom he was not to tell of our journey.

Bill led the way, clambering over roots and weaving in and out among the vines. I followed her. She was wearing a soft white dress with a dull finish so that her zigzag progress in the shaft of light from the automobile reminded me of a white moth fluttering around a candle flame. After a short while the lights from the car ceased to help any, but Princess Bill had thoughtfully brought a couple of pocket flashlights, one of which she gave to me without comment, and by using them occasionally we were able to proceed fairly rapidly.

Halfway up the side of the volcano we paused to rest in an open space which commanded a view of the ocean.

"Haven't you had pretty near enough exercise?" I asked, feeling my collar to see if it was wilted. It was.

"I had plenty of exercise playing football this afternoon," she retorted. "You are the most inquisitive man I've ever met."

"At least I believe in taking precautions, Bill." I explained my attitude carefully, lest she misunderstand my motive. "They are sure to look for one or the other of us pretty soon, and if we are both gone, it will be hard to explain to Lalou."

"Neither he nor Father is apt to look for us. They are having a game of poker, and there is little chance of their quitting for hours."

"How do you know that?" I demanded. The last I had seen of her, she was supposed to be retiring for the night.

"Brisbane told me." Her manner was a trifle worried. "He called me up."

"Called you up?" I repeated. "Simply to tell you that your father was playing poker?"

"Not that alone. He said that Father was losing heavily. You know the kind of a game Father plays."

"But I don't see," I began, debating all this in my mind, "why, if your father is 'losing his socks,' as we say in the vernacular, you and I should be running up the mountain-side. Wouldn't it be wiser for me to go over to the Club and stop the game?"

"Not just now," Bill protested. "I first want to find out how much money Father has with him. Then we will know how serious it is. Come, we must be on our way."

WE STARTED to climb once more. I stifled the questions which occurred to me and saved my breath to

keep up with the Princess. She led the way by a circuitous path to the pagan temple where I had found her once before making the sacrifice of my dress trousers.

As we entered the black paved court which surrounded the stone deity, the moon rose over the eastern horizon and its first rays fell aslant the hideous face of the black god like a spot-light.

Princess Bill took hold of one finger of my hand the way she did when riding in the elevator.

"You aren't scared, are you?" I asked jokingly.

"No-o-o," she replied with a slight quiver in her voice, "but I am awful glad I brought you along. He couldn't possibly hurt you, because you don't believe in him even a little bit."

Wherein lies a philosophy of life and well-being. Only the things we believe in can harm us.

"Well, now that we are here, what is the plot of the piece?" I demanded harshly, partly to quiet Princess Bill's tremors and partly because I didn't care to look at that nightmare face myself for fear I might get the Willies.

"I am about to reveal to you a secret that is known only to the royal family of Tamaloa," Princess Bill began impressively. "No one knows that there is a treasure-chamber beneath the statue, except Father and I. It was built several hundred years ago, and the slaves who did it were all killed so that no one would know about it."

I was appropriately impressed.

There did not seem to be any signs of a treasure-chamber under the god Ai, but I was willing to be shown. As far as I could see, the flagstones of lava all seemed exactly alike, and I looked in vain for a ring which would disclose a trap-door.

"It takes two people to open the chamber," Princess Bill explained as we neared the statue. "You stand here." She placed me upon one of the flagstones, with both feet on the same slab facing the pedestal. Then she counted off a number of stones to the right and took up a similar position.

"Move forward when I do," she commanded; "keep the same distance; and whatever happens, be quiet."

I agreed, not that I expected anything to happen but because I was willing to oblige the Princess even if I had to stand on my head.

She began reciting something in a language I did not understand, presumably Maori, althought I have since had reason to suspect that it was a tongue older than that. At the end of each sentence, she would move from one flagstone to the one directly ahead of her and between her and the statue. Faithful to my instructions, I did the same.

We moved along quite a way in this fashion, and nothing occurred. I don't know exactly why, but I have to admit that the ceremony impressed me at the time. I suppose if I had understood what she was saying, the effect would not have been nearly that of the supernatural. At last we stood at less than arms' length from the base upon which the carven image stood. The Princess put forth a hand and touched the pedestal. I did the same.

She gave a slight push—in which I assisted her as soon as I saw what she was doing; and with no more effort than opening a folding bed, we swung the entire statue of Ai over on its side. The pedestal and the statue itself were hollow. I presume some ingenious arrangement of counterweights enabled one to move it thus easily.

BEFORE us in the place where the statue had rested was an open passage containing a stairway. The Princess unhesitatingly started below and motioned for me to follow her.

A dozen steps brought us to the bottom. I flashed my pocket lantern.

It was a sort of a stone-walled chamber or cellar of oblong shape, say fifteen feet across and twice as long as it was wide. It seemed perfectly dry, and the air was sweet.

At the end of the chamber were a number of circular hampers of woven bamboo, apparently very old.

Princess Bill went to each of these in turn and threw back the lid and cast her flashlight around inside and went on to the next.

I looked over her shoulder. They were all empty.

"It's worse than I expected." Princess Bill turned to me helplessly, letting the light flicker out.

"What's happened?" I asked.

"Father has taken the last of our treasure. It took a good deal to pay for the last cargo of the *Shandon Belle,* a great deal more than Captain Corbett sold our entire output of pearl-shells and copra for, and Father has taken all that remained to gamble with."

"There's only one thing to do," I decided, hastily galvanized into action by a dislike of seeing King Kandavu trimmed by the handsome thug from Ateua. "We must hurry back to the Club and stop the game if possible."

The Princess said nothing, and I reached out to touch her, because suddenly I felt alone, if you know what that means.

"Are you there, Bill?" I asked when my fingers touched nothing.

There was no answer.

I pressed the button on my flash-light. The walls of the room leaped at me out of the darkness, but there was no human being in sight.

I looked up the stairs, where a square of moonlight indicated the exit to the open air. As I did so, it was blotted out.

CHAPTER XVIII

WITH my electric torch in my hand I climbed up the stairs hastily. When I was on the top step, I was standing inside the pedestal of the god Ai.

This was some trick of Princess Bill's—a practical joke. I tried to push the statue over. It did not budge. It was locked in place as firmly as the doors of a vault in a bank.

"Bill," I shouted, "let me out."

Somewhere outside I heard a confused murmur that might have been her voice, but I could not distinguish any words.

I turned the light of the flash-lantern around the inside of the pedestal, looking for a concealed trap-door. There was none. The surface was of solid stone. On one side was a series of niches, one above the other, which seemed to be worn on the bottom sides. I looked up. There were more similar niches inside the heroic figure above me, which I believe I have said was hollow. Those holes in the rock had been used as a primitive sort of a ladder, or I missed my guess. Possibly there was some way of getting out up at the top. I climbed up, hanging on precariously until I got inside the figure, where I could brace my back against the opposite side as I climbed.

At the top was a hole on one side about six inches in diameter. At a convenient height to bring the face opposite that hole was a stone ledge, on which I stood. Through the hole I could see the stone court all around, and the forest beyond.

The utility of that hole struck me after a bit. Of course it was the mouthpiece through which the priests of the ancient religion had spoken the decrees which the ignorant people supposed came from the god Ai. I had heard of a similar device discovered in the ancient stone gods of Egypt.

Putting my face close to the hole, I yelled: "Bill—oh, Bill."

A scurry of feet drew my attention to the right in time to see a white dress disappear among the trees.

I shouted: "Come back, Bill; it's me."

The figure halted.

"Are you quite sure it's you?" she asked from the shelter of the trees.

"Yes, I am up here inside the statue," I answered, speaking as naturally as I could.

"All right, then." She returned reluctantly to the temple. "It's kind of scary around here, anyway, and your voice made me think that Ai was speaking."

"Why did you shut me in here?" I demanded with mock sternness. She hesitated. "Come, out with it."

"Well," she began, "I didn't really come up here to look for the treasure at all, because I knew Father had it all. I came up and helped him get it myself. What I really came for was to get you in a safe place where Prince Lalou couldn't find you."

I laughed. "Why should Lalou want to find me?"

"I don't know, exactly." The Princess climbed up on the pedestal on the outside and seated herself impudently in the stone arms of the image, so that her face was nearly level with mine. "All that I know is that I heard him try to buy you from Father at dinner this evening. He said he wanted to have you build a palace for him like the Knickerbocker, but I don't believe it."

"I didn't hear him say anything about buying me."

"He spoke in Maori."

"Oh!" In casting back over that conversation, I remembered that a great deal had been said in the native tongue. "But what do you mean by saying he wanted to buy me? Slavery has been abolished in the island, hasn't it?"

"Officially, yes. But the government doesn't know everything that happens."

"Well, I certainly thank you for wanting to keep me for yourself," I commented bitterly. "But why didn't you simply warn me and let me take care of my own skin? Why bring me all the way up the side of the mountain to tell me this?"

"Because I knew if I told you down below, the first thing you would do would be to go over to the Lambs and find out about it for yourself."

"That's what I am going to do, anyway," I retorted. "So all our long walk is for nothing, because we will have to go right down again."

Princess Bill laughed merrily and lighted a cigarette, scratching the match irreverently on the cheek of the god. "That's why I shut you in there, Pudgy," she explained. "Just because I knew that if I didn't, you would be out looking for trouble. I couldn't afford to have your beautiful self spoiled."

"But I am not going to stay in here," I said with determination.

"Pudgy, don't talk nonsense. You will have to stay there until Lalou goes home."

I snorted. "Nothing of the sort. Let me out immediately."

She pondered a moment. "Will you forgive me," she asked in a wheedling tone, "if I am willing to let you out?"

I considered a long time in order to give proper weight to my relenting. "Yes, Bill," I decided at last, "I will forgive you."

"That's nice," she returned, kicking Ai in the stone tummie with her heel as she swung her leg back and forth. "I am perfectly willing to let you out." She paused reflectively and then added as if it had just occurred to her: "But I can't do it because it takes two people to move the idol."

I swore under my breath and reached out an arm to punish that young imp. She leaned back quickly against the chest of her protector just out of my reach and laughed, a long, clear, ringing laugh such as would have gladdened the heart of Ai himself—if he had had any.

I could see I might just as well give up any hope of getting out in a hurry. It would take several hours for Bill to go down and get her father to help her open my cage—provided, of course, she was willing to do it. And by that time, I might just as well wait until morning, after the departure of my enemy.

"You see, you had better take it easy," said Bill, offering me her cigarette through the mouthpiece. "I will bring you something to eat after a while, and in the meantime you can sleep on the floor downstairs. It isn't very comfortable, but I can give you my dress for a pillow."

She started to take it off. I stopped her.

"I don't intend to sleep," I said crossly.

"Then I will stay and talk to you," she replied brightly. "I am not particularly sleepy, either."

"No you wont. The situation is serious enough, without making it any worse. You go home—that is, if you are not afraid all by yourself—and get into bed before anybody discovers you are missing. I can stand it to stay here all night if necessary. Then you come back to-morrow with help and release me when no one will think anything of your absence."

"That's a nice, sensible Pudgy," commended the Princess. "I knew you would be sensible about it as soon as

you understood. I suppose maybe I had better get back. Put out your hand, and I will give you some cigarettes."

I did so. She divided her supply with me. I put them in my pocket.

"Put out your hand again," she commanded.

"What for?"

"I will give you something else."

I extended my arm once more through the opening, thus of course cutting off my view of what might happen outside.

I felt my fingers grasped in both hands by Princess Bill, and before I could protest or draw back my arm, she raised them to her lips and kissed them lightly.

"That's to keep you company if you feel lonesome," she said softly and slid from the arms of the god, clambered down to the ground and disappeared.

OF course the fact that the Princess had broken through our relationship of friend to friend by committing the loverlike offense of kissing my fingers made me angry—but not very angry. Her lips had been too soft for that.

Apparently I was in for the night. And after a little further exploration of the chamber below, I returned to the top, where I could breathe the clear night air and look out across the moonlit clearing. I would have a long time to wait, I reflected, and settled myself as comfortably as possible, leaning against the old gentleman's backbone.

I was nearly asleep, standing up, when I straightened with a start. My eye had caught a movement at the edge of the clearing among the trees.

A figure detached itself from the darkness and shadows of the trees and walked slowly and hesitatingly in the direction of the image. It was carrying something, something heavy, too. As it came closer, it straightened up and surveyed the statue. It was the Reverend Mr. Quackenbush.

I nearly lost my footing with surprise. However, I was glad to see him, for I had thought of a way for one man to get me out—or at least a way that it might be worked. My scheme was to use a weight on one side approximately equal to that of a person, to hold down one of the flagstones, while a single man could stand on the other and push the statue over without assistance.

"Good evening, Mr. Quackenbush," I said pleasantly, not thinking that I wasn't in sight.

The only answer I got was a sharp crash as the missionary dropped the box he was carrying, and a yell as he disappeared into the shelter of the black woods.

I was more surprised at that than I suppose I had any reason to be. I presume that a voice out of nowhere in particular like that, calling a man by name, would scare anybody, especially if the surroundings were saturated with centuries of savage superstition.

Knowing my man, however, I was sure he would come back. And sure enough, it was not many minutes before I recognized the cautious step of the ecclesiastic.

He parted reluctantly from the protection of the trees, but once started across the open space, he came with the firm tread of a soldier who has resolved to sell his life as dearly as possible.

As he came nearer, I discovered that he was speaking. I listened a moment. The language he was using was Latin, and I recognized here and there a phrase from a high-church service. He would not have admitted it, but he was using an incantation to ward off the power of Ai.

I spoke to him again. He paid no attention. I spoke louder; I yelled: he only raised his voice and hurled Latin invective into the night air.

WHILE he shouted at the top of his lungs, he opened the black box which he had brought on his first trip, unwound something that looked like a piece of black string from inside of it, placed the box at the base of the statue and laid the twine out across the flagstones for a couple of yards from the base. I was so curious about what he was doing that I ceased trying to attract his attention, and followed every movement with eager attention.

When everything seemed placed to

his satisfaction, he fumbled in his pockets until he found a match, which he scratched on the heel of his shoe and applied to the end of the string. The string began to sputter and emit sparks.

Then I knew what he was up to. He had hinted once in a conversation with me that he was going to destroy the pagan temple some night, and this was his way of carrying out his plan. When I realized what was happening I bent all my efforts on a final shout, but it did no good. He said something in Latin, and turned and hurried away as fast as he could.

In helpless fascination I watched the fuse sputter; then I realized that as soon as a spark reached that black box, which undoubtedly contained powder, the god Ai was due to take a trip in the general direction of heaven with me as an unwilling passenger.

The fuse had burned about half its length before I was able to move. Then I scrambled down inside the statue and fell down the stairs to the chamber below.

In the few seconds that I had left for preparation, I overturned the hampers, piled them two deep and stretched myself at length between two lines of them.

I presume that the next five or ten seconds were the longest in my life. My heart seemed to pause between each beat. I was sure it stopped, although I imagine now that it was moving much faster than usual. A cold perspiration burst out on my brow, and I could hear drops of it hit the floor.

I just about decided that the fuse had gone out and was about to get up, when the floor heaved with a nauseating motion, there was a muffled roar, a sharp crack—and then I was overwhelmed with a mass of falling rocks, sand and dirt.

After about five minutes of waiting to see whether St. Peter was going to come and get me or not, I decided that probably I was not dead, and I raised my head to look around.

Above was the moonlit sky; around me were chunks of lava, arms and legs of the stone god from which I had been mercifully shielded by my bulwark of baskets. The treasure-chamber of Tamaloa and the temple of Ai had been reduced to a hole in the ground.

Thoughtfully, and giving thanks to whatever power it was that had protected me, I climbed out of the hole and started down the mountain-side.

I felt that I had a date to keep with Mr. Lalou.

CHAPTER XIX

ON Broadway I met Brisbane, who accompanied me to my room in the Knickerbocker. We found it in wild disorder—they had even searched the bed and clothes-closet for me. While I was getting into fresh clothes—I chose a tuxedo—and making myself presentable, I questioned Brisbane.

"Now tell me," I demanded: "The King is losing, I suppose."

Brisbane nodded gloomily. "Nobody could pay King Kandavu's I. O. U.'s but Rothschild."

I swore. "What's the idea?" I asked.

"You know how much chance the King has got playing poker even when it is strictly on the level."

"I know," I agreed. "Just the same chance that a Pittsburgh millionaire has with a show-girl. Go on with your story."

"Well, you can imagine how easy it was for Lalou to trim him by cheating a little."

"Cheating!" I exclaimed.

"Sure." Brisbane was more thoroughly accustomed to the Maori character than I. "The King was so easy that it wasn't any fun for Lalou to play straight, so he began to show how clever he was, by stacking the cards and holding out a few aces every time he got a chance."

I was indignant. "Why in the name of Mike didn't you stop him and show him up? In my country, when a man gets caught playing that sort of tricks, he either gives up all that he has won and apologizes or they send for the gentlemanly undertaker to come and get him."

Brisbane nodded thoughtfully, and a gleam of hatred flashed up in his eyes.

"That's what we'd like to do, but our hands are tied. Don't forget that Lalou represents the most powerful people around here, and that all the time he is playing, there are eight or ten of his warriors standing around the room with ugly-looking spears. They are his bodyguard, he says."

I finished knotting my tie and slipped into my dinner jacket. I stood before the dresser a moment, debating. Finally I opened one of the top drawers and took out a small automatic pistol and loaded it with a clip of ten cartridges.

It weighted down the side pocket of my dinner jacket, but unless you touched it, it was hardly noticeable.

"All ready," I said, giving a final shrug to my shoulders to fit them in the sleeves of the coat.

"What's the plan?"

"Is the paper put to bed for the night?"

"Not yet. I've spent too much time looking for you. There's about half a column that isn't even written yet. Shall I go and finish it?"

We were on the street by this time and stopped in front of *The Times* office. A dim light in the back room indicated that the assistant editor and circulation manager was puttering around the press, waiting for the main torch to come in.

I thought a moment. "I am going to need you over at the Club," I decided. "If Lalou has been pulling some fancy tricks, we will have to get back at him with something a little fancier, and I am going to want some help."

We talked for a few moments, arranging a plan of campaign; then I dismissed him, saying: "Have the kid get out the paper. Tell him to put a new head on that article on the tariff we ran last Monday and run it again. Nobody read it, anyway. Then come over to the Club."

Brisbane went into the *Times* building and I continued on my way to the Lambs.

AS I went in, the door-man took my hat and greeted me quietly. I thought he seemed rather apprehensive.

The reception-room through which I passed was deserted. The bar was apparently still occupied, for I heard voices from behind the screen which cut off a view of it from the street.

I recognized the speakers! One was old Colonel R. E. Morse, the fat comedian who was rehearsing a bit in "The Pink Widow" and incidentally understudying me in the leading part; the other was his side partner, General Cussedness.

I stepped on the other side of the screen and surveyed those fat old women coolly. They were sitting at a table in the corner of the room, each occupying an upholstered bench built into the wall, and leaning against each other in the angle so that there was no danger of falling over.

When Colonel Morse caught sight of me he paled perceptibly and looked as if he wanted to hide. The other recognized me with a laugh and giggled unrestrainedly.

"What's the idea?" I demanded. "What's so funny?"

"You are," said General Cussedness between roars of laughter. Then he turned to his companion. "He don't know who he belongs to yet."

A sudden fear contracted my heart.

"What do you mean?" I demanded, taking a step toward the fat ruffians. Colonel Morse hit the table with his fist.

"I will tell you what has happened to you, Mr. Daniels. You've been lost. The King lost you on a bet. Funniest thing I ever heard of." He attempted to hit the table again with his fist, but struck the edge of the glass instead and emptied the contents into his lap.

"Help," he murmured in a frightened tone of voice, "I am stabbed!"

I left them quarreling and went down the corridor to the card-room.

THE door was shut, but wisps of stale tobacco-smoke floated through the casing. I went in. The only light was a shaded cluster of bulbs over a large table. Overhead hung strata of smoke of varying degrees of density. Around the table sat Lalou, one of his head lieutenants and the King. That there had been others in the game was testified by vacant chairs on either side of the King.

On the table were heaped all the poker-chips in the club, most of them standing in stacks in front of the visitors. Beside the chips was a pile of gold, consisting chiefly of huge, dull, old-looking pieces with the heads of forgotten monarchs adorning the obverses. A basket which they had obtained from the pool-room and which was ordinarily used for keeping pool-balls stood at Lalou's elbow, full of what at first I took to be marbles or moth-balls. A little later I realized with a start that they were pearls, any one of which would have been worth a fortune.

An intense silence dominated the room. The warriors who stood like sentinels in back of the visiting prince kept a rigid attention on the table. When the door clicked behind me, no one even looked up.

I slipped into one of the seats beside the King. Lalou regarded me with a cynical smile. Nothing was said until the hand was played out, when I signified my intention of sitting in the game.

"You belong to me now," stated Lalou.

I turned to the King. He was apologetic but hesitatingly confirmed his opponent's statement.

"I have had a run of bad luck," he explained.

"Well, this is where your luck is going to change," I stated confidently. "I am going to play for you for a while."

"But he hasn't anything left to play for," objected Lalou, indicating the table in front of the King, which had been swept bare by the last hand.

"Yes, he has," I retorted—and produced the automatic revolver from my coat pocket. I had not intended to let them know that I had it, but I knew that a sure way to appeal to the cupidity of the South Sea Islander was to offer him firearms. The sale of them is supposed to be forbidden by the government; therefore the owner of the veriest old flintlock is regarded a fortunate individual indeed.

"What is it?" Lalou regarded the gun indifferently. He had never seen an automatic before, and it did not look much like any weapon he was accustomed to.

"It is a revolver—pistol," I explained.

He shrugged his shoulders and grunted. "No good."

"You are mistaken," I insisted politely. "I will show you." I took it from the table and pointed it up toward the outside wall of the room.

"See that spot on the wall?" I inquired.

"Yes," he assented.

I pulled the trigger ten times in succession. Where once had been a spot was now a circular hole in the wall. I had shot all around it.

I take no particular credit for marksmanship. The new automatics make experts out of amateurs, and of course in the old days I had had considerable revolver practice at West Point. The exhibition was a cheap grandstand play, but I think it was worth it.

The island chief's eye glistened covetously as it rested on the weapon.

"You play," he said briefly. I received a stack of chips in exchange for my automatic, which he carefully placed, still smoking, at his right hand.

I BROKE the seal on a new deck of cards which I had brought from the office and tore up and threw away the one they had been playing with. I intended to have a couple of honest deals anyway, as I figured it would take them that long at least to begin holding out high cards.

I lost the first hand. I considered this a good omen. I had never been known to quit winner when I took the first pot. The second hand was Lalou's deal, and I stayed out of it automatically, not caring to draw to a busted straight.

While we were playing that hand, the door opened and Brisbane walked in quietly. He took a position in back of Lalou's chair.

Brisbane was a bad mascot for the savage chief. Lalou lost practically one out of every three hands, and as I did not play on the other two, no money shifted hands except between him and his own man. By losing my ante almost invariably on Lalou's deal, I

always let him die with the cards stacked against me. It was of no particular avail for him to deal me a good hand and himself a slightly better one if I would not bet against him. Several times I threw down full-houses and straights without risking a nickel on them. This must have puzzled the dealer considerably, but he could make no comment without admitting that he knew what I held.

On my own deal, which I knew was honest, I won all the big pots.

The way it was done was this:

After everybody had drawn cards, I always glanced casually at Brisbane, who stood in back of the visitors, smoking cigarettes. If he puffed once, I knew that Lalou had nothing better than one or two pairs. Two puffs meant threes; three was a straight or a flush, depending on whether or not he inhaled the smoke, and taking the cigarette from his mouth, let me know that the enemy was pinning his faith to a full-house. For anything better than that, Brisbane scratched a match and lighted a fresh smoke.

It was absurdly simple, and after I had worked it a few times I had quite a bit of capital piled on my side of the table.

I had no scruples against winning from Lalou by any means I could lay a hand to. According to Brisbane, he had fleeced the gentle old King by every trick in the dishonest gambler's pack, and whatever he got was coming to him. Besides, I had to win if I expected to live.

LALOU was a bad loser, and I imagine the fits of temper he stifled during the game would have killed me by sheer venom if they had been let loose all at once. As it was, his sole vent was whispered curses. Those and the rattle of chips on the table were the only sounds in the room. The King was asleep. So were Lalou's guards, at last, reposing in disorderly array on the floor.

It took a long time of cautious playing to win back what the King had lost. The daylight filtering in around the drawn shades and through the hole I had shot in the wall found us still at it. Two nearly naked brown men, along with myself and Brisbane, were awake; all the rest of the company were abandoned to Morpheus.

The air tasted flat and bitter. Stale cigar-butts littered the floor. My head felt as if it were miles away from my body, which in a sort of impersonal way I knew to be cold. I had more than half of the cash, however, and all the pearls, on my side of the table.

It was my deal.

After the draw, I held three queens and a pair of kings. I glanced at Brisbane. He puffed twice. Lalou was evidently trusting to three of a kind.

I bet a mess of blue chips.

Lalou saw the bet and raised me.

I came back.

We whipsawed back and forth aimlessly for quite a while. We had all reached that stage when money means very little and you hate your opponent for breathing the way he does, or because he is a trifle cross-eyed, or because the cards are sticky, or for any one of a hundred reasons.

Finally every bit of cash which Lalou possessed was in the middle of the table. This was the moment I had been waiting for.

"I'll bet all the rest of the entire King's treasure against my freedom," I offered. "We'll make that a final pot and call for a show-down."

Plainly Lalou was reluctant to take a chance of losing me.

"Why not want to work for me, Missi Daniel'?" he inquired. "Build plenty fine palace for Lalou's new wife."

I explained that I expected to return to my own country soon and preferred not to undertake any more construction jobs. Finally the idea of winning back so much of the treasure in front of me persuaded him, and he agreed to a jack-pot.

For the first time since I had sat down he and his subordinate exchanged glances.

I began shoving stacks of chips, the basket of pearls and handfuls of gold coins into the center of the table.

All at once I looked up, startled by the strange behavior of Brisbane. He was lighting matches one after another.

Fear tightened on my heart. I knew what had happened.

While I had been busy putting up my wager, Lalou had managed to palm an extra card into his hand, making his threes into four of a kind.

The look on Brisbane's face would have made me laugh under any other circumstances. He thought I was lost. So did the grinning Lalou.

FOR a moment I was inclined to agree with them. My mind leaped nimbly to a review of Lalou's possible hand. His four of a kind could not be kings or queens, because I held three of one and two of another. They were probably not jacks, because I remembered to have discarded one before the draw. The betting was better than even, that he was holding four aces.

I had no chance to better my hand enough to beat him even by cheating. Then an idea occurred to me, and aided by a lucky diversion caused by Brisbane's accidentally stepping on a prostrate guard, I was able to drop one of my queens and substitute another card which I had held out from another deck. Thus the actual strength of my hand was only two pairs against Lalou's four of a kind.

Lalou laid his hand on the table.

As I supposed, he had four aces.

"Good?" he questioned, starting to rake in the pot.

"No!" I retorted as I threw down my cards. "There is a mistake somewhere."

The fifth card in my hand was another ace!

"See," I said, putting an accusing finger on the ace. "There are five aces in the deck."

Lalou looked at me open-mouthed.

"Do you mean that I—" he began, angrily rising.

Brisbane jumped forward.

"I mean nothing," I replied. "The deck is doubtless imperfect. We will call for a new deck and deal a hand face up on the table to see who wins. That is surely fair."

Lalou talked with his lieutenant, who seemed to argue with him, pointing frequently to the sleeping King. At last the chief consented.

By that time Brisbane had secured a new deck of cards with the seal unbroken.

I asked him to shuffle them and deal out two hands, one in front of each of us, face up, so that neither of us would have an opportunity to touch the cards.

THE poor boy's hands trembled as he riffled the pasteboards; and as he began to deal, the perspiration started out on his brow. We all stood up, the better to see each card as it fell.

The first card to Lalou was a nine of hearts. My first was a deuce of spades. Lalou's second was another nine—clubs this time.

Mine was a five of clubs.

At the end of the fourth draw Lalou still had only a pair of nines, but I was in worse shape yet, as my hand read: deuce of spades, four of hearts, five and six of clubs—not a pair in the lot.

Brisbane turned the nine of diamonds and laid it in front of Lalou. The savage greeted it with an exclamation of pleasure, and Brisbane gave me a sorrowful glance that told me he would have eaten the card if he had known in time what it was.

"Turn another card for me," I said.

He did. It was the three of diamonds. For a moment none of us realized what it meant.

Even Lalou had his hand on the jack-pot before he saw. That three filled my straight, open in the middle. I had won.

With an exclamation of rage, Lalou grabbed the automatic revolver and aimed it at my head, pulling the trigger rapidly as he had seen me do. It only clicked.

"It's empty." I laughed with relief at the suspended strain. "That's why I fired so many shots into the wall," I explained.

Lalou hurled the gun into a corner of the room and reached for his kris, but before he could make any further move, his lieutenant and Brisbane disarmed him and led him struggling from the room.

I called an attendant and had him help me carry the money and jewels to the club safe. After it was locked away, we put the King to bed without arousing him, and I walked home.

ON my way to my room I stopped at Bill's door and rapped.

In a few moments a voice inside inquired: "What is it?"

"It's me!"

The door flew open. Princess Bill, in the laciest of night-dresses, with hair hopelessly tousled, clutched at my shoulders.

"You?" she demanded. "How did you get out? But don't stop to tell me now. You must hide. There is danger."

"No, there isn't," I assured her. "I'll tell you all about it later. I thought you might sleep better if you knew that your father has won back all he lost."

"Including you?" she questioned.

"Including me," I replied.

"I'm glad," was all she said, but her eyes shone with a light I had never seen before on land or sea.

I went to my room thoughtfully. I hadn't known that there were any night-dresses like that in the cargo of the *Shandon Belle*.

Before I went to bed, I made a note and pasted it on my mirror so I would not fail to read it when I woke up.

It read:

Call meeting of Board of Governors and prohibit gambling in the Lambs.

CHAPTER XX

THE next morning I took Peter and a gang of men up the side of the volcano to the excavation which had once been the temple of Ai and started them on the work of establishing a wireless station. The wireless apparatus furnished by the mail-order company was an amateur affair, and I doubted whether it would have any considerable range. Still, it was worth trying. I had our head electrician run a telephone connection between the wireless station and the central office in the village. I put the station in charge of my other cloak-room boy, who by reason of his office automatically assumed the title of Jack Binns.

Being a cloak-room boy seems to be great training for almost any position in life. I suppose a lad who learns to outwit his elders the way they have to, necessarily becomes extraordinarily alert. At any rate, Binns learned the wireless code in a very short time from a book of instructions which came with the apparatus, and soon after the wireless tower was completed, he began sending out calls broadcast over the Pacific.

Only once or twice did he pick up answers from ships and they were invariably headed in the wrong direction. I do not imagine that many of the South Pacific traders carry wireless operators, and even if they do, the Island of Tamaloa is so far out of the track of Australian commerce that very few vessels passed within the limited reach of our waves. Nevertheless it made me feel somehow more in touch with home and civilization to have that spark constantly reaching out into the air for tidings of what was going on in the world.

It was a great help to Brisbane too. While he didn't get any actual news over it, it gave him a reasonable basis for using the verb *allege* until it nearly wore out. If some of the things had really happened in the world that were printed in *The Times* under the head of telegraph news, I would have felt worse about being out of the thick of things. Brisbane would have made a better Sunday editor than Jules Verne.

Rehearsals for the show were coming on fairly successfully. I did not let the company know this, as that is supposed to be bad policy on the part of the producer, but I was fairly well satisfied with the results of my efforts.

On the first day that I rehearsed the dialogue of the piece, I had the King sit well down in front where I could watch him, for I wanted to see what sort of comedy impressed him the most. I watched him carefully from the wings before I made my entrance. He sat stolidly through the opening dialogue like a regular New Yorker. Then the two side-splitting sub-comics, Colonel Morse and General Cussedness, came on in their (to them) excruciating specialty. Not a wrinkle of amusement disturbed the placid features of their monarch.

I was a trifle surprised. The King showed more discrimination than I had expected.

At the end of their scene the General and the Colonel came off in disgust.

"Gee, the book's rotten," muttered the General.

"Punk," echoed the other. "There aint a laugh in my part."

I moved out of hearing and directed the work of a chorus which had just made its entrance to sing a number led by the Princess. After that song, I made my entrance, just as I had done it hundreds of times to howls of merriment in New York.

While I delivered the first few gags, which were supposed to be the funniest lines Harry B. Smith ever wrote, I watched the face of the King. Not a ray of understanding illumined the mask, not a smile disturbed the smoothness of his cheek, nary a twinkle in that staring eye.

At the end of the rehearsal I went to my room discouraged and sat on the edge of my bed in deep gloom. My brain kept puzzling over my failure, because the King was ordinarily an easy person to amuse, and laughed at the most trivial things. I tried to think of the things that amused him most.

At last I hit it. It was in the old marquee down on the beach where his phonograph was installed. Every day he would sit there for hours playing over and over again a half-dozen so-called ministrel records and rolling off the throne with merriment. No matter how often he heard the moss-covered gags, it seemed to make no difference with his ability to laugh at them.

With added interest in life I took a notebook and pencil and went to the marquee. There I found one of the records, labeled "Our Own Minstrels, Number One Hundred and Six." I put it in the machine, wound her up, turned her loose and sat down with pencil poised ready to take down whatever came out. After the preliminary grinding and the opening chorus were over I heard the metallic voice of the interlocutor address Mr. Bones with the time-worn query:

"Who was that lady I saw you walking down the street with, Mr. Bones?"

Then Mr. Bones gave the side-splitting reply, "That wasn't no lady; that was mah wife."

I took it down word for word. It was to be the first line I would speak after the applause had died away on my entrance in "The Pink Widow."

CHAPTER XXI

ON the opening night of "The Pink Widow," I didn't bother to go home for dinner. I was too busy with Peter arranging the last details of the properties and scenery. Peter hadn't been in bed for something like three days. I had a sandwich sent over from the hotel, which I ate in my own dressing-room. When I came back on the stage, it was dark and quiet.

The scene had been set for the first act. I turned on one light. The scene was a fairy palace all covered with tinsel and gold, with a velvet-carpeted stairway at the back as broad as an ordinary room and reaching up to a wide landing eight or ten feet above the stage level. On these steps, spread limply, face down, was the uncouth figure of Peter, clad in patched and faded overalls, snatching a few seconds' slumber before the trying duties of the evening commenced. I let him sleep. He had earned it.

When the people began to come in,—the actors, I mean,—I lowered the drop-curtain and turned on the lights in the dressing-rooms. They were rather a subdued crowd, and I missed the laughter and gayety which usually accompanied any gathering of the natives.

After I had noticed the gloomy expression on half a dozen of my thespians I asked one of them, a little dancing-girl, what had happened.

"We are scared to death," she answered quaveringly. "I've got a funny feeling in my knees. They seem as if they were kind of loose and would double up any minute. Do you suppose there is anything serious? Maybe you had better look."

I laughed. "You've got stage-fright," I told her, and sent her on her way to dress.

That's what was the matter with all of them. Can you imagine an entire company of nearly one hundred people all in that panicky condition which has no rival for uncomfortableness except seasickness?

WHEN I emerged from my dressing-room ready for the first act, a good many of the people were already on the stage, strolling about restlessly in an agony of excited apprehension.

Chorus-girls in tights and spangles fought with one another for the privilege of looking through the peep-hole in the curtain at the assembling audience. I brushed a few broilers aside and took a look through the curtain myself. The house was half filled already with an expectant throng of virgin first nighters.

As I turned away from the peep-hole, Princess Bill came out of her dressing-room. She had never looked more regal in her life. She had on very little make-up. I had warned her against overdoing it. Her coloring was such that she needed only a little heightening to be perfect before the footlights. Her dress had been made under my own supervision by the cleverest needlewoman on the island, and embodied some advanced styles that haven't reached New York even yet. Possibly it is just as well that they haven't, because no one without a figure like Princess Bill's could wear them to advantage.

She came to me for criticism.

"You look absolutely stunning—but stop licking the make-up off your lips," I admonished.

"I didn't know I was. I guess I am scared." She laid her fingers in my palm. They were cold as ice and shook with little tremors of excitement.

"I guess you are," I returned. "What are you scared of?"

"I don't know. If I did, I don't think I would be afraid."

A few minutes more of this panic all around me, and I would have had stage-fright myself. "Clear the stage for the first act," I ordered. "Opening chorus!"

With scurrying feet they crowded to the wings. When I was alone on the stage I took a last look around. Everything seemed all right. I ordered the electrician to turn on the footlights; then I walked over to the right-hand side of the stage facing the audience and gave the signal to raise the curtain.

As the girls came running on for the opening chorus, there was a burst of applause led by the ushers, whom I had trained in the gentle art of boosting. For a moment the girls didn't know what to do. They had never heard the sound before. Then the significance of the appreciation struck them, and they smiled like a company of cherubim and went to their work with a vim that surprised even me.

THE first few trying moments over, the thing began to go fairly well for a first performance. All went well, that is, except the book. The comedy did not take hold, and the lines of Colonel Morse and the General were greeted with depressing silence. Evidently the King had represented the taste of the entire population in the matter of appreciation of comedy.

With sad misgivings I got into the box in which I was to be carried on the stage and kissed myself good-by, so to speak. If I didn't make them laugh, I wouldn't dare show myself at the Lambs.

I was carried on in impressive silence. The dialogue while they were opening the box to release me was received with respectful attention. When I stepped from the box, a buzz of conversation told me that they recognized me and were telling each other about it. Then

from far off I heard the voice of Colonel Morse addressing me.

"Who was that lady I saw you walking down the street with yesterday?"

Something inside of me automatically emitted the reply:

"That wasn't no lady; that was my wife."

The effect was deafening. I was stunned by the outburst of laughter which greeted the moth-eaten jape.

Those in front began to laugh first; then those a little further back took it up; next the middle of the house began to see the joke; then the mirth rolled in a wave until it struck the back row and then rolled back, gathering force as it went, until the entire audience was in an uproar.

It certainly was a stroke of genius digging up that ancient comedy from the phonograph records. After I had sprung half a dozen rickety wheezes right off the records the audience got accustomed to laughing at everything I said, and if I had mentioned out loud that it would probably be a nice day to-morrow, I believe they would have rolled off their seats with delight. The rest of the first act was a triumphal progress.

Between the acts Brisbane came back with a request from the King, who was sitting in a box. Kandavu wanted me to be sure and use the joke about walking down the street with a lady again in the second act.

Brisbane, of course, was the dramatic critic of *The Times*. I had told him that he was expected to write a review of the performance for the morning paper.

He was enthusiastic.

"This certainly is a good show," he raved.

"Sh," I whispered, looking around; "don't let anybody hear you say that."

"Why not?"

"They would think you weren't a dramatic critic. If you like it, keep it to yourself. Are you feeling all right? Did you enjoy your dinner?"

"Sure," he replied, mystified.

"That's too bad. No regular dramatic critic should feel well or have a good digestion. Dyspepsia is the greatest asset a play-reviewer can have."

In the second act we suffered a reaction from overconfidence, and soon after the curtain went up, forefingers began to go up in the air, meaning that somebody had forgotten a line. I was so busy prompting them that I had no time to get nervous myself.

Pretty soon the audience began to notice the raised fingers, but they thought it was part of the business of the play, and they laughed so heartily at it that when I was on the stage I kept doing it myself. Soon the players got into their stride again. The audience was with us, and with this in our favor we carried the performance to what I freely admit was a triumphal conclusion.

CHAPTER XXII

AFTER the performance the King gave a supper-party to the company at the Knickerbocker.

The first act of the King when he entered was to make a speech to the assembled crowd about the success of the show, which he said was due to the untiring efforts of one man, and so on. I felt rather embarrassed as soon as I knew he was talking about me, and would have gone out into the lobby to buy some cigarettes if he had not stopped me at the door.

"Donald Daniels," he said with dignity, "I wish to make you the only return which lies in my power."

He took from his pocket a box which he opened, disclosing therein a large disk of yellow gold roughly hammered into the shape of a medal. This was attached to a ribbon, by means of which he hung it around my neck.

"By this insignia," continued the monarch, who had robbed the dictionary to get that word, "I hereby create you Lord High Comedian of the Island of Tamaloa, with the privilege of wearing a silk hat whenever you want to."

Wild applause greeted the presentation.

The King gave a signal for silence and went on: "Since the conclusion of the performance, I have had the royal jewelers marking this medal with the sentiment which really is the cause of

your being raised to this office. I trust you will never forget it."

After I had made a halting reply, because I am never good at extemporaneous speaking and because I was really touched by the gratitude of the old king, I took my seat at the table once more and examined the chunk of gold which hung around my neck. I wondered what the engraving was that he had referred to.

On one side I read: *"Who was that lady I saw you walking down the street with yesterday?"*

I didn't need to turn the medal over to know what was on the reverse.

I'm prouder of that roughly carved piece of hammered gold than any decoration I own—and I have a couple from the monarchs of countries at least ten thousand times as great as Tamaloa.

ABOUT one o'clock the morning edition of *The Times* was on the streets. Brisbane himself brought an armful of them over to the Knickerbocker while the party was in progress. Everyone turned eagerly to the dramatic criticism. For ten minutes no sound was heard in the restaurant save an occasional rustle of paper. The first line of the criticism read:

> When Hamlet made his immortal remark to the effect that something was rotten in the state of Denmark, he must have just been reading the book of "The Punk Widow."

I could have hugged Brisbane for that lead. It sounded like the regular thing. In the absence of Alan Dale I could not have asked for anything that would give me more of a "Tuesday morning" feeling than that notice.

The criticism went on:

> The theme of the opera is that women have two legs. Three dreary hours are devoted to the exposition of that idea. A more thoroughly frank appeal to that class of undesirables known as "rounders," "men-about-town" and "Johnnies" has never been seen on Broadway, and respectable people will show their opinion of such a policy on the part of the management by staying away.

There was a great deal more in the same vein. Before the King had finished reading the article, he laid the paper down and looked around for Brisbane.

"What do you want of him?" I inquired.

"I'll have him hung for this."

"No, nothing of the sort," I remonstrated. "This is the best kind of a notice we could get. A show roasted by the papers as indecent will get every loose dollar in town."

The King did not believe me.

"Wait," I exclaimed. "I'll prove it. Get your hat and come with me."

PRINCESS BILL invited herself to join us—arm in arm we strolled down Broadway to the Amsterdam Theater and Roof Garden. Half a block from the theater we were obliged to go out into the middle of the street in order to get around a crowd of men who were standing in line. We followed the line. It ended at the box-office of the theater, which would not be open until nine o'clock the next morning. Nearly every man in the line had a copy of *The Times* in his hand.

As we walked back to the hotel, a thoughtful silence fell upon us. The King was puzzling out the reverse-English of theatrical press-agenting.

As we neared the entrance on Forty-second Street, the Princess asked: "I noticed on the call-board at the theater that you have scheduled a rehearsal for ten o'clock to-morrow morning. What is that for?"

"You needn't bother about that," I explained. "I don't expect you to come to it. I'm just going to rehearse your understudy so that she can go on in your place to-morrow night."

"Go on—in my place?" Bill echoed, amazed. "No one is going on in my place."

"Certainly," I assured her unthinkingly. "You can't play the part any more."

"Why not?"

"You're to be married to-morrow."

A sharp sound like a gasp marked the intake of breath in the slight figure beside me.

In a moment she steadied herself.

"I had forgotten it," she said simply.

CHAPTER XXIII

WE always had our football practice and games rather late in the afternoon, because it was not so apt to be hot then. But on the next day the crowd began to assemble early, and by one o'clock not a seat was left in the bleachers on either side. Not only had the inhabitants of Tamaloa turned out to a man to watch our contest with the team from Ateua, but at least two thousand visitors arrived to take part in the double celebration attending the football game and Princess Vililiti's wedding. I had been so busy with rehearsals at the theater that I had not had a chance to look over the visiting team, but I went to the field with misgiving in my heart.

The gridiron was like the bottom of a huge basin with sloping sides of dusky humanity. The spectators on our side of the field were dressed in European fashion—chiefly in white on account of the weather. The other side of the field was brown of varying shades.

I went to the training quarters of the home team. In light jerseys and scantily padded football trousers our boys were gathering around the Princess listening to a final speech. When she had finished I went over to her.

"What's the meaning of this madness, Bill?" I said, indicating her football togs. She was dressed just like the rest of the team. "Surely you don't intend to play!"

"Surely I do," she retorted. "I wouldn't miss this game for anything."

"But you are going to be married this evening. What if you should get hurt?"

"Well, what if I should?" She looked up at me quizzically.

"You are talking nonsense, Bill."

"No, I am not." Her chin set defiantly although she smiled in my face. "If I didn't play, our side would be up against it for a quarterback."

What she said was true, of course. We had no other players who had her capacity for generalship.

"If you will stay out of the game," I offered, "I'll take your place. I may not be as quick as you are, or as light on my feet, but you have to admit that I am heavier."

"Nothing doing," she retorted in the vernacular which was the one part of her education she owed to me and not to the missionary. "I am going to play this game myself, and even if I were not, I would rather have anyone in the world take my place than you."

I looked at her sharply. "Why?"

"What sort of a chance do you think you would have of coming out of a scrimmage alive if you ever lined up against Lalou after what happened at the Lambs?"

So that was it! I had to admit that probably she was right. I did not believe that any minor considerations of rules or officials would deter the fighting chief from laying me out.

I went back to the field again as a shout told me that the visiting team had arrived for practice.

MY heart sank as I looked at that husky set of brown ruffians gamboling around the field with the ball. They had scorned the protection of padded clothing, and their bodies gleamed in the sunlight. The explanation of that flashed over me after a few moments of thinking. They had oiled themselves as wrestlers do in order to make it harder to tackle them.

They averaged half a head taller than our men and were proportionately broad. At their head, and apparently one of them, was Lalou himself, as handsome and straight a figure of an athlete as I ever saw, hard of muscle and trim of leg and flank like a racehorse.

After they had monkeyed around the field for five minutes, the strains of music in the distance told that our own team was coming. How a band approaching thrills you! It always brings a smell of sawdust and the menagerie to my nostrils.

On our side of the field the figure of a young man in white trousers and white jersey vaulted over the fence and took a position where everybody in the bleachers could see him. He placed a megaphone to his lips, and at a word from him the crowd rose to its feet.

He held his arm out straight for a moment to the right and turned his head until he could see the glint of the sun on the instruments of the band as they entered the gates of the enclosure. Then he started to swing his arm across his body from right to left.

With the first movement of the arm, a slow, deep roar leaped from the bleachers like a mighty wave breaking on the beach. The arm swung back—another roar. It was a sound to carry your soul on high to ride before it, like an aëroplane before a friendly gale.

The roars continued; the young man's arm swung more rapidly; the slow, deep booms became short, snappy crashes, a little quicker each time, like a locomotive gathering headway. Then when it was going so fast that the young man could not move to keep up, it ended with an ear-splitting "rebel yell."

After the vibrations of the yell rolled away, the band was heard playing unconcernedly through the riot, "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight." And after them, soberly like gladiators going into the arena, our boys marched to their places, Princess Bill proudly leading them.

THE first ten minutes of play gave us the keynote of our opponents' system. There were no tricks, practically no attempts to gain by end runs, punts or passes. It was straight line-bucking from start to finish, hard pounding on our center and guards.

Our team was able to keep them from scoring by holding them from large gains, and then when the ball was in our possession kicking out of danger, but it was an expensive game for us.

After nearly every play, when the mess was untangled, one of our boys would be left still and breathless on the field, and the trainers would have to be called out to shock a little life into him with cold water and a sponge.

Our right guard was the first one to be seriously injured. They carried him off with a broken shoulder-blade. I sent in another man.

The spectators on our side settled down soberly to the business of cheering. After each play, whether we held or lost, a crash of encouragement went up from the bleachers. At other times they were tensely silent. In the lulls you could hear the quarterbacks barking signals.

On the side-lines our substitutes were keyed up to a high pitch of excitement and sat shivering, although the day was too warm to be comfortable. In the royal box midway up the bleachers, the King in his excitement plucked the tail-feathers out of the new fall bonnet of a lady in front of him, and she never noticed it until she got home.

Our center was the next victim, and the left end followed him shortly from the field. After each play my heart stood still in my mouth until I saw the lithe figure of the Princess spring from the ground and begin yanking her men to their feet like a boy setting up pins in a bowling alley. She was limping a little, and her face was covered with dirt, but her energy was unabated.

The end of the first half found us still unscored on, although half of our boys who had started in with the kick-off were out of the game. Their suits had been taken off them, and other men were putting them on.

When the Princess came off the field she grinned at me through a grime-covered face.

"We held 'em," she said soberly.

"Yes," I admitted, "but it's going to be harder next half. Our boys are getting tired. Besides, we've used up our heaviest linemen. The subs we've got left are so light they can walk right over them."

She agreed thoughtfully. "We've got to do something," she admitted.

THE enemy came on the field for the second half leaping in the air and turning handsprings with insulting disregard for wasted strength. They were apparently not exhausted in the least by the strenuous work of the first half.

Our band still played bravely, and the crowds greeted the players as noisily as before, but the note of enthusiasm was replaced with one of prayerfulness.

The whistle blew, and with a *pung* the Princess kicked off. The ball soared in the air, lighted and nestled in the

arms of a glistening giant from Ateua. The ends and tackles closed in, and with a dull thud the two lines leaped to the middle of the field. The play was on with the same grueling tactics as before.

One of our half-backs broke his leg in the first five minutes of play, and I looked around for some one to send in. I cast my eye up and down the line of slender striplings who crouched ready to risk their young necks in the fight and implored me with tear-filled eyes to let them go in.

I was about to pick out one of them at random as there was very little choice as to weight and skill between them, when a bulky figure entered the gate at our corner of the field and trotted lumberingly toward me. Whoever it was, he wore a football suit a trifle too small for him and seemed prepared for trouble. My heart leaped for joy. The width of the man promised an unshaken bulwark against those mad rushes of the enemy. I couldn't think of anyone on the island as broad and thick as that except—

It was!

With a smile, the Reverend Stanley Quackenbush nodded to me in business-like fashion.

"I am all ready," he said.

"Ready for what?" I asked, still unable to believe my eyes.

"To go in," he said, and then added simply: "It's a case of have-to, isn't it?"

I considered quickly. That missionary certainly was a good sport. Here was a man old enough to be my father who made no bones about discarding his dignity and getting into a contest because he thought he was needed. I take off my hat to him even now whenever I think of it. My mind was made up instantly. If he could do it, so could I.

"Do you think English football will be much use against the way they are bucking the line?" I questioned doubtfully.

"No, I hardly think so," he smiled, "but I don't intend to play English football. I have been watching your game, and I know enough to play it fairly well —good enough, at least, to help stop all the plays they know. Any man who can lie down and let them trip over him is skillful enough to block that kind of play."

I slapped him on the shoulder. "You're on. Get in there; I will be with you in less than five minutes."

HE trotted out on the field, and I hurried to the dressing-room. On my way, I ran into Peter, who was inspecting the supports of the grandstand.

"I am going to need you, Peter," I said, "—that is, if you think you could stand it to play football with that bum foot of yours."

"Sure," said Peter laconically, a light of enthusiasm lighting his face. "I can do anything anybody else can."

"Come on, then." We found a couple of suits and got into them as quickly as possible.

From the bleachers implored cries of "Hold 'em," spurred us on to all the speed of which we were capable. Then a crashing yell and a deadly prolonged silence told us that another of our boys was injured and carried off the field.

Well-nigh breathless, Peter and I raced out to the team.

One of the tackles was out already, and I tapped the left-back on the shoulder and shifted him into the place of the injured man. The full-back I sent to the side-lines. By this new formation of the team we had the missionary, Peter and myself in the backfield.

Princess Bill looked her reproach at me when she saw me back of her.

"I told you," she panted, "I didn't want you on the field."

"Can't help it," I said, "you've got to have me."

She nodded.

I advised her in a low voice: "Use your new set of backs every other play when we have the ball. Try the left and the right. When you find their weakest spot, keep us going through it."

"All right."

WHEN we lined up for the next play, I glanced across at the opposing team and saw the smiling face

of Lalou. His eye was fixed on me calculatingly, and a cold chill went down my back in that second before the signal was given and the ball was put into play.

Quackenbush, playing right half-back, had the ball. I led the way, Peter following. *Zing!* We hit the line in the middle, and their center and guard had the novel sensation of falling over backwards while we stepped across them.

We gained five yards before they stopped us. In the mix-up somebody planted a knee in my stomach. It hurt cruelly for a few moments, but I had time to catch my breath while Princess Bill attempted to send the right end around.

In the next play I carried the ball but was tackled back of the line for a loss.

Beneath a swirling mass of legs and bodies I was buried, with my face plowing into the turf. Some one tried to get the ball out of my arms but I managed to hold on.

We thought it best not to risk losing the ball where we were on our twenty-yard line and so the Princess kicked out to safety for the third down.

On the defense Quackenbush, Peter and I shifted into the line and the ends went back.

We held their first play. It came my way and I made a clean tackle. I had the wind knocked out of me, but only for a second. I was yanked to my feet by a strong arm and turned to look into the dirty, grinning face of the missionary.

"Good work!" he commended.

We held them for three downs, and the ball passed back to our possession practically on the spot to which we had kicked it. This was the biggest gain our team had made, and a new note was heard from the bleachers, the note of hope and confidence. My exultation was premature, however, because our success had aroused the fury of our opponents, who hitherto had been playing a lazy sort of a game—all they had deemed necessary. Three successive downs failed to make a gain, and the ball passed over once more.

I was surprised when I took my defensive position once more to find that I was opposite Lalou. He had changed from half-back to tackle in order to face me. He grinned amiably as he noted my surprise on finding him before me.

I had no fears now. A man who has played ten minutes of football is keyed up to meet a lion face to face without thinking of the outcome. But my sense of fair play was outraged at the thought of my private enemy going out of his way in a game to get square with me.

With fiendish ingenuity every play was directed against me. Right or left half-back, revolving wedge or straight line-buck, all came through me. Their three downs cost me a broken rib and bruises and cuts too numerous to mention, but we stopped them somehow.

I said nothing of my broken rib and went on playing. It was painful, but did not interfere with the muscles of my arms and legs. The play weaved back and forth over a small section of the field, neither side gaining much. This was football as they used to play it before anyone ever heard of open formations and forward passes.

With five minutes left of it, neither side had scored. Quackenbush, Peter and I were still in the game. Peter was suffering from a broken nose and Quackenbush had a black eye that was going to look very funny during the church service the next day, but both of them grinned cheerfully at me through their swollen lips when we lined up to receive the onslaught of our rough-neck brothers on the other side of the ball.

"Come on now, liven up a little!" I heard the familiar voice of Princess Bill as she paraded up and down in back of the crouching line like an officer directing his troops in the trenches. "This is no Sunday-school picnic. Play lower, Quackenbush. Get a little speed into you, old house-boat." I heard a slap and looked up in time to see our quarter-back deliver an encouraging spank with the open palm of her hand on the broad beam of her religious adviser.

He laughed like a boy. Then the play started, coming through me as

usual. They made it—ten yards in one clip. I blamed myself as I lay there worrying why I had failed to stop them.

When I tried to get up, I knew what the answer was. I was unable to move; the muscles of my left side seemed completely paralyzed. I realized that some *jiu-jitsu* trick had been played on me by Lalou, who was beginning to despair of knocking me out by ordinary brutality.

Our own boys came back for me and picked me up and stood me on my feet. They rubbed my legs and arms and threw water in my face, and finally I could feel a little life returning to the paralyzed limbs. "He hit him a little bit too low," I heard a voice say, Princess Bill's. "Lalou intended to kill him, but he missed the exact spot. I know that trick myself."

BY this time I was able to walk, and although a trifle dazed I went to my position in the line.

"You can't play," protested the Princess.

I turned and grinned at her. "I am playing," I said.

"You can't even stand up."

"I don't have to; I am going to lie down right here in front of this handsome butcher."

That's what I did, with the play spilling over me as usual. And—they made their downs as before.

They had the ball still in their possession when we lined up on our ten-yard line. The other side was beginning to show signs of fatigue, but their success rallied them and they fell on us with renewed vigor.

The first down gained them a yard; the second netted another. I was beginning to feel dizzy and would have given a good deal for a few seconds in which to regain control of myself, but Lalou realized that the time was short, and cursing and beating his men he urged them to form quickly before we could hardly get in our places.

As their quarter-back began signaling, I saw the time-keepers running out on the field. All we had to do was to stop this one play, and then it would be over. Their line began to heave; Lalou sprang at me; I dodged him. The runner came at me with the ball. Slowly and methodically, as if I were going to bed, I laid myself down in his path and got my arms affectionately about his ankles. He fell across me. I heard the umpire whistle; there was a wild yell from the grandstand. Then something struck me in the head, and as I lost consciousness, a great weight of bodies fell on me.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE next time I began to be conscious that the blood was flowing through my veins, my ears were deafened by a series of jagged crashes. At first I suspected that the noise was all inside of my own head, which was still ringing from the impact of my last fall on the football field. Then my brain began to sort out various lengths of sound from the disordered crashes. I recognized a familiar sputter.

It was a wireless!

For a long time my mind puzzled over my proximity to a sending station. Was I on shipboard? It didn't sound reasonable. I could feel neither the vibration of engines nor the heel of a sailing ship. Finally I developed the energy to open one eye. It was night. From somewhere in back of me a great yellow flaring light was throwing staggering shadows against a background of trees. I tried to move in order to get a better view. A groan of pain must have escaped me, because some one instantly came to my side. A cool hand was placed on my forehead.

"He is alive," said a low, far-away voice.

"Thank God," answered another deeper one.

I managed to ask the conventional question: "Where am I?"

"Sh! Don't talk." Some one bent over me. "You are in the temple of Ai."

My battered brain absorbed this information slowly. That accounted for the racket. I remembered the wireless station I had established in the place of the fallen deity.

"But what," I gasped faintly, "am I doing here?"

"We had better tell him," said the masculine voice. "It will prevent his asking questions and worrying about it."

"You were hurt in the football game, Pudgy," Princess Bill explained, holding my hand close to her heart, "just as I knew you would be if Lalou got a chance at you. You were injured after the time was up. They all jumped on you. I thought you were killed. So did they, I guess, for they picked you up and were going to carry you off with them.

"When I saw what they were up to, I called all our boys together, the team and all the subs. We charged them and took you away from them. Then for fear they would try something else, we brought you up here out of the way."

Quite rapidly I was recovering control of my thinking apparatus.

"But the wedding," I exclaimed, as soon as it occurred to me. "You were to be married this afternoon."

I was answered by a soft laugh.

"The date of my wedding was yesterday," the Princess murmured.

I considered this statement soberly and slowly.

"Then I have been knocked out for twenty-four hours," I decided aloud at last.

"Yes, a little better than that. It's nearly midnight now."

"Great Scott!" I ejaculated, summoning all my strength in an effort to rise. "What will Lalou think? You must hurry back to the village."

I was pushed back gently to the improvised couch of leaves and grass on which I was lying.

"What Lalou thinks now doesn't make any difference," said Princess Bill.

I TURNED my eyes imploringly to the other figure, which I recognized to be that of Quackenbush, the missionary.

"It's true," he answered, reading my glance. "Lalou and his people have withdrawn from the island. We know that much from the sporting edition of *The Times* which the young man you call Mr. Brisbane sent up to us by a special messenger."

"Why, that means war," I exclaimed.

The missionary nodded thoughtfully.

"It probably does, unless the King's emissary, who was sent to Ateua to confer with Lalou, should be able to arrange a peaceable settlement of the matter."

This was material for sober reflection. In saving my life they had practically involved Tamaloa in destruction. I said something of this to them.

"It probably would have happened, anyway," the missionary assured me. "Lalou has had his eye on the treasure-chest of Tamaloa for some time, only waiting for an excuse to reach for it. The trouble may as well come now as later."

By the light of the bonfire which had been built in the open paved space, I could see that both Quackenbush and the Princess were still in football suits. I guessed that neither had slept since the day before. I patted the hand of each of them. These were friends indeed.

I was feeling so much better that I insisted that my nurses get some rest, because, as I rightly surmised, they would have need for all their strength later.

When the Princess had retired, the missionary returned to me. I had closed my eyes and was resting easily, but I felt that he was watching me. At length I raised my lids and looked into his face. His eyes were troubled.

"What is it, Parson?" I demanded in a low tone of voice. "You had better tell me. I am feeling fresh as a daisy now, and if there is any trouble I want to help."

He laid a hand on my wrist and fumbled until he found my pulse. He nodded his head. Apparently my heartbeat was encouraging.

"Do you think you can stand a surprise?" he queried. "I wont call it a shock, because it isn't as serious as that. It's something you ought to know before the Princess wakes up."

"All right, Parson, fire ahead. If it

is anything to do with the Princess, you know I want to help just as much as you do."

He seemed to have trouble in beginning.

"The fact of the matter is—" His courage failed him for a moment and he halted.

"Yes?" I encouraged him to go on.

He cleared his throat. "I think you ought to know, before you meet her again, that Princess Vililiti is your wife."

WHAT would you think if anybody told you that you were married, and up to that moment you had never suspected it?

"Married?" I repeated, my voice automatically putting a question which my brain was too stunned to formulate. "I don't feel married. How do you know I am?"

"I performed the ceremony myself," he explained uneasily.

"Go on," I urged. "Now that I know the climax of the third act, let me have the plot of the play. Give me the dialogue which leads up to the situation."

"You see, last night when we brought you up here, we had no hope that you would live. The Princess was nearly frantic. She felt that you had been killed on her account. It seems that ever since you came here she has sort of worshiped you. Did you know it?"

"Not exactly," I replied. "We've been good pals."

"She felt more than that, and as she wept over you she was inconsolable. She kept asking me if I thought you had cared for her. Then at last I told her about the promise I made you give not to make love to her. You know we did speak about it."

"Yes, I remember," I admitted.

The missionary studied his shoes a minute.

"I went rather farther than I was warranted," he finally volunteered. "I let her think that if it were not for your promise to me, you would not have been so—well, distant."

"I see," I reflected, "—and then what?"

"Then came the demand from the Ateuans that we give up your body. They thought you were already dead. The Princess refused, and her own people sent a deputation to her asking that it might be done to avert war.

"She cast about for some reason for not giving you up, and finally told them that it was out of the question, as you were her husband and therefore part of the royal family. In order to make good her statement, I performed the ceremony here. I can't tell you why I did it—except that I'm a fool, and when Princess Vililiti wants anything I always try to get it for her."

I rubbed my head in perplexity.

"It's funny I don't remember any of that."

"You were scarcely conscious. You managed to make the correct replies when she whispered them in your ear, but I doubt if you knew what you were doing. You were just about dead."

"But why," I questioned, not grasping this Arabian Nights' story very clearly, "why am I alive now?"

"I was coming to that. After your marriage, Princess Vililiti spent a long time in prayer. It seemed as if she were praying to the wireless, because she always faced it."

I STROVE to conceal a smile. The wireless mast stood on the very spot where the carven image had been before it was destroyed.

"After while," he continued, "she came to me and said that she was not going to let you die. You may have noticed that she has a very confident way of stating things. I suppose that is one of the heritage of kings and queens. Anyway, her confidence impressed me, and I believed with her that she could save you.

"With all of us standing around as assistants, she set to work at once, using a sort of primitive osteopathy. When we brought you up here, there was hardly a bone in your body that wasn't dislocated. They had made a thorough job of it, and how you managed to breathe is more than I can understand. In some way she contrived to put your frame back into position again. She worked all night and

up till noon of to-day. No man that I know of could have stood the strain of continued effort as she did."

"Then," I said thoughtfully, "I practically owe my life to her."

He nodded.

"I know I made a mistake," the missionary apologized, "when I married you to her, but I didn't think you would ever be conscious again."

"That's all right." I attempted to relieve his embarrassment. "Don't let my being alive worry you."

"It pleased the Princess so," continued Quackenbush. "Why, it seems she has been loving you all the time, and nobody ever knew it. All during the ceremony you would first call her 'Bill' and then 'Beautiful.' That must be a new nickname you thought up for her in your sleep. It tickled her 'most to death."

My heart turned to icy stone. Even when unconscious I had spoken the name of 'Beautiful,' and here I was married to a savage! I confronted my future soberly. At any rate, there was no need to burden my friends, who were more than that, even, with any of my troubles. I would keep any misgivings I might have entirely to myself.

"You did exactly right, Parson. I will try to see that she never regrets it."

He grasped my hand with a grip of approval.

"I am glad." His voice was full of a relief that I wished I could share.

"Now that you have got that off your mind, supposing you get a little sleep yourself. I am all right now, and I think by morning I will be up and about, especially if I rest quietly."

The missionary obeyed docilely enough, and after I had assured him that there was nothing else that I wanted, he went away and left me with my own uneasy thoughts.

THEY proved restless companions and I spent many hours awake in their company, but at last the need for recuperative sleep banished them and I fell into a troubled slumber.

Some time after daylight I finally opened my eyes. I was still feeling comfortable and drowsy. I was almost afraid to move, for fear the pains would come back. After a moment I noticed that there was a weight on my shoulder. It was that weight which balanced my body just right. I turned to find out what it was.

Pillowed comfortably on my upper arm was the head of Princess Bill. She was sound asleep. Poor kid! She was absolutely exhausted by saving my worthless life. Any repose she could get she was entitled to, and if she wanted to use me for a cushion she was welcome and then some.

After a time, I turned once more to look at my wife. Skin as soft as velvet, eyelashes that curled lovingly on baby cheeks, a tired drooping mouth that sleep was beginning to restore to its natural curving fullness, and a bosom that rose and fell slowly with the perfect rhythm of healthy breathing.

Involuntarily my arm tightened protectingly about her shoulders. She stirred a little, and her arm slipped gently about my neck as if it had been waiting for permission to rest there. Then she burrowed her face deeper into my shoulder, sighed and relaxed once more, secure in her faith in me.

All at once the muscles of my arm tightened. Far away down the mountain-side I heard a bugle, and my body involuntarily responded. I knew what a bugle-call meant. The King's guard was turning out.

At my involuntary movement, Princess Bill wakened and sat up. She regarded me with curious, steadfast eyes.

"I wonder how I came to be over here?" she questioned. "I remember dreaming that you wanted me, but that's all."

The bugle sounded again.

"Trouble," interpreted the girl quickly. "I wonder what it is?"

"I can almost guess," I retorted, "but it wont be difficult to make certain."

I rose to my feet, much to my own astonishment.

"Why, I can stand up," I exclaimed, trying the various muscles. They were all pretty stiff and sore, and there was a bad pain in my left side where the broken rib was, but I was thankful to have the use of my body at all.

I LED the way to the wireless house. Bill followed me docilely. The operator was dozing in his chair, the receiver strapped over his head. Beside the wireless key was a telephone. I picked it up.

"Number, please?" the operator cooed with professional good-morning sweetness.

"Bryant, thirty-six."

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Daniels," said the operator, recognizing my voice. "*The Times* wire is busy, but if you will wait a second, I will put you on."

I waited, and finally the voice of Brisbane came floating over the wire.

"Who is this?" he asked.

"Daniels."

"Great Scott, is that you, Chief?" Brisbane's astonishment was genuine. "Wait a minute."

I held the wire a moment.

"Hello, Chief!" Brisbane had returned to the 'phone. "I had to have them hold the press," he stated; "we were just running your obituary in the early edition. You are really alive, aren't you?"

"Surest thing you know. Tie a can to the obituary stuff and get some live news. Give me a bulletin of what is happening. I heard the bugles. What is the guard turning out for?"

"The King's emissary just returned from Ateau."

"What did he say?" I asked eagerly.

"He didn't say anything. Lalou cut his tongue out."

I stood in shocked silence for a moment. These were savage methods indeed.

"That's pretty serious, isn't it?" I commented over the telephone.

"It means war," returned Brisbane. "They will probably attack in canoes before to-morrow morning. That's why they are turning out the guard. In time of trouble the entire male population answers the call. They are assembling on the beach now."

"What are our chances?"

"Not very good." Brisbane was viewing the approaching struggle with the eye of an editor rather than a patriot. "It will make some swell stories for *The Times,* but after a few days there wont be anybody to read them. Our people can fight all right, but there aren't as many of us as there are in Ateua, and besides, the King is too old to lead them."

"I guess I'd better come down," I decided.

"All right, Chief, if you're able. Got to go now—nearly time to go to press."

"All right. Good-by."

I hung up.

"What's happening?" Princess Bill demanded eagerly.

I told her.

"Then I must hurry down to the village," she decided.

"You?" I questioned.

"Why yes," she returned. "I am the war-chief of Tamaloa."

THE wireless operator was galvanized into sudden activity. He began crashing out a call.

"What is it?" I demanded, turning on him.

"I don't know yet," he answered breathlessly. "Wait a minute. Hurray! It's the *Shandon Belle.*"

"Just in time." I bent over the table eagerly. "Find out how far away he is. Tell him to hurry."

While he was sending it I turned to the Princess. "I doubt very much whether Lalou will attack if the *Shandon Belle* arrives first. At any rate, Captain Corbett will get here in time to help if we can only hold them off for a short time."

Somehow with the *Shandon Belle* almost in sight of the island, my marriage to Princess Bill struck me as more unreal. Here I was with my first opportunity of leaving Tamaloa, tied to the tropics more firmly than I ever had been before.

The wireless operator spoke.

"They are over two hundred miles out and one of the boilers is leaking so they can't go very fast. They ought to get in some time to-morrow."

"That will have to do, I guess."

I stepped to the door.

"Everybody up," I shouted to the recumbent figures of the football squad lying about the lava-tiled court.

The boys roused themselves from

their deep slumbers and gathered around, asking what it was all about. Princess Bill explained the situation rapidly.

Mr. Quackenbush shook me by the hand.

"It certainly is a pleasant surprise to see you on your feet again," he congratulated.

We were about to start down the mountain-side when Binns, the wireless operator, appeared in the door of the wireless house and shouted: "Mr. Daniels."

"What is it?"

"There is a message for you coming in over the air now," he advised. "Wait just a moment, and I will have it for you."

I returned to the door of the house and stood there talking to Quackenbush while Binns took the message. He wrote it down as it came, and handed it to me. It read:

Mr. Donald Daniels,
Tamaloa, South Pacific.
Hope you will be as glad to see me as I will to see you. Love,
BEAUTIFUL.

I STOOD absolutely stunned. I recollected with ghastly distinctness the playful threat Captain Corbett had made that he would hunt up Ethel Sardam and bring her to Tamaloa. I had never dreamed he could do it.

But she was on the *Shandon Belle* now! Ye gods! And coming to Tamaloa! That was a fitting climax to my wedding. . . . .

The missionary had heard. I could tell from the way he looked on my agitation that he was guessing the truth.

"Is that," he questioned haltingly, "is that the girl you spoke about when you first come here?"

I inclined my head.

"What have we done!" he groaned.

I suppose that was the first time in my life that I had ever looked forward to meeting Beautiful without pleasurable anticipation.

"We have twenty-four hours yet before we need to face it," I decided resolutely. "We may all be dead by then."

And so, after arranging with Binns to keep in touch with the *Shandon Belle* and telephone any messages to the village, we started down the mountain-side, two of us, at least, looking forward with doubtful elation to the approach of the royal navy.

CHAPTER XXV

IN the village all was as confused as a dress rehearsal. Natives were hurrying back and forth aimlessly. The King was giving orders right and left which seemed to result in nothing particular, and a company of the guard stood at attention on the beach looking as if they were lined up like a bunch of lead soldiers waiting for some one to come and roll a marble at them. Our arrival was greeted with interest. The news of Princess Vililiti's change of matrimonial plan and her sudden marriage to the Lord High Comedian had preceded us.

The sub-chiefs began reporting to Princess Bill for instructions. It was not until then that I fully realized that anyone besides herself took her title of war-chief seriously.

Her first order was to dismiss the guard and order everybody to bring whatever weapons he owned and report in fighting clothes. This was a polite way of telling them not to wear any.

When we were alone together, she started to disrobe.

"What's the idea?" I asked.

She looked at me in surprise.

"Surely you don't expect me to fight with all these things on." She was speaking through a jersey which was half off over her head.

"I don't expect you to fight at all," I stated firmly.

"But you forget I am the war-chief of Tamaloa."

"You forget you are Mrs. Donald Daniels," I accused. "If there is going to be any war-chief in our family, I'm it."

She looked at me rebelliously.

"Either you are Mrs. Donald Daniels or I'm Mr. Princess Bill," I continued, meeting her eye sternly, "and we'll settle it right now for all time. If you think that stuff in the marriage

ceremony about 'love, honor and obey' is all nonsense, you are about to learn your error. Come on."

I don't think anyone had ever spoken to her just that way before. She couldn't make up her mind whether she was angry or not. First she came toward me a couple of steps irresolutely—then halted.

"What will you do to me?" she asked finally.

"I'll spank you," I said without a suspicion of a smile on my lips. "Either I am the war-chief of Tamaloa by unanimous vote—here, now—or I'll prove it to you. Which is it? I'll give you ten seconds to decide."

A slow grin spread over the Princess' features.

"All right, Pudgy," she cooed. "I wouldn't fight with you, anyway, until you are well."

Thus I won a negative victory by her pretending to concede supremacy on account of my being hurt.

AT any rate she kept her clothes on, and even changed to a dress, at my suggestion, while I took Peter and investigated the warehouse for weapons. Since we had heard from the *Shandon Belle* I had little idea that an attack from Lalou would amount to much. I surmised that the two small cannon on the ship were about the only artillery in that section of the Pacific. With them on our side we could win, hands down, over any party attacking in canoes. Without them, the best we could do was to hold off defeat as long as possible. Therefore all depended on Captain Corbett's getting into port.

In the warehouse there was still enough merchandise, equipment, tools and machinery left to carry on almost any kind of a business from retail dry goods to an iron foundry. The only trade that had been overlooked was the universal one of making war. The only weapons we could find were half a dozen shotguns and the same number of rifles, with a small stock of ammunition. There had been one automatic pistol, but I had that up in my room. Besides these we selected a lot of steel crowbars, pike-poles, axes, wrecking irons and some fire-hose.

By the time we had overhauled the stores, the natives reported again for duty. Nearly all of them had obsolete weapons of some sort—ranging from flint-lock muskets to rusty Mausers with and without ammunition. They also had spears, which they were very skillful in throwing, although I was assured that the Ateuans were very much better.

I divided all the men and women into shifts and began intrenching the village. My idea was to throw up a double line of breastworks, one down on the beach just out of reach of the tide, and the other back close to the outskirts of town.

THE digging was not difficult in the sand, and the outer works were completed that afternoon. I kept another shift of workers busy after dark by lighting the trenches with portable incandescent lamps attached to the city current. The second line of trenches proved harder to dig, but this was also a more formidable position to be assaulted, as it was up a few feet from the level on a slight bluff and had an irregular outline with natural bastions which would enable us to pour a cross-fire into a party attacking our center.

Brisbane kept in constant telephonic communication with Binns at the wireless station. There was nothing new to report from the *Shandon Belle*. She was still coming along slowly up to midnight, and at that time the wireless man on board had left his post with a final message to the effect that he would call early in the morning.

I had sent the King and his daughter to bed early. When the Princess left, she had begged me with her eyes to take her in my arms, but I couldn't while the specter of Beautiful's unexplained presence stood between us.

Now when the lights were out and the murmur of the working parties in the trenches had died away, she stole out to me where I was resting on an improvised seat just inside the earthworks. She had on the pajamas she used to wear when I first came to the island. Somehow she seemed smaller and more childish, dressed that way.

Without saying anything, she sat down at my feet and leaned against my knee, holding on to one finger of my hand.

Finally she inquired: "Aren't you coming in?"

"No," I replied shortly.

"I waited and waited for you," she explained, "and then when you didn't come home, I thought that maybe you were angry; so I came out to see. Are you?"

MY mind was in a turmoil. Out there under the wheeling Southern Cross it was harder to keep from folding her into my arms than it had seemed in the daytime.

"Are you angry?" she repeated insistently.

"No," I answered a little huskily, "not a bit angry."

"I'm glad." She caressed my hand thoughtfully. "I guess you're like Mr. Quackenbush," she finally volunteered.

"How is that?"

"Not demonstrative," she explained. "He says it's because he's an Anglo-Saxon. Are you one of those?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Maybe I could teach you to get over it." Bill regarded me seriously a moment. "Honestly, it's rather nice being demonstrative. You don't like me as well as you will later after you have had me around awhile. I had a monkey once that somebody brought me from Java. I didn't like it very much at first. But after I had it awhile, I got so fond of it I used to let it go to sleep in my arms. And when it died I cried for a week. Maybe you'll get to feel like that toward me."

I didn't even dare stroke her hair, that was so soft against my knee.

"Bill," I said shortly, "you must go in. You'll catch cold in the night air."

"You'll catch cold, too," she argued. "I came out to get you. Aren't you coming?"

She scrambled to her feet and held out her hand.

"No," I answered, getting up. "I've thought of something I must do."

I stooped over the figure of a man lying across the earthworks and wakened him. It was Peter. Anything to make Bill think I was busy.

"Run along now," I commanded lightly, secure in the waking presence of a third party. "Get a nice beauty-sleep before the ship gets in tomorrow."

Reluctantly she left, with a reproachful, hurt look in her eyes. I could see that as a husband I was stacking up about minus fifty degrees. I really did have something for Peter to do, although I had not intended to have him start for another hour or so yet.

I told him to take a gang of men and overhaul the warehouse for a huge steel pneumatic pressure-tank which I remembered to have seen there. It had been intended for the use of the entire village for an air-pressure water system, but I had found it easier to install a gravity system by locating a huge reservoir part way up the side of the volcano. I copied this idea from Bermuda, where it is also necessary to depend upon rain for drinking water.

I directed Peter to set up this tank on a brick foundation on three sides, with a chimney at the rear so that we could build a fire under it.

When he got that done, I told him to connect it up with the pipe-line from the main reservoir, running the intake in at the bottom of the tank through a check valve and arranging an outlet pipe at the top large enough to connect to the hose-line we had found that afternoon. This outlet was to have a cut-off near the boiler itself, so as to take the strain off the hose when not in use.

While Peter was installing the tank, I sent another detachment of men to collect fuel and pile it near the big steel drum.

CHAPTER XXVI

I HAD rightly figured that the first attack would come before dawn. It is a favorite hour for assault even among civilized armies. If you can catch your enemy without his breakfast, you've got nine points in your favor. The sentries caught sight of them a mile or so off the shore, paddling silently in their war-canoes. They were probably expecting us to come out

and engage them in the water outside. The South Sea Islanders are natural sailors, and they prefer to fight from boats.

Our quietness must have puzzled them, for they felt their way very cautiously and came in slowly. I passed the word to awaken the men in the trenches. We assembled silently, and with no lights at the outer fortification.

In the almost opaque darkness of the tropic night I could just barely discern the long line of war-canoes stretching out of sight and stealing toward us like wraiths of mist from the water. Some of the men wanted to fire on them in their canoes, but I objected and commanded them to hold their first shot until the enemy were quite close. I believe I repeated history to the extent of admonishing them to wait until they could see the whites of their eyes.

We were completely out of sight behind the earthworks, and the warriors landed without being aware of our exact presence. They must have known we were there somewhere, but our very silence had a better psychological effect than a broadside.

They huddled in compact little groups until all the canoes had arrived. I would make a rough guess that there were six or seven hundred warriors on the beach.

At last their leader must have given an order for an advance. In a straggling line, they began to steal in the general direction of the village, treading slowly and cautiously, as if they expected the ground to sink under their feet at every step. The impatience of our men in the trenches was intense. They had wonderful faith in me to obey my orders so implicitly. I could feel the strain of it myself. I wanted to fire and do it quickly.

At last I gave the signal.

The first volley was deafening. After you have listened to the noise of firearms for five or ten minutes, you can carry on a conversation during a fusillade in quite an ordinary manner, but the first shot, even if you are expecting it, seems as if it would burst the drum of the ear.

The surprise was complete. I don't know whether we killed anyone or not, but in a moment not an enemy was in sight. They had all dropped flat on the beach and were scrambling back on their stomachs to the protection of their canoes.

Now that the element of surprise was over, I gave the word to turn on a searchlight which we had installed on top of the Knickerbocker. By throwing this first one way and then the other, we located our foes, and the men in the trenches picked them off leisurely as long as they could see them.

Thus the first point rested with us.

LALOU'S followers retired in bad order, and we were not molested further that night. The only sign of the presence of our foes was the muffled beating of war-drums, which were sounded irregularly all through the night. I believe they used the drumbeat as a signal to other parties of warriors arriving in canoes to reinforce them.

I was elated. In actual fighting strength they outnumbered us two to one, but with a little luck we could hold them easily until the *Shandon Belle* arrived.

By daylight the boys were on the streets of Tamaloa with extras about the fight. The men in the trenches, now more in sympathy with my method of defense, bought the papers eagerly and read Brisbane's critical account of the ruction.

At breakfast, which I took in the trenches, Brisbane brought me a wireless from the *Shandon Belle*. The leak in her boiler was getting worse, and McClosky was afraid to push her for fear of blowing up the whole business. He was even afraid that they might have to stop and make a temporary repair for the sake of safety. I sent back an answer stating the desperate nature of our case and urging them to make every possible effort to come straight to us without delay.

The second attack came early in the day. In the light they were able to see how we had fortified ourselves, and they did what I suspected they would—namely, made an attempt to cut in on our flank.

They assembled up the beach and came for us on a dead run. It was an inspiring charge, and those fellows had as much nerve as anybody in the Light Brigade. They knew we could drop a third of them easily before they reached us, but they took their chance.

As before, we waited for them to get close enough to make our scanty ammunition tell. I told the men to fire one volley and then grab their spears. Anybody could see with half an eye that this was going to be a hand-to-hand rough-house. As they came on, I was horrified to notice that King Kandavu and his daughter had joined the men in the trenches. The King was in full evening dress, white shirt, high collar, lawn tie and a silk hat. I remonstrated forcefully in the few seconds left.

"Great Scott, King, you ought not to be out here. Chase yourself."

The King responded proudly: "My people here, my place here too." In the excitement he reverted to the pidgin English he had used before I came to the island.

He brandished a spear and said something in Maori which if translated would probably have been similar to an Irishman's good morning to an A. P. A. on St. Patrick's Day.

OUR volley crashed, and they were upon us. It was as handy a little scrimmage as you would ever want to witness.

Princess Bill fought by my side, in spite of my shouted commands to keep to the rear. She pretended not to hear. I noticed that she kept continually stepping in front of me when the fighting got especially hot. She did not do it ostentatiously but sort of on the quiet, so that no one would notice.

That and the fact that I did not feel justified in losing many men merely defending our outer works made me give an order to retreat to the next line of trenches. We retired in good order, and the enemy moved into our rifle-pits. They seemed satisfied with their first victory and did not seek to follow us immediately. Once safe in the trenches, I looked around to see how many were missing. Apparently we had lost very few, if any.

All at once a cry from Princess Bill startled me. "Where is the King? Where is Father?"

I looked. He wasn't with us. In his white shirt and full-dress clothes he would have been a conspicuous figure among the half-naked warriors.

I looked back over the field.

There he was, halfway between the trenches, crawling across the sands, wounded.

The enemy must have seen him at the same time, for a squad of warriors started out after him.

"Pick off those men," I commanded, taking a clean sight at one of them with my automatic revolver and dropping him.

Half a dozen of our best shots began covering the retreat of the King by firing on the squad that was after him.

The prize was too great, however, for the enemy to lose, and another detachment of them left our old earthworks on the dead run.

All at once over the din of the musketry I heard a voice shouting football signals.

Outside of the trenches, eleven of our best men were lined up in front of Princess Bill.

As I looked at them they started forward in one of our line-bucking plays.

"Hold your fire," I commanded. I was afraid we might hit the rescuing party.

I saw what the Princess intended and cursed myself for letting her get away. If anyone should have gone to the rescue of the old King, it was I and not my wife.

THE enemy got there first, but only by a second, and before they could pick up the King they were struck in the middle by the wedge of our men and sent flying on both sides. For five minutes they fought hand to hand over the King. Neither side dared fire from the trenches for fear of hitting its own men.

I ordered out a company of the guard to go to Princess Bill's assistance and had clambered over the bulwarks to lead them myself when the rescuing party started back,—only eight of them, however,—dragging the King.

We caught them as they tumbled over the breastworks.

"Quick," the Princess panted. "I'm afraid Father is dying."

I went to the side of the King.

She was wrong. He was dead. He had died not only with his boots on but wearing full evening dress as well.

I stood up. "The King is dead," I said, and in my inner consciousness I supplied to myself the familiar answer: "Long live the King."

I did not say that out loud, however, but the phrase started my mind to wondering who was Kandavu's successor. His daughter Vililiti, of course, was queen, but who was king? With a shock my mind told me the answer.

I, Donald Daniels, late comedian of "The Pink Widow," was King Donald I, of Tamaloa.

CHAPTER XXVII

MIDDAY found everything quiet. It is too hot for fighting under the tropic noonday sun. We welcomed the delay. Every hour brought the *Shandon Belle* nearer. I posted a lookout on the roof of the Knickerbocker to report the first sign of a sail.

We buried the King on Broadway at two o'clock. The band played "Très Moutard" in funeral-march tempo. It had been a favorite of his, and it somehow seemed fitting that he should be laid away to the music his heart had kept time to in life. The Reverend Mr. Quackenbush read the service beginning "I am the Resurrection and the Life," and we fired a volley across the grave.

Our parting salute to the monarch aroused the enemy. They must have thought we were firing at them. At any rate they began sharpshooting at our sentries. I ordered the band to play a quickstep and sent all of our force to the earthworks. A little engagement would dispel the atmosphere of gloom attendant upon the death of the King.

Bill picked up her rifle and started to follow the others. I grabbed her wrist and drew her back.

"Nothing doing, Bill," I explained gently. "The commands of the war-chief are that you stay in the rear with the suffragettes."

She eyed me speculatively. "I only wanted to help, and maybe if I was on the firing-line I could partly forget that." She pointed to the freshly made grave on Broadway.

"I'm sorry, Bill, but that isn't the woman's job. The woman's part in warfare is giving up the ones she loves. You have to be just as brave, but in a different way. Remember that, now you are the queen."

"What's the use of being the queen if I can't do anything I want?" she demanded.

"I suspect you're not the first queen to put that question," I returned. "Just now, I'll put you in charge of the hospital department in the Knickerbocker."

I led her gently to the hotel, where Mr. Quackenbush had already installed a ward system and was taking care of our damaged warriors as they were sent in.

BEFORE I went to the front myself, I called up Binns at the wireless and asked him for news from Captain Corbett.

"I haven't been able to get them recently, sir," he informed me. "The juice isn't working satisfactorily. I'll try again and let you know if I have any luck."

The attack on our inner line of defenses did not amount to much. It was so desultory, in fact, that it aroused my suspicions. If I judged Lalou correctly, he would strike hard or not at all.

As it was, the enemy made tentative rushes in the general direction of our works but fell back immediately at the first show of resistance.

Puzzled by these half-hearted tactics on their part, I sent an order along our lines not to waste ammunition and not to fire at all until the Ateuans were on the rise of ground at the base of our position.

So the next party that left their main body and came dashing toward us with a terrifying yell was met by absolute silence from our line.

On they came, displaying a courage in the open, usually foreign to savage warriors. Halfway between the lines their pace slackened a little, but still they ran in our direction, faltering a little as if inviting our fire.

At last a few were within fifty yards and we could see their faces plainly. An expression of dismay sat on their features, succeeded by fearful indecision. Then all at once, without a shot being fired, they turned tail and ran for dear life in the opposite direction. Evidently they had no stomach for one of our close-range volleys.

Our men laughed scornfully.

I turned to Peter and found him regarding me thoughtfully, his rifle still leveled over the top of the earthworks.

"Something wrong," I muttered.

He nodded.

"They would rather have been killed by us than go back to Lalou without firing a shot if he really wanted them to attack us," I reasoned out loud.

"Yes," he agreed.

"This, then, was only a diversion to distract our attention from the main attack."

A BOY from the hotel came tearing across the space between it and the trenches.

"Hurry," he panted.

"What has happened?"

"Telephone," he answered. "Binns."

I scrambled out of the ditch. Probably Binns had a wireless from the ship. I prayed that she might be nearly in.

At the hotel I stepped into a booth and jammed a receiver to my ear.

"Hello, Binns," I said.

"Hello, sir," he answered; then there was a pause punctuated by a funny rattle in the receiver.

"Just a minute, sir."

"What's the noise, Binns?" I demanded when he again said "Hello."

"It's the enemy, sir. They're firing on the station." He spoke hurriedly but without unduly raising his voice. "They've come down the volcano from the other side. I thought you ought to know it. I think I can keep them here for ten or fifteen minutes, but that is all. They're afraid of the wireless, so I'm keeping it going, but Lalou is with them himself and he is driving them to close in."

The situation of that brave boy was appalling. I had no right to ask him to stick to his post.

"Binns," I said, "are you listening?"

"Yes sir."

"You may leave the station and come down to the village."

"Sorry, sir," he replied apologetically. "I can't do it."

"Why not?"

"I'm surrounded. Hold the wire a second. There's a message on the wireless."

I waited what seemed interminable ages, my imagination picturing that lonely station with its white mask sticking up in the air like the forefinger of civilization and around it, closing in like prehistoric night, a cordon of relentless savages bent on extinguishing its flashing blue spark of life.

At last the voice of Binns once more.

"Hello, sir. Here's a message from Captain Corbett: 'To Donald Daniels, Island of Tamaloa. Hold them off. Unable to reach you before—'"

Crash!

There was no further sound in the receiver. My nerves shocked as if from a blow, I called wildly, "Binns, Binns. Hello, Binns!"

There was no answer.

CHAPTER XXVIII

I STAGGERED from the booth, overwhelmed by the tragedy. There was no time to be lost. With the wireless station silenced, it would be only a short time before Lalou would come down on us from above.

Wondering vaguely what the balance of Captain Corbett's message might be, I collected myself and set about preparing to defend our rear from surprise.

I split our forces in half and sent a skirmish line up the side of the volcano to delay the enemy as long as possible in the forest. With plenty of ammunition, that would not have been difficult, because by stubbornly resisting their advance from tree to tree, hours

could be consumed. As it was, our men had only fifty rounds of ammunition apiece, and I ordered them to fall back when half of that was gone.

In the meantime I set the women and children to constructing barricades in the streets and to carrying rocks up to the roof of the Knickerbocker.

We lighted the fire under the huge steel boiler and fed it fuel until it was so hot you couldn't stand within ten feet of it without feeling your eyebrows singe. The nozzle of the big fire-hose which was connected to the outlet of the boiler was set firmly in a wooden block so that it could be handled without burning the operator.

While we were at work in the village, the popping of guns up the mountainside told us that the fighting had commenced. Simultaneously a yell from the beach announced a genuine assault from the party which had been fooling with us in front of our earthen defenses.

In a few minutes the skirmishers began to straggle in, and in order to concentrate our forces I directed the detachment in the trenches to fall back to the village.

It was all important to make one determined stand that might discourage them until the *Shandon Belle* got in. I could only guess from Captain Corbett's message that our navy was still having some trouble, but how long before he would arrive I could only guess and hope that it would be soon.

In a few moments the bullets began dropping on Broadway. The sharp *ting* of broken glass told of the havoc done to windows in the Knickerbocker and the *Times* building. I stationed our best marksmen in the upper stories of the two structures to command the approach to our barricade just south of Forty-second Street. The Amsterdam Theater and the Lambs were abandoned as being too far away to defend successfully with our forces.

AS I had suspected, Lalou had determined to make every effort to carry our position immediately. He knew that any delay was to our advantage, and as he was superior to us in numbers, he could afford to lose a few men in order to get the matter over with quickly.

Our defenses this time were not nearly so strong as our earthworks on the beach had been. Hastily constructed barricades of rubbish thrown across the street did not begin to give the protection from bullets that trenches on a rising ground offered.

However, we had one weapon they did not know about yet—the steel boiler. So it was with a feeling of confidence that I saw them assemble for the attack. I gave the band word to play "Marching Through Georgia" and waited.

When they began to pour out of the forest in yelling columns, I thought I had never seen so many savages. Their numbers had been tremendously reinforced since the arrival of the first detachment. Some of the newcomers were painted in different colors from Lalou's own men, and I surmised therefrom that the war-chief had forced some of the timid chiefs of neighboring islands to come to his assistance.

Our rifle-fire from the upper windows had little effect on their charge. A few men dropped, but they were disregarded by the survivors, who came on in a frenzy of fighting anger. I stood by the nozzle of my fire-hose, admiring their courage. It was almost too bad to dampen such fiery spirits.

But it had to be. When the first column was fifteen or twenty feet from our barricade, going with a force that would have carried them over it as if it had not been there, I nodded to Peter to turn on the water at the tank.

The broad stream of boiling water struck the bare stomachs of the first men in the line. Wild yells rent the air—yells with a very different note in them from the war-cries of a moment since. The head of the column doubled up and melted away like an icicle in a frying-pan. The new arrivals I treated the same way, swinging the stream in a wide swath the entire width of the street.

Those in the rear, not knowing what had happened, pressed on, tripping over the writhing bodies of their fallen comrades. The street was piled high with scalded humanity.

Finally, noticing that there were no new arrivals and that the water which was feeding through the hose was now only lukewarm, I had Peter turn off the valve at the tank.

Our parboiled enemies, chastened and subdued by their bath, picked themselves up from the muddy street and returned to their comrades, who were hiding behind the trees of the forest.

"Keep that fire going," I commanded. "Use all the fuel you can jam in. If they came back now, we couldn't hold them off with cold water."

My hurry was needless, however, for dusk came on with no sign of an attack. From all around us came the interminable beating of war-drums exchanging signals. We kept our boiler hot, only letting off steam through the hose as the gauge showed an unsafe pressure.

Quite sure that everything was in readiness to repel another attack, I stepped over to the Knickerbocker to get a little something to eat.

I sent a boy to the hospital department to tell Bill to meet me in the grill-room in ten minutes. I allowed that much time for a change of clothing.

CHAPTER XXIX

I WAS still in football clothes, had not had a shave for three days and had scarcely had time to wash my face in that period. A long time had elapsed since I had last seen a mirror, and when I looked in the glass over my dresser, I was confronted by a grimy, unkempt ruffian whom I failed to recognize as myself. Smudges of soot decorated my face irregularly; several black-and-blue spots, souvenirs of the football game, and a couple of partially healed cuts in my forehead combined to make a picture no one but a futurist would care to paint.

After a careful scrutiny of my face, which I decided looked exactly like a Mexican war-map, I grinned at the party in the mirror slowly and told him:

"You look royal—like blazes!"

I did the best I could with a bath and a safety razor in the time I had, and slipped into some fresh clothes.

The result wasn't so very good, but I had to be satisfied. It didn't make a great deal of difference, anyway. When the *Shandon Belle* came in, nobody was going to care anything about my appearance. The worse I looked, the nearer I would come to representing my feelings.

I telephoned the Queen's room to see if she were ready.

"In just a minute," she replied with a feminine note that I recognized from days gone by in the States. "You might come over and hook me up." This last in a matter-of-fact, wifely tone that still had a trace of girlish shyness in it.

"I'll send a maid," I replied brutally after a second's consideration. "I have to hurry, so I'll go down and order our dinner."

There was a silence at the other end of the wire—then, "Oh," in a hurt voice. "Never mind about the maid; I can manage."

There was no reason why I should not have gone to my wife's room except that I did not want to be any more of a cad than I had to. There was going to be a day of reckoning when she and Beautiful met for the first time, and I did not care to have any more to reproach myself with than I had already.

So I went to the restaurant alone.

AFTER another ten minutes Bill came down, very quiet and subdued. I wondered if she had been crying. Poor kid, she had enough to weep over. Doubtless at the missionary's suggestion she had put on a black dress. At first I did not know her as she came in. It made her look so much older. Maybe she had grown older during the day. At any rate, the dull fabric lent a delicate luster to her pale skin that was very becoming. Somehow it seemed scarcely possible that I had so recently seen those round soft arms and smooth neck and cheeks grimy and covered with gunpowder marks.

Indeed, it was difficult, almost impossible, sitting there in the grill-room, to realize that on the street-level, not a hundred yards away from us, sentries were patrolling the barricades, and

burying parties were disposing of the dead bodies that covered Broadway.

The Queen ate very little. Heaven knows, she had enough to think about, with her father dead and her people being killed like flies. I hated to think that I was going to be the cause of even more pain to her.

Finally she asked timidly: "What are we going to do when the *Shandon Belle* goes away?"

That was the question I had been asking myself. What were we going to do? I had planned all along to go with the ship on its next trip to the United States.

"We'll have to decide that later." I sparred for time. "Maybe after the *Shandon Belle* gets here, we may have to alter our plans considerably."

I was quite sure we would have to, but I did not explain what I meant.

Further discussion was interrupted by the arrival of a boy whom Peter had sent to tell me that a searchlight could be seen casting flashes on the clouds near the horizon.

"It's the *Shandon Belle,*" I exclaimed, rising.

"The light is kind of funny, though, sir," said the boy. "Peter said to tell you he thinks they are signaling."

"I guess I had better go and see," I decided; then I turned to Bill. "If you will excuse me, I will go up on the roof and have a look."

I sent the boy to fetch Peter, and I took the elevator to the roof, stopping off at my own room to get a pair of night-glasses.

SURE enough, on the horizon-line was a wedge of light which undoubtedly came from a searchlight. It swept back and forth across the sky several times, and then it disappeared and appeared at intervals.

Morse code, I decided.

Peter joined me.

"Turn on the searchlight," I ordered, indicating the lamp we had installed on the roof.

Peter did so. We turned the lamp so that the ray shot directly overhead. Imitating the motion of the other searchlight, we swept back and forth across the sky a couple of times, and then by covering the lens with a piece of board we signaled "O. K." in the telegraph code.

The other lamp was held steady, and by flashes it spelled out a message that I wrote down and translated thus:

Can't reach you to-night; repairing boiler. Wireless doesn't answer.

It was signed by Captain Corbett.

My heart sank. We were condemned to another night without succor. I sent back the message to the ship:

We are surrounded. Hurry.

There was nothing further we could do. The enemy had noticed our activities with the searchlight, and while we were sending our message, they had begun firing at us; one of the bullets had even gone through the brass covering of the lamp itself.

Lalou could guess without reading the message that the searchlight in the distance meant a ship, and I guessed he would redouble his efforts to defeat us before help arrived. Thus the nearness of the *Shandon Belle* was really a disaster to us as long as she could not come any closer.

CHAPTER XXX

WHEN I returned to Broadway, I found the street bright as day. The cause of the illumination was not far to seek. The Amsterdam Theater was on fire.

As I have said, we had located the line of our defense inside the theater and the Lambs. For a moment I wondered why they destroyed the building; then as the bullets began zipping around us, I realized that it was to give their riflemen a chance to thin out our ranks by long-distance sharpshooting.

I directed the men to keep under cover as much as possible, all except those who were keeping up the fire under the steel boiler. I told them to redouble their efforts, as I imagined we were going to need plenty of hot water soon. I was right.

Without yelling, this time, moving silently and swiftly as shadows, the savages came up the street.

I had the nozzle of our fire-hose in readiness. When they were within twenty-five feet of our barricade I told Peter to turn on the water. He did.

Out of the nozzle came a cloud of hissing steam, but nothing more.

"Turn it on full," I yelled.

"It's wide open, sir," said Peter.

The truth chilled my heart. Lalou had broken our water-mains from the reservoir up the mountain. I bitterly cursed my folly in having proudly explained our water system to visitors in days gone by. He had only to break the pipe that led from the reservoir, in order to cut off our water entirely and let the contents empty themselves in a futile stream on the ground. That was why they dared charge again.

WITH a yell of rage I cast aside the hose and drew my automatic revolver, the only weapon I had.

Almost instantly they were upon us. We fired a volley which deterred them not at all. The barricade was swept away, and the street became wedged with men fighting hand to hand. An occasional shot was heard, but mostly this was the grisly business of choking and stabbing, where blood flowed so freely that no one knew whether he was covered with his own or his enemy's gore.

I saw Peter swing a clubbed musket at a man who was poised to throw a spear at me, and the next instant Peter himself crumpled up in a twisted heap as some one drove a knife through him. I started to go to his assistance, but saw it was no use, and was carried backward with a struggling mass of humanity.

Somewhere in back, the band started to play, and for a few moments it put heart in our men, and we managed to stem the tide. I contrived to pass the word to make for the Knickerbocker. Women and children were to go in first, while the men were to hold off the enemy until the retreat was fully covered.

Our losses during the next five minutes were fully fifty per cent of our strength, but I knew that if we turned and ran it would be worse. The band kept playing, although one by one the instruments were silenced. It's inspiring to die with the music of a military march in your ear. I know because I have nearly done it.

The streets were slippery with blood, and yet a man dared not slip, for once off his feet he was at the mercy of those sharp spears. Once I nearly fell, but was grabbed by the shoulders and yanked upright.

"Thanks," I said, not daring to turn to see who it was. I was laying about me with a spear which I was using as a club.

"All right," panted a voice. "This is pretty warm, isn't it?" I recognized the tones of the missionary. Heretofore he had devoted himself to hospital work, but now he was in the thick of the scrimmage.

THE word was passed along that the women and children were all in the hotel, and I ordered our men to fall back slowly to the building. I paused a moment at the steel tank to close the outlet. I noticed with pleasure that there was still some water in the tank below the outlet, and that there was a good fire blazing.

Once inside the Knickerbocker, we barred the doors, and I ordered the best marksmen to the second-story windows to pour a raking fire into the street if any assault were made on the doors. On the roof I stationed another squad of men to drop heavy stones into the street.

We were given a few moments' respite while the enemy held a council of war. Curious throngs gathered around our boiler, as I had hoped; and some of them, who more than realized my wildest dreams of what an enemy should be, began putting more fuel on the fire.

I ordered everybody away from the windows on that side of the house and watched through the night-glass with fascinated gaze while the indicator on the pressure-gauge climbed to one hundred, one hundred and twenty-five—two hundred. It stood still there for a moment, and I was afraid it had sprung a leak and that the steam was escaping somewhere. Then I realized that the gauge would register no more

and that although the hand had stopped, the pressure was still going up. Then—

A rending crash told of the end of our serviceable defender. In its destruction it carried with it a hundred or more of our enemies, who vanished instantly from its vicinity. The moral effect of the explosion on them and on our men was much greater than the casualties would indicate.

A wild yell of enthusiasm went up from our side, and an equal wild scramble for places of safety took the enemy back once more to the woods. This gave us time thoroughly to bar the doors downstairs and block up the windows with shutters made by the destruction of the clerk's desk. I did not fool myself into thinking that Lalou would desist from another attempt. I could only hope that we would be able to hold out until morning. After that, the *Shandon Belle* must come or we would be done for.

AFTER a while one of our men in the upstairs windows reported that some one was coming down the street with a flag of truce.

I went to the window. In the light of the burning building came Lalou, walking proudly under the protection of a white flag. The insolent assurance of the man aroused my admiration. How could he know that we were not so exasperated as to forget the conventions of warfare and shoot him where he stood?

He halted under our windows.

I stepped forth on a balcony above.

We eyed one another for a moment.

"Well?" I questioned at length.

"Give up my Vililiti, then we go home plenty quick."

My heart leaped with hope. If he was willing to treat with us at all, the *Shandon Belle* must be drawing nearer. It meant that he despaired of carrying the hotel by assault in time to get away. Otherwise he would never have given up a chance to be revenged on me.

I pretended to be considering his terms. Every moment gained added to our advantage.

Suddenly I was aware of a slender figure standing by my side.

"I'll go," said the young Queen.

I looked at her in amazement, and she returned my gaze with great tear-dimmed eyes. I knew instantly why she was doing it. Just like every other move she made, this one was to protect me. I tried to imagine anyone else I knew in all the world who would have felt toward me that way. And then I tried to think what life would be like if she were gone out of it. Then, with a lump in my throat, I realized that I had found something there in the South Pacific for which all barriers must be swept aside.

"No," I said harshly, and turned to Lalou. "She is my wife." I threw my arm about her waist and drew her toward me. "If you should ever see her again, she will be my widow."

Lalou's face worked with rage and hate for a moment and then he strode off to the woods without replying.

The Queen gently disengaged my arm and walked in through the open window. She was crying a little, but fighting bravely not to show it.

CHAPTER XXXI

IMMEDIATELY the damnable staccato of the tom-toms, which had been silent during our parley, began again. I went the rounds of the windows and up on the roof to see that everyone knew what to do when the attack came. At one window I found Brisbane serving out ammunition to a party of warriors armed with ancient shotguns.

"What the deuce are you using for bullets?" I inquired, looking at the square chunks of metal he was passing around. "What is it?"

"Type," Brisbane replied briefly. "Best ammunition I ever used. Beats buckshot all hollow. We ran short of bullets, so I pied the form for to-morrow's *Times*. I don't think we'll be able to print the paper for a day or so, anyway."

All of which proves that yellow journalism is dangerous in more ways than one. I wonder what he would have done if we had used a linotype machine.

Satisfied that the men above would do all in their power as long as their ammunition held out, I took charge of the main floor myself, with about fifty warriors.

We made small loopholes in the shutters for rifles and built a barricade of furniture inside the revolving door, which I left working on purpose. All this was done in a few moments, but not any too soon at that.

A volley of musketry from the second story told us that the enemy were in the street outside, and soon a hail of bullets began ripping the thin walls of our shelter. They were firing high, however, a comparatively common fault with rifle practice at night, and we were safe as long as we crouched low.

In spite of the efforts of our sharpshooters upstairs, Broadway soon became full of naked savages yelling at the top of their lungs.

As they attempted to rush the door, we met them with a scattering volley from our windows downstairs, and at the same time a shower of heavy rocks from the roof crushed them from above. They retired with heavy losses. The lobby of the Knickerbocker was filled with smoke and the pleasant, acrid odor of burned gunpowder. Our men were well pleased with themselves.

BRISBANE came down the staircase.

"Oh King!" he yelled.

"Here," I answered.

"Only one round of ammunition left," he announced.

"All right," I returned. "Probably we wont need but one."

I was not nearly as hopeful as I sounded.

"Don't waste a shot," I ordered. "If we have to, we will retreat up the stairs, and then we can hold the second floor until doomsday."

Lalou must have delivered a scathing lecture to his men between attacks, because they came on like fanatics to the next assault. Nothing stopped them—neither bullets nor rocks from above, nor a rifle-fire directly in their faces from the main floor.

At last the sound of firing gradually died away. That meant that our powder was exhausted. With a wild yell the enemy made a rush and struck our revolving door.

Two of our best men stood there to receive them just inside, each armed with a long steel crowbar.

It was hard work, and the perspiration streamed down their faces, but those two men and the revolving door proved more deadly than a Gatling gun. Other men seized the victims as they fell and dragged them out of the way so as to give plenty of room for swinging the bar. I believe that eventually we would have put Lalou's entire army *hors de combat* in this fashion, if he had not grown impatient.

The first warning we had of his impetuousness was a crash as one of our shuttered windows fell in, driven by the trunk of a tree which a hundred warriors or so were carrying on the dead run. Through the opening they made a stream of savages began piling in.

We had no way of dealing with them, and I ordered our men to fall back to the stairway.

THE staircase was another position comparatively easy for a few men to hold against a great many. We could have delayed them there indefinitely if we had possessed ammunition, but as it was, they could pick us off from below, and we had no way of retaliating. Thank heaven the building was so full of gunpowder-smoke that it was practically impossible to see what they were firing at. Between volleys they rushed us.

We were pressed back up the stairs, fighting for each step as if it were the decisive battle of a campaign.

Halfway up the staircase I left the conduct of the battle in the capable hands of the missionary, who was wielding a clubbed rifle like a Samson, and ascended to the second floor.

In a glass case on the landing I found an emergency fire-ax. I smashed the glass and was soon back at the head of the staircase with the ax.

With a word of encouragement to the men who were so desperately defending the approach to our retreat, I began hewing away the stairs in back of them.

The bannister went first, carrying with it a number of our foes, who in their eagerness to get at us had wedged in too closely between their comrades and the outer rail. Then under cover of the smoke, which was drifting up the stairway, I chopped about halfway through the stringers.

"All right, boys," I shouted. "Come on upstairs. Make a stand on the last step."

More rapidly the center of the fight came nearer the top. On the top step it surged and halted, most of our men standing on the landing.

I swung the ax twice.

Crack! Crash!

The stairs went down thunderingly, hurling the crowd headlong.

Thoroughly exhausted and panting, we paused long enough to draw our breath and smile encouragement at one another. Our situation was bad enough, heaven knows, but every little gain we made was so much more than we really expected, that we constantly found cause for self-congratulation.

OUR relief was short-lived, however, for almost immediately they began firing volleys through the floor. This was cursedly ingenious and cost us a number of men, until we discovered that we were safer on the third floor and the roof.

As we ascended to where the windows were not blocked, we noticed a fresher and brighter glare streaming in through the openings. Quackenbush went to a window in one of the bedrooms and looked out.

"They've set fire to the *Times* building," he reported, dodging back as a bullet buried itself in the window-casing.

An inarticulate cry from behind me drew my attention, and I turned to see Brisbane attempting to get to the window. He was badly injured in one leg, and had to drag himself along. At length he pulled himself up at the open window and stood looking out amid a hail of bullets.

I went to his side to draw him away. His eyes were filled with tears.

"Come," I said. "We'll build it all over again."

Thud. A bullet struck something besides the woodwork.

I reached out to catch the boy as he fell, but he dropped the other way and toppled out the window to the street.

CHAPTER XXXII

WHILE I stood horror-stricken, too benumbed to notice the lead whizzing past me, the *Times* building seemed to leap in the air. Then it opened up in the middle, the way an egg does when you hit it sharply with a knife. There in the center was a yolk of blazing flame which burned for a fraction of a second and then scattered. After all this came a deafening concussion, and a blast of air struck me in the face and hurled me to the floor, which rocked with the force of the explosion.

How the *Times* building was blown up, I don't know. There were no explosives stored there that I know of, and it hardly seems probable that Lalou would dynamite a newspaper office.

After a while I was able to crawl back to my companions, who were huddled in a panic-stricken group in the hall. In a voice that sounded far away I told them briefly what had happened. Our nerve was shaken and our courage sapped by the explosion across the street. Who could tell but that at any minute the floor would rise up under our own feet?

All at once one of our warriors shouted something in Maori and began pointing down the stairway. He jabbered excitedly at the others, who gathered around him, sniffing the air. Then I smelled it myself, the unmistakable odor of burning varnished wood. Wisps of smoke began drifting up the stairway.

Quackenbush and I looked at each other in dismay. This, then, was the end. Caught like rats in a trap! No chance even to die fighting. How I envied Peter and those fellows who had met their death at the end of a spear.

OVER in a corner the natives conferred by themselves. Finally two of them detached themselves from the

group and started down the corridor to the room where the women were. They picked up their spears as they went.

"Wait!" I commanded.

They halted irresolutely.

"Where are you going?" I put the question with a greater show of authority than I really felt I had over them.

Finally one of them replied sullenly: "We have been chosen, because we are unmarried and have no kin, to be the ones to kill the women and little ones before they burn to death."

"Is this so?" I demanded of the group.

They nodded acquiescence. One, an old man, whose grandchildren were the pride of his life, cried out bitterly but nodded with the rest.

"I say no," I decided. "If you are willing that your wives and children shall die by violence, let us make a sortie down the fire-escape. At the worst we can only all be killed, and maybe they would let the women and little ones go free. What do you say?"

"Aye. Let's try it." All assented eagerly.

"Then call them all."

One of the men went to collect our noncombatants.

I turned to the missionary.

"Will you, sir, be the last to leave the building?" I requested. "I will go first with most of the men to show the way and to draw their fire. If we should live to get down, we men might be able to create enough of a disturbance at the bottom of the fire-escape to distract the attention of the enemy from those descending."

"I will do as you say," the missionary returned.

"Good-by, then, my friend." I gripped his hand hard. "If we never meet again, good luck!"

"God bless you," he said, returning my handclasp.

I ordered the men to follow and entered the room from which the fire-escape led. Behind us the smoke was filling up the hallways, and the crackle of flames was becoming a roar.

I stepped out on the landing of the fire-escape quite prepared to be dropped instantly by a shot from below. Nothing happened. Probably they had not seen me yet. Followed by the others, I started carefully down the iron stairway that led to the street.

In front there was not a sound. Even the war-drums had ceased their rattling. The silence was oppressive after the uproar to which my ears had become accustomed. I wondered what trick was under way.

BEHIND me trailed a long line of natives, stepping carefully upon the grilled iron steps that seemed so fragile yet really were so strong.

I quickened my pace. At the second floor the fire-escape was continued by a balanced stairway which automatically lifted out of place when not in use. I stepped on it, and the far end swung to the ground.

"Now," I thought, "I can't hope to escape detection any longer."

I even wanted to hear the sound of a rifle. Anything was better than the suspense of the silence which might cloak any fiendish trick. At the ground I paused. There was still no sound outside of the building I had just left.

The others came down. The men drew up silently in battle array, and the women huddled behind them, ready to make a dash for the woods as soon as all were down.

I scanned the faces of the women as they descended for the familiar features of Queen Bill. She was not among them.

Finally Mr. Quackenbush came down. I looked beyond him for the Queen. He was alone.

"Where's Vililiti?" I demanded. "The Queen is not here. Where's my wife?"

I turned first to Quackenbush and then to the crowd. No one answered.

"If she's still in the building, she's lost," I groaned. "I'm going back."

Halfway up the first flight of stairs I was halted by a voice below.

"Wait, Mr. Daniels."

A girl was coming up to me, holding something white in her hand. I took it—a piece of folded paper.

"She gave it to me," the girl explained. "She told me to give it to you in half an hour."

I opened the note. I was afraid I knew its contents, but by the glare of the burning village I scanned it hastily. It read:

To you and to my people I owe it to give the only chance there seems to be of escape from destruction. I hope that my effort may not be in vain. If it is, what is the difference between death now or half an hour later? Good-by. After all, I shall never grow old and ugly.

VILILITI.

CHAPTER XXXIII

I WAS stunned. That was why our descent from the burning building was unmolested. That was the explanation of the tom-toms' ceasing their devil's tattoo. The enemy had left. Having secured the prize he was after, Lalou had fired the hotel under our feet and left, secure in the thought that our destruction was only a matter of minutes.

I glanced out to sea. The reason for his haste was obvious. A searchlight was flashing across the sky, and I could hear the occasional thunder of cannon. They were getting nearer. Captain Corbett had seen the light from the burning buildings and was firing minute guns as a warning while he crept in toward the island under disabled engines.

What use to have help in sight when we were crushed in defeat?

Presently the moon rose, and I saw a slender black strip float across the water between us and the great incandescent disc. While I watched numbly, it was succeeded by another black strip —then another, and another. And as they crossed the moon-path, there was a flash of silver at regular intervals as the paddles dipped.

The sight of the enemy getting away with their prize stirred me to action once more. I couldn't let them go without making an effort to rescue my wife.

"How many men will volunteer to go after them in canoes and recapture the Queen before they reached Ateua?" I demanded passionately, facing the crippled remnant of what had once been the population of Tamaloa.

There was no reply. Some of the men shifted their feet uneasily.

"What's the matter? Are you cowards?" I jeered. "Will you let your Queen die for you without turning over your hands to save her?"

One of the older men stood forth.

"We are not afraid," he said in simple rebuke. "Our canoes are not fast. They have half an hour's start. We cannot overtake them."

I knew that what he said was true. The Ateuans had the best boats among the islands. We were a peaceful community, and our canoes were notoriously clumsy and slow.

THERE was one desperate chance. I determined to take it alone. In a shed just out of reach of high tide, Peter and I had been building a motorboat which it had been my intention to give to Princess Bill on completion as a wedding present. We had not had time to finish it up before the football game, as we had hoped. Indeed, I believe Peter had been working on it up to the beginning of the second half, when I had pressed him into service as a half-back. The motor was installed, but the hull had not been painted, and the steering gear was not connected up.

There was no knowing whether it could be handled in the long Pacific swells or even if it would run at all, but at least I would have a try at it. I called out a dozen of the strongest men and started for the beach.

The missionary attached himself to the party. While we were knocking the blocks out from under the boat, he spoke for the first time.

"What do you intend to do?" he questioned me with serious eyes.

I told him, while I attached a couple of ropes to the tiller as a temporary steering-apparatus.

"Are you sure you are doing the right thing?" he asked soberly.

"Sure?" I retorted. "What do you mean? Are you mad? You don't suggest that I let him keep her?"

The missionary looked in my eye calmly. "It might be best."

I stopped aghast. "Think of her situation over there. She'll die."

"Think of her situation here too, if you should save her. When you go she'll die too."

"When I go?" I repeated wonderingly. "Why, when I go, she will go too."

"What do you mean? How about the other?"

"There isn't any other," I explained, realizing it myself for the first time. "And there never will be," I added, "for if I don't bring her back with me, I shall never return."

WHILE the men were putting rollers under the keel, I poured in a supply of gasoline and oil and found a bucket for bailing.

The way was clear to the water's edge, and with a mighty shove, we propelled the boat on rollers into the surf. I had the men stand in the water up to their waists and hold her steady while I tried out the engine. After a couple of trials it coughed spasmodically on three cylinders for a few moments and then settled down to a steady roar on all four.

"All right," I shouted over the racket. "Let her go."

As I threw in the clutch, the boat rocked violently, and a stocky figure climbed dripping over the side. The propeller took hold, and we pointed out in the path of the moon.

"What are you doing?" I asked the missionary.

"I'm going along," he responded.

I paused, undetermined whether to take the time to put about and land him, or go ahead.

"You'll probably be killed," I explained. "There isn't one chance in a hundred of our coming back."

"I know it."

"Then why do it?"

"Because," he said slowly, "because I love her too."

Aside from the racket made by the exhaust, which was unavoidable, as the muffler was not connected up, the machinery worked smoothly enough. I oiled all the working parts again and again, so that they might work out any stiffness in the bearings.

The missionary took the steering ropes and steered in the general direction of Ateua, the location of which he knew better than I.

The new timbers of the hull, not having been soaked, were not by any means tight, and the boat leaked through her seams in tiny sprays that gushed up from the floor like fountains. After the water got up to our ankles one of us had to bail constantly.

Once out of the lee of the island, we found quite a sea running. It would not have amounted to much in a regular boat, or even in a light canoe built for riding the waves, but in our fast, heavy craft, built for going through the water and not over it, we found it rather damp traveling.

AT last we sighted a low-lying strip of land which Quackenbush thought was Ateua. We had to alter our course to port considerably. This was a distinct advantage, as it brought our bow more directly into the wind, and while we pounded a little harder as we dived from crest to trough, most of the water divided on both sides of us and fell back into the sea again. We had lost time, though, by coming out of the direct course, and a fever of apprehension seized me for fear we might be too late. If they once reached the shore, we could do nothing.

I was bailing when the missionary shouted to me to look. On our left, and about a mile nearer to the island than we were, I saw our quarry, a long line of canoes strung out like a parade. I thanked heaven for the moon. Without it, we never would have seen them.

Apparently the noise of our exhaust had given them ample warning of our coming, because they were bending rapidly in double-quick time as they paddled fast in order to land ahead of us.

I adjusted the spark until there was no question but that we were getting every ounce of speed out of the engine; then I went forward to help the missionary steer. Our only chance lay in steering so accurate a course that we did not lose a foot by yawing. The bailing was temporarily abandoned. As long as the carburetor was above water, I didn't mind a little bilge in the hold.

The flywheel was throwing a continuous stream.

With a quarter of a mile to go, the motor began to miss. I found the flywheel throwing water so that it hit the spark-plugs. I tied the bailing-bucket upside down over the two forward ones and protected those aft as best I could with my shirt, which had a few dry spots on it.

When I looked up again, I saw flashes of flame from the foremost canoes. They were firing at us, but I had not heard it on account of the noise of the engine. Quackenbush was standing up straight in blithe disregard of the flying lead which was whistling about him.

OUR plans had been made on the way over. When it was quite evident that we could reach the island first, the missionary altered our course and headed directly for the first canoe. They saw the scheme and for a moment ceased paddling—then started to turn away.

It was too late. Motor driving at full speed, we rose on the top of one wave while they were in the trough of the next.

We dropped on them from above, staggered a second from the shock and went on, pushing the sinking canoe aside as if it were so much spray. As we struck, I gave a quick look into the bottom of the canoe for Bill. She was not there.

The other canoes spat sheets of flame, but we turned so quickly that we were unhit. We held our course for the second canoe in line. I had figured that Lalou would be in one of the first two or three, and of course he would have his prize with him.

As we came head on, a figure stood up in the bow, took deliberate aim and fired. The motor-boat swerved suddenly to one side.

The missionary turned and handed the tiller-ropes to me as I leaped to his side. Then he slipped silently to the floor in the wash of bilge water.

I stood astride of him and pulled the boat around once more just in time. We struck amidships.

This time we did not go on. The canoe split in two in the middle, but our boat stood still, the motor racing. I feared the propeller was broken.

However, the stop was fortunate in a way. Otherwise I should have had great difficulty picking up Queen Vililiti. With no one to help me manage the boat, it would have been practically impossible for me to bring it alongside a swimmer close enough for him to climb aboard. As it was, I saw my wife sinking with the stern of the canoe, and I reached out and grabbed her by the arms she held out to me just in time to prevent her going down with the rest.

WITH a superhuman effort I dragged her over the side. I wasted no time in talk, but went aft to my engine, which was turning over about a thousand times a minute without accomplishing anything. If the propeller was gone, we were done for.

I took hold of the clutch-handle. It was loose. With a faint hope I pulled ahead a little. I began to feel resistance. I threw her in full; the boat leaped ahead. What had happened was that the clutch had jarred out when we struck the other boat.

As I turned to go forward to steer, the boat lurched sidewise. I looked to see what we had hit, and as I did so, a naked savage clambered over the gunwale with a long, crooked knife between his teeth.

It was Lalou.

CHAPTER XXXIV

WE eyed each other while each recovered his breath. I remember that the thought uppermost in my mind was the wish I did not have a broken rib, because I knew that in the fight that was coming it was going to hurt.

I did not have long to worry about that before he started for me. I remember that I told him in a plain matter-of-fact way several enlightening facts about himself and his ancestors and his probable destination in the spirit world after I got through with him.

I grabbed his knife-arm as he lunged, and kept the blade from more than grazing my chest. Incidentally I let him have a quick uppercut on the point of the jaw, which was something he wasn't expecting, not having seen the operation before.

He staggered a little, and then clinched with me. I noticed as we closed, that the launch was running in circles right near where we had struck the canoes, and I wondered vaguely why they did not fire at us. I suppose it was because they recognized their chief on board and did not want to risk hitting him.

His knife was at my back, but I held his wrist with my left hand, and he was still weak from the force of the blow which I had struck. I knew that strength would return soon, so I must force the fighting while I had a slight advantage. Calculating the motion of the boat, to which I was more accustomed than he, I swung him crashing against the side, and as he attempted to recover his balance, I jerked his knife-arm around in front of me.

Straining muscle against muscle, we held the kris aloft between us. I could feel the weight of all his strength as he strove to bring the blade down and bury it in my shoulder. I watched the gleaming steel with fascinated eyes. My strength, never a match for his, was even less because of the broken rib, which made it hurt to hold up my arm above the shoulder.

I could feel the muscles slackening against my will. My arm was borne down. There was a grin on the tense face of Lalou as he felt me weaken.

That gave me a last spurt of animus, the strength to make a final effort. My arm stiffened once more; at the same time a giant wave struck the side of the launch, throwing her on her beam ends. As we were hurled against the engine, the knife descended —and as much to my surprise as anyone's, buried itself in the neck of my enemy.

I yanked him to his feet away from the revolving wheel, and still with that surprised, apologetic look on his face, he dropped over the side into the whirling waters.

FOR the first time in minutes I looked about me.

There were no canoes in sight. Vililiti had seen the improvised tiller-ropes, and quick to action, she had grabbed them up and steered away from the vicinity of the canoes, leaving pursuit baffled and far behind.

I was glad of a few minutes' respite, and I slowed the engine down to mere headway while I took stock of our position. A low groan from the missionary told me that he was still alive, and I asked Bill to look to his comfort while I overhauled the boat for damage.

There seemed to be enough water inside to take a bath in, but with the engine running slowly, it didn't throw up so much spray. I got busy with the bailing-bucket and after a while managed to get her clear of water below the flywheel. Next I tightened up all the bolts and sprinkled oil over the machinery which had been working so long in salt-water spray.

With the engine racing full speed ahead once more, I headed her forefoot in the general direction of the *Shandon Belle's* searchlight,—which stood straight up like a pillar upholding the sky,—fastened the lines and turned to assist Bill in caring for the missionary.

He had a bullet through his shoulder which had broken a bone and had cost him the loss of a lot of blood, but anyone could see with half an eye that even amateur surgery would never be able to keep him from converting or killing many a heathen yet.

The first tints of dawn were lighting the horizon as we rounded the point of Tamaloa Island. 'Way up on the top of the volcano, a ray of sunlight was searching for the place where Ai had used to greet him, and where later Binns had reached out with the fingers of the wireless to brush tips with the wings of the morning. Below, at the foot of the slope, lazy clouds of smoke drifted skyward from what had once been Greater Tamaloa. In the harbor, not five hundred yards from the shore, was anchored the *Shandon Belle,* just as she had looked six months ago when I had first landed from her to amuse the King.

On board the ship they heard us coming, and in the half light of the dawn they swung the searchlight on the launch. A cheer went up when they made out that there were three of us.

CHAPTER XXXV

WHEN I brought the launch alongside, hundreds of eager brown faces lined the rail to welcome us. The survivors of the village had taken refuge on board. Tenderly the missionary was carried up from the landing-stage to the deck above, and even Bill and I were helped up the stairways as if we were a couple of cripples instead of the most belligerent king and queen in the Pacific.

On deck, Captain Corbett, torn between a desire to address me as "Yellow Legs" and a sense of formality that dictated, "Your Majesty," compromised by saluting and saying: "Glad to see you aboard, sir."

We did not look very royal, anyway, Bill and I. Her dress was torn and stained with sea-water and cinders, and my face and clothing were sadly smeared with blood as a memento of my late friend Lalou when he had pricked me in the chest. My shirt also showed traces of having been used as a watershed around the spark-plugs of the launch-motor.

"What are your orders?" The Captain was uncertain which one of us to look to for instructions.

"With Queen Vililiti's permission," I said, "I think the wise thing to do now is for the remnant of the population to seek protection under the wing of the British government at their headquarters. Then when they are quite certain that they are safe, they could return to their homes or rather to the place where their homes used to be. At present, I think they ought not to stay on the island. There is danger of the Ateuans taking revenge for the death of their chief."

"Very well, Your Majesty." He saluted once more. "I'll have the anchor up again immediately."

The Captain strode off to issue his commands.

I should have liked to ask him about Beautiful, but I did not want to speak of her before Bill. I was jollying myself along with a shred of hope that I might prevent trouble. If I could only get a word with Beautiful privately, I had an idea that I might explain things frankly to her and enlist her aid in keeping the true state of affairs from Bill. My hope was only a shred, though.

THINKING of this, I joined Bill at the rail. She was gazing thoughtfully at the paradise that had been her home.

Not caring to disturb her thoughts, I stood there while the anchor was being weighed. When the screw began to revolve, I noticed that a tear stood in Bill's eye. My impulse was to throw a protecting arm around her and let her have her cry out on my already damp shoulder, but I restrained myself. "Better wait," I thought, "until you have seen Beautiful."

As it happened, I did not have long to wait.

I turned away to leave Bill alone in her grief, and as I did so I faced the door of the forward cabin just as it opened. In its frame stood an immaculate vision in tropical white flannels, a demure person with dark hair and great mischief-making eyes.

I looked at her, fascinated, unable to say anything, waiting to see what she would do first. She walked over to me sedately and looked me all over critically from head to heels.

"Hello, Skinny," she greeted me finally. "You are a mess, aren't you?"

"I am," I admitted.

"However," she decided, "I've stayed up all night to get a glimpse of your classic features, so now I'll kiss you, anyway."

She held up her lips as she always had in the days when we had been working together in "The Pink Widow."

What did I do?

Just what you would have done, of course. Probably I kissed her even more readily than you would, because we stage people do not lay much stress on a kiss of greeting, anyway.

As I said, I kissed Beautiful because it did not occur to me to shake hands. But as soon as I had done it, however, I realized that Vililiti had not had the same training and experience as Beautiful and myself.

I turned to give her the benefit of an explanation.

She was gone.

"Your friend seemed to have a date," said Beautiful.

"Where did she go?" I shouted, searching the vessel with my eyes.

"Over the rail," Beautiful replied. "Is it a custom, or is she the Annette Kellerman of these parts?"

I ran to the rail.

A hundred yards from the moving vessel and progressing rapidly toward the shore was a familiar head.

Poor kid!

I climbed over the rail myself.

"Skinny!" screamed Beautiful. "What are you doing? Who is it?"

"It's my wife." I paused a second to explain. "And in about ten minutes I'm going to kiss her for the first time —if a shark doesn't bite me first."

CHAPTER XXXVI

I DROPPED to the water, not as gracefully as I've seen it done, but without knocking the wind entirely out of me; then I made a wide circle to avoid the suction of the propeller and started in pursuit.

I believe I have said that I had learned considerable about swimming since my first day at Tamaloa. If it hadn't been for my broken rib, the swim to the shore would not have tired me a particle. As it was, I just managed to reach the beach before I gave out.

The girl had disappeared, but I felt sure I could find her, and so I waited to recover my strength. The morning sun was still low enough so that the beach was not yet hot, and I rested comfortably on the sand. At length, when I was quite myself again, I rose and walked up the shore.

I paused a moment where the still-smoking ruins marked the destruction of the Knickerbocker Hotel, the *Times* Building, the Amsterdam Theater and the Lambs. On Broadway, nothing remained but the signpost with its melancholy crossed fingers, and beneath it the taxicab, its woodwork riddled with bullets, and one wheel off, leaning dejectedly toward Forty-second Street.

Somewhere in that tangled ruin was old Peter with his twisted foot, who had died shielding me; there also was young Brisbane, his own death more spectacular than anything he had ever printed in a "last edition;" and beneath it all, sleeping peacefully with the signpost for a headstone, was my friend the King.

Beyond the village, and mercifully hidden by a curtain of trees, was the crystal pool. It was there that I looked for and found my wife.

SHE was seated on the grass that encircled the deep basin, her knees drawn up in front of her and her arms clasping them. She was dripping as I was, but water was so much her natural element that she looked all the better for it. She knew I was there, but she did not turn around. I sat down beside her.

"Bill," I said gently, "several days ago, you told me I was undemonstrative. Do you see now the reason?"

"You mean because you love her?" she stated idly, not looking at me.

"No," I replied patiently, "—because I loved her once, and I couldn't tell you every last little thing that was in my heart until you knew that she was here. I was afraid to tell you she was coming, because I didn't know how to explain it so you would understand. During the battle I didn't dare. Do you see?"

"Why?"

"I wanted to retain control over you so that you wouldn't do anything foolish. Now you know, and I have told her, and I have come to take you home. I am waiting, Bill. We have been married three days, and I have never kissed you."

She shook her head.

"No," she decided listlessly. "I could never be happy, knowing that our marriage was all a mistake. Please go, Pudgy—please. You can at least make her happy."

"Bill," I said reproachfully.

She shook her head.

I rose, defeated. As I turned to go, the bushes parted, and in the opening stood Captain Corbett. I had not heard his approach, on account of the soft grass.

"I came about with the *Shandon Belle,* sir," he said, "as soon as I heard you had left."

"Very well," I replied.

"I hope you'll pardon the interruption," he apologized, feeling no doubt the tense relation between Bill and myself. "There's a native canoe drawn up on the beach and I thought you ought to know about it. I brought a dozen men ashore to handle 'em if they should make any fuss."

"Thank you."

THAT put a different face on the matter. If there were any enemies loose around the island, it would be impossible to leave Bill there alone.

"I'm sorry about not being able to bring that girl out just as advertised," the Captain went on with elephantine lack of tact.

"I thought you did bring her," I answered moodily, scarcely paying any attention to what he was saying.

"Yes," he admitted, "but I didn't figure on bringing the young man too."

"What young man?"

"Oh, you know, the young fellow that dances and wears so many clothes."

The fellow who danced and wore so many clothes! I did know him, and the recollection of my one-time opinion of him made me sneer. It was "Skeeter."

"How in the name of Mike did you come to bring him along?"

"I didn't go to. We found the show in San Francisco. Me and the mate pinched off the little girl the same as we did you, only she made more of a fuss. We thought we'd got away with it clean, until we got down to the docks, and durned if there wasn't this little shrimp riding on our cab-springs behind.

"He was going to make all kinds of trouble and yell for police and all that sort of thing, so we just naturally had to bring him along for self-protection. But that aint the worst of it."

"No?" I was beginning to be interested in spite of myself.

"No, sir," he continued. "Just for meanness, that darn girl went and married the little geezer hard and fast in Honolulu when I let 'em ashore for a little while. What do you know about that! It spoiled the whole business. I wish I could have left 'em there, but they didn't tell me about it until we was two days out, and they said they was just taking their honeymoon on the *Shandon Belle.*"

I started to laugh, but the merriment died on my lips.

Across the pool, standing carelessly in the open, a target for anyone, was an Ateuan warrior, Lalou's principal lieutenant. As I looked up, he leveled his rifle at me and took a slow, deliberate aim. There was no mistaking his demeanor. He considered himself an executioner. No one on our side cried a word of warning. It was as if we feared that the first sound would startle him into pulling the trigger.

Then in the twinkling of an eye, just as the shot rang out, I was hurled to one side as Bill sprang between me and the rifle. A sharp pain bit me in the shoulder as my arms closed hungrily around that slender, lithe body that somehow was always standing on the near side to danger.

Another shot, this one from Captain Corbett. I did not look up, but bent my head until my lips found the eager, warm lips of the Queen.

I could feel a trickle of blood running down my side. I looked. The same bullet had pierced us both, going through the soft flesh of Bill's upper arm and into my shoulder.

"Bill," I whispered huskily, "we're wounded."

"Are we?" she answered, tightening her clasp around my neck. "I hadn't noticed."

THE END

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There may be beverages that are made to look like it—but there is no beverage that can make the same delightful *impression* on your palate.

Delicious

Demand the genuine by full name—and avoid disappointment.

THE COCA-COLA COMPANY
ATLANTA, GA.

Whenever you see an Arrow, think of Coca-Cola

"Don't tell me you never had a chance!

"Four years ago you and I worked at the same bench. We were *both* discontented. Remember the noon we saw the International Correspondence Schools' advertisement? That woke me up. I realized that to get ahead I needed special training, and I decided to let the I. C. S. help me. When I marked the coupon I asked you to sign with me. You said, 'Aw, forget it!'

"I made the most of my opportunity and have been climbing ever since. You had the same chance I had, but you turned it down. No, Jim, you can't expect more money until you've trained yourself to handle bigger work."

There are lots of "Jims" in the world—in stores, factories, offices, everywhere. Are *you* one of them? Wake up! Every time you see an I. C. S. coupon your chance is staring you in the face. Don't turn it down.

Right now over one hundred thousand men are preparing themselves for bigger jobs and better pay through I. C. S. courses.

You can join them and get in line for promotion. Mark and mail this coupon, and find out how.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2412, Scranton, Pa.

Reports on 27,000 typical I. C. S. students show 14,900 now receiving $1500 a year or more; 2451 receiving $2500 or more; 413 receiving $5000 or more; 20 receiving $10,000 or more; and eight with annual incomes of $25,000 or more.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE DONE YOU CAN DO

TEAR OUT HERE

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

Box 2412, SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I mark X.

ELECTRICAL ENGINEER	SALESMANSHIP
Electric Lighting	ADVERTISING MAN
Electric Car Running	Window Trimmer
Electric Wiring	Show Card Writer
Telegraph Expert	RAILROADER
MECHANICAL ENGINEER	ILLUSTRATOR
Mechanical Draftsman	DESIGNER
Machine Shop Practice	BOOKKEEPER
Gas Engineer	Stenographer and Typist
CIVIL ENGINEER	Cert. Public Accountant
Surveying and Mapping	Railway Accountant
MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER	Commercial Law
Metallurgist or Prospector	GOOD ENGLISH
STATIONARY ENGINEER	Teacher
Marine Engineer	Common School Subjects
ARCHITECT	CIVIL SERVICE
Contractor and Builder	Railway Mail Clerk
Architectural Draftsman	AGRICULTURE
Concrete Builder	Textile Overseer or Supt.
Structural Engineer	Navigator / Spanish
PLUMBING AND HEATING	Poultry Raising / German
Sheet Metal Worker	AUTOMOBILES / French
CHEMICAL ENGINEER	Auto Repairing / Italian

Name _____

Occupation & Employer _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

Rate:—$1.00 per line—cash with order. No advertisement of less than 4 lines accepted.
The August issue will appear on July 1st. Forms close in Chicago on June 15th, by which time order, copy and remittance must be in our hands.

THE STORY-PRESS CORPORATION **North American Bldg., Chicago, Ill.**

80 to 100 Words a Minute Guaranteed!

Learn at Home—10 Easy Lessons

A wonderful new method of acquiring skill on the typewriter has been discovered. Almost overnight it has revolutionized the whole typewriting situation.

Already thousands of stenographers and other typewriter users who never exceeded thirty to forty words a minute, are writing 80 to 100 words with half the effort and with infinitely greater accuracy than they ever could before, and they're earning salaries increased in proportion.

Nothing Else Like It

Don't confuse this new way in typewriting with any system of the past. There has never been anything like it before. It is as different from the old touch systems as day is from night. Special *Gymnastic* Finger-Training Exercises bring results in *days* that ordinary methods will not produce in *months*. It is the greatest step in typewriting since the typewriter itself was invented—already its success has become nation-wide.

Doubles and Trebles Salaries

Among the thousands of operators who have taken up this system are hundreds of graduates of business colleges and special typewriting courses—many were so-called touch writers—yet there has not been a single one who hasn't **doubled** or **trebled** his or her speed and accuracy, and the salaries have been increased from $8 to $15 a week (their former salaries) to $25, $30 and even $40 weekly. And the new way is *amazingly easy* for anyone—there are only 10 lessons and they can be quickly learned at home.

Valuable Book Free

We cannot describe here the secret principle of this new method. But we have prepared a book which tells all about it in complete detail, which is **free** to those interested. It is a big 48-page book, brimful of eye-opening ideas and valuable information. It explains how this unique new method will quickly make your fingers *strong and dextrous*, bring them under *perfect control*, make them *extremely rapid* in their movements—how in a few short weeks you can transform your typewriting and make it *easy*, *accurate* and *amazingly speedy*—all this and much more is told in detail. No instruction book ever written, no matter what its cost, ever told so plainly the real WHY and HOW of expert typewriting.

If you are ambitious to get ahead—if you want to make your work easier—if you want to put more money in your pay envelope—get this book at once. It will be a revelation to you as to the *speed* and *salary* that is possible to typists. Mail the coupon or a postal today—*Now*.

USE THIS FOR BIGGER PAY

The Tulloss School of Typewriting, 1706 College Hill, Springfield, Ohio

Please send me your Free Book about the New Way in Typewriting. This incurs no obligation whatever on my part.

Name.....

Street.....

City.....State.....

Occupation.....

Insure the Neatness and Permanency of Your Records

When the difference in price between cheap and the best carbon paper is so *little* and the difference in *results* is so *great*, no stenographer or business house can justify using poor, cheap, unreliable carbon paper.

MultiKopy has the call among stenographers because it enables them to do better, quicker, cleaner work. MultiKopy is made *right*. Its correct, scientific composition and smooth surface make MultiKopy extraordinarily durable. One sheet of MultiKopy will often give 100 clear copies or 20 clear copies can be made at one writing. Often MultiKopy copies rival the original in neatness and legibility.

MultiKopy has the call among business men because it insures records that are beautifully neat, permanent and unfading. MultiKopy copies in black or blue last as long as the paper holds together.

To get MultiKopy *clearness* and MultiKopy *permanency* you must insist on getting MultiKopy.

Send for FREE Sample Sheet

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369 Congress St. Boston, Mass.

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Makers of the famous STAR BRAND Typewriter Ribbons

TRADE MULTIKOPY MARK

Carbon Paper

These are the signs of good health. Has your baby all of them?

Has he a good appetite—a clear pink skin—bright wide-open eyes—alert springy muscles—a contented little face? Does he gain each week in weight—does he sleep quietly with eyes and mouth tightly closed?

If he hasn't one and all of these things—look out. Something is wrong with him. And nine times in ten that something is his food.

Your baby can't grow rosy and strong if he doesn't have the right food. Nurse your baby, if you can. If you can't, wean him on

Nestlé's Food

(A complete food—not a milk modifier)

Don't give him raw cow's milk. Cow's milk needs a calf's four stomachs to digest it. "Cow's milk, as ordinarily marketed is unfit for human consumption," says the U. S. Government.

But there is something in cow's milk that is good for your baby, if that something is modified and purified so that it is as light, as satisfying and as pure as mother's milk itself. That is what is done for you in Nestlé's Food.

It comes to you reduced to a powder—in an air-tight can. You add only water—boil one minute—and it's ready with just the right amount of fats, proteids, and carbohydrates that will make a healthy baby.

Send the coupon for free sample box of Nestle's—enough for 12 feedings—and the Specialist's book on the care of babies. Don't delay. Your baby's health depends on the food you give him now.

NESTLÉ'S FOOD COMPANY
252 Broadway
New York

Please send me, FREE, your Book and Trial Package.

Name.....

Address.....

ROBERT J. CASEY, author of "The Pay Streak" (to appear in the August BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE) and of other fine stories which we will publish regularly.

FREE *for* Six Months

My New Magazine

INVESTING for PROFIT

This wonderful magazine is the "Investor's Brain Partner" and often referred to as the "Little Schoolmaster of the SCIENCE OF INVESTMENT"

Don't invest a dollar anywhere until you at least read Investing for Profit Magazine

"Every investment he touches turns into money." This is a common every day expression—no doubt you know a few such men among your acquaintances. These men do not follow blind luck—they have mastered the law of Financial Success. You may watch them conceive and carry out their financial plans successfully—and you know they are not mentally stronger than you are. But it is the KNOW HOW in conjunction with brains that counts.

The education necessary to transform mind conceptions into visual realities is the element necessary to bring wealth to the dreamer. Until you learn the *real earning power* of your money—the difference between *rental* power and *earning* power—the underlying principles of incorporation—the science of investing—don't invest a dollar in anything anywhere.

Investing for Profit—A Liberal Financial Education

I claim—and I can prove it beyond the shadow of a doubt—that my magazine has not only made thousands of dollars for its readers—but it has SAVED them from losing many thousands of dollars in unwise investments. Until my magazine, INVESTING FOR PROFIT, appeared the small investor never had an opportunity to ask for and receive honest, unbiased, sound, logical advice and counsel in the science of investment.

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