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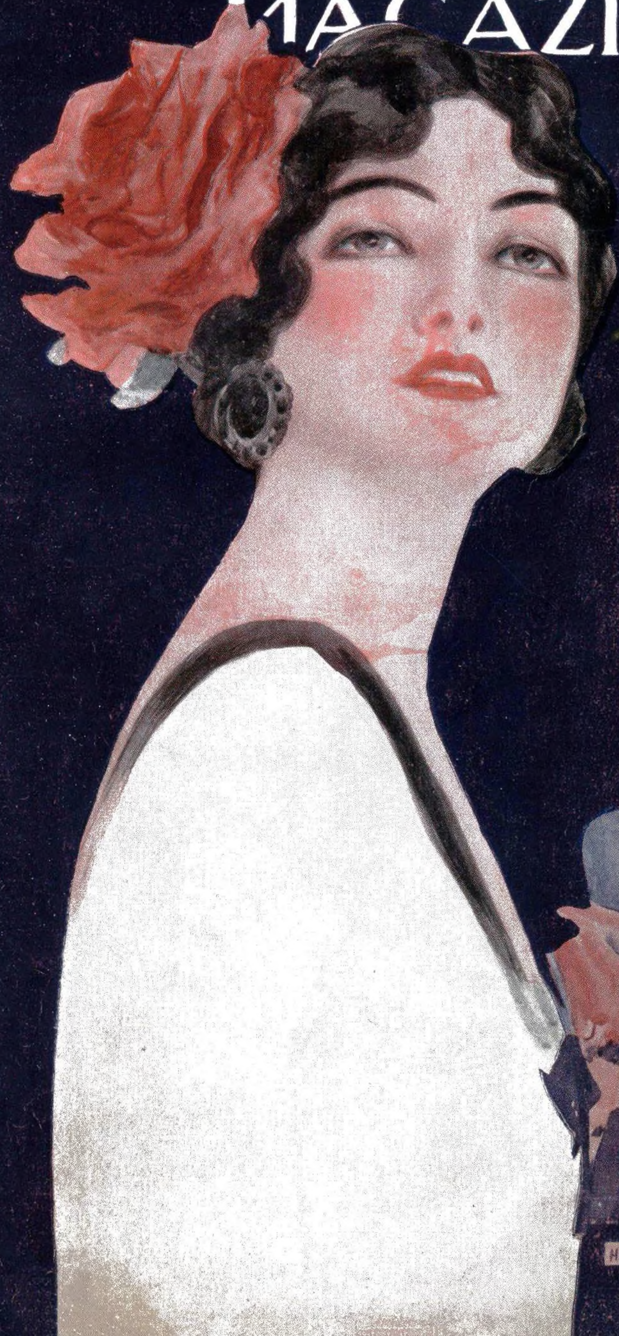
MARCH 1914

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE



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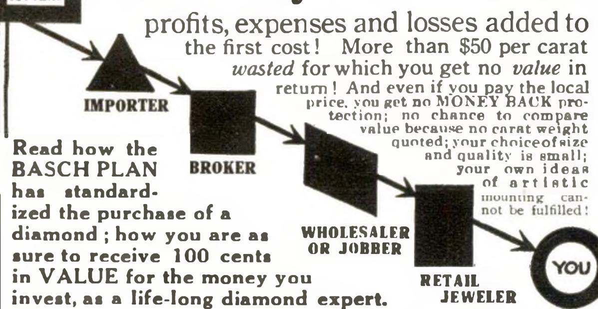

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THE BLUE BOOK
MAGAZINE FOR MARCH, 1914

Next Month

ONLY the chosen few of the many stories which are daily submitted to us go to make up THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE. Every morning the postman brings us a pile of manuscripts over a foot high. All of these are given careful consideration—and out of the whole number perhaps *one* will be chosen as entirely worthy of your consideration. And what a splendid collection these selected stories make! Our April issue, for instance, will include a novelette of gallant adventure—"His Coat Of Arms," by H. Andrew Aldridge—which has only been equalled by the famous "Monsieur Beaucaire." Our two serials, "For the Allinson Honor" and "Innocence," will each come to an especially thrilling episode. And there will be some remarkably exciting exploits of those famous BLUE BOOK characters, "Blue-funk Carson," the African pioneer; the "Diplomatic Free Lance;" "Matt Bardeen," master diver; "Magnum," the scientific detective; and others. And as for individual short stories—just see if the April BLUE BOOK hasn't as fine an assortment of them as you ever read. You'll find it on sale everywhere, March 1st.

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COVER DESIGN: Painted by Henry Hutt

STAGELAND................The Latest Pictures of Plays and Players

TWO GREAT NOVELS IN SERIAL FORM

FOR THE ALLINSON HONOR...........Harold Bindloss...... 876
The second installment of this splendid story of the Northland: Andrew sets out in quest of Graham's lode.

INNOCENCE..........................Edwin Bliss.......... 994
The sixth installment of this daring novel of New York life: Kathleen Morrison rescues Landrum.

ONE COMPLETE NOVELETTE

THE FURNACE OF GOLD..............Crittenden Marriott... 849
The absorbing story of a desperate treasure-quest and of an unusual romance.

TWENTY REMARKABLE SHORT STORIES

THAT BAG OF TRICKS................John Barton Oxford.. 872
Barty Kerrigan tries to learn "parlor" tricks—with astonishing results.

FREE LANCES IN DIPLOMACY........Clarence Herbert New. 892
"The Education of Hassan Ali."

THE KEEPER OF FOUR-FATHOM LIGHT·Ray Wynn........... 903
A thrilling episode of the Atlantic Coast.

WHAT HAPPENED TO WINIFRED......Frank X. Finnegan... 909
The remarkable adventures of a taxi chauffeur.

THE MANDARIN'S CHAIR..............Hastings MacAdam... 917
A domestic disagreement brings about a bizarre situation.

BLACK IVORY..........................John Barnett......... 925
"Blue-Funk Carson" fights a pitched battle with Arab slave-raiders.

THE DEBT OF HONOR.................Lilian Ducey......... 931
A love story of exceptional charm.

THE FLAREBACK......................Guy C. Baker......... 937
Lawyer Fawsett upsets a neatly contrived conspiracy.

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She proves to be a real human being—and the best man wins her.

EAT-EM-UP MAKES A MISCUE.........Grant Owen.......... 952
The well-laid plans of a prize-fight fan become sadly twisted.

THE INVISIBLE BULLET..............Max Rittenberg...... 957
Magnum, the scientific consultant, turns detective.

MARY CARMICHAEL AND I...........James Vale Downie... 963
We find life extremely interesting.

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The making of a man—a tale of the Tennessee mountains.

A ROSE LIFTED UP....................Allen Updegraff...... 980
A factory-town strike interferes with love's young dream.

THE MULE..............................Charles Wesley Sanders 987
Stubborn—but with real stuff in him, for all that.

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"When the Ship Turned Turtle."

A MATTER OF RECORD..............Paul Lee Ellerbe..... 1008
A vivid story of a criminal plot and a message in cipher—with a most dramatic climax.

THE DOWRY...........................Sidney Hodges Cole.. 1018
The bride's father escapes from prison to provide it.

ALEXANDER'S COUNTRY BUTTER.....Marshall Jewell Bailey. 1024
Big business in butter.

BAD-MAN'S BLUFF.....................John E. Rosser....... 1036
Wherein a Western editor shows up a bad-man.

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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.

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"Seven Keys to Baldpate"

Dramatized by George M. Cohan from the novel of Earl Derr Biggers

WILLIAM HALLOWELL MAGEE, a novelist, makes a wager with the owner of Baldpate Inn that he can write a story in twenty-four hours. Seeking seclusion, MAGEE borrows the key to Baldpate—a summer hotel now locked up for the winter—and with his typewriter retires to an upper room of the deserted hostelry to write his story. There enters the hotel office one JOHN BLAND, an employee of a street-railway magnate, who places $200,000 in the hotel safe—a bribe to be called for later by the Mayor of Reuton. MAGEE surprises BLAND—who draws a pistol; but a moment later the novelist tricks him and locks him in an upstairs room. Forthwith, however, MAGEE is confronted by a third intruder—MARY NORTON—a newspaper reporter on the trail of the bribery affair. MAGEE falls in love with MARY—and complications now crowd still more closely upon one another's heels. In all, seven persons, including PETER, a strange old hermit, come to "lonely" Baldpate that night. And then at last the curtain rises upon MAGEE wearily at work with his typewriter, and the audience realizes that none of these amazing events has really happened—they have formed the story which MAGEE is just finishing. (*Produced by Cohan & Harris.*)

GAIL KANE as Myra Thornhill, and WALLACE EDDINGER as Magee, in "Seven Keys to Baldpate." *Photograph by White, New York.*

A scene from "Seven Keys to Baldpate:" On the balcony are CARLETON MACY as Jiggs Kennedy, CLAUDE BROOKE as Thomas Haydan, MARTIN L. ALSOP as Jim Cargan, PURNELL B. PRATT as John Bland, and ROY FAIRCHILD as Lou Max; below are JOSEPH ALLEN as Peter, and WALLACE EDDINGER as William Hallowell Magee. *Photograph by White, New York*

"Hop O' My Thumb"

By George R. Sims, Frank Dix and Arthur Collins

A certain poor wood-cutter finds his seven children too heavy a burden and leads them into the forest, with the intention of losing them. One of them, HOP O' MY THUMB, drops bread-crumbs along the way and contrives to guide his brothers part way home by this trail, but the birds eat up the remaining crumbs, and the brothers find themselves lost. Presently they come upon a house and, unaware that it is an ogre's castle, crave shelter. The ogre's housekeeper pities the children and conceals them from the ogre by disguising them as his own daughters, and then aids them to escape into the Garden of Statues—where the ogre keeps all his victims frozen into statues, until he is ready to eat them. HOP O' MY THUMB discovers a magic fountain in the garden and by its aid brings the statues to life. HOP and his brothers then escape to the mountains, pursued by the ogre, who wears his famous seven-league boots. The children hide until the ogre is asleep, and then render him powerless by stealing his seven-league boots. They then flee to the king's palace, where, aided by these same extraordinary boots, they win fame and fortune for themselves. (*Produced by the Drury Lane Company of America.*)

VIOLA GILLETTE as Hilario, and EVA FALLON as Mirabelle, in "Hop O' My Thumb." *Photograph by White, New York.*

DE WOLF HOPPER as the King of Mnemomica, and IRIS HAWKINS as "Hop," in "Hop O' My Thumb." *Photograph by White, New York.*

IRIS HAWKINS as "Hop," and his six brothers, in the Christmas spectacle, "Hop O' My Thumb." *Photograph by White, New York.*

"To-Day"

By George Broadhurst and Abraham S. Schomer

FREDERICK WAGNER fails in business; and his wife LILY, spoiled and accustomed to all manner of luxuries, is forced to go back to the limited allowance which in earlier years had sufficed her. FREDERICK makes an honest effort to pay his creditors and obtains employment with a real estate agent. LILY, however, finds living in relative poverty, in the same flat with her husband's father and mother, very irksome. Persuaded by a friend, MRS. GARLAND, she commences making visits to a "house of call" in order to obtain money for the luxuries she craves. It happens that FREDERICK's employer handles the property on which the disorderly house is located, and FREDERICK is sent there to collect the rent. He sees there a photograph of his wife, suspects her, and arranges with the landlady to meet the original. Husband and wife are thus brought face to face at the scene of her shame. He casts her from him, and leaving her to the fate she has chosen, returns to his home with his father and mother. (*Produced by the Manuscript Producing Company*)

EMILY STEVENS as Mrs. Wagner, and TERESA MAXWELL CONOVER as Mrs. Garland, in "To-day."
Photograph by White, New York.

EMILY STEVENS as Mrs. Wagner, and EDWIN ARDEN as Frederick Wagner, in "To-day." *Photograph by White, New York.*

A scene from "To-day:" ALICE GALE as Emma Wagner, GUS WEINBURG as Heinrich Wagner, EDWIN ARDEN as Frederick Wagner, EMILY STEVENS as Lily, (Mrs. Frederick) Wagner, and TERESA MAXWELL CONOVER as Mrs. Garland. *Photograph by White, New York.*

"The Great Adventure"

By Arnold Bennett

ILAM CARVE, a famous but excessively bashful English painter, comes home to find his valet, ALBERT SHAWN, dying of pneumonia. The physician who is summoned mistakes master for man, and the artist is too shy to correct the error—even when SHAWN dies. So it is supposed that CARVE himself is dead; and so it happens that SHAWN is buried in Westminster Abbey in the belief that the body is that of CARVE. The diffident artist finds his new obscurity much to his liking and he continues life in the character of the humble SHAWN. Presently a young widow, JANET CANNOT, appears, in response to a letter SHAWN had written in answer to her advertisement for a husband. The supposed valet is much taken with the capable JANET, and after she nurses him through an illness, marries her. CARVE continues to paint, however, although JANET regards his work as mere rubbish. So eventually a picture dealer named EBAG discovers ILAM'S identity, and with the cat thus let out of the bag, the artist's great adventure in anonymity comes to an end. (*Produced by Winthrop Ames.*)

LYN HARDING as Ilam Carve, and JANET BEECHER as Janet Cannot, in "The Great Adventure." *Photograph by White, New York.*

A scene from "The Great Adventure:" LYN HARDING as Ilam Carve, JANET BEECHER as Janet Cannot, and ROXANE BARTON as Honoria Looe. *Photograph by White, New York.*

"The Things That Count"

By Lawrence Eyre

The only son of the wealthy MR. and MRS. HENNABERRY had married an actress, BEULAH RANDOLPH, against their wishes. They decline to call on their son's wife, and even after his death MRS. HENNABERRY disregards his widow. MR. HENNABERRY, however, goes to see her and his grandchild DULCIE, whom he finds to be an unusually frail little girl. On Christmas Eve, MR. HENNABERRY carries a basket of gifts and delicacies to BEULAH and DULCIE; MRS. HENNABERRY discovers this, and unaware of BEULAH'S identity, assumes that her husband is engaged in a clandestine love-affair. She goes to see BEULAH, finds only DULCIE at home, and much attracted by the little girl, proceeds to give her a Christmas party and asks in the neighbor's children. The mother returns; the excitement of the party is too much for DULCIE; she faints; and when the doctor is summoned, the identity of BEULAH and DULCIE is disclosed to MRS. HENNABERRY. There follows a mutual reconciliation; and the doctor—whom, it develops, is engaged to BEULAH—announces that with proper attention DULCIE will soon become well and strong again. (*Produced by William A. Brady.*)

HILDA ENGLUND as Ingeborg, IDALENE COTTON as Signora Vanni, and ALICE BRADY as Beulah Randolph, in "The Things That Count." *Photograph by White, New York.*

ALICE BRADY as Beulah Randolph, and GRACE DOUGHERTY as Dulcie Randolph, in "The Things That Count." *Photograph by White, New York.*

FLORINE ARNOLD, EDWARD ESTABROOKE, GRACE DOUGHERTY, ALICE BRADY, HILDA ENGLUND, ALBERT REED, NICK LONG, IDALENE COTTON, EDNA W. HOPPER, LOUISE MULDENER, JOSEPHINE WILLIAMS, MAXINE E. RICKS and CHARLES EVERETT, in "The Things That Count."
Photograph by White, New York.

March 1914

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

Vol. XVIII No. 5

The Furnace of Gold

by

CRITTENDEN MARRIOTT

THIS is a novelette with a real "punch" to it—a story that brings to you all the glamour of strange romance and all the fascination of wild adventure. Mr. Marriott—whom you will remember as the author of "Cloud City," "The Water Devil," and "Sally Castleton, Southerner,"—has never written a more engrossing tale; don't fail to read it.

"HEY! There! Turn out! Turn out, you scum! On deck with you!" Tom Randolph heard the words dully, but did not understand them; still less did he imagine that they were addressed to him. But they roused him and he moved painfully, clasping his aching head with trembling hands.

"Turn out! Turn out, I say!" Again came the order, and Tom opened his sticky eyelids and looked about him. As he did so, a horny fist knuckled into his neck and he felt himself dragged across an edge of board and dropped. Instinctively he threw out his hands to save himself, but only succeeded in slightly lessening the jarring crash with which he toppled to the floor.

Before his dazed wits could clear, he heard the same voice.

"On deck with you," it raged. "Quick, or I'll lift you."

Tom struggled up, feeling as he did so the "lifting" impact of a heavy boot, luckily clad in rubber. The moment he gained his unsteady feet a giant of a man sprang at him from behind with a shower of blows and kicks and drove him through a doorway onto the deck of a schooner. "Tail on to them halliards," roared the voice.

A final blow sent Tom reeling against

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a knot of men who were pulling on a rope and were pretending not to see what was occurring. One of them made way for him, and with trembling hands he grasped the rope and pretended to pull. He could do nothing but pretend, for he was scarcely able to stand.

After a few minutes, however, his wits came back to him. He was no longer being assaulted, and the giant whose voice had waked him had gone a little way off. He looked about him and saw that he was on a large three-masted schooner that was rushing swiftly through the waves, heeling well over before the thrust of the wind. Amazed, for his last recollection was of the land, he turned to the man beside him. "What does this mean?" he groaned. "What does it mean?"

"Means you've been shanghaied, I reckon," answered the man, cautiously. "You aint the only one."

"Shanghaied!" Tom's heart sank. "What ship's this?" he gasped.

"This? The *Lizzie Green*. Bound for Lima! Here! Get to work, or we'll have that darned second mate on us."

Tom Randolph threw his weight on the rope, this time more effectively. As he worked he tried to call back the circumstances that brought him on board the *Lizzie Green*.

Dimly he remembered the occurrences of the night before—he supposed it was the night before. He remembered his scornful remarks at the club, about people with pocketfuls of money who made round-the-world trips against time; he remembered his assertions—his tongue had been loosened by a drink or two—that anybody could go around the world in these days even without money; he remembered Milton's offer to bet ten thousand dollars to ten that he could not start with five dollars and work his way around the world in six months; he remembered taking the bet—forgetting for the moment that by going he would leave Milton a clear field with Susy Pendleton—whom he had only been prevented from marrying by his own relative poverty. And finally he remembered setting out amid the cheers of the crowd, determined to begin the trip at once, with only his nest-egg of five dollars.

And then he remembered nothing more.

But he guessed the rest. San Francisco, he knew, was not a safe place at best; and in the wee small hours of the night it was a very unsafe place indeed. He knew he must have had a drink too much to start with or he would never have made such an idiotic wager. No doubt he had rushed down to the Barbary Coast intent on finding a ship for Shanghai—and he had been shanghaied. Perhaps Milton helped him on, anxious to get rid of him before sober reflection should induce him to change his mind; perhaps he had done it all his own fool self. It did not matter. In either case the result was the same. He had started—or been started on his trip around the world, and for the moment at least he could not turn back.

It was four hours before his watch on deck was up, and for most of that time he was kept continually moving, driven on by the brute who had roused him and who, he discovered, was named Talcott and was the second mate. In the few intervals of rest he noticed three other men and a woman moving about on the quarterdeck. From Carter, the sailor who had befriended him when he first came on deck, he learned that they were the captain, Sawyer by name, the first mate, Parkton, and two passengers, said to be husband and wife, name unknown. Once when he moved too slowly to satisfy Talcott and that bully sprang upon him with a shower of blows, Tom thought he saw the woman remonstrating with the captain. He was not sure, however, and the remonstrance, if made, seemed ineffective.

At last his watch was up and he could stretch his aching bones in his filthy bunk. Long before this time he had made up his mind that it would be mere folly to resist the officers of the ship or to try to pursuade them that he had never signed on. He knew something of sailoring, though only in an amateur way, and he knew perfectly well that the captain would refuse to believe him and that any remonstrance would only make his position worse. He resolved to accommo-

date himself to the situation and do his work as well as possible. Later, when he reached port, would be time enough to decide on his future course.

In his bunk he found a dirty canvas bag containing some greasy clothes and a filthy cap; he did not find his five dollars and indeed did not look for it, knowing well it must be gone.

Tom was of a very cheerful disposition and could accommodate himself to nearly any circumstances, and on almost any other vessel he would have soon become resigned and perhaps even cheerful, despite the villainous food and the miserable sleeping quarters. But he soon found that no one could be cheerful on the *Lizzie Green*. The brutality of the officers forbade. The Captain took little part in the hazing, but the two mates raged up and down the ship all day long, showering curses, kicks and blows impartially.

After some days at sea he sought counsel of the sailor who had befriended him. "Look here, Carter," he said. "You know a lot more about the sea than I do. Are there many hell ships like this?"

Carter shook his head. "Not nowadays," he declared. "There used to be a lot, but most of 'em's disappeared. When I first come to sea the second mate war'n't no navigator; he was just a scrapper who'd fought his way up out of the fo'castle. If one of the men could lick him, the Cap'n would disrate him—an' take the other fellow aft in his place. It's the same on the *Lizzie Green* to-day. Pollock aint no seaman; he's just a slugger."

"But what do they hammer us for? What do they want to do it for?"

Carter shrugged his shoulders. "Oh! They're just darned bullies," he said philosophically.

Tom drew down his brows. "Suppose I whipped Pollock," he began; "do you think—"

"You!" Carter cackled. "He'd eat you alive."

"But if I did whip him, would the captain—"

"God knows an' He wont tell. He might call you aft and he might shoot you dead. There aint no tellin'."

Tom said no more but thereafter he studied the second mate's burly form with new interest. So far on the voyage he had been dazed and ill, or he had been suffering from beatings. But he was getting hardened and for some days he had been approaching the point when he would throw prudence to the winds and resent the causeless attacks made upon him. Only the fear of the law had so far held him back, and if there was a chance that the Captain might sustain him, then—

While he hesitated, the days slipped by and the *Lizzie Green* sped southward. Though old, she was trim and sharp built, more like a yacht than a merchant vessel, and she made wonderful speed.

She was far down in the tropics (almost on the equator, Tom guessed,) before the crisis came.

One morning it was whispered about the ship that the man passenger had fallen overboard in the night. Tom had seen little of either passenger. They, the woman especially, had kept themselves out of sight—because, Tom guessed, they would not witness the brutality they found themselves powerless to prevent. The glimpse or two of them that he had caught told him that the man was old and feeble and the woman much younger, in fact little more than a girl.

And now the man was gone.

One of the men, who had had the wheel in the mid-watch, reported that the passenger had come on deck about two bells and had walked past him to the stern and apparently had never been seen again. The wheelsman had heard no cry and had indeed forgotten all about the man, whose disappearance was not noticed until hours afterward.

To Tom, the manner of the man seemed suspicious, and when the opportunity came, after supper on the same evening, he consulted Carter.

"Did that passenger really fall overboard, Carter?" he asked cautiously.

"Fall overboard nothing! Parkton knifed him and flung him over the side. Jensen saw it all. He's scared blue and he's lying the best he knows how in the hope of keeping out of trouble. It wont do him no good, though!"

"But, good Lord, Carter, you don't mean—"

"I mean a plenty. This aint the end, by no manner of means. The Cap'n and them two mates are hatching some hell's broth. I'm guessing they're goin' to cast the ship away for the insurance."

"Barratry?" gasped Tom.

"I dunno what you call it. An' maybe it aint that. Maybe it's something else. But it's something. They don't mean to let any of us get ashore again."

Tom drew a long breath. "But it's incredible," he objected.

"All right. But it's more incredibler if they don't. We come to sea shorthanded, didn't we? An' we're so beat up now we couldn't save the ship if she got into trouble. She'll get into it all right. An' most of us will get drowned, an' the Captain'll get away and report that the crew refused duty and it'll be all over. You'll see."

"But the woman—"

Carter sniffed. "What's a woman more or less?" he scoffed. "She'll get hers sooner or later. You'll see."

"But, good Lord, if that's so, let's do something. Let's fight for our lives—"

"Aw! What can we do? We can't prove nothing. An' the officers have got pistols. An' if we could down 'em we'd hang for it when we got ashore. We're done for, all right. You're an edicated man—been to college an' all that—but you'll drown just the same as the rest of us."

The strident voice of the second mate broke in. "Here you! Randolph!" he roared. "Lay aft and mop up this quarterdeck."

Tom obeyed. As he bent to his menial task he wondered whether Carter's words were true. He could not believe them. That men should plot wholesale murder for a few thousand dollars of insurance money seemed to him incredible. "No," he decided, "the *Lizzie Green* is a hell ship, but she can't be a nest of murderers."

Just as he had reached this conclusion he heard a light footstep beside him. He glanced up and saw the woman passenger come hastily out of the cabin and hurry past him to the rail.

She was young—far younger than Tom had supposed. Her black hair, black eyes, and smooth olive cheeks told him that she belonged to one of the sun-kissed races, perhaps to Mexico or to one of the nations of Central or South America. Despite her red eyelids and tear-smudged cheeks she was distinctly pretty.

Tom watched her out of the corner of his eye and quickly noticed that something besides grief was troubling her. Two red spots burned in her cheeks and her eyes kept roving to the cabin door from which she had emerged so hurriedly. Her whole attitude was that of one who flees from pursuit. Wonderingly Tom watched her.

At that moment Talcott spied her. For an instant he hesitated; then his eyes lit up and he hurried toward her.

"Hello, sweetheart," he cried. "D'you come on deck to see me?"

The girl shrank back. "Señor!" she cried. "Already I have ask you to have the goodness not to speak to me, ever."

"Not speak to you, hey? I aint good enough for you, I reckon. Well, I'll show you." The mate's face darkened and he sprang forward, with arms outstretched to bar escape. The girl shrank back, stooping as she did so.

Tom saw a flash of white, the streak of a long black stocking, and she was up again, stiletto in hand. "Infamous one," she gasped, "infamous! All infamous! In the cabin! On the deck! *Ah! que barbaridad!* Is there not one decent man on board this so terrible ship? Ah!"

At sight of the dagger, Talcott had shrunk back, but suddenly he sprang forward. The girl struck out, but he caught her wrist and the knife went spinning over the side. As he closed with her he laughed aloud.

The next instant Tom caught him by the collar and hurled him across the deck. "Keep off! you infernal scoundrel," he gritted. "Keep off, or I'll kill you."

II

Two weeks before, Tom could not have torn the gigantic mate from his hold, much less have hurled him across the deck. But that had been two weeks before! For the two weeks, bottled-up

rage had seethed within him. Now it burst loose. Before his eyes the deck, the sky, the tossing sea, the figure of the mate, alike glowed red. As the mate jumped up and rushed at him, he sprang forward with a yell of rage.

Talcott met him as furiously. Talcott was far the heavier and stronger, a bull of a man who could have literally torn Tom to pieces if he had once gotten hold of him. He fought like a bull, furiously but clumsily, with short, fierce, head-down rushes, and later, with mad efforts to come to a clinch.

Tom, on the other hand, though he fought with fury fought also with the trained science of the gymnasium. Again and again he dodged Pollock's mad rushes, and again and again he landed on the mate's face and body with blows that seemed heavy enough to fell an ox, but that made no impression on the mountain of a man before him. Gasping for breath, dizzy with the shock of the few blows that Talcott managed to get home, blinded by sweat and blood, he fought on till suddenly he noticed that no one was facing him. Simultaneously, he felt himself gripped and held. Looking up, he found himself in the grasp of the first mate and the Captain; and looking down, he saw at his feet the quivering, unconscious form of his antagonist. Behind, he glimpsed the figure of the woman passenger, leaning forward, hands clasped—a picture of fear and hope.

Dully he heard the Captain's voice.

"That'll do, my man," it said. "You've licked him. It's all over."

Tom gasped and choked. Then he began to laugh hysterically. Foolish school-boy words, long forgotten, rose to his lips. "I knew I could do it," he babbled. *"Quod erat demonstrandum. Sic semper tyrannis!"* His laughter sank away into a foolish giggle.

He was roused from it by the Captain's voice. "Who are you, anyway?" demanded the officer. "How'd you come on board this ship?"

"How'd I come on board—say, you ought to know. I was shanghaied and you know it!" Tom was too excited to be prudent.

"You're an educated man?"

Tom nodded. He was beginning to come to himself. "Used to be once," he muttered.

The captain stared at him. "All right," he said. "Go wash up. Then come to my cabin. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

Half an hour later, still barely able to walk but not daring to delay longer, Tom dragged himself into the cabin, and stood before Captain Sawyer, wondering whether he was to be rewarded with the place of the man he had conquered. He would take it, he was resolved, if it was offered, but he would take it only that he might bring these brutes and murderers to justice.

The captain was sitting alone at the table. He was a burly man, tall and raw-boned and evidently as hard as nails. His red hair covered both his head and his face, and almost obscured the glitter of his piercing gray eyes. He did not speak at first, but merely sat and glared at Tom for a full minute. When at last he broke the silence he made no mention of the mate's place or even of the battle.

"You say you're educated," he grunted.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know languages?" Anxiety rang in the man's voice.

Tom concealed his astonishment. "Some of them, sir," he answered. "I know French and—"

"What tongue's this? Can you translate it?" The captain thrust a sheet of paper across the table.

Tom inspected it wonderingly. Then he looked up. "It's Latin, sir," he said. "I'm pretty rusty on Latin, but I think maybe I can puzzle it out if I had time."

"Very good! Sit down here and get to work at it." The captain pointed to a seat at the table, "Here's paper!"

Tom sat down and bent over the writing. He was glad enough to sit down, for he was sore from the fight he had waged, but he was gladder still to conceal his face from Captain Sawyer's gaze. He had told the truth; he was rusty on his Latin, but he was not so rusty that he did not instantly recognize some of the words. *Aurum,* for instance, was an unforgettable word; and so was *argentum*. Other words, too, he

knew—enough to enable him to guess the purport if not the details of the inscription and to realize that it consisted of directions for finding a treasure in gold, silver and jewels—a treasure that, if the paper was correct, was enormous.

Conscious that the captain was watching him narrowly, he wrinkled his brows over the writing, following the lines one by one with his pencil. Actually, however, he was not attempting to translate it. His thoughts were rushing dizzily about the events of the past few hours. He knew now, if never before, that though Carter had been wrong in thinking that the *Lizzie Green* was to be cast away, he had been right in guessing that there was something out of the ordinary about the voyage. In the light of this paper, Tom read the explanation; the *Lizzie Green* was treasure hunting, and the men were being hammered daily and hourly with the deliberate intention of so cowing them that even the enormous treasure, if found, would not rouse them to piracy and rebellion. The paper, Tom guessed, had been the property of the passenger; and he had been murdered for it—and then the murderers had found themselves unable to interpret it. The treasure itself—good Lord! He remembered now; the treasure must be that hidden on Cocos Island so many years before—the treasure that so many expeditions had vainly tried to find.

With a mighty effort he called back his thoughts and concentrated them on the paper. Mentally he translated the words one by one until he had the gist of them in his head. They ran:

"Cave at extreme end of gullet between double jaws a mile east of north point. Boats can enter at all stages of tide. Smooth water inside cave. Treasure sunk two hundred yards beyond curve at entrance; one thousand ingots gold; three thousand ingots silver; thirteen chests jewels."

Tom guessed that an ingot would weigh from fifty to seventy-five pounds. Expressed in dollars, the value of one thousand ingots of gold made him dizzy. No wonder men would steep their souls in murder for it.

The paper gave no indication as to the land on which the "north point" was; but Tom never doubted that it was on Cocos Island. Evidently it was only a recent copy of a part of fuller directions. But was it authentic? He did not know. But it was evident that the captain and mates thought it was.

"Well! Can you read it?"

The Captain's raucous voice brought Tom back to earth, or rather, to the cabin. He looked up and met the Captain's eyes. Like a flash he realized his peril. Once he had translated the paper, he would no longer be needed. He had in his possession the secret to gain which the captain and the mates had already done murder. He had been permitted to learn it because he alone on board the *Lizzie Green* could interpret it. What would happen to him when he had told it? The question needed no answer.

Abruptly his thoughts roved to the woman passenger for whom he had fought. What part had she in this? Was she the accomplice of the murderers of her husband. Tom could not think it. If not, was not the paper rightfully hers? Had she refused to translate it? Or was she unable to translate it? Tom did not know, but he determined to find out. Meanwhile, it would gain neither him nor her anything to refuse to read the paper. In fact, it would probably result in his murder and in her being left alone amid this band of murderers without even his poor help. Suddenly he decided on his course.

Deliberately he leaned back in his chair and faced the captain.

"Yes, sir!" he said, respectfully, "I can read it. I have read it. But I wont read it aloud except under conditions."

"What!" Captain Sawyer's atramentous face grew so black that Tom thought the blood would burst through it. His eyes darted fire; foam sprang out on his lips; his very beard bristled. He leaped to his feet, snatching at the pistol at his belt.

But before he could fire, Tom spoke, hurriedly—for he knew his shrift was short—but still coolly.

"If you kill me, Captain," he cried, "you'll kill the only man on board who can read this paper."

The Captain hesitated. Then the fury

died out of his face and he put his pistol back into its holster. His little eyes glittered cunningly.

"Well! What do you want? Speak out!" he ordered.

Tom breathed more easily. "Why! It's this way, Captain," he said. "I like gold as well as anyone. It was my liking it too much that got me into trouble. I want my share of the Cocos treasure."

"Cocos?"

Tom made a weary gesture. "Of course it's Cocos," he said. "It couldn't be anything else. Fifteen million dollars worth of gold and a ton or two of silver and jewels—Oh! it's Cocos all right. This paper tells how to find the cache. And I'm perfectly willing to translate it if—"

"Well?"

"If you'll make me second mate—I've earned that anyway—and if you'll give me a share—How many are in on this, anyway?"

"Three!" Captain Sawyer spoke reluctantly. Tom's manner was having its effect.

"You and the mates, I suppose. How about the woman?"

Captain Sawyer's face grew black. "The woman's my affair," he growled. "Understand? She's none of your infernal business. You butted in about her once and got away with it, but you wont do it again. You asked a question. There are three of us—three. You understand?"

"Three it is. All right! You can give me Pollock's share—or you can give me a share equal to his, if you don't want to throw him over. But I've got to come aft as second mate. Pollock can be third, but I've got to be second. Come, Captain! I'm as good a sailor as Pollock—though that isn't saying much. I can handle a schooner like this all right. And I'm man of my hands; I proved it on Pollock just now. And I'm a man of intelligence; you'll make no mistake in taking me in with you. You wont find it so simple as you think to get that treasure; you'll need me, all right! I'll earn my share over and over again—in addition to translating this paper for you."

Captain Sawyer hesitated. His little eyes gleamed craftily. Then he nodded. "I'll make you second, all right," he agreed. "You earned the place when you whipped Pollock. He's a fool anyway. I'll make him third. He was to get one sixth of the treasure. I'll give you the same. Now translate that paper."

Tom grinned. "Not just yet, Captain," he answered blandly. "I'll wait till I move aft and get my new rating recorded on the log. And even then I'll wait till we sight Cocos Island. It'll leave less time for accidents."

The Captain's brow darkened, but he nodded. "Very well," he said slowly. "Have it your own way. Bring your dunnage aft and be quick about it. We'll sight Cocos in an hour."

"An hour?" Tom was amazed.

"Yes—"

A call from the deck interrupted the Captain. "Land ho!" it came. A moment later the first mate came into the cabin. He glanced curiously at Tom, but did not speak to him.

"Smoke dead ahead, sir," he reported. "It's too thick to be a steamer. Looks like a volcano. I reckon the crater on Cocos has broken out again."

Captain Sawyer jumped to his feet and hurried out of the cabin, followed by the mate. As Tom started to follow, he heard a low "Hist" behind him; and turning, he saw the woman passenger standing at the door of one of the staterooms.

"I am Inez Carranza," she breathed. Her words bore only the faintest trace of accent. "I want to thank you for that you save me. I hope—hope—but I have listen. You have join with them. You are on their side. You go to translate that paper?"

Tom nodded. "Yes! I am going to translate it," he acknowledged. "I've got to translate it or lose my life. But I'm not on their side. I'm going to see the whole bunch of murderers hanged before I get through with them. If you're in trouble—"

"In trouble!" The girl's hands clenched till the knuckles stood out white. "In trouble! Dios! I am alone on this ship without one soul to help me! In trouble! Yes, señor, I am in trouble!"

Tom broke in. "You're not alone," he said. "I'll help you. You know they murdered your husband?"

"My father," corrected the girl. "I think so; yes!"

"They did it, all right! The helmsman saw the whole thing, but he didn't dare to speak. But talk quick. The Captain will be back in a minute. Tell me what I can do to help you."

The girl threw out her hands. "Oh! I know not, señor," she sobbed. "What can one man do against so many? Oh! Why did we ever come on this so accursed ship. I did not want to come, but my father insist. He found the key to the treasure and he would come. I did not trust Captain Sawyer—not so much!" She held up her fingers with an imperceptible pinch of dust between them. "And now—and now—"

"You are sure the directions to the treasure are right?"

"Yes! Yes! They must be. My great grandfather was with those who bury it. The directions have been in our family for nearly a hundred years, but they were lost, and when my father find them—"

She broke off as the tramp of feet sounded outside the cabin door. "They must not see that I talk to you," she breathed. "But I thank the good God I have one friend." With a last frightened look she slipped back into the stateroom and the door closed behind her. Tom dropped into his place at the table and bent over the inscription. As he did so, the door opened and Captain Sawyer came in.

"It's Cocos, all right," he said. "We'll be close in by sunset."

III

Darkly violet in the light of the blazing stars Cocos Island lay, cradled by the heaving seas. In the soft radiance, the notched skyline softened into flowing lines that masked the toppling granite crags of which it was composed. The vast chasms that sliced the mountain were invisible. The smoke of the volcano made only a smudge against the sky, lightened now and then by gleams that played against its under side. The whole place might have been a fairy island set in a silver sea.

All night long the *Lizzie Green* drifted slowly with the current, a mile or more off the north end of the island, waiting for daylight. Captain Sawyer's reckoning had been correct save that he had not counted on the smoke of the volcano, which enabled him to sight the island from farther away than he had expected. By the time the *Lizzie Green* had gotten close in, night had fallen and Captain Sawyer preferred to wait until morning before attempting to land. Meanwhile, Tom had moved the greasy bag that served him for baggage back to the cabin, and his new rank had been accepted by the first mate and by the crew and even by Pollock, who took his reduction to third mate hard but did not venture to object.

As soon as the ship was hove to for the night, Tom wrote down his translation of the directions for finding the treasure and gave it to Captain Sawyer. That personage's eyes glittered as he read.

"That's the north point yonder," he said, pointing. "I guess those two lines of breakers show where the jaws are. We'll go in as soon as day breaks."

The night passed quietly. Tom was given no watch; either the Captain distrusted his seamanship or his loyalty, or else he thought it best for the moment not to disturb the existing routine of the ship. Whatever the cause, Tom was allowed to sleep out the night undisturbed, for which he was devoutly thankful.

For some time he remained on watch, hoping to see Señorita Carranza again. But she did not appear and he dared not betray his eagerness by seeking for her or inquiring after her.

When morning came and the *Lizzie Green* sailed opposite the opening in the jaws it was very evident that no landing could be made between them. Not only were the two points white with foam but the entire space between them was studded with black rocks that again and again thrust themselves above the seething waters as the great surges rolled in. A small boat might

live through the smother, but not a vessel so large as the *Lizzie Green*. Caught in that tossing caldron, she would inevitably leave her bones to whiten on the sea floor.

Captain Sawyer studied the gullet awhile. "Call away the port cutter, Mr. Parkton," he ordered. "We'll go in and—hold on! There aint no use risking a boat in that hell's caldron unless we've got to."

Parkton nodded. "We could get in all right, Captain," he opined. "But it would be durn ticklish work getting out again. Maybe we can get to that cave overland."

"I guess we'll try it that way first anyway," agreed the Captain. "I reckon that's the way Carranza meant to get in. He brought enough blasting power and tools. But I'm free to confess that I don't like the looks of that volcano."

Parkton scrutinized the smoking peak. "I don't think it'll give us any trouble, sir," he said. "The sailing directions say it smokes from time to time but hasn't been known to erupt for forty years and more."

"Let's hope it wont begin now," rejoined the Captain grimly. He swept the shore with his glasses. "What's that fluttering on that cliff, yonder?" he demanded, curiously. "Looks like somebody signaling!"

Parkton lifted his glasses. "Where away, sir?" he asked.

"Broad on the starboard bow. Looks like—hello! It's gone! Did you see it?"

Parkton shook his head. "No sir," he answered.

"Hump! Durned funny! I'd have sworn—But we'll find out soon enough. There's a bight on the shore just in front of where I saw it. Run down and see what sort of a landing we can make."

Half an hour later the *Lizzie Green* dropped anchor off a strip of sandy beach behind which rose a line of vine-mantled cliffs. The cutter was dropped overboard and brought around to the gangway and loaded with ropes, crowbars, candles, and other articles that might come in handy for underground exploring.

The Captain closed his glasses and slipped them into their case. "I don't see anything of that signal," he said. "I reckon a rock fooled me. I'll leave you in charge, Mr. Parkton! I'll take Mr. Randolph and Mr. Talcott and four sailors with me. Get your men aboard, Mr. Randolph. Put in a water keg and a box of biscuits. We may want to stay on shore."

Randolph obeyed, taking care that Carter was one of the men chosen. As he prepared to go over the side, Señorita Carranza came running from the cabin. "I go ashore, too, Señor," she announced, eagerly. "If you will be so kind as to help me—"

"Humph!" Captain Sawyer barred her way for a moment. Then he stepped aside. "All right!" he remarked, enigmatically. "I reckon it's the easiest way out after all."

A moment later the boat was speeding shoreward. Tom, sitting in the stern, hand on tiller, watched the peak of the volcano slowly sink behind the line of crags that bordered the shore. Closer in, white rocks began to show and the water changed from dark blue to a transparent green. No living thing appeared on the shore; if anyone had been signaling, he seemed in no haste to show himself.

Suddenly the boat grated, bumped as if on a rock, then swung broadside to the shore. "Where the devil are you steering?" roared the Captain. "Didn't you see that shoal? Here! One of you men get over and push her off."

Carter jumped into the water and promptly sank nearly to his neck. "Beg pardon, sir," he gasped, "there aint no shoal here!"

"Darned funny!" The Captain looked nonplused. "Well! What are you waiting for? Take the painter and tow us in."

A few moments later the boat grounded in good earnest and Carter ran up on the shore, tugging it behind him. As the stern came in, Captain Sawyer leaped out on the sand, then staggered and almost fell. At the same moment the man who was holding the painter lost his footing altogether, pitching headlong on the sand. The boat itself rocked uneasily.

Captain Sawyer scrambled to his feet. "What in h—l's the matter?" he

demanded furiously. "Who tripped me? By the Lord, I'll—"

"Nobody tripped you!" Talcott was crying out raucously. "It's an earthquake. The volcano's coming down on us. For God's sake get aboard."

Sawyer glared at him. "Shut up!" he roared. "Haven't you got the pluck of a scared mouse! Shut up!"

Talcott obeyed, but he continued to stare uneasily at the crest of the volcano, two miles away, just visible above the edge of the cliffs, and at the cloud of sulphur smoke that was trailing from it, muddying the blue of the sky. Shaken and disheartened by the disgrace of having been whipped by a man so much smaller than himself, his nerve seemed to have deserted him altogether.

Captain Sawyer paid no further attention to him nor to the uneasy looks of the men. "Get those things ashore, Mr. Randolph," he ordered, turning his back and staring with his glasses at a broad spur of the mountain that ran out to the north. In its end, he knew, was the gullet and the foaming jaws. Perhaps he was still looking for the signal that he thought he had seen and perhaps he was only picking out the easiest route to the top of the overlooking crags.

In a few moments the outfit was landed and the boat hauled well up on the sand out of reach of the tide. Then Captain Sawyer turned back.

"Here," he growled. "Two of you men pick up them crowbars and coils of rope. Mr. Randolph, there seems to be a way up that spur yonder. You start ahead and take these men along with you. Mr. Pollock,"—he stared contemptuously at the white-faced mate—"you and the others stay here till I get back. Make some sort of camp and get some scoff cooked for us. I reckon that's about all you are fit for. You, ma'am,"—he glanced at the girl—"you c'n do what you d—n please. You *would* come! Now make the best of it."

The girl glanced at Pollock, then at the steep ascent. "I go with you, Captain," she said. "I stand in my father's place; is it not so?"

Captain Sawyer's lips curled. "Oh! sure!" he replied. But his tones denied what his words expressed. The girl, however, took them at their face value; silently she turned and followed Randolph, Carter, and the third man up the slope. Tom noticed that she glanced curiously, perhaps eagerly about her as she went.

The climb was not hard, but it was long and wearisome. The route did not take the explorers close to the crater of the volcano, and indeed, once they had reached the top of the cliffs, it led them directly away from it. No recent lava was visible and none seemed to have been vented by the volcano. But the constant tremors that shook the earth and sent the smaller pebbles rattling down the ragged crags, and the strong smell of sulphur in the air continued to remind them of the vast chained forces of nature that lay growling close at hand.

At last Tom, who was leading, came out at the end of the spur and looked down, sheer two hundred feet, into the triangle of heaving water so aptly named the gullet. To right and to left the crags dropped steeply away to the distant foaming jaws. Between the converging walls the spouting billows seethed as in some vast caldron. Steadily the recurrent rollers swept in, foaming high along the inner sides of the jaws and disappearing with a scream into the depths of the gullet. Clearly some sort of a cavern lay out of sight beneath the overhanging cliffs.

Inez grew quite white as she watched. "Oh! But it is terrible!" she cried. "Terrible!"

Captain Sawyer paid no attention to her and Tom thought it best to follow his example.

For a time the Captain stared grimly into the depths. Then he studied the forked spurs that dropped away to the gnashing jaws, trying to spy out some place along their steep, vine-covered descent whence it might be possible to get a view into the mouth of the cavern. Finally he shook his head.

"I reckon a man could climb down on them vines all right," he said. "But he couldn't see anything worth while if he did. That's a blame funny-looking

spur, anyway. Looks as if it had been broken off."

Tom was already wrinkling his brows over the configuration of the eastern fork of the spur. It did indeed look as the Captain had said—as if it had been broken off; and Tom, who knew something of geology, decided that this was exactly what had happened to it. By no other means could he imagine the creation of that straight wall of rock, abruptly rising from a broad, smooth slope. "It took some earthquake to fault that rock off," he muttered.

Then he started. Captain Sawyer was shouting in his ear.

"Wake up, durn you," he railed. "Wake up! You talked mighty big yesterday about how you were a handy man and how you'd earn your share half a dozen times over. Well, here's your chance to prove it. Just you fix that crowbar in the rock and fasten that rope to it and we'll lower you down and let you see what you can see."

Tom shrugged his shoulders. He knew, none better, that when he was hanging over the abyss at the end of the rope it would be easy for some accident to drop him into the waters; and he knew well that Captain Sawyer would not hesitate to bring about such an accident if he desired it. Sooner or later he was certain that the Captain would try to kill him. But he guessed that the time had not come—for one thing, there were too many witnesses present—and in any event, he did not see how he could refuse. "All right, Captain," he acceded. "I'll do it."

The crowbar was fastened and Tom put his leg into the loop of the rope and slipped over the face of the cliff. As he started, Carter bent over him, pretending to help. "Don't you worry, sir," he whispered. "We wont let the old devil play any tricks on you."

Tom nodded. A moment later he was spinning around and around in the air, like a spider at the end of his swaying line. Steadily the men lowered away, and nearer and nearer he sank to the raging waters. Sea birds, roused from their nests in the face of the cliff, beat about his head—luckily so, for they gave him something to think about besides the weakness of the rope and the possible treachery of the men above. Down he went until he passed the overhang of the cliff and could see the mouth of a cavern yawning black before him. The water was near now, and as the recurrent surges came in they rose in reaching fingers as if to pluck him from his hold; then, with a shriek of rage they sucked back till he could almost see the black rocks beneath. Tearing his eyes away from the water, he fastened them on the mouth of the cavern in an effort to penetrate its blackness. But for the life of him he could not determine whether it extended back fifty feet or five hundred. The waves rushed into it and vanished around a sharp curve. Apparently they did not break, though even of this he could not be altogether certain, for the view was obscured by the mist and spray that rose from the waters as they ripped along the converging sides. Leaning far backwards, he waved his cap to Captain Sawyer above, and a moment later he was drawn up.

Sawyer sprang at him. "Well? Well?" he roared. "What did you see? Can we get a boat in? Is the cave there? Why don't you speak?"

Tom shook his head. "There's mighty little to tell, Captain," he said. "I reckon you might get a boat in, but where it would end up I don't know. There's a big hole down there, but how far back it goes I don't know. It turns eastward a little way in. There isn't any way that I can see to find out except by chancing it in a boat, and the Lord knows whether we'd ever get out again."

Captain Sawyer stared long and hard at Tom. Clearly he did not trust him. Then he turned and gazed once more at the racing waters. "We can get in, all right," he muttered, half to himself. "I've steered a boat into worse places than that. It's gettin' out again that'll be hard. But I reckon we can do it at slack water or on the ebb."

He straightened up and glared at Tom.

"Well!" he growled. "I haven't come all this way to back out now. You're durned sure you translated them directions right?"

"I'm sure, Captain."

"You'd better be, for you're goin' in with us too, and if we get smashed I'll promise you that whoever goes to Davy Jones' locker you'll go first. Understand?" He tapped the pistol in his belt significantly.

Tom nodded ruefully. "I haven't a doubt of that, Captain," he said. "But what's the use of living when you haven't got any money. I'm ready when you are!"

Captain Sawyer nodded grimly. "Are you?" he said. "We'll see."

IV

LEAVING the rope hanging from the cliff and the other paraphernalia beside it, ready for possible future use, the little party of treasure seekers set off for the beach. In the excitement of the exploration they had forgotten the volcano, despite the increasing tremors of the earth. But as they started downward they faced it. Not one of them but changed color. Undoubtedly the column of smoke had increased both in size and in blackness. It filled the whole southern firmament. From the crater came faint crackling noises, like a bunch of distant firecrackers. All scanned it uneasily, but Captain Sawyer vouchsafed no remarks and the others dared not make any.

Halfway down the ascent, Inez, who had grown very silent, stumbled and uttered a cry. "My ankle," she gasped. "Oh! My ankle."

Tom caught her as she staggered. "There! Lean on me," he said. "It'll stop hurting in a minute."

The girl took a few halting steps forward. Then she looked up at Tom with distended eyes. "It is not my ankle, Señor," she gasped. "It is that—Señor! Will all the men go in the boat?"

Tom shook his head. "I reckon not." he said. "It would load her too much for rough water like that. Somebody'll have to stay behind—Pollock and some of the men, I guess."

"You—you will take me along?"

Tom shook his head. "I'm sure Captain Sawyer wont let you go," he said. "It's too dangerous. He wont take any dead weight."

The girl shuddered. "But—but I cannot be left with that brute Pollock and those men," she gasped.

Tom started. "I never thought of that," he gasped. "Of course you can't. In heaven's name, why didn't you stay on board?"

"With that fiend who murdered my father? I dare not, no."

"Good Lord! I forgot. What's to be done? I'm not armed and I can't fight half a dozen men. Nobody can, outside a dime novel. By George! I don't know what to do."

Inez was silent for a moment. The others had all passed and were hurrying down the mountain. *"Bueno!"* she said. "Go you on! Do not look back. Soon I will slip aside and hide. You will come back for me after you come from between the jaws, Señor?" she ended wistfully.

"I certainly will." Tom spoke heartily. He did not qualify his promise, though in reality he greatly doubted whether he would be alive to keep it. To him that triangle of water looked deadly though he guessed that it was not quite so deadly as it seemed, else Captain Sawyer would not risk entering it. "I reckon that's the best way out," he concluded, reluctantly.

The girl released his arm and he strode on. When, a few minutes later, he looked back, she had disappeared.

On the beach he found Pollock and the men hard at work, mantling the sides of the boat with stiff, uprooted bushes as an additional protection against the rocks against which it might be dashed.

Captain Sawyer stood watching. One by one he selected the men who were to go, leaving Carter behind, whether by accident or design Tom did not know. "Get aboard, Mr. Randolph," he ordered, at last. "Mr. Talcott, you'll stay here with the others."

Talcott's pale face reddened. "Good Lord, Captain!" he cried. "You aint going to leave me here without a boat with that volcano just about to bust loose."

Captain Sawyer spun round upon him, hand on pistol. "That's what I'm

going to do," he grated, in a voice pregnant with death. "Got any objections?"

The mate stepped back. "N—no, sir," he gasped.

"I thought not. Where's that woman?" The Captain gazed about him. "Hid, has she? Smart girl!" He stepped into the boat and took the tiller. "Shove off!" he ordered.

Out to sea sped the cutter, heeling to the thrust of the breeze. For a mile or more she skirted the northwest jaw and the line of foam that marked its prolongation, then came about and stood straight inward, heading toward a gap in the jagged points that crisscrossed the opening of the yawning jaws. Close in, her sail fluttering down, and with outspread oars, glistening with the whipped foam of the racing waters, she balanced on the minor waves, waiting for a great roller fit to lift and carry her. At last it came, and rising on its broad back she swept toward the gulf where the jade-green waters roared, tossing the spindrift high in air. Round about her the waste of billows yammered and screamed, while the helpless oars whipped through the foam. Round and round she spun, half filled with water from the lashing waves. Then, in the nick of time, the port oars grazed a point of rock and the starboard oars dipped into solid water; she was through the gap and was being borne onward at racehorse speed into the gullet.

Tiller in hand, Captain Sawyer sat watching the jagged rocks on which the raging current strove to impale him. Again and again he guided the boat away, missing by a hair's breadth rocks that would have split it asunder. Again and again he drove it from beneath crested seas that threatened to overwhelm it. Villain he might be, but his seamanship was beyond praise.

Swiftly the gullet constricted. On boat and crew the shadow of the mountain fell chill. The roar of the waves dashing against the cliffs blended with the shriek of the winds and reverberated from the clanging cliffs in an uproar that drowned all speech.

Abruptly, out of the surges in front, rose the archway of the cavern. Beneath it, the waters ran furiously, white along the sides, still and black in the middle. Somewhere in front they must break and rush out again in an undertow whose strength no living thing could resist.

Feebly the ineffectual oars beat the water. Just ahead was the turn that Tom had seen from his perch on the end of the rope, and toward it Captain Sawyer steered.

Tom clutched the sides of the boat and stared ahead with straining eyes. Round that turn lay life or death. If the paper spoke true, a moment more would see the boat floating on smooth waters inside the cave. If the paper lied, a moment more would see it battered against a wall of rock that would crush it like an eggshell. No oars would hold it back. With quivering heart Tom waited.

Narrower and narrower grew the passage. The outstretched oars rattled against the rocks on either side. Round the curve swept the boat and then—

Too late Captain and crew saw the doom that waited them. Not two boat lengths ahead the waves broke upon a mass of shattered rock that filled the passage from side to side. Death, sure and inevitable, grinned at them.

As the boat rose helplessly on a breaker, Captain Sawyer faced Tom, pistol in hand. "Damn you!" he screamed. "You go first anyhow."

The hammer rose, but before it fell Tom, turning, dived over the stern, deep into the curving face of the following breaker. As he went, he heard the *pop* of the harmless pistol, the crash of the boat as it descended on the waiting rocks, and the screams of the dying men. Then the water filled his ears and muffled all sounds.

A moment later he came up behind the breaker, and dashed the water from his eyes to face the next one as it came hurrying gleefully on to overwhelm him. Wave after wave swept toward him and under each he dived, knowing full well that his fight was hopeless but struggling for life as men will struggle, struggling though his uttermost endeavors could not win a yard toward the entrance. Weaker and weaker he grew until at last, worn out, he felt himself lifted on the crest of a gigantic

roller and carried into the innermost depths of that devouring gullet. Swept helplessly onward, his outflung hand caught an edge of rock and fastened to it, more by instinct than by reason, battling against the water that strove to drag him from his hold—clung till the water dropped from beneath him and he found himself hanging to a jagged crack that slanted across the rock high up on the side of the cavern. Into it he wedged fingers and toes and wriggled upward a foot or two; then he hung helplessly, too exhausted to struggle more, waiting for the next wave to tear him from his hold.

How long he hung there he never knew. Wave after wave came thundering in, but none rose quite so high as the one that had borne him to his perch. Hope dawned as at last he realized that none was likely to do so.

Safe for the moment, he began to look about for some means of escape, and his heart sank as he read the full hopelessness of his position. Overhead arched the rock; and below roared the sea. A hundred yards away the blessed daylight gleamed through the mouth of the cavern, but the walls between were smooth as glass and were overhanging. No human being could make his way along them.

His thoughts came back to the crack to which he clung. In the gloom of the cavern he could not see how far up it ran. To ascend it seemed useless; but the need for action was strong upon him, and he began to climb, an inch at a time.

For perhaps twenty feet he crawled, clinging with fingers and toes. Then abruptly the crack widened and he found that he could get his arm into it.

The relief was enormous. For a little he rested; then went on more rapidly.

Abruptly he struck his head violently. He looked up and despite the gloom made out that he was close against the roof of the cavern. The crack seemed to continue upward, but it was narrow, too narrow for him to pass, too narrow—

Was it too narrow? He turned his head sideways and tried to pass it inward and upward. The jagged edges of rock tore his skin, but he forced himself on. He could never get back, that he well knew, but he knew also that he had only death to come back to. Desperately he struggled on, writhing between the narrow walls. Again and again he thought himself fast, sealed forever in the crevice in the mighty rock. But ever he strove again and ever he found that he could gain a little more.

Then suddenly the crack widened—widened! With a great effort he drew himself up and found that he was standing on a ledge or shelf of rock. Pitchy darkness was all about him, but he could at least stand upright and expand his tortured lungs.

After a little he began to move along the crack, keeping upon the shelf. For perhaps a hundred yards he moved; then suddenly his foothold failed. Only by flinging out his arms against the edging walls between which he stood did he save himself from crashing downward.

Cautiously he reached forward, feeling for foothold, but finding none. At last he chanced upon a loose fragment of rock, and tossed it into the darkness before him. Long he listened for the sound of its fall, but no echo came back from the void. He stood on the edge of a chasm.

Carefully he retraced a dozen yards or more and set himself once more to climb the crack. But he found the widened walls made progress almost as hard as the constricted ones had done. Remembering an old schoolboy trick of his, however, he reached out his hands one to either side of the crack and lifted himself slightly. Then he wedged his toes against the rock and found that he was able to move his hands a little higher. Thus he spread-eagled upward for another twenty feet and then—

Light dawned on him. Light! Light! High above, but unmistakably, it gleamed, filtering through some sort of network that obscured it.

Wild with hope he toiled on, till at last he burst his way through a canopy of vines and clambered out beneath the blessed sky. As he fell exhausted on the rocks he heard a cry. Looking up, he saw that he was lying on the surface of

the northwest jaw, just below the scarp of rock he had noticed from above so many ages before. He saw the fixed crowbar and the swaying rope. And close beside it he saw Inez Carranza staring downward at him. Then blackness rolled over him and he knew no more.

V

Tom opened his eyes and looked upward. Above him hung the blue sky, cut by the edge of the cliff and by the trailing smoke of the volcano. Inez he could not see, but as he stirred he heard her voice and discovered that she was behind him and that his head was lying in her lap. As he strove to rise she bent over him and held a flask to his lips. Tom gulped a few drops of the fiery liquor and felt strength flow back into his veins. Again he strove to rise. But the girl pushed him back. "*Paciencia, Señor.*" she cautioned. "Have a care. Do not lift your head above the slope."

Tom stared a little. "Why not?" he asked, hesitatingly.

"The *Lizzie Green* lie out to sea just beyond the spur," breathed the girl. "Perhaps it is that the shameless ones on her watch the cliff with glasses. They think you dead and perhaps—"

Tom nodded. "I understand," he said. Cautiously he slipped along the face of the spur for a little distance to a spot more shielded from view from seaward. Then he sat up. "Good girl," he exclaimed, cheerfully. "I might have spoiled everything. Of course they think I'm dead. I thought I was dead myself." He glanced over his torn clothing and bruised hands and arms. "Gee! I look it!" he added, ruefully. "But what's happened since we were wrecked? What's become of Pollock? Tell me!"

The girl shuddered. "Oh! it was of a horror!" she cried. "When I leave you I—I—" The girl stopped short, as if struck by a sudden thought. She flushed, stammered, and then, evidently coming to some decision, went on. "I hide behind the rocks," she said. "Soon I see the boat go out to sea and turn the point into this so dreadful place. I run up the mountain, quick, to watch it come in. Suddenly I bethink myself and I look back and see the mate and the sailors coming up the mountain behind me. I think they look for me and I run quick to one side and hide behind the rocks. But they do not think of me. Instead, they bend over and watch the boat come in. I watch too, Señor, and I almost die to see it. Again and again I think the waves have swallow it. But ever it come up again. Closer and closer you come. At last you disappear. And then—Ah! *Dios!* Far away from the cliff I see the body of Captain Sawyer shoot up out of the depths. I know him by the red beard. Then I see others rise. But I cannot see who they are. The distance is too great. But I think you are dead and I weep.

"The mate think all are dead too, and he curse. Ah! *Dios!* how he curse! He look at the volcano and he shake and tremble. The mountain look very bad, Señor. The mate is frighten'. He rush down the mountain like mad and the sailors follow him. So fast they go that they fall down. Again and again they fall! But always they get up and rush on. I watch them from my place.

"Then I look toward the ship. I see that a boat comes in. Talcott and the men wade out in the water to meet it. They climb on board and the boat go back to the ship, quick. The men fear the volcano and they do not stop for the things on the beach. Me—I—I know not what to do. So I stay here and watch—and weep. Then, oh! What joy! I see you rise from the vines on the side of the slope."

"Bully for you!" Tom rose cautiously to his feet, taking care to keep behind the shelter of the slope. "You did exactly right. Whatever comes, you're safer ashore than you would be on board with those ruffians. I don't know what they'll do now. Maybe they'll give up and sail away. Anyhow, I'm mighty willing they shouldn't know that I'm alive just yet."

"But, Señor!" The girl's eyes widened. "How is it that you escape? How is it that you come up out of the ground?"

Tom laughed, though rather ruefully. "It must have looked queer," he acceded. "But it couldn't have looked half

as queer as it really was. It was this way—"

Rapidly Tom recounted the story of his escape and of his climb through the narrow crevasse. He told the story lightly, trying to make a jest of it, according to the custom of his countrymen, who always try to conceal their deepest emotions. But try as he might, he could not wholly hide the horror of his experience.

"Gee! It was tough!" he laughed, at the end. "I wouldn't go through it again, not for sixteen treasures that weren't there. I guess your respected ancestor rigged up those directions to fool possible treasure-seekers!"

"But, no! Señor!" The girl threw up her hands. "The treasure is here without a doubt."

"But it isn't." Tom shook his head. "The passage ends just inside the turn in the rocks. There *isn't* any passage! It's just a shallow hole that ends against solid rock."

"But—but—is the rock solid, Señor? Or is it just broken? Could it not have fallen and—"

"Good Lord!" Tom grabbed his head with both hands. "Good Lord! I do believe you've guessed it." Rapidly his thoughts ranged over the sequence of circumstances, leaping from point to point. "The volcano!" he muttered. "Earthquakes! Must have been lots of them! This cliff face, that crack! That —by Jove!" He broke off and stared at the girl with disturbed eyes.

"What is it, Señor? Oh! what is it?"

"It's the cave. It's the treasure. It's the way to the treasure." Tom was leaning forward, whispering. His face was white. "You remember I told you of the chasm I nearly fell into? That's the cave. The directions were right. I beg your respected ancestor's pardon for doubting him. The cave is here, beneath our feet. There used to be an entrance from the sea just as his nibs said. But some time ago a big slice of rock must have been faulted off from the cliff. It must have slipped downward a hundred feet or more. We're standing on it now. Part of it closed the entrance. The crack I escaped by must be between it and the rock that stood firm. The place where I stood when I tossed the pebble must be the edge of the unbroken part. The cave may be just in front of it. If the gold ever was there, it may be there yet. It's a hundred to one it's there."

The girl was breathing fast. She was as excited as Tom. But she was really the more practical. "But, Señor, how can we get it away?" she questioned. "You—you would not tell the men on the *Lizzie Green?*"

"Never! Not if she was the last ship in the world. Not one of those devils shall ever get a penny. The first thing to do is to make sure. We may have to get away from here any minute, and—" He broke off and glanced toward the volcano. "It seems to be quieting down a little," he added.

The girl's eyes followed his. "You have right, Señor," she cried. "It has quieted much—very much."

"I don't know whether that's a good sign or not." Tom was eyeing the volcano dubiously. "It may mean that the vent has been plugged up. If so, it may break loose any minute, and when it does—well! Excuse me. Another thing; it's likely to make those scoundrels on the ship come ashore again. Either way, we've got no time to lose. Luckily we've got the crowbars and plenty of rope—and some candles. Captain Sawyer was thoughtful; I'll say that for him. If you'll wait here I'll go up and fetch them down, and then I'll make a voyage of discovery down into the crack—"

"But, Señor! You cannot. You are tired out. Wait until I can get help."

"Help!" Tom laughed. "There isn't any help to get. And I'm not tired now. I was tired half an hour ago. But I've had a tonic since then. Now watch me climb up those vines and fetch that rope and those crowbars without letting the *Lizzie Green* see me."

Tom was as good as his word. Soon he came back, loaded down with paraphernalia. "If anybody saw me, he's got a better glass than I credit the *Lizzie Green* with having," he remarked triumphantly. "I moved along the ground and didn't show a finger. I've got two crowbars, two coils of rope, some matches, and a bundle of candles. Now, to go down."

Rapidly he tied the end of one rope about one of the crowbars and the other coil of rope and lowered them into the crevice. When the abrupt change in weight showed that the load had reached the shelf, he tied the other end of the rope to the other crowbar and wedged the latter across the crevice. "Don't let it slip," he cautioned, as he let himself slide down between the torn vines. His last view was of the girl's clasped hands and frightened face. "Don't worry," he called. "It's all right."

Down he went, slipping easily down the rope, checking his descent by contact of the walls. Soon he reached the ledge on which he had rested and from which he had so nearly plunged into eternity. Here he stopped for long enough to light a candle, and holding it before him, he carefully advanced until he reached the edge of the pit. Detaching the second crowbar from the rope he fixed it firmly across the crevice, tied the second rope to it and tossed the coil into the chasm. He had no means of carrying the lighted candle, so he blew it out and stuffed it into his pocket with the others. Then, twining his leg about the rope, he let himself down slowly into the darkness.

The descent seemed unending. Yard after yard, fathom after fathom, he slipped downward until his hands grew sore and his feet tired from clutching the swaying rope. Below him he could hear the sea champing and gurgling, and he knew it must reach the cave by some subterranean passage. He might find himself in the water at any moment; he could not tell. Louder and louder grew the tumult until he knew he must be close to the water. It was well, for he must be near the end of his rope. At last his feet touched a mass of rocky fragments and he rested thankfully for a moment before he lighted a candle.

Before him lay a rocky floor, wet but not submerged. Behind him rose the wall of rock along which he had descended. In all other directions the darkness seemed to stretch interminably. His candle merely served to accentuate it.

After a moment he placed the candle, still lighted, on a rock, and left it to serve as a guide in returning. Then, lighting another, he started forward.

Soon he found that he was in a passage-way rather than a chamber. After he had gone about a hundred yards, however, the passage suddenly widened, the rock on his left falling away. Planting another candle here, he started onward, and in a few minutes found himself at the edge of a body of water that stretched far beyond the range of the feeble illumination of his candle. He could see, however, that this was in continual motion, showing that it was in direct communication with the sea. Evidently this was the "lake" referred to in the directions. Further search speedily showed that it reached from wall to wall, effectually barring his further progress.

Disgustedly Tom sat down, wondering what next he could do. He could not bear to go back to Inez and confess failure. He could not bear to think that he had undergone so much and had so narrowly escaped destruction to have it all end thus.

"I wont give up," he muttered. "I'll be hanged if I will—not so easy as this, anyhow. How do I know how wide this water is? Maybe I can get across it. Blamed if I don't try."

Rapidly he stripped off the rags that served him as clothes and piled them beside the lighted candle; then he waded boldly into the water.

Cautiously but swiftly he advanced into the deepening pool until only his head was out of the water. He was just wondering whether he dared to try to swim forward into the darkness when he became conscious that the bottom on which he was standing was very peculiar. It seemed to be made up of smooth rocks, cut and grooved in regular oblongs. Curiously he felt it with his toes. It seemed to be composed of short bars, laid end to end. Suddenly he understood.

"I've got it! I've got it!" he screamed, frantically. Recklessly he dived, clutching with stretching fingers at the floor. An instant later he was up again, holding in his hands a short

bar of some substance that was clearly not rock and that grew enormously heavy when he tried to lift it from the water—a bar so heavy that it could be composed of but one substance.

Wild with excitement, he waded back to where his candle was still gently flickering, and battered the bar against a jagged point of rock. Under the assault the black incrustation of years gave way and through it appeared streaks that glowed yellow in the candle-light!

Weak with excitement, Tom dropped to the floor and stared at the treasure he had found. The bar was two to three inches square and about eighteen inches long. Tom guessed it weighed at least seventy-five pounds. Swift computation fixed its value at about fifteen thousand dollars. And only a dozen yards away there were hundreds of others like it—hundreds of them. The thought dazed him.

The sputtering of the candle recalled him to the fact that time was flying. Jumping up, he hastily dived once more into the waters and fished out another bar of gold. Then, slipping into his clothes, he started back over the route by which he had come, carrying a bar of gold under each arm. When he reached the rope he tied its end about the two bars of gold and left them lying on the rocky floor, while he swarmed up the rope to the ledge above. In spite of the excitement that drove him on, his strength was beginning to fail, and it was only with great difficulty that he reached the shelf of rock. Once there, he had almost as much difficulty in hauling up the rope with the bars of gold. The second stage of the ascent he found even harder, and when he came out into the daylight he dropped exhausted on the vines.

Inez was waiting for him and hailed his appearance with delight. "You have found it—yes, Señor!" she chattered. "I know you have found it."

Tom nodded; he had no breath left for speech. A moment later he raised his hand. *"Paciencia, Señorita,"* said he, with a grin, mimicking her words of an hour before. "Wait till I pull up the rope. Give me a few drops from that flask and I'll have it up in a jiffy."

Five minutes later the two bars lay at the girl's feet.

Amazement and delight, mingled with the memory of what the gold had cost, struggled for expression on the girl's piquant face. "Ah!" she cried. "We are rich, Señor! Rich! But—but woe is me —my father is not here to rejoice with us."

Tom nodded. "Yes, we are rich," he agreed, "barring a few small details such as getting the gold to civilization and saving our own lives. The gold is there, all right, and some day we'll get it. Just now, however, I would be glad to trade a few thousand dollars of it for a square meal. Suppose we go down and see what Pollock left on the beach. The sun seems to be setting and it gets dark very quick down here; we'd better be off while we can see."

In single file the two hurried down the mountain. The sun was in close to the horizon, sinking in a swirl of multicolored clouds, and the swift-footed night was coming on apace. The smoke from the volcano was undoubtedly growing less, and the earth tremors and explosions had ceased.

Tom carried a bar of gold slung under each arm, and strong as he was, he had to sit down again and again to rest. He found that one hundred and fifty pounds of gold was just as heavy as one hundred and fifty pounds of lead, and that its value did not greatly lighten his burden.

Inez came behind him. On the way down she explained, as she had had no opportunity to do sooner, that her father was a native of Costa Rica and her mother an American. All her life her father had been seeking the lost key to the great treasure his grandfather helped to bury on Cocos Island. But the years had fled by without a clue and he had almost forgotten it. Then, abruptly, like a bolt from the blue, the key had turned up. Some day she would tell Tom how it had been lost and how found. For the moment it was enough to say that the finding it had driven her father wild with delight.

At this point Inez began to hesitate and it struck Tom that she was not telling everything. However, he gathered that Señor Carranza had been unable

to get a vessel in Central America and had taken his daughter with him to San Francisco, where he hoped to make satisfactory arrangements. Unluckily, he had fallen in with Captain Sawyer, who could be very pleasant when he wished, and had confided in him—with the result that Tom had seen.

In return, Tom told her of his bet and of its consequences.

By the time he had finished his story the two were close to the camp on the beach. As they came out of the bushes that fringed the cliff close to camp, Tom stopped with a quick-drawn breath of alarm, pressing Inez back into the shelter of the bushes.

Between them and the sea, not fifty yards away, two men were rummaging among the heterogeneous articles that had been left on the beach by the fleeing sailors. Tom stood for a moment, paralyzed with amazement, then drew a long breath as he saw that the two were not members of the *Lizzie Green's* crew. To judge from the hue of their skins and the style of their garments they were natives of the not-distant mainland—of Mexico or of some part of Central America. He was surprised, for he knew that Cocos Island was supposed to be uninhabited. Certainly, as far as he could see, it had no soil capable of bearing crops, its scanty vegetation being apparently composed wholly of the vines that clung to the barren rocks. Then suddenly he recalled the signal that Captain Sawyer had noticed from the deck of the *Lizzie Green* and its abrupt disappearance. Evidently it had been made by these people and as evidently they had removed it for some reason. Perhaps they had been expecting some other vessel and had grown suddenly distrustful. If this were so, they might give trouble.

As he pondered, the two men straightened up and swung to their shoulders the two bundles they had been preparing. Clearly they were carrying off the stores which Talcott had left on the beach, and on which Tom was depending for his supper. This, of course, would not do at all and Tom stepped forward hastily, utterly ignoring the fact that he was unarmed, while both men had long machetes hanging by their sides. *"Poco tiempo, amigos,"* he called. "Hold on a bit. I am afraid we want those things ourselves."

The two strangers dropped their bundles and clapped their hands to their machetes. Clearly they were ready to fight for their booty. Then suddenly Inez stepped forward and spoke in a flow of liquid Spanish of which Tom could understand only a few words. At sight of her, the men dropped their hands and began to smile.

Then Inez turned to Tom. "It's all right, Mr. Randolph," she said. "These are Pedro and another of my father's servants. We leave them here three months ago when we depart for San Francisco."

Tom's eyes widened. "Then—then you've been here before?" he gasped in amazement.

"But certainly, Señor. We have been here often. Many times we have search for the gold—in vain. Then the clue tell us where the treasure lay. But we did not find the crevice in the rocks by which you ascend and we think we must bore through the rock to get the treasure. Therefore we go to San Francisco to get the drills and the dynamite. We get them, but"—the girl's voice broke, but she went on bravely—"the infamous ones murder my father on the way. If they had wait till we arrive at the island, all would have been well, for we have here ten men, all ancient servants of my father's family."

Tom rubbed his eyes in bewilderment. Events were succeeding each other too fast for him to take them in. However, he had no time to speak, for as Inez finished, one of the men stepped forward.

"Boat come," he said, pointing seaward.

A boat was indeed coming from the *Lizzie Green*—coming swiftly and furiously, impelled by strong arms. Clearly those on board had seen or guessed something of what was going on ashore.

Inez looked at it and her eyes lit up. *"Dios!"* she cried. "They come! Now will I have revenge for the so-cruel murder of my father."

VI

DAZEDLY Tom stared at the girl. Her cheeks were burning, and her eyes, fixed on the hurrying boat, were ablaze with hate. If looks could have killed, every man on the boat would have died upon the spot. Tom scarcely knew her.

The boat was perhaps an eighth of a mile away, too far for him to recognize anyone on board it; he missed Talcott's great bulk, however, and concluded that Parkton must be in command. The sun had long since sunk behind the island, but its light still rested on the boat and the surrounding waters. But as Tom looked, the boat swept forward into the shadow of the mountain, passing instantly from brilliant yellow light to obscurity. Simultaneously Inez grasped his hand.

"Come, Señor, come," she cried, impatiently.

Tom started. Half a dozen men, armed like the first two, with the ubiquitous machete of the Spanish-American, had silently appeared and were hastily shouldering the rest of the stores. As Tom turned they started toward the cliff and disappeared behind a mantle of vines.

Again Inez tugged at him. "Quick! Quick! Señor!" she urged. "Give the gold to Pedro and come."

Tom snickered. The cavalier directions about the gold struck him as distinctly amusing. He did not know what Inez was contemplating. He did understand, however, that her men had some hiding place at hand to which they were hurrying.

Clearly the moment was not one for parleying. Meekly he surrendered the gold bars to the piratical-looking native who stood at his elbow and followed where the girl led.

In a moment he found himself close to the vines that mantled the cliff. Inez pushed through them; he imitated her and found himself at the foot of a narrow sloping cleft that had been so hidden by the configuration of the cliff and by the vines that he had not suspected its existence. Along this cleft ran a rough natural path up which the others were hurrying.

Tom followed, ascending for perhaps one hundred feet; then he noticed that the men above him had disappeared, and that Inez was waiting.

"Quick! Quick!" she called, reaching out her hand.

Tom took it and felt himself drawn through a mantle of vines into a recess so dark—at that hour of the day—that he could see practically nothing. Inez still held his hand, however, and drew him on, and he followed unhesitatingly, though he realized that he was again moving through a cleft in the rock, and it occurred to him that he had had almost enough of rock passages for one day.

The passage was not long, however. Almost in a moment he came out into a chamber sixty or more feet long and half as many deep, which had been hollowed, naturally or artificially, in the face of the cliff that overlooked the landing place. Tom could not see the beach, however, for between him and it, across the face of the chamber, hung the great mantle of vines. They started from the cliff above and depended downward till they reached the cliff talus at the foot, where they took fresh root and started upward again, weaving and intertwining, till they formed a lattice work that was strong enough to support a man's weight and that was almost impenetrable.

For the moment, however, Tom had no time to think of natural wonders. Inez had parted the screen and was beckoning him to look. Stepping to her side, he saw the boat whipping through the water close to shore. Parkton held the tiller, and Carter was pulling stroke. Behind the latter were half a dozen oarsmen. Beside them he caught sight of the muzzles of as many guns. Clearly Parkton had thrown prudence to the winds and had armed the sailors. Perhaps he had guessed something as to the finding of the gold.

Inez turned and gave a sudden order. Tom heard the click of gunlocks behind him and spun round. Close to the lattice of vines stood Pedro and the others, rifles leveled at the men on the beach below.

Tom gasped. Then he acted—there was no time for verbal remonstrance. With a single movement he sprang to

Pedro's side, snatched the revolver that hung in the latter's belt and sprang back.

"Stop!" he roared. "I'll kill the first man that pulls a trigger!"

Probably not one of the men understood his words. But so deadly were his tones that they hesitated and looked round, rifle butts wavering. And Tom's attitude was eloquent.

Quickly he spoke, glancing at Inez.

"None of that," he ordered sternly. "I wont stand for it—not for a single minute."

Inez's eyes flashed. *"You* wont stand for it!" she shrieked. *"You* wont! *Dios!"* Round she swung to the men. "Shoot him down," she raved, in Spanish.

Tom guessed if he did not understand the words. His pistol settled on the center of Pedro's forehead. "Better not," he counseled significantly; and the Spanish-American's rifle wavered and sank.

Then Tom faced Inez again. "Parkton is a murderer and a scoundrel," he said. "He shall hang for your father's murder. But the rest of those men had no part in it. Carter is a friend of mine. And not one of them, not even Parkton, shall be shot down in cold blood. Besides, if we kill them, Talcott will run away with the ship and leave us here."

Inez's face changed. Obviously she had not thought of the ship. But before she could speak, one of the men cried out, pointing through the vines.

Inez looked. "They have land! They have land!" she cried, wringing her hands. *"Dios!* What shall we do?"

"Do?" Tom laughed. "Leave it to me!" Ignoring the men, who, he felt, were no longer to be feared, he strode to the vines and pulled them apart.

"Parkton!" he called.

Rifle in hand, Parkton had just leaped upon the sand. At the sound of Tom's voice he stopped and looked about him, holding his gun at the ready. Then—

The solid earth heaved in agony, swinging in sickening waves like those of the unquiet sea. The everlasting rocks swayed and crashed, hurling vast fragments to the sands. The men in the rock chambers, flung desperately backward, caught at the tottering walls, dropping their rifles; the rattle of the shots echoed from the walls. Then came a vast uproar, cracking the eardrums and drowning all other sounds. A lurid gleam, as of some vast conflagration, illumined the quivering beach and the heaving sea. With it, the earth ceased to quiver, though the lurid light grew stronger. The volcano had blown off its head and the imprisoned gases had found vent.

Bewildered, dizzy, with reeling senses, Tom clung to the mantle of the vines, whose elastic strength had broken the shock of the earthquake, and glanced outward. Not a man of the boat's crew stood upright. Like leaves they had been dashed helter-skelter to the rocks and the waves. In the quickening crimson light of the volcano Tom saw Carter stagger to his feet and turn to flee. Then—

Before his eyes the sea sucked outward—outward—outward! The ocean floor, hidden from view since the morning of time, rose into view. Farther and farther back ran the sea. The *Lizzie Green,* deserted by the waves, crashed down upon the sands that had lain beneath the treacherous water. Supernaturally quickened, Tom's staring eyes descried her lying on the bottom, careening landward, masts, rigging, bulwarks, shattered by the fall, showing ruddy in the crimson glare.

Then the sea came back! Out of the far distance a mighty wave shouldered itself. Black was its body and its curving hollow, but its crest was lined with white. And it roared landward.

Beneath its rush the *Lizzie Green* vanished forever. The bared rocks sank back to the undersea world, there to remain till the sea should vanish. The great wave broke again and again and again. Ruddier and ruddier it grew as it neared the flaming crest of the volcano. Before it the men on the beach went down, insects fighting overwhelming doom. Then, with a shock and a bellow the water struck the face of the cliff, shaking the very foundation of the island. A scant ten feet below Tom's perch it stopped; its spray dashed over him where he clung.

Then it sank back, baring the beach

once more. And as it went, the vines, torn from their hold on the cliffs, gave way. Tom felt them yielding in his grasp, swaying outward and downward. Slowly they sank, snapping one by one. To them Tom clung—clung till he felt the sands of the beach beneath his feet and knew that by a miracle he had reached the ground unhurt.

Upward he looked! From the peak the volcano flamed, a rose of red and yellow fire. From the sides of the peak ran out two vast snakes of molten lava, widening as they flowed. One poured northward, overwhelming the bases of the jaws, cataracting over the cliffs into the mighty gullet. By their light Tom could see the vast cloud of steam that rose where fire and water met.

Then he looked behind him and saw a second wave, not high like the first, but deadly, advancing. Before he could move, before he could think, it struck him and he knew no more.

For hours Tom seemed to lie, dull and quiescent, under deep waters that rolled and tossed above his head. Then dreams began to visit him, proof that the moment for return to consciousness was close at hand. In them he saw once more Captain Sawyer's red beard float for an instant on the wave that dashed him to destruction. Again and again he was flung against the cliff face; and again and again he went over and over the weary climb that saved him. Then the dream changed; once more he was descending into the abyss; once more he climbed the swaying rope, festooned with hundreds of bars of yellow gold; once more he stood in the rock chamber facing down Pedro and his men. And once more he saw the great wave approaching. Madly he struggled to escape—and awoke.

He was lying in a berth in a narrow white and gold room, which was quivering with a steady vibration, which—when his momentary bewilderment had passed—he readily identified as the throb of a steamer's screw. How he came there he had no idea; but, seeing a push button on the wall at his side, he pressed it and waited.

Almost instantly the door opened and a Japanese steward peered in. Seeing that Tom was awake, he nodded and smiled. Then, forestalling inquiries, he exclaimed cheerfully, "You wake? Plenty good. Bring honorable doctor quick," and vanished.

Tom possessed his soul in patience. The character of the stateroom had shown him that he must be a passenger of some consideration, and the politeness of the steward confirmed the belief. Tom was clear-headed, but he was very weak and, though curious, was languid.

He was not kept waiting long, however. Soon the door opened again and an elderly man, wearing a doctor's white uniform, came in. When he met Tom's eyes he smiled. "Well," he asked, cheerfully, "how are we feeling?"

"Weak!" Tom answered promptly. "Weak; but all there—wherever 'there' is. *Where* is it, by the way, Doctor?"

The doctor grinned. "I guess you're all right if you can joke," he said. "You are on board the *Shinyo Maru,* which is Japanese for steamer *Shinyo,* of the Toyo Kisen Kaisa, or Oriental Steamship Company, of Tokio, bound from Callao for Salina Cruz, Honolulu, Yokohama, and Shanghai. Any more satisfied in your mind now?"

Tom shook his head weakly. "Not much!" he confessed. "When and how did I get on board?"

"Two days ago off Cocos Island. Our route leads by there. We had seen that the volcano had broken out again; and just opposite we spoke a sailboat, with a Spanish girl and six dagoes on board. Also yourself—unconscious. The lady explained that they were escaping from the volcano and that you had been hurt and that she wanted to take passage for you to the United States or to Honolulu. It looked a little queer, but to cut the story short, we took you on board. The lady paid your fare to Honolulu and left one hundred and fifty dollars in American gold with the purser for you. She also gave me a letter for you. Then she sailed away—said she was going to Costa Rica and expected to get there all right. I guess she will, for she seemed an energetic lady and her men seemed to know their business."

"And the letter?"

"Here it is! I'll let you read it if you'll take this sedative first and will go to sleep immediately afterwards. You're not seriously hurt, but you've lost a lot of blood and you've got to build up your strength."

Tom promised. He swallowed the powder that the doctor had prepared. Then he tore open the letter. It read:

> Dear Mr. Randolph:
> I send you away because I fear you die if I do not. Moreover, of a verity, the crack in the rock that you have discover is bury beneath a hundred foot of red-hot lava. We will penetrate it, yes, but not now. I go back to my home to wait for it to cool.
> You have tell me of your so foolish bet and I send you on your way. I buy you ticket to Hawaii and I leave you $150 so that you may go from there where you will—back to San Francisco in another ship or on to Shanghai on this same one. One of the bars of you-know-what is yours, but I cannot leave it with you for fear the Japanese officers of the steamer guess what we do not want them to guess. So I leave you all the money I have and inclose my check for $18,000 gold, which is about the value of your share. Do not cash it for one month, in order that I may have time to sell the you-know-what and make deposit in the bank. I leave this letter with the doctor, who seems honest. And so I sign myself,
> INEZ CARRANZA.
> Burn this!

Tom looked at the check; it was drawn on the National Bank of Costa Rica at San José, dated a month ahead, and the sum named was $36,000—presumably because the Costa Rican silver peso was worth but fifty cents, gold standard. Tucking the check under his pillow, Tom folded the letter into a long straight wisp. "Give me a light, Doctor," he asked. In a moment more, Inez's words were ashes.

A week later the *Shinyo Maru* dropped anchor at Honolulu, and Tom Randolph, his strength recovered, found himself endeavoring to make a great decision: should he go on with his trip around the world or should he go back to San Francisco and Susy Pendleton? Suddenly the light of a glorious idea broke over him: he would do both. He would go back to San Francisco, cash Inez Carranza's check, and thus armed with the sinews of war, would win Susy Pendleton out from under Milton's guns, so to speak. Then he would take Susy on a honeymoon trip with him around the world—and Milton would have to pay him the ten thousand dollars of the wager for doing it. Was there ever a more splendid prospect?

Three weeks still later, Tom Randolph once more set foot in San Francisco. And as sometimes happens even in this dour and contradictory old world, his dreams came true with an wholly delightful completeness. Absence—and possibly some weeks of Milton's unmitigated society—had made Susy's heart grow distinctly fonder of Tom Randolph; and thus encouraged, he renewed his courtship with a fervor that soon won the day. Moreover, a small expenditure in cable tolls soon developed the fact that Inez Carranza had reached home safely and that her check was distinctly good. And so it happened that not long afterward Tom Randolph again set out from San Francisco on his trip around the world—this time with the money to complete the journey and win his fantastic bet already earned and turned into letters of credit in his pocket. And with him went the newly made Mrs. Randolph.

That Bag of Tricks

The blithe romance of Barty Kerrison: he falls in love, finds himself shamefully awkward in the presence of his inamorata, and hires another girl to teach him "parlor tricks." Whereupon there ensue complications of a curious nature.

By JOHN BARTON OXFORD

BARTHOLOMEW KERRISON had his feet with him. He was aware of that fact as he stumbled up the second flight of stairs at the Belfield Apartments. Moreover, with each succeeding flight of stairs those feet seemed to grow in size and unwieldiness, and he began to wonder what on earth he should do with his hands, which suddenly appeared to him as approximating the size of hams. He coughed huskily and glanced nervously to the top of the fifth flight, which he was at the moment ascending. At the top of that flight was an open door, and through the door came the sound of gay voices and a bit of laughter.

Kerrison stopped and looked almost wildly behind him as if he were contemplating immediate retreat, but at that moment some one came out of the door into the little hallway. A girl's voice said:

"Oh, here you are at last, Mr. Kerrison. Come right up!"

He saw Lena Avery standing there and realized that retreat was now quite impossible. So he wallowed up to the top of the flight, said an awkward "good-evening," suffered himself to be led into the little flat and began nervously peeling off his heavy overcoat and the unwonted yellow-hued gloves which encased his big paws.

There was a row of hooks on the wall of the flat's tiny hall. Two of them were already occupied by masculine hats and overcoats. Kerrison felt his heart diving bootwards. He hadn't counted on other callers being present.

"Right in this way," Lena was instructing, moving before him to the front room. "This is Mr. Dahlen, Mr. Kerrison, and Mr. McCabe, Mr. Kerrison."

Barty Kerrison, flushing painfully to the roots of his sandy hair, seized two limp and well-kept hands in succession, muttered thickly and quite unintelligibly something about being "pleased to meet yuh," and sat down most uncomfortably in a Morris chair with imitation leather cushions. His feet seemed to have trebled in size, and it seemed to him that his arms were protruding a most amazing and distressing distance from his coat sleeves.

Mr. Dahlen and Mr. McCabe were both well-groomed young men, whose clothes fitted them trimly and whose whole manner was one of comfortable assurance.

Kerrison, realizing by the polite pause that something was expected of him in the conversational line, managed to blurt out: "Pretty cold for this time 'o year, aint it?"

Then he flushed painfully again and subsided into silence.

He caught a covert raising of Mr. McCabe's eyebrows and a quick curling of Mr. Dahlen's thin lips. Then the conversation buzzed on, and Kerrison could only sit helplessly by, his big paws gripping the arms of the Morris chair, and a fatuous smile, sadly forced and unnatural, held on his big features by sheer force of will.

The other two callers completely ignored him. They talked to pretty, sprightly Lena Avery with an ease and an assurance that filled Kerrison with consuming wonder and envy. Now and again, the girl tried to include Kerrison in the talk, but her efforts were productive of such flushing and stammering and evident misery on his part that she too presently left him quite out of it, flashing delicious bits of repartee at the other two, and remembering Kerrison once in a while with a quick, bewildering smile in his direction.

So an altogether—for Kerrison—wretched two hours passed. At the end of which time he arose uncertainly.

"Well, I gotta be joggin' along," he announced, ostentatiously drawing out a huge silver watch from his pocket. He moved towards the hall, bumping blindly against a little table and all but upsetting a gaudy vase upon it, which Mr. McCabe grinningly rescued.

He got clumsily into his overcoat and pulled out the yellow-hued gloves.

"I'm so glad you came," said Lena Avery. "You'll drop around again some evening, wont you?"

Kerrison took her proffered hand in his own big and calloused paw.

"Good-night," he choked haltingly, and found himself plodding down the stairs, while certain covert titters sounded from the flat above.

In the vestibule he paused to button up his coat and draw on his gloves.

"You might 'a' known," he told himself bitterly. "You don't fit in no such place as that. You gotter learn a whole bag of tricks before you go there again. Gee, though, aint she pretty and aint she nice?"

A fine figure of a man was Bartholomew Kerrison, perched on the truck seat, guiding his horses through the crush of traffic and soulfully cursing the less skillful drivers than himself.

But his heavy brows were wrinkled and this particular morning he was thinking far more of his *faux pas* of last evening than the traffic conditions about him.

"I'm goin' there again," he told himself, "and next time I aint goin' to be no such gawk. Gee, I'd oughter 'a' known how it would 'a' been—that a girl like her would 'a' had other fellers hangin' round. I got a lot to learn if I'm ever goin' to have a show with her. Once more like last evenin' would just about cook my goose."

He swung the truck out of the line of similarly loaded vehicles and turned the corner into Bond Street. It was his custom at about this time each morning to stop at a certain little bakery on Bond Street and purchase doughnuts, which he consumed with much gusto on his trip uptown.

Now, as he headed his team for the bakery, he grinned to himself.

"Say, I'll bet Della'd teach me them tricks," he mused. "She's the very one. She's sharp as a new file and quick at sayin' things. I'll put it up to her."

Already relieved in his mind, Kerrison pulled his team to the curb, jumped down and entered the little shop.

Della Logan, masses of red hair piled high on her head and her pert little freckled face alive with good humor, turned from the pies she was arranging on one of the shelves to smile at Barty Kerrison as he came in.

"A half-dozen of them doughnuts," she mimicked his deep tones with a flash of her white teeth, "and, say, aint you got some of that cream cheese to go with 'em? Sure we have. New cream cheese, just in this morning. Anything else, Barty?"

Even as she talked she whisked the doughnuts and cheese into a bag and thrust them across the counter.

Barty threw down a coin.

"Say," said he, "how'd you like to earn a little extra money? Huh?"

"Doin' what?" she inquired as the little bell on the cash-drawer tinkled.

"Teachin' me some tricks," said he.

Della Logan looked at him thoughtfully.

"Parlor tricks," said Barty. "Look, Della: you got a quick way with you; you aint never at loss for somethin' to say. Teach me how to do it, will you?—and how to stand by a piano and turn music without fallin' all over myself, and what kind of clothes to wear and things like that. I'll pay you well for it. Anything you say."

Della grinned maliciously.

"Who's the girl, Barty?" she asked.

Kerrison grinned sheepishly. They were quite alone in the place. Below stairs he could hear Della's father poking about the ovens in the basement.

He leaned confidentially across the little counter and told her about Lena Avery; how she worked in the office of one of the big department stores uptown; how he had first seen her one day while he was unloading goods at the freight elevator and she came out of the employees' entrance close by; how he had known then and there that Lena Avery was the one girl in the world for him; how he had seen her often after that when he was unloading goods, because when he had any cases to go to that particular store he always managed to get them there at one o'clock, the time Lena came out for lunch; how a big packing-case was slipped carelessly off the elevator one day and Lena would have been hurt had he not jumped from the truck and pulled her out of harm's way; how after that she always spoke to him and now and then fed sugar to his three horses; how she had invited him at last to call at her home; how he had gone there last night for the first time—and the result.

Della listened quietly. At the narration of his call the previous evening, her brow clouded.

"Them two fellers, Dahlen and McCabe, I bet you could 'a' licked the two of 'em at once with one hand tied behind you, Barty," said she.

"Maybe," he admitted. "But that don't get me nothin'. Look at the dummy I was, sittin' there while they was laughin' at me up their sleeves."

Della's frown deepened.

"I'll fix you so'st they wont laugh at you again," said she shortly. "Come around here nights after we close up. That's at eight. I'll do my best for you."

"I'll pay you for yer time, and pay you well," he declared.

Della laughed softly.

"I'll send in the bill when I'm done with you," she said. "Yep, I'll teach you a bag of tricks, all right. Better begin to-night. I'll look for you shortly after eight. We live up over the bakery here, you know."

Barty Kerrison went out and jumped on his truck. Off he rumbled, munching doughnuts and feeling much better.

Della Logan, sighing softly and shaking her red head, watched him go with an enigmatic little smile on her lips.

At eight that evening Barty rang the bell at the little door beside the bakery. Della herself let him in and ushered him to the cozy rooms upstairs.

"Now, then," said she in a most pedigogic tone, "pretend I'm the Lena Avery girl and that you're callin' on me. Sit down over there, and for heaven's sake, Barty, don't hang your mouth open that way. And take a reef in your legs. Look how your feet are sprawled out."

It was a wholly improving evening, as were the many evenings which followed it. Della Logan taught him dance steps, that he might better handle those unwieldy feet of his; she made him buy some new better-fitting and quieter clothes. The yellow-hued gloves she burned up and substituted soft gray ones; also she suggested a soft hat in place of the loud caps he affected.

She taught him how to drape himself gracefully over the end of a piano, or to stand behind her and turn her music as she played and sang in a thin but very sweet little voice; she showed him how to enter and leave a room without endangering all the bric-a-brac in it. By the sweat of her brow she drilled him in the gentle art of repartee until he had caught the knack—heavily, it is true—of twisting an extra meaning out of his sentences. She made him pay her covert and graceful compliments, making him repeat them over and over until she was satisfied.

Six weeks she labored with him. Nor did Barty Kerrison realize what pleasant evenings those were. He only knew that he was gaining an assurance in himself, that the next time he went to call on the alluring Lena Avery he wouldn't make the mess of it that he had on that first call.

At the end of those six weeks Della Logan looked on her handiwork and found it good.

"You'll do," Della pronounced. "I can't do any more for you. Go call on her now. They wont be titterin' at you now."

"Now what do I owe you for all this?" asked the practical Barty, pulling out a well-stuffed wallet.

Della made a grimace. "I'll make out my bill and give it to you to-morrow with your doughnuts," said she.

"I'm goin' right over there to-night," said Barty. "Let's see, you said when I went, to take her somethin', some candy or flowers. What kind would you get?"

"Well, if it was me now," said Della, "I'd say some orchids—some of those pale pink ones, if it was the flowers. The candy you'd oughter know about yourself—either chocolates or bonbons, but the very best make, mind you!"

A half-hour later Barty Kerrison was ringing a certain bell at the Belfield Apartments. A five-pound box of expensive chocolates was beneath his arm; in his other hand was a huge box of pale pink orchids. Some one called through the tube to which his ear was glued. He announced himself and the vestibule latch clicked.

A comforting feeling of sureness pervaded him. He knew just how he would enter, just what he would say, just how he would steer the conversation into familiar channels in which he could take his share. Della Logan had been a brick; Della had certainly worked wonders for him, even as he had known she would do. He wished she could see him now, mounting these stairs so easily and so confidently.

He had reached the top of the third flight. He paused suddenly. He was aware of a sinking feeling at the pit of his stomach because those lessons with Della were over. He was going to miss those evenings in the cozy rooms above the bakery frightfully. He was going to miss Della's red hair, and her smile and her flashing teeth. It was borne to him very suddenly and very forcibly that these things would never be made up to him by Lena Avery's beauty. He heard the door at the top of that fifth flight open and some one come into the hall.

He began tiptoeing softly down the stairs to the vestibule. Some one above spoke his name softly, questioningly. He retreated yet more stealthily, but with added speed.

He took a taxi to Bond Street. He irritated the chauffeur by sticking his head continually out of the window and exhorting more speed. He rang the little bell at the door beside the bakery—it was an old-fashioned bell—so vigorously that the wire threatened to part. He fairly leaped into the doorway when Della opened the door.

"Say," he gurgled, "here's a box of chocolates for you and a whole raft of them pink orchids."

Della Logan drew back stiffly.

"Didn't you make a hit with her then after all?" she said. "Wa'n't your new tricks any use, or did you forget them?"

He pressed the candy and the box of flowers into her reluctant hands.

"I didn't try 'em on her," he said. "Listen: I went there; I rung the bell; I got halfway up the stairs; then somethin' hit me hard. What hit me hard was you—you, Dell. All the time you've been teachin' me those things—all the time you've been teachin' me—"

He paused. She evidently caught his meaning, for she laughed softly but with very apparent relief.

"Well, what do you suppose I was teachin' you all them things for?" she demanded. "To have you go wastin' 'em on some other girl?"

He caught her in his arms. The box of chocolates clattered to the floor. The taxi chauffeur, who stepped up at that moment for his just dues, discreetly turned his back.

And some one stepped upon and irretrievably squashed five pounds of perfectly good chocolates.

Complete Résumé of First Installment

ANDREW ALLINSON has returned home to England from the Boer war. His occupation as volunteer soldier being gone, he finds time hanging somewhat idly on his hands. For although by inheritance he is a large shareholder in the old banking firm of Allinson & Son, he has never been thought to have much of a head for business, and has always been relegated to the position of silent partner. His brother-in-law, Leonard Hathersage, is the active head of the firm, and by subtle methods contrives to confirm the impression that Andrew is really "the family fool."

Mrs. Olcott—the wife of a former comrade-in-arms of Andrew's who has been ordered to an unhealthy post in West Africa—takes a house in the neighborhood. And Andrew, solely out of gratitude to the friend who had once saved his life on the battlefield, undertakes to look after Mrs. Olcott's business interests for her. Andrew's frequent visits to her house arouse the suspicions of his charitable relatives, who become fearful that he will get into some sort of an entanglement.

Now it happens that Allinson & Son, under Hathersage's guidance, has been promoting a mining venture in Canada. It is not wholly the honest sort of proposition with which the name of Allinson has heretofore been connected; and so Hathersage, pretending to fear Mrs. Olcott's influence, gains the assistance of the rest of the family in persuading Andrew to go out to Canada to look after the mine; Hathersage's real object, of course, is to make Andrew the scapegoat when the worthlessness of the mine becomes apparent.

Andrew readily consents to go to Canada, for he is sick of his position in England. Arrived at the Lake of Pines, where this Rain Bluff Mine is located, he finds there as foreman one Jake Carnally, another tried and trusted comrade of the war. It gradually becomes apparent to Andrew that the mine is not a profitable venture—for the shareholders. The only person who is making any money out of it seems to be one Mappin, who runs a transport company and to whom Hathersage has given a contract at very advantageous terms to do the hauling for the mine—which is far north of a railroad. Mappin also proves to be a suitor for the hand of Geraldine Frobisher, the beautiful daughter of a wealthy American who has a summer place on the lake. Andrew meets Geraldine and the two are much attracted to one another.

Andrew feels very strongly that it is up to him to save the honor of his name by protecting the shareholders who have invested their money in the mine. While he is trying to think what is to be done, he meets a man named Graham, who has for twenty years been a clerk in the office of a lumber company at the Lake of Pines. Graham tells Andrew of a valuable silver lode he had once discovered far in the north, many years before; be has always planned to return thither and locate a claim, but circumstances have prevented. It occurs to Andrew that he might finance an expedition, go with Graham to locate the lode on shares, and thus provide a real mine for the Rain Bluff company to work. With this scheme to save the Allinson honor in mind, he sets about preparing a daring expedition into the wilderness of the frozen Northland.

For the Allinson Honor

The second episode in this splendid novel shows "the family fool" proving most conclusively that he is no such thing. He breaks business relations with the perfidious Mappin, tells Hathersage "where to get off," says good-by to Geraldine—and in an heroic attempt to save the day, sets out into the wilderness in quest of Graham's lode.

By HAROLD BINDLOSS
Author of "A Delilah of the Snows," "Winston of the Prairie," etc.

THEY left the mine at daybreak, and on reaching the town Andrew had first of all an interview with Graham's employer. The president of the lumber company sat at a desk in his office at the mill and listened attentively while Andrew explained the object of his visit. He was an elderly man with a keen but good-humored expression, and once or twice he glanced at Andrew as if surprised. When the latter had finished, the mill-owner took a box from a shelf.

"Have a cigar," he said.

Andrew lighted one and looked round the room. It was dusty and dingy, with a rough board floor; and a cloud of steam from a neighboring stack obscured the light that entered the windows. A rusty stove stood at one end, with a desk near it which Graham had occupied for twenty years.

"So the mine has not turned out all you expected?" commented the lumberman.

"Far from it," Andrew acknowledged.

"And you feel it a duty to do something to protect the interests of the shareholders?"

"Yes," said Andrew, and added with a direct glance: "Are you surprised?"

A smile crept into his companion's eyes.

"I guess we can let that go. You have done the square thing in coming to me before you spoke to Graham. He's a man we value and he has served us well, but I've now and then felt sorry for him. It's possible he hasn't found it easy to spend the best part of his life here, keeping our accounts on a very moderate salary, though we pay him more than we could get another man for."

"It's strange he didn't break loose from it long ago."

"I guess it cost him something to stay. We're an optimistic people, Mr. Allinson, with a hankering after adventure; but Graham could never put by money enough to make the plunge. He had his children to bring up and he spared nothing to give them a fair start. I suppose this isn't quite the line you thought I would take?"

Andrew admitted it with some embarrassment, and the lumber-man looked amused.

"There are plenty of big mills run

entirely on the laws of supply and demand, where men are scrapped as freely as obsolete machinery, and the one thing looked for is the maximum output. Still, you see, our isolated position gives us a monopoly, and we're small enough to take a personal interest in our older hands. As a matter of fact, we find it pays; but that is not the point. You are willing to guarantee Graham against any loss if your search is unsuccessful?"

"Yes," Andrew promised, "—he shall not suffer."

"Then we'll do our share in keeping his place open as long as may be needful. As it happens, things are slack just now; and to make this journey will set his mind at rest. He'll be content with the old routine when he comes back."

"Then you count on his coming back to the mill?"

The lumber-man looked sympathetic.

"I don't wish to discourage you, but if Graham finds that lode I shall be surprised."

Andrew thanked him and returned to his hotel, where he wrote some letters and afterward decided to visit Frobisher, who was staying at the Island of Pines for a week or two. Graham was away on business down the line and would not return until the next day, and Andrew, being in a restless mood, felt that a talk with Frobisher or his daughter might soothe him. They were intelligent and sympathetic people; and he had thought a good deal about Geraldine of late.

Fine snow was driving before a stinging breeze when he walked out upon the frozen lake. Here and there its surface had been swept clear by the wind, leaving stretches of smooth ice, but, for the most part, its white covering offered good foothold. It was dark and bitterly cold; Andrew's hands grew stiff in his thick mittens and he shivered as he faced the stronger gusts, guiding himself by the loom of the rocks and trees that now and then showed faintly through the snow. The walk was far from pleasant, and he realized that things would be much worse when he went up into the trackless spaces of the frozen North.

Reaching the house without misadventure, he was received by Geraldine. Mrs. Denton, she explained, was invalided by a cold caught on the train; and Mr. Frobisher had driven across to the Landing for his mail, but would be back soon. She led Andrew into a room which looked delightfully bright and comfortable after the shack at the mine, and made him sit down by the hearth, on which a pine-log fire burned gaily.

"You are thinner than you were when we last saw you, and you don't look so cheerful," she said, taking a low chair opposite him.

"I think both things are explainable," Andrew replied with a rueful smile.

Geraldine quietly studied him. He was troubled and could not hide it, and he interested her. The man was honest and forceful in an untrained way. She could imagine his grappling with unaccustomed difficulties, clumsily, perhaps, but resolutely. Though several years his junior, she knew that she had the keener intelligence; but this did not make her attitude contemptuous. He had shown signs of qualities which sometimes carried one farther than superficial smartness.

"I suppose you have had some trouble at the mine?"

"Yes," he said, though he could not account for his candor. "I've had an experience that has rather shaken me. After all, it's possible that one needs something of the kind now and then; and until lately I've escaped it."

"I wonder whether that's unfortunate?"

"It is, beyond a doubt. I've taken life easily, generally getting what I wanted without much trouble, and now, when I've no experience to fall back on, I'm landed in a maze of difficulties. But all this is too personal; forgive me for boring you."

"But I'm interested," she declared. She felt that he would find a way out, though it might not be the easiest one. "As you came over to Canada, I suppose you must have found the smooth life you led grow monotonous."

"Not exactly. I liked it; but I'd a feeling now and then that it might be more bracing to do something useful—make things, for instance, or even go into business."

Geraldine laughed, and it struck

Andrew that she was very pretty as she looked at him with sparkling eyes.

"You're delightfully matter-of-fact. You might have hinted at a longing for high adventure or something romantic."

"The worst of adventure is that you often get a good deal more than you bargain for," said Andrew soberly.

"You learned that in the North?"

"Yes," he answered with a moody air, "—that and other things. For example, I learned how money's sometimes made, and it was a shock."

"Ah! The money was yours?"

"That's where the trouble lies. So far, I've been content with spending it."

"And you now feel that your responsibility doesn't end there? But if you wished to go into business, why didn't you do so?"

"That is rather more than I can tell. Still, whenever I hinted at it, I was quietly discouraged. I suppose it wasn't expected of me, and the general opinion was that I was incapable."

Geraldine thought that his friends were mistaken in this conclusion, but she could imagine his yielding to the representations of cleverer people, without questioning the accuracy of their views about him. He had, however, obviously broken loose from his tutelage, and now stood firm, ignorant, perhaps, of much that men who worked for their living knew, confronting with undisciplined courage troubles new to him. She had no doubt that he had courage and strong sincerity.

"I'm afraid I'm not very entertaining," he apologized with a smile.

"It's a compliment that you're natural," Geraldine said graciously. "One doesn't always expect to be amused. But you have Carnally to help you at the mine. What do you think of him?"

"I have a high opinion of Jake."

"I believe you're right; he's a favorite of mine. What he undertakes he carries out. You feel that he can be relied on, that he would do the square thing, however difficult it is. After all, one couldn't say much more of any man."

"No," Andrew responded gravely. "The trouble often is to see how the square thing should be done."

There were footsteps in the hall; Frobisher came in and greeted Andrew cordially.

"I heard you were at the Landing, and I'm not sorry you'll have to stay all night," he said. "It's snowing so hard that I had some difficulty in getting home with the team."

XI

THE REAL BOSS

"How have you been getting on in the bush?" Frobisher asked his guest when they sat talking in his smoking-room. "You look worried."

"There's a reason for it—the mine's no good." Andrew looked Frobisher steadily in the face. "I dare say you knew that some time ago."

"I had my suspicions. I wasn't singular in that."

"So it seems. I must ask you to believe that it was only during the last few days that I found out the truth."

Frobisher smiled.

"After that, I'd better say that I exonerated you—I think it's the right word—as soon as we'd had our first talk. I saw that you were being made a tool of."

"You were right," said Andrew. "It isn't a pleasant situation. I don't mind its not being flattering; that's the least trouble."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"The square thing, so far as I'm able. Allinson's, so to speak, guaranteed the undertaking."

There was some extra color in Andrew's face and pride in his voice, though he spoke quietly, and Frobisher sat silent a moment or two.

"Have you made any plans yet?" the American then asked.

Andrew told him that he proposed to take Carnally and Graham north to search for the silver lode; and Frobisher looked grave.

"There's a point to be remembered," he cautioned. "Minerals in Canada belong to the State, which makes a grant of them to the discoverer on certain terms. The lode will therefore become the property of whomever first locates

and records it, which may be any member of your party."

"I've thought of that. The expedition will be financed by me, and I'll have an understanding with Graham and Carnally as to their share before we start."

"Three claims could be staked, and your companions could make them over to you when the development work was done. If properly patented, you would be the legal owner."

"I intend to become the owner."

Frobisher looked as if the statement surprised him.

"Then you'd better cut your connection with Rain Bluff before you set off," he advised. "It might prevent some complications. The directors might contend that you were not entitled to undertake private mining operations while you represented the Company and drew its pay."

"I don't think you understand. I mean to hold the claims in my own name, so as to strengthen my position, which will need it. I expect to have serious trouble over the Company's affairs."

Frobisher laughed softly.

"You're no fool! You feel that you undertook to look after the shareholders' interests when you came over, and you have to make good?"

"Yes," Andrew assented, "I feel something of the kind."

"Then we'll assume that you find the lode and that it's as rich as Graham believes—which is taking a good deal for granted. Your shareholders, learning that Rain Bluff is worthless, would probably jump at a proposition that would give them back their money, or even part of it. You could buy them out and afterward repay yourself handsomely by developing the new mine."

Andrew's face hardened.

"When these people gave us their money, they did so expecting to get any profit that could be made. It's their due and, so far, Allinson's has never broken faith with those who trusted it."

Frobisher was not surprised at the answer. There was, he had seen, a clean pride in the man, whom he felt disposed to pity. Allinson had obviously little knowledge of business, and would have to meet the determined opposition of the clever tricksters who had floated the Company. He was entering on a hard fight with unaccustomed weapons. Nevertheless, Frobisher would not venture to predict his defeat. Courage such as Allinson showed often carried one a long way, and he had the right upon his side. Frobisher's business experience had not made him an optimist, but he was prepared to watch this altruistic champion's struggles with friendly interest and to assist him as far as he could.

"You have undertaken a pretty big thing," he said. "To begin with, it's a lonely country that you're going into, and though having the lakes and rivers frozen may simplify traveling, you'll find it tough work living in the open with the thermometer at forty below. Winter's a bad time for prospecting; but as timber's plentiful, you may be able to thaw out enough of the surface to test the lode, and something might be done with giant-powder. Provisions will be your chief difficulty. You will need a number of packers."

"If possible, I must make the trip with no companions except Carnally and Graham. Everybody at the Landing has heard about the lode, and if we took up a strong party and failed to locate it, we'd have shown them roughly where it lay. That would give the packers a chance for forestalling our next attempt. Their right to record the minerals would be as good as ours."

Frobisher was somewhat surprised. Allinson had thought out the matter in a way that would have done credit to a more experienced man.

"Suppose we go down now," he suggested after a while. "I'll get Geraldine to sing for us."

Andrew agreed, and was glad he had done so when Miss Frobisher opened the piano. He was not a musician, but there was a sweetness in her voice that greatly pleased him. He sat listening with quiet enjoyment to her first song, watching her with appreciation. The light from a shaded lamp forced up the strong warm coloring of her hair and fell on her face, which was outlined in delicate profile against a background of ebony. Her figure lay half

in shadow, but the thin evening dress shimmered in places, flowing about her in graceful lines.

He grew more intent when she sang again. It was a ballad of toil and endeavor, and the girl had caught its feeling. Andrew wondered whether she had chosen it by accident, for the words chimed with his mood, and he was stirred and carried away as he listened. Obscure feelings deep in his nature throbbed in quick response. After wasted years of lounging, he had plunged into the struggle of life and become a citizen of the strenuous world. Ingenuous as he was, some of his lost youthful fervor awoke again; he would never sink back into his former state of slothful ease; bruised, beaten perhaps, he must go on. The duty to which he had long been blind now burned like a beacon through the mists ahead. Yet it was no evanescent, romantic sentiment. Andrew was a solid and matter-of-fact person.

When Geraldine closed the piano he rose and looked at her with a gleam in his eyes.

"Thank you; I mean it sincerely," he said. "It's a very fine song."

"It's stirring," she replied. "I dare say it's true—one would like to think so."

There was some color in her face, and his heart throbbed at the knowledge that she had meant the song for him.

Then Frobisher broke in humorously:

"That kind of thing appeals more to young folk. When one gets to my age, one would rather be soothed. We've had enough of the rough-and-tumble scuffle; it's time to retire from the ring and sit comfortably in a front seat, looking on."

"It would soon get tiresome," declared Geraldine. "You would want to take a side and instruct the combatants," she added with an affectionate smile. "The temptation would be irresistible if somebody whom you thought didn't deserve it were getting badly hurt."

"I don't know. Interfering is a dangerous habit, and people aren't always grateful." Frobisher's glance rested for a moment on his guest. "However, I might still step into the ring if the provocation were very strong."

Then they engaged in casual talk until it got late, and when Geraldine and her father wished him good-night Andrew said diffidently:

"I'm grateful to you for keeping me here. I'll go back feeling brighter than when I came."

He left them and Frobisher looked after him with a humorous expression.

"That young man has chosen a hard row to hoe, though I don't think he quite sees all he's up against. It's safer to take a bone from a hungry dog than to do a business man out of the pickings he thinks he's entitled to, especially if he's engaged in floating companies."

"But that is part of your business."

"Sure!" said Frobisher. "It's wiser to speak of the things you know. I've picked up one or two good bones."

"But you had a right to them," Geraldine declared confidently.

Frobisher's eyes twinkled.

"I believe there was a difference of opinion on the point, but I'd got my teeth in first. However, I'll admit that unless Allinson was convinced the bone belonged to him he'd let it go. That's the kind of man he is, and he's not likely to grow more prudent if you let him see that you agree with him."

"Do you think I've done so?" Geraldine asked.

"I don't know," Frobisher smiled. "It seems possible; but I've no doubt your intentions were excellent. You're a bit of an idealist; however, the fellow will do you credit. He has sense and grit, though he's what one might perhaps call superfluously honest."

"How could his virtues reflect any credit on me?" Geraldine retorted. "Besides, your cynicism is assumed. I don't believe you ever took a dollar you were not entitled to. Why do you always make a joke of things?"

"It's true that my ventures have generally paid a dividend, but I've a suspicion that it was a lucky accident that one or two of them did so. When I was young, I was as serious as Mr. Allinson, but people sometimes grow more

humorous as they get older. They don't expect so much and they learn to make allowances."

"That's a mistake," said Geraldine. "I should never be content with the mediocre."

Andrew left the house the next day, and on entering his hotel in the afternoon he found Mappin sitting in the unoccupied general room. He laid down his newspaper as Andrew came in and looked up with a truculent expression in his heavy face.

"I got your letter at Fort William as I was coming here," he said. "It seemed to need an explanation. What d'you mean by giving me warning to quit?"

His tone was offensive, but Andrew sat down quietly, knowing it was desirable to keep cool.

"I thought I'd better send you notice that we may terminate our arrangements in three months, as we have the option of doing," he replied.

"But why do you want to terminate them?"

"We may shut down the Rain Bluff. It's not paying."

Mappin gave a snorting laugh.

"What has that to do with it?"

"It ought to be obvious," Andrew said curtly. "If the mine wont pay, it must be closed. Allinson's is not in the habit of carrying on a business for its private benefit at the investors' expense."

"I shouldn't have thought it," Mappin sneered, and looked hard at Andrew. "You seem to be taking a pretty decided line. May I ask whom you are speaking for?"

"For myself, in the first place, but I believe the shareholders would support me. Though I haven't interfered much so far, I'm the head of the firm."

Mappin was impressed by Andrew's manner, and his tone became more conciliatory.

"I'm afraid you have kept out of business so long that you don't quite understand matters. Your brother-in-law has arranged things here much better than you, in your inexperience, could do. This proposition's too big and complicated for a beginner to meddle with; you'd only involve yourself and everybody concerned, in a deplorable mess. Be warned and let up. Make any small improvements and economies you can, but leave the main points of Hathersage's scheme alone."

There was some ground for Mappin's opinion, and his air of conviction had weight; but Andrew had no thought of yielding.

"So far, I can't tell what changes may be necessary, but I expect to make them, whatever they are, as occasion arises."

"Then hadn't you better wait until you know?"

Mappin took a letter from his pocket. "Suppose you tear this thing up?"

"No," Andrew said firmly, "the notice stands."

There was a moment's silence while their glances met, and each recognized that there would be no compromise: henceforward they must be enemies.

"Oh, well," said Mappin, with an air of ironic resignation, "I'll continue to look after your transport until the time expires. Now that we understand things, let's talk of something else. Have you seen Frobisher lately? I'm going across to his place after supper."

A sudden anger seized Andrew, though he scarcely realized that it sprang from jealousy. This coarse fellow with his low cunning and sensual nature had no right to enter the house that sheltered Geraldine Frobisher. It was repugnant to think of his meeting her on friendly terms; and, having heard that he had been a frequent visitor, he wondered what had induced Frobisher to tolerate him. An unpleasant suspicion crept into his mind—perhaps the man had a friend in Mrs. Denton, who differed from her brother in many ways. However, Andrew concealed his annoyance.

"It will be a fine night, though the snow's rather deep," he said. "Now what about the provisions I ordered?"

They discussed the matter for a while, and then Andrew went out to look for Graham. He found him alone in the mill office, and the elder man listened eagerly to what he had to say. Then Graham jumped up and strode excitedly up and down the room.

"After all the years of waiting, I can hardly realize that I'm to have my

chance!" he exclaimed. "I feel dazed; the thing's—overwhelming!"

"There's no doubt about it," said Andrew. "I've arranged matters satisfactorily with your president. You have only to say that you will come."

"Come!" Graham's eyes glowed; but he paused in sudden hesitation. "Still, I don't know how my wife will face it. She must be told at once. Come with me and explain—I think you will do it better than I can."

He threw a book into the desk, shut the desk noisily, and took out his watch.

"Mr. Allinson," he said, "I believe this office has never been closed five minutes before the proper time since I first entered it, but the habits of twenty years have lost their grip to-night. I feel like a man unexpectedly let out of prison."

Andrew went out with him and nothing was said until they reached his house. The table was neatly laid for supper, and Mrs. Graham was cheerfully bustling about it. She stopped and looked at her husband with a start when he came in. The man was trying hard to maintain his usual calm, but his expression was strained and eager, and his manner deprecatory, as if he were half ashamed. Andrew thought Mrs. Graham knew.

"Can you spare me a few minutes?" Andrew asked. "I have something to say."

She sat down with forced quietness, though her color faded.

"I'm afraid it will be a shock, Martha," Graham broke in. "He means to tell you that I am going north to look for the lode with him."

The woman did not flinch. She looked at her husband gravely, with no sign of reproach; and Andrew saw that she had courage.

"I have expected this; I knew it must come sooner or later," she said quietly. "But go on, Mr. Allinson; I will listen."

Andrew felt relieved. She would give no trouble, but her tense expression caused him a sense of guilt. He explained the arrangements he had made and handed her two or three documents, which included an order on a bank for certain payments to be made her if the expedition did not return by a specified date.

Mrs. Graham took the papers with a gesture of repugnance, but a moment later she looked up quietly.

"It's fair; it's generous, Mr. Allinson. I am getting old and my daughter is very young." Then her lips quivered and she broke into a pitiful smile. "You have done what you can, but it doesn't cover the greatest risk I run."

"I know," responded Andrew gently, "I am asking a great deal from you."

"Well," she said, "for his sake, perhaps for my sake, I must try to let him go." She paused for a moment and then asked with an effort: "When do you start?"

"As soon as we can." Andrew felt that it would be tactful to take his leave. "But I have a letter I must mail."

"Come back, please," she said. "Supper will be ready in about ten minutes."

When Andrew had gone out Graham turned to his wife.

"I'm sorry, Martha. I feel that I must go."

She came to him and put her hands on his shoulders, smiling bravely.

"Why, of course, dear! I wouldn't stop you."

Graham put his arms around her.

"It isn't all restlessness, Martha—this is a chance. What have I done so far but keep you poor? It has hurt me to see you always hard at work at some drudgery, living in this poor little house, planning to save a few cents wherever you could. Now there may be a change; our life will be very different and the children's future brighter if I can find the lode. But if I am to find it, I must go now. In a few more years it would be too late."

"Yes," she said softly. "But, after all, we have been happy before."

He kissed her, protesting that he had been far happier than he deserved; but she drew away from him.

"Still, you have had your bad hours. Do you think I don't know? It wasn't easy to go to the office day after day and keep accounts, with the longing you couldn't get over, and dreams of riches in your mind."

"I'm afraid I let you guess it. But they're not dreams. I found a lode rich in silver; I may locate it again."

Mrs. Graham smiled rather wearily.

"Dear, I hardly care whether you find the lode or not. You will be content when you have looked for it, and I shall be happier knowing that the restlessness you couldn't master has gone and will never trouble us again."

When Jim and his sister came in for supper, Andrew joined them, and found that he was expected to talk over his plans. It was obvious that Graham had not strained his authority; his was a harmonious household and its younger members expressed their opinions with freedom. Andrew was, however, amused to see that their father had risen in their esteem. They had never attached much importance to his belief in the lode; but since he had gained the support of a man of means, it looked as if there might be something in the project. Nevertheless, they bantered Andrew freely and he took it in good part. When he left, Mrs. Graham accompanied him to the door.

"You'll try to forgive me?" he begged, stopping a moment in the narrow, shabby hall.

"Yes," she said. "I can't fairly blame you, and I have been prepared for what has happened." Then she laid her hand on his arm. "I am trusting you with a great deal, Mr. Allinson. It's a heavy responsibility."

XII

INTERRUPTED PLANS

Mrs. Denton reclined in an easy-chair in her room at Frobisher's house. A shawl of beautiful texture covered her shoulders; her feet rested on a stool, and the lamp on a neighboring table was carefully shaded. The dull pallor of her skin and the gauntness of her face suggested the invalid, but her health, while far from good, had suffered from the thought she bestowed on it. She was a reserved and selfish woman, and her mean ambitions were responsible for much of the trouble that had befallen her. Geraldine and she were generally at variance; Frobisher bore with her, but there was one person for whom she cherished a somewhat misguided tenderness. Mappin had been her favorite from his earliest years.

His father had been her lover when the Frobishers were poor, and she had returned his affection. Nevertheless she had thrown him over when a richer suitor appeared, and her marriage had turned out disastrously. Urged by a desire for social prominence and love of ostentation, she had driven her husband into hazardous speculations, for which he had weakly reproached her when the crash came. He escaped total ruin by Frobisher's help, but he afterward went down hill fast, wrangling with his wife until his death set her free. Her old lover had also married, and died a widower, leaving one son, and Mrs. Denton had shown a benevolent interest in the boy. He was bold and ambitious, which was what she liked, and she was not deterred by the lack of principle he early displayed. Success was the one thing she respected, and as he grew up, young Mappin promised to attain it. Now she was expecting him, for he came to see her whenever he was in the neighborhood, and Frobisher made him welcome for her sake.

When Mappin came in he was red-faced from the frosty air.

"This place is stiflingly hot," he said. "I'm afraid that's because you're not feeling very fit yet."

Mrs. Denton told him she could not get rid of her cold, and he had the tact to listen with a show of interest while she talked about her health.

"You will stay all night?" she asked.

"Yes, I'm sorry I must get back tomorrow."

"Then I've no doubt it's necessary," she remarked in a suggestive tone.

Mappin laughed as if he understood her.

"It is. As things are going, business must come first. Besides, I can't flatter myself that I gained much by my last visit."

"That's a point I can't speak upon, but you're not likely to lose your head. There's a cold-blooded, calculating vein

in you. I wonder whether that was why you came straight to my room, though the society of a crotchety old invalid can't have much charm for you."

The man's heavy face grew a trifle redder than usual.

"No," he protested, "it wasn't. I'm not dirt mean."

"Oh, well," said Mrs. Denton, looking at him gently, "you know I'm your friend. But I never pretended not to guess what brought you here."

"And I haven't made a secret of it. I mean to marry Geraldine."

"She'll have a good deal of money some day."

Mappin looked up angrily.

"I'll admit that my interest generally comes first; but I'd be mighty glad to take Geraldine without a cent."

"Then you had better bestir yourself. Allinson has been here pretty often and she seems to like him. Besides, he's made a good impression on her father."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mappin, "that confounded Englishman again! It's only a few hours since he threatened to cut my connection with the Rain Bluff; and one way and another that's a bad setback." He frowned and the veins showed on his forehead. "I was coining money out of my contract, and I need it, because I have my feelings and I wont ask Frobisher for Geraldine like a beggar. He has a cool, smiling way of saying unpleasant things that makes me mad. I want to show him I'm as smart as he is and can give the girl as much as he can."

When they were detached from his business, Mappin's ideas were crude, but Mrs. Denton was not refined and found no fault with them. Moreover, she had an interest in his success. For a long time she had been the mistress of her brother's house and directed his social affairs. The position was a desirable one, especially as she had been left without means; but it was threatened. It was inevitable that Geraldine would take the power she enjoyed out of her hands, unless she married. Had Mappin not entered the field, Mrs. Denton would have furthered the claims of any suitor, to get the girl out of her way.

"I suppose money would gratify your pride, but you may find waiting risky," she said. "If you're wise, you'll make all the progress with Geraldine you can."

He smiled ruefully.

"I sometimes feel that I'm making none. She looks at me half amused and half astonished when I express my opinions; I have to keep a curb on myself when I talk to her. In fact, I've once or twice got mad. I can take a joke, but her condescending smile is riling."

"Then why do you want to marry her?"

"It puzzles me when I think it over coolly, but that's difficult. When she's near me I only know that I want her." His eyes gleamed and his face grew flushed as he proceeded. "Guess it must be her wonderful eyes and hair and skin—the shape of her, the way she stands, the grit she shows. Once when I said something she flashed out at me in a fury, and I liked her for it." He clenched a big hand. "Somehow I'm going to get her!"

Mrs. Denton smiled. The savagery of his passion did not jar on her; she admired his determined boldness. She respected force that was guided by capacity; she liked a man who was strong or cunning enough to take what he desired. Her niece, however, held different views.

"That sounds genuine," Mrs. Denton said. "Still, you had better talk to Geraldine in a more polished strain."

"No; I'd do it badly, and it wouldn't pay. There's red blood in me, and I haven't found much difference in men and women. If you hit straight at their human nature, you can't go wrong. A girl's never offended because you like her for being pretty."

He was wise, in that he knew his limitations and never pretended to be what he was not. His knowledge of human weaknesses had been profitable, for he had not scrupled to prey upon them, but he erred in assuming that his was the only rule of life. Virtue he frankly regarded as either absence of desire or a sentimental pose.

"You're too coarse, too crude in your methods," Mrs. Denton persisted. "If you're not careful, you'll disgust Ger-

aldine. You don't seem to see that she's different from the girls you are accustomed to."

Mappin laughed.

"Oh," he said, "at heart, they're all the same."

"In a sense, you're wrong. Allinson lets Geraldine see that he puts her on a higher plane, and she likes it. If you can't imitate him, you had better watch him."

"If Allinson's likely to make trouble, I'll fix him quick. Pretty talk and finicking manners—that's all there is to him, except a few fool notions about the mining business which he hasn't the grit or ability to carry out. But you look as if you had a headache and I guess I've talked enough."

She let him go, fearing to strain the consideration he sometimes showed her, for he was the only person for whom she had a scrap of affection. Mappin left her with half-contemptuous pity. He owed her some gratitude, because it was on her account that he had been received in the house; but he knew how little her support was worth, for he was shrewd enough to see that her brother and her niece held her in no great esteem. Indeed, he knew his position was not encouraging. Geraldine had shown him no favor, and Frobisher's attitude was more marked by forbearance than friendliness; but Mappin was not deterred. He had stubborn courage and a firm belief in his powers.

Reaching the bottom of the stairs, he stopped in the shadow of a heavy curtain as Geraldine came out of a door at the farther end of the large hall. The girl did not see him and, prompted by curiosity to learn what effect his sudden appearance would have, he stood watching her. She looked thoughtful, and moved slowly, but with a grace he did not miss. The soft rustle of her dress stirred him; he noticed with greedy eyes the fine outline about which the light material flowed, the bloom of her complexion, the beauty of her pose. Indeed, he forgot why he had waited, for his heart was beating fast and he felt his nerves tingle.

Then she saw him and recoiled. There was a glitter in his eyes from which she shrank. It alarmed her and filled her with disgust. Mappin, however, could not guess her feelings. She was obviously startled; perhaps he had shown what he thought of her too plainly and shocked her prudishness; but this after all was no great matter. Delicacy was unknown to him; he could hardly have been made to understand that Geraldine regarded him with downright loathing. Still, as he could think of nothing to say, he was not sorry that she turned back without a word; and with a harsh laugh he opened an adjoining door to look for Frobisher. Geraldine returned to the room she had left, and sat down with a sense of repulsion that presently gave place to burning anger. She felt that she had received an outrageous insult.

Geraldine did not see Mappin again until the next morning, when she was coldly polite, and he left in a state of half-puzzled irritation, thinking more about Allinson than he had done. The man might prove a dangerous rival, unless something were done to prevent it. Mappin, however, thought that he could deal with him and was glad he had written to Hathersage, giving him a hint that Allinson threatened to make trouble for them both.

As a result of Mappin's letter Andrew was handed a cablegram one evening when he was discussing the preparations for the journey with Carnally and Graham in the latter's house. When he had opened it he frowned.

"This promises to complicate matters. It's from my brother-in-law," he explained, and read out the message:

"'Do nothing until I arrive; sailing *Sylvitanian.*'"

Graham took up a Montreal paper.

"One of the fast boats. He should be here in nine days." Then he looked disturbed. "It may prevent your going North."

"No," Andrew said resolutely, "it shall not do that; but I'll have to see him. It's strange he should come, though I told him the mine wasn't paying."

"You want to remember that Mappin's a friend of his," Carnally interposed. "There's another thing: you can't tell him about the lode—which, so

far, doesn't belong to you. I guess the less you say about your plans the better."

"I believe that's true," Andrew agreed. "Well, our start must be put off awhile."

Leonard arrived, accompanied by Wannop, who explained that he had come to see the country and look up one or two old friends. Soon after they reached the Landing, Leonard had an interview with Watson, who had been summoned to meet him; then he went with Andrew to his room at the hotel. It was small and scantily furnished, but a galvanized pipe which ran up through the floor from the basement heater made it comfortably warm; and Leonard, sitting in a rickety chair, watched his brother-in-law closely while he talked about the mine. Andrew had acquired a quickness of thought and a decision of manner which were new to Leonard. There was a pause after he had finished his explanation, for both felt that the next few minutes might prove momentous. They held widely different views and an unconsidered remark might bring them into open collision. Leonard waited, ready to profit by any mistake the other made, until Andrew spoke:

"I was surprised to hear you were coming over—though perhaps it's as well you did so."

"When I got your letter the matter seemed serious enough to require my personal attention."

"You may tell me what you think," said Andrew, "and I'll consider it carefully."

"To begin with, why did you give Mappin notice to terminate his contract?"

"It seemed the best thing to be done in the shareholders' interest."

There was something impressive in Andrew's tone; Leonard knew that a conflict, which he wished to avoid, was imminent.

"I wont mince matters," he replied. "You have no business experience and know nothing about mining. You have acted rashly. I made the arrangements with Mappin and considered them satisfactory."

"I'm sorry to hear it. I wish it had been somebody less closely connected with Allinson's who concluded the deal with him. The man's making a good thing out of his contract at the company's expense."

"You mustn't be hypercritical. Opportunities for picking up a few dollars are often attached to operations like ours, and it's wiser to let one's friends have them and look for favors in return. Besides, the man does his work well."

"No," corrected Andrew, "he does it badly, with a cool assurance that no fault will be found and we'll pass his bills. In fact, for the firm to take my favors from him would savor of corruption. In the end, the shareholders would have to pay for them."

"Be careful," Leonard warned him. "You may cause a good deal of trouble without doing any good. Remember that you're only here on trial and accountable to the rest of the directors. If necessary, the power you're overstraining could be withdrawn."

"I think not," said Andrew. "In a sense, I'm Allinson's; it would be a difficult matter to get rid of me. I have neglected my duties, but it's not too late to make a change."

Leonard paused to light a cigarette. He had been met with a firmness he had not expected, and he realized that Andrew might prove formidable.

"Very well," he conceded, "if you insist on our giving no more work to Mappin, I suppose he must be sacrificed, though you place me in an unpleasant position. After all, he's comparatively unimportant; we must talk about the mine. You seem to think it ought to be closed, which is out of the question for the present. You have, no doubt, learned that it often takes time to reach payable ore; all sorts of preliminary difficulties have to be overcome, and investors have frequently to exercise patience and put up with disappointments."

"You promised a good dividend in the prospectus."

"We didn't promise it on the first six months' working. Besides, one makes allowances for prospectus statements."

"It shouldn't be needful where Allinson's is concerned. But what do you suggest?"

"That we keep the mine open, and do everything possible to increase the output and strike better ore. In the meanwhile, we wont say too much about our troubles."

"When you increase the output you increase expenses. This doesn't matter so long as the refined metal will pay for it, but it's a ruinous policy where the ore's no good. Then, you can't hide our difficulties. The shareholders will expect a dividend, and if it isn't forthcoming they'll demand an explanation at their meeting."

"That might be prevented. The family vote could be relied on, and it's often possible to control a meeting and silence objectors. These are matters you can leave to me."

"The objectors have a right to be heard; they could be silenced only by trickery. If we have made a mistake, we must admit it and consider how we can cut the loss."

"Admit our mistake?" Leonard laughed. "You're talking at random."

Andrew leaned forward, his eyes fixed on his brother-in-law.

"This company should never have been floated. We'll let it go at that: the less said upon the point the better. The question is—what is to be done now? Well, I've decided on two things—we'll keep a few men working at the mine, because the yield will cover their wages, while I go into the bush and look for a richer lode I've heard about. If I'm successful, we'll consider the new situation."

Seeing that objections would be useless, Leonard reluctantly acquiesced, and it was a relief to both when Wannop came in.

"There's a friend of yours asking for you, Andrew; I brought him up," he explained, and stood aside as Frobisher entered.

"I came to ask you over for a day or two, and I shall be glad if your relatives will come as well," he said. "We have plenty of room and have been rather dull lately. Besides, the hotel is too full to be comfortable."

After some demur they agreed to go, and Andrew felt grateful to Frobisher, for a visit would relieve the strain that Leonard's society threatened to impose on him. Half an hour later they took their places in Frobisher's sleigh.

XIII

LOVE'S ENCOURAGEMENT

It was after dinner and Wannop, lounging comfortably over his cigar in Frobisher's smoking-room, smiled at Andrew, who sat opposite.

"This is a very nice house and I like your friend," he commented. "It's lucky he invited us, because I don't know how they'd have put us up at the hotel."

"What brought you over with Leonard?" Andrew asked bluntly.

"Gertrude wanted to make some visits this winter, which set me free. I've never been much away from home, and it struck me as a good chance for seeing Canada; then Jack Cartwright—you may remember him—is in Toronto. It's twelve years since I've met him, though he has often urged me to come over; and there's another man I know in Winnipeg."

"I wonder whether that was all?"

Wannop looked amused. He was stout and clumsy, but he had his jovial air.

"You seem to have been getting smarter since you came to Canada," he said. "Perhaps I'd better admit that I was anxious to see how you were getting on."

"Didn't Leonard tell you?"

"Leonard was as guarded and diplomatic as usual. He informed us that there had been some trouble at the mine and he was afraid you hadn't experience enough to deal with the situation. Then he gave us the impression that you were inclined to be rash and might make a mess of things unless he came over and put you right."

"Ah!" exclaimed Andrew, "I expected something of the sort."

They looked at each other with mutual comprehension.

"Can matters be straightened out?" Wannop asked.

"Not in the few days that Leonard

intends to devote to it. It's most unlikely that the Rain Bluff will ever pay."

"I'm sorry to hear it. A good deal of my money and Gertrude's has gone into the mine."

"You needn't be alarmed. I don't think the shareholders will suffer."

Andrew's tone was impressive, and Wannop looked at him sharply.

"That doesn't seem to agree with your last remark."

"I've a plan for working a richer lode, but I can't tell you anything further, because the secret belongs to another man until the minerals have been recorded; and it wouldn't be fair to Leonard and the directors, who haven't been consulted about the project yet. When my plans are ready, they will be disclosed. Perhaps I'm straining your confidence."

"It will stand some strain. But are you sure that Leonard will be fair to you?"

"That is another matter," Andrew said quietly.

"Well, I'm glad you have told me something: it gives me a lead. It was obvious that you and Leonard were at variance. In fact, I've foreseen a split for some time, and if a side must be taken, I'd rather stand by you."

"Thanks! But it may get you into trouble."

Wannop lighted another cigar and then looked up with a chuckle.

"We're neither of us sentimentalists, but there's something to be said. You and I have always got on well, and when I married Gertrude you didn't lay such stress on the favor shown me in being allowed to enter the family as your estimable relatives did. Then we're the two whose abilities aren't held in much esteem, which is some reason why we should stick together. With all respect for the others, I sometimes think they're wrong."

Andrew laughed.

"We'll come to business," Wannop went on. "While the Rain Bluff shares were well taken up by outside investors, a good many are held by the family; these count as a compact block, a strong voting power—though it's remarkable that Leonard holds less than any of the rest of us. So if there's to be a fight between you and him, it will begin among your relatives; their opinion is more important than that of the general shareholders."

"Yes," assented Andrew, "Leonard would be powerful if backed by the solid family vote."

"The point is that he may not get it. Anyhow, Gertrude and I will support you, and we hold a good deal of stock between us."

"Thanks!" said Andrew. "Still, it may not come to a struggle of that kind, after all. It must be avoided if possible."

Then Frobisher came in and interrupted them.

Leonard spent a week with Frobisher, driving across to the Landing each morning on business. He and Andrew now and then discussed the company's affairs without open disagreement. His attitude toward Andrew was friendly, but marked by a tone of good-humored forbearance, and when he spoke of him to Frobisher it was with a trace of amusement, as if Andrew were erratic and needed judicious guidance.

"If Allinson hasn't much judgment, why did you send him over to look after the mine?" Frobisher once asked him bluntly.

Leonard smiled at this.

"We didn't give him much responsibility; to tell the truth, we wanted to get him away for a while. There was a young grass-widow whom it seemed possible he might make a fool of himself about. Rather a dangerous woman, I believe, and Andrew's confiding."

When his guests had returned to the Landing, Frobisher remarked to his daughter:

"Mr. Hathersage doesn't seem to think much of his brother-in-law."

"So it seems," said Geraldine, with an angry sparkle in her eyes. "He never missed an opportunity for cunningly disparaging him."

"Then you don't agree with him?"

"I don't know that it was his real opinion," Geraldine replied. "I wouldn't trust the man." She paused and asked sharply: "Would you?"

"If I had to choose, I think I'd rather put my confidence in Allinson."

He looked thoughtful when his daughter left him, for he had not spoken to her without an object, and her indignation had its significance.

Before returning to England, Leonard had an interview with Mappin at the hotel.

"Do you know anything of the lode Allinson talks about?" he asked him.

"Nothing except that it lies up in the northern barrens, a mighty rough country, and that people think it's a delusion of the man who claims to have discovered it. But didn't your brother-in-law talk it over with you, if he's interested in the thing?"

"He did not. I may as well admit that there are points upon which his views don't agree with mine."

"So I imagined," Mappin remarked pointedly.

"He's in favor of closing the Rain Bluff. If that were done, it would, of course, cost you your contract."

Mappin looked thoughful. Leonard had already sketched out a plan by which the notice Andrew had given Mappin might be rendered of no effect.

"Well," he said, "I'd much rather keep it; but we had better be frank. You would prefer that Allinson didn't find the lode?"

"I don't want him to waste the Company's time and money on a journey into the wilds, and expensive prospecting work which will probably lead to nothing. It would be wiser to keep the Rain Bluff going and get out as much ore as possible. I needn't point out that this would be more to your interest."

"That's so," chuckled Mappin. "I begin to see. I'm to make all the difficulties I can for Allinson?"

Leonard hesitated. He was asked to give his confederate dangerous powers, but he thought the safety of his position required it. There did not seem to be much likelihood of Andrew's discovering valuable minerals, but he might perhaps find somewhat better ore than the Rain Bluff was turning out, and with a practical scheme for working it gain support enough to embarrass the directors. If, however, Andrew failed in his search, it would be easier to discredit him, and the demand he would no doubt make for the abandoning of the mine could be withstood.

"I think that's what I meant," he said. "You are in charge of our transport and I expect he'll need a quantity of food and prospecting tools sent up into the bush. I can leave details to you."

Mappin's eyes flashed.

"I guess I can fix it; let it go at that. Now there's another matter I want to mention."

Leonard acquiesced in the change of subject, feeling that he had done all that was possible to counteract Andrew's projects. He left with the Montreal express the next morning.

Two days later Mappin was summoned to Andrew's room at the hotel and found him studying a list of provisions.

"We shall get off in the next few days," he said. "I want you to send these supplies up to the mine, where we'll call for them."

"What about the rest of your truck?" Mappin inquired.

"Carnally has sent it off already."

Mappin saw that he could not do as much as he had expected to delay the party.

"Is there anything else?" he asked.

"Yes," said Andrew. "As we can't transport stores enough for the whole march, provisions will have to be cached for use on our return. Do you know where Whitefish Creek is?"

"It's a very long way up and said not to be indicated very correctly on the map. Two forks, aren't there?"

Andrew nodded.

"A lake lies about two days' march up the east branch, and there's an island in it with a sandy tongue at one end. Take this list of provisions and have a cache made there. Get them up in a month from now. You can do that?"

"Oh, yes; I've some smart packers."

"Then here's another list. To get to the Whitefish you cross the height of land and there's a low neck in the middle of the long ridge. I want another cache made at the bottom of the gap You understand that? It's important."

"I'll make a careful note of it," Mappin promised. "Your idea is to travel

with light loads, and replenish your stores at the caches as you come back?"

"Precisely. Carnally and Graham have been calculating our supplies closely and we shall not have much left when we reach the first cache. You had better put a barked fir-pole on the top of it; there are trees about."

"The boys I'll send up will see to it," said Mappin, and after a few questions took his leave.

A day or two later Andrew walked across the ice in the evening to see the Frobishers before he started on his journey, and when he had spent some time with them Geraldine went down with him to the hall. They were alone, for her father was searching for a compass he wished to give Andrew. Geraldine stopped when she reached the foot of the stairs and stood with her hand on the balustrade. Her unstudied pose was graceful; she made a very attractive picture, and though she saw Andrew's admiration she was not displeased. It was different from that which Mappin had bestowed on her.

"I think you are doing a very fine thing," she said diffidently. "You see, I know something, besides what you have told me, about the mine and Allinson's. Ethel Hillyard wrote to me not long ago—I knew her in England—and she said several nice things about you."

"Did she?" said Andrew, with some embarrassment. "Ethel's a good friend. But it's rather trying to have things said about you."

"Now you're curious," Geraldine replied, "and I'll be indiscreet enough to mention one. She said you were always sincere, and to be relied on." She paused a moment and added: "I think that's true; your going to search for the lode proves it."

Andrew looked at her steadily.

"Would you be surprised to hear that you are largely responsible for the search?"

"I! What could I have to do with it?"

"I'll try to explain. There was a time when I was half afraid to go on with my plans; I could see nothing but trouble ahead. Then one day when you were speaking of Carnally you said something about doing the square thing. That and the song you sang one evening soon afterward decided me."

"Then I'm afraid I've been very rash; it's a responsibility I should not have assumed. After all, I know nothing about the difficulties you may meet."

"And I know very little, except that they'll certainly be plentiful. Ignorance is a heavy handicap, and it doesn't make things better when it's your own fault. Still, whether you meant it or not, you showed me that there was only one course open—to go straight ahead and leave the rest to Fate."

His words awoke a responsive thrill in Geraldine, for she knew his worth.

"Well," she said, with the color in her face and sympathy in her eyes, "I wish you good luck. But be careful up there among the rocks and muskegs. Come back safe."

"Thank you! It would be something to you if we kept out of trouble?"

His gaze was steadily searching and for a moment she turned her head. Then, though there was a slight change in her manner, she looked around with a smile.

"Yes, of course," she answered. "I shall be anxious while you are away, and eager for news."

Andrew saw that there was nothing more to be said, and he was glad that Frobisher came down the stairs with the compass in his hand.

"It's one of the cutest things of the kind I've seen," said the American. "There's very little oscillation; the card can't come unshipped; and you can take a bearing correctly with the sights on this sliding ring."

When Andrew had thanked him for the gift, he left the house. It was a still night and bitterly cold, but he walked back across the ice to the Landing with a glow at his heart.

The next installment of "For the Allinson Honor" will appear in the April BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, on sale March 1st.

Free Lances in Diplomacy

A powerful drama of international intrigue, culminating in a scene of really tremendous intensity, is described by Mr. New in this remarkable story—"The Education of Hassan Ali." Indeed, the rescue of the English foreign-office secretary from the diabolic torture-chamber into which he had been entrapped, is one of the most thrilling episodes in all fiction.

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

WHEN Lady Trevor chose to assert herself, her undeniable beauty, her charm of manner and marvelous cultivation made her easily the belle of any assemblage in which she found herself. But on account of the government intrigues in which she occasionally dabbled, even after her marriage—and because of a generous warm-heartedness for the season's débutantes—she usually effaced herself as much as possible, and was content to chat quietly with this or that famous man in some corner, or dance with the younger men and let them take her out to the conservatory for whispered confidences about their love affairs or entanglements of various sorts. Consequently, she had become one of the best-loved women in England before she was twenty-eight, and had placed herself in the most advantageous position she could have possibly contrived to pick up hints of international complications which might be developing under the surface.

At the Duchess of Caermerthorn's musicale and ball—one of the earlier affairs of the "season"—Lady Trevor found herself, as she had expected, among the most famous and brilliant people in Europe. There were a number of celebrities from across the Channel, together with the best known people in England. One of these, whom she happened to notice particularly that evening, was Sir Lucian Hallett, K. C. M. G., C. B.—Assistant Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs—because of the intense fatigue and strain which showed in the lines of his face and the dark circles which showed so ominously under his eyes.

The business of the Foreign Office, in Downing Street, was, as she well knew, conducted by a large staff of under secretaries, King's messengers, librarians, deputies and clerks—all of whom were thoroughly tried and responsible men. Upon some few of them, however, fell not only responsibilities, but a great deal of hard detail work which taxed their endurance to the limit; and Sir Lucian, by virtue of his position, was probably the most over-

worked man of them all. The Foreign Secretary himself—Sir Edward Wray, K. G., M. P.—was, in moments of international stress, swamped with vital details which often kept him awake for thirty hours at a stretch. But he had at his immediate disposal, besides his two private secretaries and *précis* writer, the permanent and parliamentary under secretaries, the chief and two assistant under secretaries, the comptroller of commerce and consular affairs, the legal adviser and the librarians. Below these, came the King's foreign service messengers, home service messengers, senior and junior clerks—a large majority of whom were young peers of the realm or baronets. And Sir Lucian Hallett, as chief assistant under secretary, was burdened, not only with most of Sir Edward's knowledge of all foreign complications, but with the endless task of advising him as to details and carrying out his numerous instructions.

In other words, Sir Edward Wray was the general commanding, and Sir Lucian was his executive officer with full powers and knowledge . . . with this difference. Sir Edward was too prominent a man before the world to run a daily risk of assassination or abduction. Sir Lucian, on the other hand, was a man whose never-ending work kept him out of the newspaper limelight and very little known in his official capacity. A safe-deposit vault of secret information which might shake the foundations of Europe if he could be persuaded or forced to give in detail what he actually knew—and for that reason, a man who should have been guarded night and day by at least half a dozen secret agents of the government instead of the single individual detailed for that purpose.

Catching his eye through a momentary opening in the sea of heads and shoulders, Lady Trevor beckoned invitingly to a place by her side on the small divan in a secluded corner: "Sit down here and rest a few moments, Sir Lucian—you're looking rather fagged, I fancy."

"Your Ladyship is very kind. Dare say I'm not as fit as I should be—it's the demnition grind, don't you know. I say—there'll be a dozen of 'em talkin' to you here in a moment—do you mind if I take you into the Duke's study, over yonder in the east wing?"

"Sounds rather attractive—what's in there? I'm a bit tired of all this confusion myself. Let's slip away before some one catches us."

It took them but a few moments to make their way into a quieter part of the big house where none but intimate friends of the Duke and Her Grace were supposed to venture. Lady Nan Trevor was persona grata in any house where she cared to place her pretty foot; and Sir Lucian, though merely a baronet, frequently dined with royalty as a matter of course and expediency, having stalked deer in the Highlands with His Majesty when that powerful monarch was merely a sailor middy on vacation. Once within the doors of the study, Nan settled down comfortably in a great leather chair before the smoldering logs on the andirons, while he stood before her—hands in his pockets, and legs comfortably braced at a wide angle.

"Lucian—you need rest! Why not run down into the Mediterranean with us on the *Ranée Sylvia?*"

"Hmph! . . . That's just about the only place on the globe where I'd be safe in takin' a rest, Nan! I'm beginnin' to fawncy our system is wrong, at the F. O. Ned Wray, of course, knows practically as much as I do concernin' foreign affairs—an' once or twice, he's had some narrow escapes. But he's too prominent a man in the eyes of the whole world to be in anything except occasional danger. With me—the case is quite diff'rent, you know. I'm a retirin' sort of beast—never appear much in the *Times* or the gazettes—keep out of the limelight as much as possible! *Have* to, you know—or I'd never get through my work! But in spite of all that—in spite of the rawther secluded life I lead—I'm everlawstin'ly conscious of the fact that I'm bein' shadowed—night awfter night—day awfter day.

"Trouble is, d'ye see—I know too demnition much. Details really ought to be divided among a dozen of us, but you really cawn't work the F. O. that

way at all! Suppose one chap has all the data concernin' Persia or Afghanistan locked up in his own skull—an' some drunken motorist runs him down? . . . Eh? Deuce of a job to puzzle out the things he might have known—was supposed to have known—an' fit 'em together in such a way the F. O. could act upon them! Suppose Teddy Connyngham were the only chap among us who knew exactly what was doin' in Penang—or Hong Kong? An' he drops dead—bad heart. We try to keep most of the secret information concernin' each locality in the head of some one man, but Wray must know—an' I must know—what all of 'em know, in order to avoid just the sort of complications I've mentioned."

"But Lucian—if something were to happen to you?"

"Ned Wray would get no sleep for six days and nights at least. He'd have to shoulder my work in addition to his own, an' British diplomacy would suffer while he was tryin' to get clear of the details. Eventually, of course, another man would grow into the work an' handle it to the best of his ability."

He spoke with the manner of a man too utterly jaded from overwork to care whether school kept or not. And yet—? There was in him, as in others of his peculiar kind, that sort of dogged persistency and unconscious loyalty which could be trusted to keep him at his post in spite of everything until he dropped in his tracks. Nan sensed all this in one keen, appraising glance which took in the set of the lean but square jaw—the deep-set, tired eyes which looked out upon the world from under the shaggy brows with an unwavering gleam upon friend or foe.

"Lucian, does it get on your nerves? . . . This sensation of being constantly followed?"

"On my own pers'nal account, d'ye mean? Why—er—not in the least! One takes life as it comes, don't you know—crossin' no bridges until they happen along. A few years ago, I got to thinkin', once or twice, how very nawsty it might be for governm'nt if some of the bounders should get the better of me on a dark night an' make off with some of the papers. But there's nothin' to that line of nons'nse. Every country has its diplomatic reverses—sometimes from the most trivial causes—sometimes from more serious ones which might have been avoided. If one permitted his mind to dwell upon such pawssibilities, he'd soon find himself unable to sleep—an' that, d'ye see, would play the very deuce with a chap in my position. I sleep—anywhere. In my chair at the club-window, over my copy of the *Times,* in the railway, crossin' the Channel, in my office chair at the F. O.—when I've a half-hour between interviews. Freshens one up quite amazin'ly, you know. In fact, if I were quite sure you'd be here for an hour, in this study, I could just drop off at a moment's notice.

"But, d'ye see, I'd not risk it in a house like this under any other circumstawnces. I've no very import'nt docum'nts upon me, as it happens, but such as I have are not the sort I'd care to have certain guests of the Duke's glawnce through this evenin'. I'm hopin' His Majesty'll not have me at Buckin'h'm, Saturday night. If he does, he's quite sure to send me down to a place in Surrey before I return to Downin' Street—prob'ly send one of the royal equerries along with me. With the secret service chap as chauffeur, drivin' the car, that would give us three—but with the sort of docum'nts I should be carryin', three would be a joke. However—it's all in the day's work, Nan. We don't get as much melodrama now as they did in the Middle Ages—fortunately. Come! I mustn't keep you here all to myself any longer. Suppose we go back to the ball-room."

As they passed along the main hall, in coming from the east wing, a group of gentlemen were standing by the great fire-place, smoking—and she noticed that one of them shot a rather keen glance at Sir Lucian while lighting his cigar. The man's appearance seemed vaguely familiar, but she couldn't place him. His dark olive skin and coal-black hair stamped him either as one of the Latin races or, possibly, an Oriental. The one or two words she caught, in passing, were in fluent English—but with just the trace of an accent. The man's face was clean-shaven.

Had there been a beard or mustache, she felt that it might be easier to guess his nationality—yet, in an instantaneous backward glance from under drooping eyelids, she was again struck by something familiar in the shape of the head or the lines of the man's figure, and definitely fixed him in her mind as an Oriental.

Her impression was that he had scarcely noticed her at all. His casual, though keen, glance had been fastened exclusively upon Sir Lucian—speculatively, appraisingly, as though he were revolving in mind something in which the baronet was personally concerned, or some intention of his own which dealt with the other man alone. And there flashed into her mind Sir Lucian's remark about his consciousness of being watched—all the time. The incident gave her a slight feeling of nervous apprehension—not only upon Sir Lucian's account—he was an old and tried friend of many years standing—but from the sinister possibility that anything of a threatening nature concerning him might easily be even more threatening to British policies and the British government. So her vivid impression of the tall stranger by the fireplace in the big hall remained in her mind long after she had left the Duke's mansion and regained the privacy of her apartments in Park Lane.

At this point, it will be necessary for a clear understanding of the affair to digress for a few moments and describe certain happenings in the North-west Provinces of India some four years before. About that time, there had been considerable trouble with the Pathan hill-tribes just beyond the Khyber Pass. In one particular atrocious instance a party of commissioners and political agents who had been sent up from Peshawar to negotiate with a certain obstreperous chieftain had been captured by what seemed an irregular body of nomadic hillmen and taken to a tent perched upon a projecting spur in the rocky fastnesses, where a ferocious commander whose face was masqued behind a low-wound turban and bushy whiskers pretended to receive them with great humility—fed them an appetizing stew from an iron pot over the fire, chatted affably over a couple of pipes of tobacco—and then, grinningly, had them crowded, inch by inch, over the brink of the rock to a drop of three thousand feet.

When this commander—who happened to be the treacherous chieftain they had been sent to confer with—returned to his own hill fort, he found awaiting him a plump and jovial Russian, Baron Mennikoff, who roared with amusement and appreciation as the chief described the amazed expressions upon the commissioners' faces when they were pushed off the rock to their death. The Baron, it seemed, was upon most excellent terms with the Chief—in fact, their friendship represented a community of interests not usually mentioned in polite society but which had been to their mutual advantage for some time. And the Chief's open defiance of English domination beyond the Khyber had been secretly at the Baron's instigation. When they had finished their dinner and smoked for a while, the Baron began to lay before his host an idea which had been fermenting in his mind for some time. They spoke in the vernacular, piecing out the conversation with occasional words in Russian or Arabic, but this was the gist of it:

"Hassan, thy father's son hath given those English dogs something to think of. They will respect thee more, hereafter—but also, will they place a price upon thy head. They will come again through the Khyber, with an expeditionary force. And, since none of the commissioners' party lived to tell the tale, they will have no direct proof against thee or thy tribesmen. Still, they will work it out by circumstantial evidence—by questioning this one and that one, until all but thee have been eliminated. And then there will be reprisals—when they catch thee. Against thy tribesmen, they can do nothing—for they have no proof, and thy tribesmen are many. But a plan occurs to me whereby thou mayest in time deal a heavy blow at the Angresi and live upon the fat of the land in the meanwhile. Dost follow me?"

"Aie—thou art as full of wisdom, oh

Mennikoff, as a sound nut, as my father's son well knoweth. Speak then, that I may know more of thy plan. For what thou sayest be even so: the Angresi will come again, in force. It is their way—pigs that they are!"

"Here, then, is my plan—oh Hassan, son of Ali. A wise moonshee will I send unto thee, one versed in many tongues and much other knowledge. With him, thou shalt ride up to Samarcand—where none will molest thee for a year or two. From him, thou shalt learn the Angresi and the Russian tongues—also, the manner of dress and eating, the many little things which will enable thee to pass for whom thou wilt in the world beyond the sea. Then, when thou hath proved thyself in these things, shalt thou go down even to Bombay or Calcutta, and there mix as one in trade with all manner of Angresi and other races—until, by the fourth year, thou mayest pass anywhere for whom thou wilt. But thy inner self must not change. Inside the shell with which I shall coat thee must be the same man who gave those pigs of commissioners of his stew from the pot and then amused himself by pushing them over a three-thousand-foot drop to their death. Aie—that part of the man must not change, else he will be useless in the great plan which I have formed for thee."

"And—touching upon the matter of rupees, oh Huzoor? Was there anything in thy plan which had to do with them?"

"Even so—they have been considered in the plan. The moonshee—all of thy instruction—thy clothing, food, pipes, ornaments, necessities—thy tikkut on the railway, when thou goest in such manner—all will be provided for thee. More than that, three hundred rupees will be given thee each month to spend as thou wilt. And the end of the game is a few months—or years—in the great London of the Angresi, where thou wilt live as well as the best and pass among men of power until that for which thou hast been prepared comes about, in the fullness of time. Afterward, shalt thou have for thyself twenty thousand rupees, and may go or come as thou wilt."

Just why Mennikoff selected Hassan from among the hundreds of other native chieftains who were disaffected toward British rule in India would have been difficult for anyone else to understand. But it had seemed to the Russian for a year or more that this particular Pathan had in him inherent qualities which made him peculiarly adapted to the work Mennikoff had in mind. And his quiet enjoyment in pushing the British commissioners off the ledge of rock clinched the matter. Here was a man who had as little bowels of compassion as a stone idol—and as much native craft as a Machiavelli. Given a proper education and restraining influence, such an one might go far in any scheme of vengeance or political intrigue. And Mennikoff—who had his fingers in the vaults of the Bank of Russia in addition to a large private fortune—considered a few infinitesimal thousands of rupees or roubles well invested in such a rehabilitation.

So, while the wires between Peshawar and Delhi and Calcutta were hot with news of the commissioners' massacre and orders massing a punitive expedition at the Khyber, Hassan Ali jogged leisurely north-west on his wiry pony and eventually reached Samarcand, where a learned professor from Moscow, in the only existing house which claimed even the barest necessities of civilization, hewed this hard and knotty Afghan timber into the semblance of an educated Occidental. Then followed two years of business and social life in Calcutta—where, to his own and others' amazement, Hassan found himself accepted as one entitled to all the civilities and respect accorded natives of the highest rank. Russian influence has been found exceedingly strong in quarters where its existence was previously unsuspected.

At the end of the fourth year, Mennikoff—whom Hassan had not set eyes upon since that night by his own campfire in the hill fort—appeared one evening in the Calcutta merchant's house and gave his pupil certain instructions which made that wily Oriental's eyes light up with a somber gleam. There were other meetings during the month—and Hassan finally closed up his af-

fairs to sail on a P. & O. boat for Tilbury Docks. And this brings us back again to the reception and ball at Her Grace of Caermerthorn's town house that foggy London night—and the mysterious stranger in the hall who seemed casually interested in Sir Lucian Hallett, K. C. M. G., C. B.

Lady Trevor had her own way of eliciting information without asking direct questions. Later in the evening, an inquiring lift of her eyebrows while talking with the Duke, as the stranger happened to be passing by, caused that genial pillar of the aristocracy to look up, over his glasses, and calmly inspect the disappearing figure.

"Eh? Rather an interestin' personality, that. Has the chap been presented to you? No? He's by way of bein' an Oriental, I fancy. But for the life of me, I can't say whether he's Hindu, or Malay, or somethin' else! May be a diff'rent breed altogether. Speaks excell'nt English—like a Varsity man. Seems to have been all over the place—familiar with most of the cities an' countries. Man of considerable means, I fancy. Has a suite of rooms at the Albany. Goes about a good deal. Member of two or three clubs. Said to be an importer of Oriental goods, which he markets through a large retail house in the city. Name's Hessinally or Hasanaly—or somethin' of the sort. Plays deuced clever auction, don't you know—an' chess. Reg'lar marvel at chess. Sophia ran across him at one of the Embassy receptions, one night—took quite a fancy to the chap. Asks him here when there's anything partic'lar on."

"Er—rather striking face, I think. Does he know many people about London?"

"Oh *rather!* Great chap for makin' acquaintances—deuced agreeable manners, don't you know, an' enough of the barbarian underneath to keep you conjecturin' whether he'll ever boil over like Vesuvius, or whether he's civilized for keeps, as the Americans say."

"Must be an interesting sort of personality. I think I shall have to have some one present him."

"Simple enough matter. There's Freddy Cavendish—send him after the chap."

"Thank you—no. Freddy imagines himself a diplomat; he has been complimented upon one or two things of which he had no more knowledge than a baby, and it has gone to his head. Takes himself very seriously. If you and your Oriental happen to be talking as I pass, you may introduce him."

She changed the subject, and betrayed no further interest in the man. But the Duke felt that, having said as much as he had about Hasanaly, it might be just as well to introduce the man and see if her opinion co-incided with his own. So, taking an opportunity when all three happened to be in the ball-room at the same moment, he stopped, genially, by the Oriental's side, and was asking a pleasant question or so as to his impressions of London when Lady Trevor and her partner stopped dancing near them. The greetings were brief; then Her Ladyship whirled away again in the waltz. But just before the assemblage broke up in the early hours of the morning he sought an opportunity to chat with her a few moments, as she intended he should—and again stirred her memory.

Lady Trevor knew instinctively that he had no recollection of her whatever—which was not surprising, as she had been but a slip of a girl in short frocks up to the time she had left India. But the more she studied his face—in covert, instantaneous glances — the more positive was her conviction that she had known something about the man under other circumstances and in some far distant place. As she was stepping into her car at the curb, Hasanaly came out of the house behind her and walked off up the street with a muffled figure whom she recognized as the Russian ambassador—and she happened to catch one or two sentences in fluent Russian which set her mind so persistently at work concerning the man's identity that she didn't get to sleep until daylight.

In the afternoon, she motored in to the Foreign Office and unceremoniously admitted herself to the private office of Sir Edward Wray, who rose in surprise as she closed the door behind her.

"Hello, Nan! What the deuce—? Jolly glad to see you, of course. But—what—?"

"Ned, I want you to cable in cipher at once, to Calcutta. Ask them for information concerning a supposed wealthy Pathan by name of Hassan Ali who has been rather prominent in social and commercial circles there for the last two years. Ask particularly if he has been known to be intimate with any Russians during that time."

The Foreign Secretary knew the woman who had begun life as Nan Tremaine of the Indian secret service too well to waste time on foolish questions, or ask for unnecessary explanations. He pulled a cable-blank toward him as she spoke, and jotted down the message. Three hours later, he came to Park Lane for dinner and showed her the answer, which translated, read:

Foreign Office—London.
Hassan Ali well known here. Believed to be Pathan. Was in Samarcand for some time, previously—not known where before that. Supposed to be worth a hundred thousand, sterling. Exceptionally well educated for native. Apparently well acquainted with Baron Mennikoff—seen with him a number of times. Has visited Russian embassy once or twice. No reason to believe Russian connection any more than casual acquaintances. Man seems progressing in wealth and influence. I. S. S.

"I'm very much obliged to you, Ned—and I fancy they're asleep over there in Calcutta if they imagine this man's intimacy with Baron Mennikoff isn't significant. We know what the Baron is. He never goes to any trouble without an object. I may be wide of the mark on some details—but from the scrap of conversation in Russian I overheard last evening, and from this message, I'm almost positive that Hassan Ali is here in London as Mennikoff's tool, or agent—and if I'm not vastly mistaken, Russian gold paid for his unusual education. Now assuming that to be either true or possible, why did he go to the trouble and expense of molding such a man out of an average Pathan?"

"If the Pathan came from that disaffected lot beyond Khyber Pass, he'd be cold-blooded and unscrupulous enough to satisfy even a Russian. Your average Pathan is either loyal to his salt, the most staunch friend in the world—or else, he's a jungle tiger."

"Precisely! . . . And this man strikes me as being the tiger sort. What use has the Russian government for a very well educated but hungry tiger in London?"

"Who can say? Might be any one of a thousand diff'rent things. I fawncy you're goin' a bit fast, Nan. Most of this is all surmise, on your part."

"Of course; and yet, it all fits in with what we know of Mennikoff. There's something dangerous in the air, Ned. I felt it all last evening. There's something brewing. And I'm going to take a hand in it!"

"Oh, I say, Nan! . . . You've had your go at the game. You've done magnificent work an' been given a barony for it. But now, you're married—an' there's the kiddy, you know! You'll not mess in this sort of thing any more—"

"But you've probably no one else who can get at the thing as quickly as I can—and I've an impression that something is approaching a climax. Under the circumstances, you've no objection, have you, George?"

Lord Trevor's handsome face twisted a little in a wry smile, as he lighted his after-dinner cigar. "Oh, aye—every objection a married man can raise. But, d'ye see, I've been forced into the same thing more than once awfter I thought I was out of it for good—merely from the conviction that I could handle certain complications better than anyone else available. I fawncy it's not altogether a sense of duty at our time of life, an' to people situated as we are. All three of us have done enough for His Majesty's Governm'nt—more than enough. We've earned our right to sit back an' let others take up the work of guardin' English diplomacy. But there again, d'ye see, is where the real incentive shows up the most strongly. We've patriotism, of course—as much as others—an' a fairly strong feelin' of duty. But when there's every reasonable excuse for retirin' permanently from anythin' in the line of diplomatic work, there's but one thing keeps us messin' about in it—the love of the

game, for the game's sake. An' there you are! What is it you've in mind, Nan?"

"I've not figured it out as yet—but I fancy it may involve my going into the enemy's camp in some capacity that will give me opportunities to get at the truth." The Foreign Secretary sat up in his chair with a gasp of protest: "Surely you'll not attempt anythin' of that sort, Nan! You run sufficient risk messin' about in the matter at all—but in that sort of thing you've a jolly good chance to lose your life! Those bounders aren't playin' cribbage, you know!"

"I mean to have some of our Afghans within call, Ned—and what I've done before, I can do again. In fact, I shall be jolly well pleased to have the practice—just to prove I've not forgotten what it took me so many years to learn. You need give yourself no uneasiness—I'm enough of an Orientalist to believe in my Kismet. What is to be will be. If they blot me out, it's no more than each of us have risked for years."

"But—Lord Ivo! . . . Aren't you forgettin' him, entirely!"

"The boy will be in the service himself when he gets a little older, Ned—you couldn't keep him out of it. It's in the blood, you know. Now—I fancy I'd best start in at this matter to-night. There's something on foot—the sooner we know just what, the better."

Calling Sabub Ali and one of his cousins, who had been for many years members of Lord Trevor's household, she gave them minute instructions and sent them out for information, while she changed, in the seclusion of her room, to a man's suit of cheap gray tweeds, rather the worse for wear, and deftly wound her hair in the folds of a green turban. Before putting on the waistcoat, she bathed her face, neck and arms in a strong decoction of coffee in which a slight percentage of iodine had been mixed. Over her little feet, she slipped the congress gaiter of the Calcutta Babu—five sizes too big for her—the toes stuffed with cotton and excelsior to prevent slipping about in them. The result was a very intelligent-faced young Hindu, apparently eighteen or twenty, who had a smattering of education, had lived in cities long enough to appreciate the advantages of semi-European costume, and was not very well fixed in regard to funds. After a careful examination of her facial appearance, she took from a bureau drawer a small and very silky black mustache which she gummed upon her lip with rubber cement in such a way that it would have required very close examination to detect its falseness. Both she and His Lordship paid as high as five or ten guineas for each wig or beard they used.

Slipping downstairs without being observed by any of the house-servants, she went into the big Jacobean library where His Lordship and Wray were smoking, and closed the hall door after her. Then, when they had amazedly complimented her upon the make-up, she touched a spring in the wall and a section of the book-cases swung outward upon a massive cantilever, revealing a narrow passage behind them through the wall. After a long final embrace from Lord Trevor, she disappeared down the passage, and the book-cases closed again. Descending a flight of steps, she hurried along an electric-lighted underground passage which terminated under a house on Park Street at the rear of the Park Lane grounds. Here, a flight of concrete steps brought her up in a room on the ground floor, where Sir Abdool Mohammed Khan waited for her—and after giving him minute instructions as to what she had in mind, she slipped out of a basement door and hurried to where Sabub Ali stood on the next street corner.

"Well—hath learned anything, oh Faithful One?"

"Even so, oh Ranee Bahadur. The man hath quarters at the Albany, as thou knewest. There be but one servant—who is of London—not Hind. But in the East of the City, on the Greenwich side, there be others whom he sees—three Russians—and there is a telephone in the room where they sleep."

"Good! Now let us go to the Albany—and see if perchance there be employment for a boy—like me."

It was about ten o'clock when Has-

san Ali's cockney servant came in from the door to say that a young fellow from Calcutta wished to speak with him and had said he was from Baron Mennikoff.

The name was an *open sesame.* The disguised Nan was fetched into Hassan's living-room and the valet sent out of it. Then, somewhat to Hassan's surprise, the young fellow addressed him in Pushtu as purely accented as his own.

"I used the name of Mennikoff, oh Protector of the Poor, for that I had seen him with thy father's son in Calicut and knew him to be thy friend. Mennikoff, I do not know—but thine old comrade Achmet is even so the friend of my sister's brother. I dealt in the bazaars with this one and that one until I had a bag of rupees—and then I made the pilgrimage, as thou seest" —a gesture toward his green turban. "In the Turkish boat went I up from Aden—and kissed the Stone—and prayed before the Kaaba. But even in the Holy Place were there *choor* who robbed me of my rupees. Many things did I on the ship, which took me to Ismalia. In Cairo, again, I sold in the Esbikyeh and in the bazaars—sometimes, things which I had, other times, things I had not. And I prospered sufficiently to come on the ship of these Angresi pigs to this place. Here, I have not eaten for two days; my belly is flattened till I no longer walk upright. But I remembered thou wert here—somewhere. I remembered Mennikoff. I have stood by the gates of the Russian embassy for two days—and I saw thee coming out. I followed thee here. My name is Sidi Mohammed. Like thyself, I am from beyond the Khyber. Thy father was my father's brother in all save blood. Give me bread and a few rupees. Then—what thou commandest, that will I do—as is the custom among us."

Hassan studied the young fellow through half-closed eyelids, behind which the tigrish irises gleamed with a dull glow. There was something vaguely familiar in the boy's face. Unquestionably, he was telling the truth. One of the neighboring tribesmen — possibly one of his own. Otherwise, he couldn't possibly have known what even no one in Calcutta knew—that he was a Pathan from beyond the Khyber. And there was no question that the boy would do exactly as he said. An Afghan is true to his salt—he knifes his father's, brother's or patron's enemies with as much *sang-froid* as if he were decapitating a turkey. Here, then, was a willing and faithful tool who might prove exceedingly valuable. Treat him a trifle better than he expected, and there would be no limit to his devotion. Decidedly, the Prophet had sent him assistance in time of need. Presently, he spoke:

"Look thou, Sidi—the stamp of thy blood be in thy face. Thou hast spoken a true thing. Pathan, thou art—and thou shalt remain with me. Food and clothing shalt thou have—aie, and also a few rupees—for I would not have it said that thy father's son was shamed before the Angresi while I, thy patron, went abroad in fine raiment and gave thee but a pittance. But—mark this well. Sharpen thy daggers and have them in readiness against the time when I may have need of them. It may be a slitting of ears—or a slicing of hearts—or the gouging of an eye—or the roasting of an Angresi slowly, that he may speak to my profit. Who knows? It lies in the hand of the Prophet. Yet, when the time comes, thou canst not fail me."

"May it be even so, Huzoor. My daggers be now sharp, as thy father's son may feel for himself—yet again will I sharpen them against thy need. I promise thee, they shall spit a man at a single stroke—for these were my father's daggers, and be steel from Damascus."

Nan promised this without so much as a shudder. As a boy in the bazaars of Delhi and Madras, she had learned even to think in the deviously oblique way of the Oriental—to get his point of view—see with the eyes of the East what few Europeans or Americans ever see. And the Eastern code of ethics was as natural and obvious to her as any tenet of her Christian education. For certain reasons, or the lack of them, one killed his man. It was obvious. There was no argument. The thing hap-

pened—and then one washed and dined. There were no regrets—why should there be? One knifed his enemy—it was usually safer to do it from behind, in the dark—or one's enemy did the thing first; after which, Nirvana. It was quite simple, as anyone could see. And there you were. As for the after consequences—that was left to one's Kismet. What was to be would be. In the meanwhile, the sun was bright—one lived another day. The point which really concerned her the most was the identity of the person upon whom her daggers were to be used? Well—that would doubtless develop later.

Now, in actual passage of time, it must be remembered that we have yet progressed no further than the night after Her Grace of Caermerthorn's musicale and ball. Monday night—and Tuesday. On Saturday, then, Nan had been an inmate of Hassan Ali's household but four days—but in that time she'd been uneasily conscious of an approaching shadow—a something actually timed to happen under certain propitious circumstances. And on Friday night, she knew by the expression upon Hassan's face that everything was favorable for the attempt. Finally, he gave her a clue which almost stopped her pulses for a moment.

Arrangements had been made, so it seemed, to drug the chauffeur of a landaulet belonging to a certain baronet in the Foreign Office. The second man, who rode with him on the front seat, was known to be a secret service officer usually on his guard, and therefore a much harder proposition. But arrangements had been made to dispose of him also. So when Sir Lucian Hallett came out the rear entrance of Buckingham Palace about midnight and rode off in the landaulet, he was already in a web from which there was no possibility of escape.

He had given but a casual glance at his chauffeur, and discovered nothing unusual in the young fellow's appearance. The second man stood holding the door for him. For an instant, Sir Lucian thought he looked a bit stockier than usual—but a glance at the long mackintosh gave an apparently obvious explanation. And it was not until the car was bowling along through a corner of Surrey that he saw he was trapped. He tapped on the glass, then opened the window in front to tell the chauffeur he was going too far eastward, on the wrong road—and the man turned upon him with a savage command to keep his mouth shut. Presently, the car stopped. Two men got into the tonneau and seated themselves in such a way that he couldn't make a single defensive move.

On and on, the car rolled—through Surrey, into a corner of Kent—eventually pulling up before a lonesome house near the water-front in Rochester. Knowing resistance was useless, Sir Lucian walked into the house with the muzzle of a pistol jammed into the small of his back—and up to a room on the top floor which had no apparent outlets save a small skylight in the ceiling and a massive door by which they entered. The walls were padded with what appeared to be old feather-beds or hair-mattresses, in ticking. In the center of the room, beneath the skylight, was a tin-man's charcoal furnace, with two soldering irons—and at the further end was a curiously equipped iron bedstead which had a smooth board table instead of a mattress, and over which hung a small rubber pipe connected to a water-tank up near the ceiling.

Sir Lucian calmly took out his cigar-case, trimmed one of the Havanas with his pocket-knife, and lighted it at the charcoal brazier. Then he seated himself upon one of the only two chairs in the room.

"Well, gentlemen—I suppose questions are unnecessary. You want the copy of the Japanese letter on Manchuria, I presume—and I'm in your power. I'm not fool enough to throw away my life in a useless struggle—help yourselves."

The man who seemed to be leader of the gang wore a glossy black beard and looked at him with a magnetic glance from fathomless black eyes.

"Your copy of that Japanese letter is of no use to us, Sir Lucian. Its arrangement was purposely changed to guard against just such a contingency as this. But the real letter—and many other bits of vital information—are locked

inside that skull of yours. You understand, of course. What is in that skull, we mean to have. I think it will be as well for you to remove your coat, waistcoat and collar. We'll assist you with the shoes and socks."

"But—oh, very well—suit yourselves." He removed the garments. "I suppose I may smoke? . . . What?"

"For a moment or so—yes. Make the most of it. We shall have another use for your mouth, presently. Now then, Ivan, Stefan—are those cords and pulleys ready, on the bed? . . . And the straps? Excellent! You will lie down on your back, if you please, Sir Lucian—yes—at full length. Now, Sidi—the straps buckled around the wrists and ankles. Draw them tight, Ivan—a foot or a hand to each corner of the bed—so that it is impossible for him to move an inch. And now—the strap around the head—so that he may not turn it, or move from side to side. Excellent! Can you move now, Sir Lucian? Ah well, we shall discover that in a moment or so. Stefan—you will arrange the rubber tube directly above his nostrils, and then turn the tank-cock a hair's breadth—so that but one drop at a time falls upon them. All ready? . . . Yes, that's about right—he will begin to notice it in a moment or two. In the meanwhile, are the irons red-hot? Yes—that one will do very nicely, Ivan—give it to me. I wish to experiment with the skin upon the sole of the human foot and discover at what degree centigrade it begins to shrivel."

The man was as calm and cold-blooded as if he were conducting an experiment in a laboratory. His motions, and those of the Russian hellions who obeyed his orders, were maddeningly deliberate. By this time, Sir Lucian was gasping for breath under the relentless drop-drop-drop of water running down into his nostrils—and the red-hot iron held so near the sole of his foot was causing him the most excruciating tortures. The leader had seated himself, note-book in hand, at the head of the bed—apparently determined to keep up the proceedings until the Foreign Office man had emptied himself of his last scrap of information—or was dead. The man was as relentless as Fate—and his very deliberation gave Sidi the chance for which he had been waiting.

His first intention had been to cover the other three with a brace of automatic pistols and whistle for the assistance he knew to be near at hand—but there were four other Russians in the room below, and he saw the impossibility of sparing all seven. He must account for those in the upper room before the others rushed him—and he knew that unless he acted at once, Sir Lucian would be tortured to death without speaking. Choosing a moment when all three were on the other side of the bed, he dropped behind it and shot the leader through the head. Before Ivan and Stefan could whirl upon him with their knives and pistols, he had shot each of them and blown a police whistle—three times.

There was a rush of stamping, hurrying feet upon the stairs. The massive door burst open and the four burly Russians tumbled into the room, a bullet finding lodgment in each as he came through the door. Then came another rush. Half a dozen secret service men, followed by Lord Trevor, Sir Abdool Mohammed Khan and the faithful Sabub Ali, appeared at the door—while two of the other Afghans in Lord Trevor's household peered warily down through the open skylight.

When they released Sir Lucian, he was unconscious—and it was several days before he could touch his right foot to the ground—but he wouldn't hear of a vacation.

"Ned Wray is nearly as much overworked as I—and he hasn't as strong a constitution—doesn't take his sleep when he can get it—doesn't get enough, anyhow. If I were to lay off for a couple of weeks, he'd be laid up in bed—an' the F. O. work would all go to the dogs. I'm glad Sidi killed that bounder, Hassan Ali. If that chap were still messin' round, alive, I think I'd feel a bit nervous at times. By the way, who is that boy, Sidi? I don't seem to remember him in any of the offices at Downing Street! Deuced nervy little chap—owe my life to him. I shall see that Govern-m'nt does somethin' for that boy—what?"

The Keeper of Four-Fathom Light

From out the hurricane there comes to the keeper of Four-fathom Light the great event of his life. How he risks all and wins much is told in this vivid narrative of great love and high heroism.

By RAY WYNN

THE keeper of Four Fathom Light rose from his seat in the tower room and went out on the balcony to look about him. The outlook was a gloomy one; it was late afternoon and the sky was overcast; the wind moaned and scuffled hoarsely about the tower, and the great waves thundered in impotent fury against the acre or so of black rock—the only portion of Four Fathom Reef which showed itself above the surface of the sea. There was nothing in sight, although far off to the eastward his keen and practiced eye could just catch a glimpse of a wisp of black smoke against the haze in that quarter. He turned around, as he heard the voice of Grannis, his assistant.

"Any messages?" inquired the latter.

"One. The *Modoc* signaled, going eastward. She said that the supply-boat would be along in the course of a week or ten days."

"I'm glad to hear it. Our provisions are getting low. Say, Gordon, did it ever occur to you that this is a mighty lonely place? A man might just as well be buried alive as do a tour of duty here."

Gordon smiled. "It's cheerful now to what it used to be, before the wireless was installed, Grannis," he said. "The last two months have been fairly bearable. Then, too, you're new to the life. When you've been here as long as I have, you'll be more contented."

"How long have you been here, Gordon?"

"Over two years."

"Over two years? And what ever brought you?"

"The supply-boat," replied Gordon, gruffly. Then, as he noted the hurt expression upon Grannis' face: "Forgive me, old man; I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. There is no reason why you shouldn't know about it. It was a woman. I loved her—expected to marry her. Then another fellow came along; he had money and social position and her parents favored him. She didn't, at first, but he kept on coming to the house. I grew jealous and, at last, we quarreled and parted. After that happened, I gave up my position in Montreal and drifted down here. I wished to be alone."

Grannis thought of the girl who was waiting for him on the mainland. "It's too bad," he said, sympathetically. "Have you ever heard anything from her since?"

"Nothing. She may be married by this time. Many a time, I've regretted that I didn't keep my patience a little better. There was a show for me, if I had only done that. There were things about him that would have settled him with her had she but known them. And she would have heard of them, sooner or later." Gordon was silent for a moment. "There's no use in talking it over," he said, finally. "It only makes a fellow blue. We may as well get supper. From the looks of things, there's a dirty night ahead of us."

They were just finishing their evening meal, when the noise of the steadily-blowing wind changed suddenly into a sullen roar, which lasted a few seconds, then died away, only to rise again. Gordon looked at Grannis.

"Northeaster," he said, laconically. He rose from the table. "I'm going up in the tower, to look after the light."

As he ascended the circular stairway, he felt the sullen force of the wind as he passed one of the slit-like windows in the side of the tower. "We're in for a heavy gale," he muttered. "Let it come; the old tower is good for it." In the light-room, he worked at the light for a few minutes, until he had it adjusted to his satisfaction. Then he descended to the tower-room, seated himself at the wireless table and adjusted the receiving harness on his head.

The recording tape showed black; there had been no messages while he had been at supper. Then he fell into a moody train of thought, which had its origin in Grannis' questioning. Grannis came into the room a few minutes later and sat down to read without disturbing his reverie. The wind rose higher and higher, and the thunder of the waves upon the rocks at the base of the tower became deeper and deeper.

He was brought back to a realization of things around him by a faint tapping, which his trained and sensitive ear soon resolved into the signs of the Morse alphabet. "Dk, dk, dk," it kept repeating, over and over again—the tower signal. He fingered his key and a series of crackling reports and flashes of whitish-blue flame filled the tower-room as he answered, letting the unknown operator know that his communication was received.

After an interval of several minutes, the faint tapping recommenced. "It's the liner *Mendoza*," he told Grannis, a minute later. Then he became absorbed in taking the message. Grannis, who was watching him, noticed that his face became white and hard as marble as the message came clicking in, and he leaned forward in his chair in breathless anticipation. Gordon's answer was short—it did not take him a minute to send it; then he tore the harness from his head and turned to Grannis.

"The *Mendoza* signals that she has been in collision," he cried. "A big tramp steamer rammed her amidships, about half an hour ago—then stood away and left her. Her engines are disabled and she is making water fast, settling by the stern. She can't be far from here—this operator gave us their position; it must have been her smoke that I saw, off here to the eastward, just before dark, and she was coming this way. Telephone Hope Bay and Exmouth life saving stations for the crews to come out, while I try to raise Kingstown and Pine Harbor and notify them to send out tugs in the direction of the Reef. Hurry."

He turned again to his instrument, as Grannis raced out of the tower-room on his way to the telephone, downstairs. A few minutes later, Grannis returned.

"They are on their way by this time," he cried. "What luck with Kingstown and Pine Harbor?"

"Kingstown is sending out two tugs. I'm after Pine Harbor now. There they are,"—as a faint tapping came to his ears. For a moment he listened intently. "Three tugs," he called to Grannis. His "All right" to Pine Harbor was followed by a rapid calling of the *Mendoza*. Her operator's reply came close upon the heels of his call. "Help on way," Gordon told him. "—two tugs, Kingstown—three, Pine Harbor." "All right," came the reply, "have sighted light; drift, due westward, by compass."

Grannis groaned when Gordon told him this.

"With this gale, she'll land on the

Reef within an hour," he exclaimed, the color gone from his usually ruddy cheeks.

"Go outside and see if you can sight her," ordered Gordon.

"I see her lights," shouted Grannis, as he re-entered the room. "She can't be over six miles away and driving down like a racehorse before the wind and sea. She'll be on the Reef long before help can get here."

Gordon nodded. "The tugs ought to be in sight," he said, as he rose from his chair. Grannis followed him out upon the balcony. Neither of them looked in the direction of the liner drifting swiftly onward to her doom; they looked, instead, to the northward and eastward. It was some minutes before their search of the horizon in that quarter was rewarded by the sight of a faint pin-point of light. A moment later, they picked up another. A few minutes later, Grannis located a third, inshore of the others. Gordon returned to the tower-room and sent out a wireless, at random, calling them down to the light. He trusted that some of them might be equipped with a wireless outfit. A few minutes later his effort was rewarded by an answer—"all right"—and the signature was that of one of the most powerful sea-going tugs out of Pine Harbor. He called the *Mendoza,* telling her operator that help was on the way and that communication had been established with the rescuing tugs. Then he called to Grannis, asking him if he saw any more lights.

"One more," was the answer. "It must be the third tug from Pine Harbor; the light is in line with the rest."

"Look for the life saving crews," he called, as he turned to wire the additional news to the *Mendoza.*

Grannis' answer that there was nothing in sight in that direction was what he expected to hear. The little power-boats of the stations would make bad weather of it, fighting right into the teeth of the gale that was blowing.

Then a thought occurred to him and he hastened to communicate it to the steamer. "Reef runs mile to south of tower," he wired. "Sheer south—anchor inside—plenty water."

"Ship beyond control," came back the answer. "Down by stern—bows out of water—settling fast—getting out boats."

Gordon shuddered as he thought of the loss of life which must ensue if this was tried, and he wired: "Don't get out boats until ship strikes—wait for help."

"All right," came the answer. It struck Gordon that it was very faint and he thought that he understood the reason—the water had risen in the hold to such a depth that it had drowned out the dynamos and forced the operator to resort to his storage-batteries for current. This belief was confirmed, a moment later, when he heard, so faintly as to be almost inaudible, the words: "Good-by."

Gordon now felt that he had done all that could be done. He threw off the head-harness and rose from the table. Standing in the door-way of the room, he watched the liner, driving in swiftly. Closer and closer to the Reef the *Mendoza* came, until, at last, she gave a rank sheer to starboard, and her bows, high out of water, hung, for an instant, upon the crest of a great wave, over the Reef, not two hundred feet south of the tower. Then she settled with a mighty crash. The next wave forced her farther upon the Reef and swung her partly around, until she lay, quartering, across it.

From their elevated station, Gordon and Grannis could plainly see the effort being made to launch the boats. Evidently the captain feared that she would not hold together for any length of time. The first boat was swamped as she lay alongside the ship, and those who had leaped madly into her were washed away to leeward. Gordon shouted in angry horror as he beheld the sight.

"The fools!" he cried. "Why can't they wait until help reaches them? The ship will hold together long enough for that." He ran into the tower-room and brought out a torch, which sputtered and flamed, bluely, as he wig-wagged to the steamer a message to "hold on." Those aboard her either did not notice, or did not understand it, for they immediately set about launching another boat. Both Gordon and Grannis cursed

impotently, as they saw the first tragedy reënacted, and again Gordon wigwagged furiously to the steamer. He could not tell whether his signals were seen and understood or not, but the sailors desisted in their efforts.

He turned to look again for the tugs. They were nearer than they had been, but still several miles away. He set off rockets, to give them the direction, if they needed it, and one of them answered with a long-drawn-out wail of her siren, which was borne to his ears upon the rushing wind. Then he turned again to the liner. The efforts to launch boats had been renewed and some of the crew were dragging one of the port quarter boats over to the starboard rail.

"Come," said Gordon grimly to Grannis. "The boat. We can launch her in the lee of the Reef and drift down to the wreck. We must get aboard her and tell those fools to stand by until the tugs can get here. They will drown every passenger aboard her, if we don't."

Grannis followed him, as he tore down through the tower and out to the spot where the lighthouse boat—a tight little yawl—was suspended from davits sunk into the solid rock. Together, they cast off the lashings and lowered her into the water, where she swung, swaying viciously to and fro in the eddies which sucked along the side of the Reef. They sprang into her and Gordon seized the tiller, motioning to Grannis to cast off, forward, and to take his place at the oars. Grannis obeyed. Then Gordon cast off the stern line.

"Pull," he shouted. Grannis drove the oars into the water, conscious as he did so that they hardly took hold, so tremendous was their drift. It seemed but seconds to both of them, before they were under the quarter of the stranded liner. Here, Gordon tried to sheer the yawl in under the great hull, but the best that he could do was to get her up under the flying boat-tackles.

"Jump," he shouted to Grannis. Grannis leaped, catching hold of the ropes. Gordon leaped after him, nearly missing his hold. The yawl, relieved of its burden, sheered out from the ship and vanished in the darkness to leeward. Hand over hand, buffeted and tossed about by the fury of the gale, they climbed the tackles. Some of the liner's crew, who had seen them as they approached, hastened to round-in the davits.

Gordon leaped to the deck and dashed madly forward toward the bridge, where the *Mendoza's* captain, a middle-aged man with a grizzled beard, stood calmly issuing orders to his subordinates.

"What is it, my man?" he shouted, as he saw Gordon standing before him.

"I'm keeper of Four Fathom Light," shouted Gordon, in return. "I've just come aboard to tell you that help is near at hand. There are five tugs and two life-saving boats coming. It's a useless waste of life to try to launch boats in this sea. The ship will hold together till help comes."

"She can't," yelled the captain. "Every time she settles, I expect to see her break in half. The passengers are mad with fear and it is all that we can do to hold them back, at the pistol-point."

It was useless to argue further. Gordon left the bridge. As he ran aft, he noted with inward apprehension the ominous quivering of the hull, as the waves alternately lifted the ship and dropped her bodily, upon the rocks; he could also hear the snapping of bolts and the rending of heavier pieces of steel; plainly, the captain was not far off in his estimate of the inability of the ship to withstand much longer the pounding which she was receiving. All depended upon the approaching tugs, and, if they did not soon arrive, there would be none left to save.

He found a party of sailors about to launch the boat which they had brought across the deck. The passengers—a mob, crazy with fear—were crowding forward in their insane eagerness to make their escape. Several officers and seamen were holding them back at the pistol-point. The young lieutenant in charge was tottering upon his feet, the blood running from an ugly gash upon his forehead; but he was resolute and plucky, and his weakened voice was

constantly raised in commands to his men to stand firm and to the passengers to keep back. The boat was a larger one than the two which had been swamped, and was of the non-sinkable type; there was a chance that those who embarked in her might reach the shore in safety. All this Gordon saw, as he approached the spot where the sailors were swinging the boat outboard.

The boat swung out, over the raging sea, and the sailors lowered away. The moment that she touched the water, the passengers made a mad rush for the side.

"Stand back," cried the lieutenant. "Stand back. Women and children—"

His words were cut short by a blow over the head from an oar. The man who delivered it leaped forward, over his body, only to go down under the impact of a crushing blow which Gordon delivered, full upon his chin.

Gordon leaped over the prostrate bodies. "Stand back," he yelled. Those nearest to him shrank from the muzzle of the pistol which he whipped from his pocket. "Bear them back, men," he shouted. "Bear them back. Let the women and children come forward."

Encouraged by his call, the weary and discouraged sailors made a concerted rush and bore the passengers back.

"There is room in the boats for all of you, if you will have patience," shouted Gordon. "Let the women and children come forward."

The crew were already in their places in the boat. One by one, the women and children came to the rail and were lowered into the waiting arms below. Finally only one remained—a tall figure, standing apart from the crowd of maddened men. Gordon saw her and called to her to come and take her place in the boat. But she did not move. He sprang to her side.

"Come on, woman," he shouted, and seized her by the arm. Then, as the light from one of the flaring torches fell full upon her face, he let go his hold.

"Margaret," he cried. "Margaret—you here?" He grasped her arm again. "To the boat—to the boat. It is your only hope--the ship can't hold together much longer."

She hung back, as he dragged her toward the rail.

"My father," she exclaimed, wildly. "My father! I cannot go without him."

"Where is he?"

She pointed to a form huddled upon the deck. Gordon sprang to his side and lifted him in his arms. Then he ran toward the rail with his burden, the woman following him. But they were too late. The boat had already cast off, the officer in charge of her fearing that she would be dashed to pieces against the steamer's hull.

With a muttered imprecation upon his lips, Gordon turned toward the woman. At that instant, the deep blast of a whistle was heard, near at hand. Gordon gently laid his burden down upon the deck, then turned toward the men.

"The tugs," he shouted. "The tugs!" Another deep blast of the whistle drowned his voice. Then, looming bulkily out of the darkness to leeward, came one of the biggest of the tugs from Kingstown.

Slowly she bore in toward the wreck, fighting her way against wind and sea until her bows were but a few feet from the hull, where, with her engines running at three-quarter speed ahead, she just held her own.

To the confused and terrified Margaret, it seemed but a moment before she stood in the pilot house of the tug, her father lying beside her, dragged there by the united efforts of Gordon and Grannis. It seemed but another moment before the tug had backed away from the wreck, to let another tug in. The rest of the called-for rescuers had arrived upon the scene.

"You must put me ashore at the light," Gordon told the tugboat captain. "I'm the light-keeper, and this man, here, is my assistant."

"All right," said the captain. He threw the wheel over and the tug began to slant toward the light. "I'll have to get rid of some of you, anyway, for I'm overcrowded, as it is. How many can you take?"

"All you want to put on the Reef," replied Gordon, promptly.

"I'll unload everything, then, and go

back to the wreck for more. I'm thinkin' that help will be needed, for there's only another tug here, besides ourselves."

"There are four more coming," said Gordon, "but they ought to be here now, to do any good. The steamer wont hold together much longer."

The tug nosed her way inside the Reef toward the light and made fast to the end of the little wharf. A few minutes later, she steamed away again, toward the wreck, to resume her work of rescue.

In the tower-room at the light, the next morning, were three persons—Gordon, Margaret and a stout young man who attempted to pay much attention to the girl, but toward whom her manner was freezingly repellent. Gordon sat at the operator's table, the receiving harness on his head, busy with his instrument, but still finding time to glance now and then at the others of the party, and, more infrequently, out of the window. The storm was still on, the wind blowing harder, if anything, than the night before. All that was left of the *Mendoza* was a tangled mass of wreckage, representing the fore part of the hull, at which the waves tore viciously; the after part had broken away, slid off into deep water and disappeared. Below, in the basement of the tower, Grannis was ministering to the wants of the two score passengers, who were awaiting the dying-out of the gale for tugs to come off to the light and transfer them to the mainland.

At last Gordon rose from the table and stepped to the head of the stairs.

"Hello, Grannis," he shouted down the stairway. "Tell Mr. Gale that I've just had word from Kingstown that his wife and son are safe, and that I've wired Kingstown that he's here." Then he turned to the others in the room. "The loss is not as bad as I thought it was," he remarked. "That boat-load of women and children got in safely to Pine Harbor. Kingstown says that the Company's books show that there were one hundred and ten passengers and two hundred and fifty officers and crew. Eighty-one of the passengers are accounted for and two hundred and forty of the crew."

"And those that are saved owe their lives to *you,*" said the girl softly, a deep flush upon her face as her eyes frankly met his.

For an instant, the hard, stern expression upon Gordon's face relaxed, only to return again, as the stout young man spoke.

"I dare say we should have been rescued, anyhow," he drawled, unpleasantly. "There are always boats chasing up and down this channel."

Gordon flushed darkly and his eyes flashed. "You seemed to think that there was not much chance of being rescued last night, when I had to hit you that clip on the jaw to keep you from running down women and children in your effort to get into the boat, Mr. Maitland," he remarked quietly.

The stout young man opened his lips to make an angry retort. But the girl forestalled him.

"Also, when he struck my father down, when he tried to keep him from doing so," she remarked, coldly. "He had no thought for us—all that he thought of was himself."

"But, Margaret, you do not understand—" protested the young man.

"My name is Miss Sensor, to all save my relatives and friends," she interrupted.

Maitland rose to his feet and stood for a moment irresolute, shame and anger striving for the mastery within him. Then he turned upon his heel and left the tower-room. The girl turned to find Gordon's eyes fixed upon her face. He drew closer to her side.

"Then I have a chance, Margaret?" he whispered, eagerly.

"A chance?" She looked intently at him for a moment. Then her gaze fell. "A chance? After last night?" she whispered.

Gordon's arms closed about her and his lips sought hers. A few minutes later, Grannis ascended the stairs, looked into the tower-room, stood for a moment in silent astonishment, then turned and descended them, chuckling, softly, to himself. In his own mind he was sure that Four Fathom Light had lost its keeper.

What Happened to Winifred

Did you ever stop to think what really remarkable adventures the taxicab drivers meet? Like the drivers of the old stage-coaches, these modern motor-pilots have many hair-raising experiences. Mr. Finnegan has written an exceptionally attractive series of stories based on these strange adventures; we present the first of them herewith.

By FRANK X. FINNEGAN

JUST to show you that you never can tell from looking at them what sort of a bug they may develop when you think everything is going along fine—well, listen to this: I was driving a slim, well-dressed chap through one of the best residence streets in the town the other day, he having nominated the same as the street he wanted to have a slant at through a taxicab window, when all of a sudden he called to me to stop in the middle of a block.

We were in front of a swell apartment house with a little lawn space on one side where three or four kids were playing around, and I thought my laddy-buck had found the house where he wanted to make a call, so I drew in at the curb. He jumped out, but instead of going up into the house, what does he do but make a dash in among the kids, grab up a yellow-haired little boy about three years old and make a flying leap back into the cab with the squawking kid in his arms.

"Drive on!" he says. "Get out of here as fast as you know how!"

I wasn't keen to be mixed up in any kidnaping game—the less I have to do with coppers the better I like it—but at the same time, it was no cinch that my man wasn't in the right and I might queer things for fair by laying down on him just then. There's always two sides to those kidnaping yarns, and as near as I can figure it out the father that comes around and swipes his kid out of the front yard is just as likely to be entitled to it as the mother who gets it from some bald-headed old judge.

This line of argument flashed over me as soon as Mr. Man told me to beat it, and right quick I decided to take a chance with him. The other kids in the bunch had set up a yelp when little golden-locks was nailed, and four or five women were rubbering out of windows in the apartment house, expecting to see a mad dog or something, and I made up my mind it was time to rumble. I threw on the juice and we leaped about forty feet ahead in the first jump and turned the corner on two wheels.

Then I took a look back into the cab. He had the little boy on his lap and was trying to coax him to quit crying. The kid seemed to be scared stiff and acted to me as if he'd never seen the man before.

"Well," I says to him, "now where? What sort of a game is this, anyhow?"

He looked at me in a queer sort of way, as though he was trying to figure out how far I'd go with him.

"Just drive on and turn into Durant Avenue," he says. "You wont get into any trouble about this."

"You bet your life I wont," I says, "because I can usually see it coming and make a running jump the other way. And more than that," I says, slowing the taxi down to a walk, "I don't propose to take any chances. What's the idea of picking up this kid? Either I'm in on this or I'm not."

"Everything will be all right," he says, "if you'll only drive ahead until I tell you to stop. I'll—I'll double the fare," he says. "If you stop now you'll ruin everything and we haven't time for explanations."

That sounded reasonable enough, too. The riot we had left behind us at the building where he got the boy was likely to have waked up a cop or two by that time and for all we knew they were tearing after us with touring cars and patrol wagons. I was no more anxious than he was to be nabbed with the goods, so I speeded her up and headed for Durant Avenue.

All this time the kid kept bawling and squirming, and as the top of the cab was down we got many a curious peek from the people along the sidewalks, but it wasn't until we got to the corner of Durant Avenue that anything happened.

I was slowing down a little to take the curve when a woman who had been standing on the curbstone as though waiting for us to pass took a run out into the road waving her parasol at me and yelling: "Stop! Stop!"

I stopped, all right.

"Here's the mother of the kid," thinks I to myself as I put the brake on, "and I'm not going any further with this gag."

"What are you doing with that child?" she yells, leaning over the edge of the door on the side furthest from the fellow. Two or three people turning the corner stopped to have a look—you don't see a woman every day in the week shaking her parasol at a man in a taxi, with a squalling kid in between them.

And what do you suppose my brave passenger does? He jerks open the door on his side and takes it on the run for the nearest side street, leaving me to face the music.

There was a pretty big crowd by that time—seeing his nobs streaking it down the street made four or five more turn around, and when they spotted the taxi at the corner with the excited dame prancing around it, they all hove to and began to cluster around. I could see a grand little time ahead for me, all right.

My first idea was to do a sprint after the speed boy, overhaul him and collect what was coming to me—the clock showed a dollar eighty-five right then. I jumped to the street, but before I had taken a step the woman got me by the coat lapel.

"Where are you going?" she says. "Don't think you can escape, too!"

"I'm going to grab that guy," I says, "and collect my money. I'm not running this cab for fun."

"No, you're not," she says. "You wont do anything of the kind. I'm going to call an officer! This child has been kidnaped!"

Then the crowd began to get excited and little Petie in the car howled louder than ever. She had the door open by that time and got her arms around him, pawing him and calling him pet names.

"What do you know about it?" I says.

"Why, his folks live in the same apartment building with me," she says. "I know the child well. Poor little chap!" she says. "It's a shame!"

The other women standing around began murmuring what a shame it was and what a brute I was.

"You can see it in his face," I heard one of them say. "Every line in it is vicious!"

"Why doesn't a policeman come?" somebody else wanted to know, and I was strong for getting out of there.

"Well, if you know this kid so well," I says to the woman who had stopped us, "maybe you know who that smooth gink is that got away with my dollar

eighty-five just now. I don't know him," I says, "nor the kid nor the apartment building, but I'm out just that much coin so far as I can see."

"No, I don't know the wretch!" she says. "He's a common, criminal kidnaper and I believe you're his accomplice! If I hadn't recognized little Howard he would have been miles away by this time."

"Well, I'm glad you happened around before the bill got any bigger than a dollar eighty-five," I says, "because that sprinter might have done the same thing if it was six eighty-five. Now if you'll just take little Howard off my hands—"

"Don't let him escape!" a woman in the back of the crowd says. "There's been too much of this going on. Somebody ought to be made an example of!"

Just then a policeman came around the corner to make our little party complete, and seven women at once tried to tell him how I kidnaped the youngster, but my lady friend that went to bat first did most of the talking.

"Here is my card, Officer," she says. "I'm Miss Winifred Wilbanks. I recognized the baby as the son of a neighbor in the apartment building where I live. When I hailed the man and spoke to him he jumped out of the cab and ran."

"Will you make a charge against this chauffeur?" he says, taking out his note-book.

"I can't do that," says Miss Wilbanks. "I don't know anything about it. But you can make a report on the matter and take this man's number."

"That's all I can do," says the copper. "I didn't see him kidnap any baby and I can't arrest him without a warrant."

"I suppose I ought to take off my hat and thank all you kind people for not sending me to jail for what my speedy friend did," I says, "but I'm too busy to attend to it. Now if you'll all stand aside for this machine, I'll be on my way and try to make up this dollar eighty-five I've been skinned out of."

"Wait!" Miss Wilbanks says, striking a pose with little Howard's hand in hers. "Take us back to the apartment house. I will pay the charges and I know Howard's father will gladly recompense me for rescuing his child!"

"That's the most sensible talk I've heard yet," I says. "Jump in, if you're not afraid of being kidnaped yourself."

She waited a minute with her hand on the door and the crowd rubbering so as not to miss a word of it.

"You have my card, Officer?" she says, "and all the details for your report? The child's name is Howard Ellison."

"Thank ye, ma'am," he says, "I've got it all."

Then she opened the door and boosted the kid in. He had stopped crying as soon as he recognized her and now he was grinning over the fun of having a ride in a taxi.

"You may drive us back to the Montclair apartments," she says, climbing in with her chin in the air, and you bet it wasn't her first time in a taxicab.

I had them back where the excitement started in less than ten minutes; and where I expected to run into another riot it was as calm as a morning in June. Four or five kids were playing around in the lot just as they had been before, but there was no mob of women waiting for us on the sidewalk as I was afraid there would be—no mother tearing her hair and no copper looking for kidnapers.

Believe me, I was glad to get out of it so easy, and when she handed me two dollars and a half and took little Howard into the house, I didn't lose a minute beating it for another part of town to think it over. And the more I thought about it, the less I was satisfied with my decisions. The Wilbanks woman's story that she just happened to be passing and recognized the baby seemed straight enough, but why should she decide right away that it was being kidnaped?

Well, it was none of my funeral, after all, and as I had nabbed my money from Miss Wilbanks for my end of it, I had nothing to worry over, but I couldn't get it out of my head and I was still puzzling over it a couple of hours later, sitting in my cab at the stand, when somebody said into my ear:

"I believe I owe you some money."

I whisked around and it was Fleet-Foot Freddie, the boy who had dusted so speedily before Miss Wilbanks' parasol that afternoon.

"No, you don't owe me anything," I says, "because that strong-arm female that gave you the run settled with me, but I don't like the way you beat it and left me to meet all comers."

He waved a five dollar bill under my nose.

"That's all right," he said. "Take this for your trouble. I knew nothing would happen to you."

"You didn't know anything of the sort," I said, stowing away the five-spot before he could change his mind. "I came near getting pinched and a lot of dames around there wanted to mob me for a kidnaper. What chance did I have to square myself after you made your get-away?"

He smiled in a curious sort of way as much as to let me guess that I didn't know it all.

"It was tough on you," he said, "but I was sure it would be all right in the end. Only I forgot that I was leaving you without paying my bill. That's why I dropped around to the stand to-night—I thought I might find you here again." He had hired me there in the afternoon.

"And just to show what confidence I have in you," he goes on, "I'm going to take your cab for another trip."

"Not on any trip like this afternoon's," I says. "Nothing doing on any more of that police business."

"No, this one will be quiet and well-behaved," he says, "and in an entirely different direction. Just drive me out to Claiborne Street and I'll tell you where to stop."

I wasn't particularly stuck on the fellow or his ways and for half a minute I had a notion of turning him down. But the money looked good and it was none of my business if he was getting into scrapes—I was driving a taxi for hire. And besides, I was just a little bit curious to see what he had up his sleeve, so I cranked up while he was settling himself in the cab, and the next minute we were tearing for Claiborne Street.

He raised the stop signal in front of a little hotel—a private sort of place that most people call a family hotel—and I had scarcely stopped when a woman tripped out and came straight for the cab. My man didn't make any effort to get out but he opened the door and held it open for her, as though it was arranged that she should step in. When she came under the light of a street lamp just as she was stepping into the cab with my mysterious passenger I turned enough to get a look at her; and I nearly fell off my seat when I saw it was Miss Winifred Wilbanks.

For the first second or two I expected a cat and dog clawing match when she discovered she was getting into a taxi with the kidnaper. She hadn't even glanced at me, so I felt safe for a while, but it struck me there might be something started when she found us together again.

Instead of a row behind me, though, they began to chatter like a couple of old friends and he told me to drive ahead, so I pulled out, just a little bit dizzy from trying to put two and two together.

"Do you think it was quite safe to get the same man?" I heard her say, and I knew she was onto me, all right.

"Sure!" he said, "better than getting another one. I fixed him so there wont be any danger there."

"I hope so, Morton," she said, "for I'm dreadfully nervous to-night."

It was getting altogether too deep for me and I quit trying to piece it together. We had been speeding along toward the business section of the city for about twenty minutes, Morton and Miss Wilbanks talking all the time but so low that I could only catch a word now and then, when he called to me to stop at the next corner. It was a lonesome, deserted neighborhood of scattered houses, most of which were already dark. In the big house on the corner where I stopped a few lights showed at the windows.

Morton got out first, and while he was fumbling for money to settle with me, Miss Wilbanks climbed out and hurried up the street into the darkness ten or fifteen feet, as though she was anxious I shouldn't get a chance to recognize her.

"Much obliged," Morton said, slipping me the money. "That was a good run. Going right back to your stand, are you?"

I couldn't see why he was particularly interested in where I was going but I said I was.

"I may find you there again some time," he said, trying to be extra friendly. Then he moved off to join the woman and I started up and drove ahead and around the first corner.

But I had no idea of tearing back to my stand right away—I was too much interested in my two passengers and I had a strong curiosity to know where they were going and what would happen next. I stopped the car after I had gone half a block, ran back to the street where I had left the couple and took a careful peek around the corner.

I could see them standing in front of the big house, a foot or two apart, and just as I crouched up against an iron fence to watch them without being spotted, Morton cut loose with a gun three shots and the woman let out a line of screams that would wake the dead. In the midst of the banging of the revolver and the shrieking of Miss Wilbanks, while windows were going up all along the block, Morton ran like a deer in the opposite direction from where I was planted, turned a corner and was gone.

Making a run to the yelling female was the first thing I thought of, but a couple of people from the house beat me to it and I decided I'd look better on the hurricane deck of my taxi when the crowd began to gather. It was a cinch there would be a copper on the job in a couple of minutes and my best game was just to happen along accidentally and not have so many questions to answer as I would if I came mooching around on foot.

I got back to old *Susan* and took a drill around the block, coming down on Miss Wilbanks and her audience from the opposite direction; and by the time I got there she had most of the block turned out. She was leaning up against a couple of women who were fanning her, and a policeman, puffing like a porpoise, was hearing how she had been held up by a footpad, shot at and nearly murdered, and robbed of her handbag with all her money and jewels.

"I am Miss Winifred Wilbanks, Officer," I heard her say as I sort of sneaked up quietly on the crowd. "I can't give you a card because that awful ruffian took them all in my handbag. When I screamed he fired at me. I was about to make a call in the neighborhood and had just dismissed my taxicab when the man sprang at me from behind that wall—"

"Isn't it terrible?" one of the women butted in. "We have no police protection here. We're likely to be murdered any minute."

"Will you go to the police station and make a complaint?" the policeman cuts in.

"Certainly," she says, "and I presume you'll make *your* report, too."

"I'll call up this minute," he says. "I can't leave my post or I'd go with you. But here's a taxicab," he says, taking a slant around at me. "Maybe you'd like to ride over."

"Why, I can't even pay my cabfare," she says, doing the hysterical again. "The footpad took every penny I had!"

That was just what I wanted—it gave me a chance to get into the game.

"I'll take you to the police station without any money," I says. "I'll take a chance on getting mine later on."

She looked at me, where I was leaning out into the lamplight, and instead of seeming surprised or scared when she recognized me as the man who had toted her around on two other trips, it seemed to me she actually looked relieved—as though she was glad it *was* me.

"Oh, thank you," she says, never tipping that she recognized me. "You are very kind. If you will take me to the police station and then to my home, I will see that you are paid."

I was down on the street holding the door open by that time; she climbed in and the crowd pushed forward to take one last rubber.

"You'll not forget the name, Officer," she says, leaning out of the window—"Miss Winifred Wilbanks."

"I have it down in my note-book," he says. "I'll not forget it."

"Thank you," says Miss Wilbanks, who was getting her nerve back pretty fast. "Drive on, please."

That was the office for me and I wheeled through the crowd, giving the horn an extra flourish or two in honor of the occasion, turned the corner and sped along for a couple of blocks. Then I slowed down and looked over my shoulder at Miss Wilbanks.

"Do you really want to go to the police station?" I asked her.

She froze up in a minute.

"What do you mean?" she says. "Certainly I do! Drive to the nearest station immediately!"

"Well, all right," I says. "You're running the expedition, but while you're complaining about Morton holding you up just now and shooting at you, are you going to put in a knock about that kidnaping stunt this afternoon?"

She fell back against the cushions as though I'd hit her on the head with a club.

"Why, I—I thought Mr. Morton had arranged everything with you!" she says.

"No, he didn't arrange very much with me," I says, "—especially when he beat it to-day and left me with that kid on my hands and you yelling for the police. He slipped me a little extra change this evening but he didn't loosen up about any mysterious shooting and hold-up acts out here. He's got me winging," I says, "and I don't see yet how you're going to make a very loud noise in the police station about this friend of yours."

It was fresh, I suppose, but I was getting pretty sore on Brother Morton and I knew I had it on Miss Wilbanks so she couldn't make much of a fuss about anything I said.

"Didn't he ask you to wait around after he paid you this evening?" she asked.

"Not me," I said, "but I just waited around on my own hook. Maybe he was figuring on that when he banged that gun off and ran away with your handbag."

She looked up at me in an odd sort of way and then her head went up.

"Never mind the police station," she said. "Drive me to the Montclair."

I turned back to the wheel without saying another word and started for the apartment house where we had brought the kidnaped kid that afternoon. I began to feel sorry for the woman—somehow it seemed to me that Morton had ditched her on whatever business they were mixed up in and it wasn't up to me to make things worse.

Fifteen minutes of hitting the high places brought us within sight of the Montclair and when we were within a few doors of the big, lighted entrance I saw a man step off the curb, peering at me and trying to look beyond me as he held up his hand in a signal. I guessed it was Friend Morton and slowed down, but it wasn't. Just the same my passenger was on the look-out for him and she called to me to stop.

"Have you seen Morton?" she demanded as soon as he hurried to her and opened the door.

"No, but everything seems to be going all right," he said. "There's four of them waiting for you up-stairs now."

She put out one hand and leaned against the door of the cab as though she was faint. She put the other hand over her eyes for an instant.

"Joe, I can't do it," she said. "I'm afraid. I can't face them."

"Well, you bet you *can!*" the big fellow says, sticking his face almost into hers and giving her a mean look, "and you're going to do it, too. What do you suppose we've been hanging around all day and all night for—to see you weaken at the last minute? You've got to go through with this thing now—since that kidnaping stunt fell down. We'll do it without Morton—but it's going to be done."

He seemed to have forgotten all about the fact that I was sitting there listening and waiting for my fare—maybe he didn't care. Miss Wilbanks suddenly recalled it, though, when the man took a step toward the apartment house entrance.

"Oh, Joe, pay for the taxi, will you?" she said. "I forgot—that is, Morton left me—"

"Don't talk so much!" Joe growled, coming up to take a close look at the fare clock and digging down for the

money. "You'll need all the talk you have when you get up-stairs. And for the Lord's sake, Win, stop and think before you talk and don't make any breaks. There's too much depending on this not to have it go through right."

"Don't talk that way, Joe," she says, whimpering a little. "You'll get me all unnerved and I can't do anything. I've been through a lot to-day."

"That's the very reason I came down here to head you off," says Joe, "—so you wouldn't come bursting in on these people without a thought in your head. Now you've got a chance to pull yourself together and stand a little of that third degree stuff. Nobody can do it for you—it's up to you. Come on!" And he stalked away to the big apartment house, after handing me the fare and not a cent over, with her trailing him.

It was my turn to pull my freight from that Montclair apartment house and get back to my stand, away from all this mix-up and mystery, but somehow I couldn't do it just then. There was something about the big, brightly lighted building that held me like a magnet.

I rolled the cab up a little closer to the doorway and sat there some little time looking at the Montclair and thinking things over. What was it all about? Who was this Morton, who boldly attempted kidnaping, highway robbery and assault with a deadly weapon almost under the noses of the police and got away with all of them? And what were his relations with the fine-looking, well-dressed woman who was so willing to tell the police her name and address, who berated him as a scoundrel at one stage of the game, rode with him as a friend and confidant in the next act of the drama and then declared he had robbed and tried to murder her?

I gave them all up one by one. I quit trying to figure out who "Joe" was and why Miss Wilbanks let him bully her the way he appeared to be doing and I made up my mind I would probably never find out who were the four waiting for her when she got back and why she had to pull herself together and face them.

Just as I had reached this conclusion and was getting ready to trek downtown and try to forget all about the whole puzzling business, two well-dressed young fellows came out of the Montclair in a hurry.

"Hello! This is luck!" one of them says. "Here's a taxi!"

"Engaged, probably," the other one growled, but I was up and flagging 'em in a minute. I had a hunch that they were tangled up in the Wilbanks business in some way and I was right on the job.

"Taxi? Taxi?" I says as natural as if my stand was always in front of the Montclair.

"Sure," says the first chap. "You're on, old top. Take us down to the *Times* office in a hurry and if you get nailed for speeding I can fix it. The chief of police is a pal of mine."

I made them out for newspaper men from that line of talk, of course, and I was surer than ever that they were on the story I had been helping to develop.

"Let down the top of that thing," the other fellow suggested. "I want to smoke without getting suffocated."

I opened up the cab and they climbed in and you can bet I had my ear cocked back to catch every word they said after we started.

"Well, what do you make of it?" the fellow who had hired me asked as soon as they had their cigarettes going.

"It looks like a pipe yarn to me," the other one said. "What do you suppose Fisher and Daniels are hanging around there for?"

"Oh, you know Mysterious Bill," the first chap laughed, "—he never lets go of anything until he has shaken the teeth out of it, and Daniels is afraid he'll miss something if he leaves him there alone. I got all I wanted in two minutes."

I made up my mind that the two fellows they referred to were two more reporters—these were the four who were waiting for Miss Wilbanks.

"Our people pegged it for a press-agent stunt as soon as our police man 'phoned it in," the first chap went on, "but there was nothing much stirring

and the chief thought there might be a feature yarn in it. Pretty actress held up and shot at—robbed of her money and jewelry and all that stuff—I'm going to put the soft pedal on her being the new leading woman of old man Cosgrove's stock company."

"Sure," assented the other reporter, "the hold-up is the yarn—if there ever was any hold-up. She wasn't very strong on explaining what she was doing away out there all alone—actresses don't make calls at that hour."

"No, she was rather shaky on that," assented his friend, "but it might all be on the square—she may not have wanted to drag the names of her friends into it. Friend husband seemed pretty anxious to get all the horrible details out of her, didn't he? Wonder why he wasn't along on her taxi trip to take care of her."

They stopped chatting for a minute and I was piecing things together at as lively a rate as old *Susan* was tearing over the pavement. I began to see things. Miss Winifred Wilbanks was an actress—and they suspected the hold-up was a "press-agent stunt!" Well, how about the kidnaping?

Suddenly I wheeled around and spoke to the two young fellows over my shoulder.

"Excuse me, gentlemen, if I appear to be butting in," I said, "but I overheard your conversation and I may be able to shed a little light on things here and there. It was this taxi that Miss Wilbanks rode in just before she was held up to-night."

They almost leaped on my back in their eagerness.

"What?" one of them yelled. "*You* were out there?"

"I sure was," I said, "and I brought her home—that's how I happened to be at the Montclair when you came out. But let me ask you something first: did the papers get anything to-day about Miss Wilbanks having rescued a kidnaped baby and restored it to its mother?"

I could see them staring at one another. Then one of them laughed—a hard, sarcastic little laugh.

"Why, now," he said, "the papers haven't got that stuff—what was it?"

I told them as briefly as I could, and when I mentioned Morton's name one of them stopped me.

"Morton?" he exclaimed. "Why, he's Cosgrove's press-agent—Ed Morton, used to work on the *Leader!* He framed this whole thing up—what do you know about that! I didn't think he had the nerve to go through with it!"

"I see how it came off," the other cut in. "The kidnaping stunt fell down—the copper didn't make a report on it because there was no pinch in the case and he didn't want to get mixed up in it as long as the kid was returned home."

"Sure! And Morton found out the papers didn't get the yarn and he framed up this fake hold-up and robbery—he had to do something to make good!"

"He did more than that," I cut in, "—he took Miss Wilbanks out there in my cab, fired the three shots himself and did a get-away while the crowd was gathering."

"Some class to Ed!" one of them said. "It's a shame to spill the story after all the trouble he took."

"Are you going to use the yarn?" the other fellow asked.

'Well, I'm not going to fall for it the way Mort expected us to," he said. "I'm afraid I'll have to show him up a little. Our people don't like press-agent stunts. But say, wont the laugh be on Bill Daniels and Monte Fisher if they go to this hold-up business and play it for a news story!"

"I wouldn't crow too much," the other chap said. "We might have taken it in, hook, line and sinker, if this man here hadn't put us wise. I'm in favor of adding a dollar each to the expense account and contributing it to the fund for Thrifty and Thoughtful Taxi Drivers."

"Here too," the first chap grinned. "He's a life saver."

They passed over the two singles when they settled for the trip in front of the *Times* office, and I went back to my stand with my mind at rest. And when I read the newspapers the next morning I picked out the two that Daniels and Fisher worked on, without half trying.

The Mandarin's Chair

The fantastic experience of a man whose wife insisted on buying six hand-carved Chinese dining room chairs; a little domestic disagreement ensues, and then—most amazing events.

By HASTINGS MACADAM

GRISWOLD McSWEEN had just come home for dinner. His wife, her eyes bright with expectancy, met him at the door.

"Did you go and see them?"—very eagerly.

His reply, as they turned arm in arm into their parlor-and-library-and-sitting-room, was both decisive and apologetic.

"Yes, Clara," he said, "I did; and for the life of me I don't see how you ever got such an idea into your head."

She jumped away as though he had struck her; in a jiffy fully six feet of fighting ground lay between them. And fighting ground she meant it to be.

"Why Grizzy dear!"—an exclamation honey-sweet and heart-melting, "you don't understand *at all*. Chairs like those are all the rage and they're an exact match for our—"

These tactics were not new to Griswold. That "Grizzy dear" was a favorite. She must know that there come times in men's lives when, if wives invite war, why, that's what they get—and to the hilt. He interrupted her as roughly as he had dared at any time during their twenty months of married life:

"There's no use arguing. My mind's made up. You were going to say they are an exact match for our sideboard. They're *not*. Our sideboard is of a good old Colonial pattern, with the United States of America written all over it. Even the carved ebony deer-head at the top—Clara, that's the head of a Virginia white-tail. And those chairs are *Chinese!* Good Lord, Clara! do you suppose I could ever eat in a chair like that. Everything would taste like chop suey!"

Clara had stiffened; she had even paled a little. But there is always wily method in Clara's mutinies. She barbed her attack with tones that were actually ambrosial:

"Oh, don't be a Gruffy Groofy! My heart is set on having them. They're dark and mahogany and hand-carved; and they *do* match the sideboard. And there's a big arm-chair for you. I've always wanted to see you in an arm-chair at dinner. My father had an arm-chair; and when Baby Boy grows up I want him to have a dignified, *grand* looking papa, especially at meals. You know"—unveiled sarcasm now—"if a man *isn't* dignified, the right kind of a chair will help. The head of a family ought always—"

"Fiddle-sticks!" Griswold broke in. "I don't want, I wont have an arm-chair in my dining-room. *My* father never ate out of an—I mean never sat in an arm-chair to eat. If a man can't sit up to his meals in a plain straight-back, will he ever sit up without props?"

"That's just it; you *need* props. Half the time you sit cross-legged and turn sideways when eating. It twists you awfully and looks *horrible*. I'm sure that's what gives you indigestion. An arm-chair will hold you straight so the food will plop right into the middle of your stomach and not give you indigestion. But that's neither here nor there," —a quick transition into outright defiance. "My heart is set on those chairs. I'm going to have them, going to, going to—because—"

The dinner-bell rang. Automatically they moved towards the dining-room.

"I'm going to, going to, going to have 'em," repeated Clara, "*because*—I've already got 'em!"

And she pointed. Sure enough—

! ! !

Exclamation points, meaning sudden exit of lord and master via the front door, slamming same violently.

Now Griswold had given Clara his reasons in all sincerity; but not *the* reason.

The evening before their conversation had been chairs, chairs, chairs. The very last thing before falling asleep, he remembered hazily, was: "Now remember, you've promised to go and look at them the first thing in the morning." Then it had begun again and had continued from the minute the baby woke them at five A. M. until eight, when Griswold started for the auction rooms.

There, in a clutter of beds, bureaus, chiffoniers and desks, of brass ware and glassware—of this, that and the other, with an odor of use pervading the place and an appearance of misuse characterizing nearly everything in it—the chairs had looked very imposing. Yet the instant he saw them, a troup of ideas, all repelling, crowded upon him. To sit at dinner with one's arms upon a couple of wriggly dragons in the act of coughing fire and brimstone onto the dinner table! To feel in the region of one's shoulders a confused horde of tiny almond-eyed fiends carving one another up! To know that from a central panel, around which the conflict raged, the most baleful countenance he had ever gazed upon—a phiz rendered the more baleful by the insertion of bits of ivory to represent the whites of the eyes—was spying from about the middle of his back-bone into the most delicate parts of his anatomy! Chairs like these for a man who abhorred pretentious things—*no!*

Nevertheless the dragons might have seemed oddly attractive, the array of fighting Chinamen most diverting, the little portrait charmingly unique, and an arm-chair, perhaps, endurable, were it not that upon October first, only three weeks away, his insurance was due.

There are always mainsprings of action, and chief of them all is money. Now Griswold hates the thought of money and whenever, which is often, money dictates to him, he conceals the fact to the best of his ability. He earns forty dollars a week and displays a four hundred dollar ability in the art of convincing himself and Clara that reasons other than the lack of the four hundred dollars prevent their living upon a four hundred dollar scale. One look at the chairs aroused fears of the price, which were quickly confirmed by a conference with the auctioneer. They would sell at not less than twenty dollars for the big one and ten dollars apiece for the six smaller ones—eighty dollars in all. On October first, the insurance, a matter of $118.92, would confront him. He had in the bank precisely $133.95. Deduct eighty dollars from $133.95, compare the remainder with $118 92, and you have Griswold's sentiments to a penny.

From the auction place he hurried to his office, whence he called up his house. He found that Clara had gone to her mother's, who did not have a telephone. Caught up in the daily grind at the office, he completely forgot the chairs until the moment of arrival home in the evening.

Fondly expecting to develop in Clara the business ability he did not possess, Griswold had founded his domestic

enterprise upon a common-bank-account basis. The partner of his bosom and income had checked out of the $133.95 approximately eighty dollars—for a job-lot of heathenish chairs! That front door slammed very violently indeed!

Griswold went to the club, played bridge, played abominably and in abominable luck. Three times he reneged, was called and paid the forfeits. Twice his opponent on the right declared no trumps and found a hundred aces in the dummy! There were interruptions:

"Telephone, Mistah McSween," whispered an obsequious negro, for many years waiter in the cardroom.

"Man or woman?"—sharply.

"'Deed suh, I think suh, it's your wife, suh."

"Sam, tell her I'm not here. Tell her I was last seen riding down Pennsylvania Avenue in a low-neck hack with a couple of—a couple of gentlemen, Sam."

Other telephone calls came, but Griswold had "not returned to the club." Towards twelve o'clock he arose from the whist, a loser of twelve dollars.

All that is, is right, alleges Hegel. Perhaps, too, all that is, is good. Anyway, at the end of his evening of recalcitrance, Griswold felt considerably better. Like many another, he quailed before a hopeless debt, then laughed when it became still more hopeless.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed. "Home may still be home in spite of Chinese chairs. With all her faults, Clara's a good sort. She's like Ty Cobb, always doing the unexpected. Pshaw! I'll get busy; I'll have an idea, I'll—I'll go home; and not only that, I'll go home in a taxicab. Take a street car, me, a man with eighty-dollar chairs in his dining-room? *Preposterous!*"

As the cab neared 4333 Decatur Street, he remembered Clara's views upon the expenditures of household funds upon taxicabs she hadn't ridden in. He poked his head from the cab window and shouted:

"Driver, stop at the corner." Which Driver did; and, presently, as the taxi scurried cityward with a dollar-sixty, its red lamp seemed to laugh and to say: "Ha, ha, ha, you're $78.57 shy on the insurance now—$78.57."

He walked slowly along beside a row of fledging maples that looked like a file of boy scouts doing sentinel duty, one in front of each of a row of fledgling time-payment houses. Having reached 4333, he turned, looked up; and panic as breath-taking as the danger of death seized him. No light in the second-story front! When he was away at night, Clara *always* kept a light in her bed-room until he got home!

He searched the house over; neither Clara, nor Baby Boy; only the darkness of the tomb—and the chairs.

Upon reflection, though, the panic as breath-taking as the near danger of death passed off. Having lit the gas in the parlor-and-sitting-room-and-library, he thrust his hands into his trousers pockets and solemnly stared at his dismayed countenance, which was reflected from the looking-glass over the mantel. The clock pointed to ten minutes after one.

"Griswold, we're a fool, aren't we?" —speechifying to his likeness in the mirror. "Yes, fool is right. But what'll we do next. Clara gone; Baby Boy gone; house deserted. Now where has she gone? Around the corner to her mother's? Eggzactly. *Confound it! she heard that cab!* She knows I'm home and she's sitting up and waiting for me to come *there*. Griswold, do I go? No, not on your life. She'd hand it to me; Mother-in-Law'd hand it to me; no-sir-ee-bob, we stay right here. We'll give her about an hour, and then in she'll come. But what'll I do meanwhile?"—turning away from the mantel. "Jove, the chairs! I shall be sitting in that big Mandarin's chair like a king on his throne. I shall judge her very severely—very severely indeed. It's desertion on her part and abduction of Baby Boy, nothing less!"

He lit all four gas-jets in the dining-room. Clara had polished the chairs until they shone like ebony. In conjunction with the side-board they certainly gave an air of quiet elegance to the room.

"They *are* a fine set of chairs," Griswold admitted.

The bright light gave an uncanny look of life to the portrait of the Mandarin. From the oval frame in the back of the big chair the Oriental countenance seemed to survey its new surroundings with no little interest. The reflections at the forehead and cheek-bones resembled the high lights of an oily skin. A mustache, after sprouting verdantly, curved abruptly down at the corners of the lips and dwindled into two long black strings. Griswold was sure he detected an expression of haughty contempt around the mouth.

"Old Stick in the Mud, you don't think much of me and my dining-room do you?"

What! The Chinaman nodded and grinned!

"Here, I'm seeing things!" Griswold exclaimed. "I need a stimulant."

A trip to the refrigerator and the matter-of-fact business of mixing a milk punch restored the master of the empty house to a state of mind so far afield from visions of suddenly incarnated Mandarins that he sat down in the big chair without the slightest qualm of fear or uneasiness. In fact he had dismissed the very lifelike portrait from his thoughts.

Thus it happened that, after his first sip of the milk punch, he lay back to enjoy the after-taste. He remembers quite well: he rested his arms along the arms of the chair and his hands upon the two knoblike dragon heads; then, a moment later, reaching for another sip, he pulled himself erect and in so doing thrust his two middle fingers into the mouths of the two dragons and pressed up.

"Gel out mly I'l chlair!"—faintly uttered, like a spirit-voice at a séance.

Startled, Griswold looked up at the ceiling, over at the sideboard, out into the dark hall—everywhere but just behind him.

"Imagination," he commented. He took the second sip and lay back again. No mistake this time. A sudden, sharp pain! A kick in the small of the back, and then:

"Gel out mly chlair. You plessee blutton; I clum. Whallee want to do. blakee mly legs?"

Griswold is sure his each particular hair stood on end. He jumped from the chair so quickly that he almost upset the table. In some way or another, however, he managed to reach the far side of the room without causing a smash. Then he turned.

He beheld a tiny fellow, who nevertheless seemed very old and who sat dangling his wee legs from the edge of what now seemed to be a cavity in the back of the arm-chair.

This intruder, manifestly the original of the portrait, had screwed his features into such a look of indignation, of offended majesty, that Griswold trembled before it. Yet his fear mingled with fascination; for the Mandarin was quite the most picturesque personage Griswold had ever seen. A blue, blouse-like garment of rare, heavy, hand-woven silk covered a shimmery yellow tunic which fit tightly. The sleeves, a part of the tunic, were yellow also. Pantaloons of rich black satin, sandals of soft kid, and lace collar and cuffs completed the costume. A string of lustrous blood-red stones circled his neck and hung loose almost to the waist. In contrast with the blue blouse, their background, these red jewels had a particular and, to Griswold, a most disconcerting brilliance.

"Good Lord!" Griswold exclaimed, forgetting his terror, "are they rubies?"

"Whalle mean, lubies? I tellee you, lif you mlashee me again I culloff you head."

"What!"

"Culloff head, likee lis!" And an expression of fiendish delight in the thought accompanied a gesture illustrating decapitation. "Likee lis, *slish-slish!* cul'm off. Ley glubble-glubble lil while; lat's all."

"Ugh!" exclaimed Griswold, and thought on, though not aloud. "He talks as if he had done it often. He's a *murderer!*"

"Len or lelve lousan' I culloff," remarked the Mandarin, exhibiting both a consummate mystery of mind-reading and a convincing familiarity with the art and practice of head-lopping. "But you no mlashee," added Griswold's visitor reassuringly, "I no cullee."

The latter remark plus the thought that a little chap less than a foot high would find it difficult to *slish-slish* through a neck nearly a foot thick, quieted Griswold's apprehensions. There came, too, a rush of ideas recalling the genii and the bottle, Aladdin and the lamp, and the magic skin. To be a prisoner in the back of a chair for hundreds of years; to witness, without voice to participate in the innumerable family quarrels with which every dining-room abounds; to sit, powerless to eat a bite or drink a drop, through thousands and thousands of breakfasts, dinners and suppers; to endure, impotent to protest, the countless renditions by after-dinner humorists of the same old stories Confucius used to tell; to sojourn, doubtless for months at a time, in dusty, musty auction rooms: no pleasant existence this. At this, Griswold's money difficulties recurred to him. One of those rubies, for instance!

If the Mandarin detected his host's avaricious hopes, he gave no sign of it. "No likee lere," he said imperiously. "Lake mlee lown!"

Baby Boy was going on five months old, so Griswold had acquired a deft facility at handling tender mites of humanity. He removed the Mandarin from the edge of the hole in the back of the chair quite dexterously, and undertook to place him upon the table. But the little fellow protested by kicking Griswold in the stomach vigorously.

"No, no, no—in l'lair, in l'lair."

Hence, notwithstanding that the Mandarin's top-knot sank entirely from sight beneath the table, Griswold placed him in the center of the chair's cushioned seat.

"Now, latch me glow."

To Griswold's amazement, not to speak of consternation, the top-knot almost immediately began to rise above the table. And not only that; a pearl-studded scabbard which hung at the hip, and which had resembled a small pair of curved nail scissors without the finger-holes, likewise began to grow. And not only that, but the string of rubies, until now no larger than buckshot, began to grow. In fine, hardly a minute passed before Griswold beheld at his dinner-board a six-foot specimen of Oriental brawn and magnificence, with a scimitar in fine working order at his side, and wearing a chain of rubies each as large as a hen's egg.

As his visitor assumed proportions that made head lopping, if he should take the notion, quite a practicable thing, Griswold shrank again to the far side of the room.

"Nel mly! No lurtee," quoth the Mandarin, manifestly delighted at regaining his full stature. Evidently, too, his return to man's size had awakened many appetites, for he remarked: "Whallee glot in thil glassee? Smlellee gloodee."

Griswold took the hint with alacrity. The slightest slip now, and Clara would return to a headless husband. The blood would squirt terribly and soil the tablecloth! "If I let him drink alone," Griswold reasoned, "he may take offense. "Surely the circumstances compel me to take a second milk punch."

"Your very, very good health," spoke up Griswold a moment later, "but whom have I the honor of toasting?"

"Mly name,"—and the Chinaman drew himself up proudly, "is Hang Dang Hai—I'lm—"

"What!" Griswold almost shrieked, then added to himself, "You surely ought to."

For once his Oriental lordship misread Griswold. He mistook his host's exclamation for a quite natural amazement at the idea of entertaining so distinguished a guest.

"Leth," the old potentate continued, "I'lm Hang Dang Hai, Mandolin of Hang Dang Hai. "It mleans Land Where Bleezes Blow Sleet Acloss Wally Lillies."

The beverage had a pleasantly mellowing effect upon the Mandarin, who sipped it slowly and, after each sip, lay back in the chair and uttered a softly appreciative "Ah!" This reminded Griswold of Baby Boy's stock remark when tickled under the chin. It dawned that the Mandarin after all might have his good points.

For his part, Mr. Hang Dang Hai began to take a paternal interest in Griswold's affairs. In fact, the conversation turned to intimacies of the most delicate nature.

"Mlallied?" asked the Mandarin.

"I should say so," replied Griswold emphatically.

"Whley you keep 'em?"

"*Them.* Why, there's only one. Clara wouldn't stand for any others; why, she'd cut off their heads."

"Oof!"—contemptuously. "Nlo glood, lun."

Whereupon the Mandarin, who, it appeared, had had a considerable experience, gave his opinions upon matrimony. It is much easier, he said, to manage a hundred wives than to manage one. He had tried both systems; he had singled out a particularly attractive young damosel and had divorced the other ninety-nine; but the fortunate girl —Lalo Lalun by name, signifying Little Goose With Feathers as Soft as Silk—had become so puffed up by her conquest that she imagined herself the sole proprietor of his time. Why, when he and Confucius sat up late at fan-tan she raised Ned about it! He had been compelled to give so much attention to Lalo Lalun that the affairs of his principality were thrown into the utmost confusion. For one thing, the deserted ninety-nine had gone forth and raised an army which threatened his destruction. Therefore, much as he regretted it, he had found it necessary to cut off the pretty little head of Little Goose With Feathers as Soft as Silk.

After conscripting a new one to make the even hundred, he had re-married all the others. The feat was accomplished in blocks of ten. He had lived happily ever after. His wives henpecked one another and left him in peace and quiet of evenings. Whenever one of his helpmeets dared to disturb him while smoking his pipe, or to reproach him in any manner whatsoever, he resorted to decapitation. He made this a uniform rule and the results were so satisfactory that he had no hesitation whatever in recommending the plan to Griswold. At times when the executions reduced the number of his wives as low as ninety, another wedding would take place. He would annex ten more—at one clip.

His example had established among the nobility of Hang Dang Hai the custom of marrying in blocks of ten. "Do you take this man for your wedded husband until his sword shall do you apart?" the marriage ritual ran. "We do," the ten would chorus. If they rebelled, or even remonstrated, off would go their heads. Hence few rebelled or remonstrated. The blocks-of-ten system, the Mandarin modestly observed, had proved a very valuable both as a political and domestic economy in Hang Dang Hai. Otherwise, a man of station would have had all of his leisure and savings eaten up with his weddings. Only once, after the one-hundred-wife and blocks-of-ten system had been introduced, was the peace and prosperity of the Land Where Bleezes Blow Sleet Acloss Wally Lillies seriously menaced. The idea of emancipation spread among the wives; they formed a union and issued an ultimatum to the effect that instead of each man having a hundred wives each woman should have a hundred husbands. The Mandarin and his nobles held a council at which it was decided that the union could not be recognized; and that, moreover, its demand was exorbitant. The wives then formed an army and marched upon the husbands. Since the ratio was a hundred to one, the men seemed doomed to destruction. But the Mandarin had had a brilliant idea; overnight he had a huge mirror manufactured; and when the wives rushed to the attack in the morning they discovered the shocking appearance they made in war togs and surrendered immediately.

Awful to relate, Griswold had grown so hardened to the Mandarin's callous references to beheaded people that the mention of another now had sunk to the uninteresting level of a remark about the weather. Quite a normal point of view had stolen upon him. He found his eyes and all his faculties glued to the marvelous gems which glowed from the visitor's blouse like so many suns through dark-red glass. Worth not less than a hundred thousand dollars apiece, those rubies!

"It's all very well to talk about the advantages of having a hundred wives," Griswold remarked finally. "That may have been possible a couple of thousand years ago in Hang Dang Hai. But

most men of to-day can't afford one, and that's my case."

"Whallee mlean, no aflord?"

Griswold hastened to explain. By hard, hard work, he earned forty dollars a week; by laboring two thousand and five hundred weeks he earned the price of one of those—

"One l'lese," interrupted the Mandarin, lifting up his string of jewels.

"Yes."

"O Dam Lai!" an exclamation of unfeigned Oriental astonishment, immediately following by a hurried unclasping of the string of rubies. "Take lis, and lis."

And he cast two of the lambent stones across the table much in the manner of the man at the Zoo casting fish to the seals. As the seals dash for the fish, Griswold's nervous hands shot out and closed greedily upon the gem. Two hundred thousand dollars!

Griswold undoubtedly would have remained hours staring at the two rubies, entranced by their hypnotic gleams, had it not been for the hypnotic gleams of the remaining rubies which the Mandarin still possessed. So Griswold continued in his most pathetic manner and tone: he worked so very, very hard and made so very, very little: and his rent was so much, his running expenses so much, and the cost of Baby Boy and of Clara's hats and dresses was awfully, awfully high. Even round steak was thirty-three cents a pound! Fact was, what with the purchase of the mysterious chairs, his losses at bridge and the taxicab bill, he had, less than an hour before, hopelessly confronted a deficit of one hundred and thirty-eight dollars and sixty cents!

"Yes," said Griswold, with a grimace intended for a smile, "my only recreation consists of devising ways to make this month's money pay last month's bills."

As these horrors of modern high-cost living were unfolded, the Mandarin every now and then detached another ruby and tossed it across the table until, without modifying the sobby character of Griswold's narration in the least, the latter's affluence had soared into the millions.

"That terribly impossible sum of $78.57," went on Griswold, "stood between me and the payment of my insurance on the first of the month. If I had died with that insurance not paid," he groaned, "there would have been nothing left, nothing for Clara and Baby Boy to live on—no-ho, nu-nu-nothing at-t-all!"

Another bombardment of rubies intervened, incidental to which the Mandarin interrogated Griswold closely on the subject of insurance. He nodded several times appreciatively as the life-insurance idea soaked in. However, Griswold was so absorbed in working on the Mandarin's sympathies to the tune of about a million a minute that he failed to observe the light of eager covetousness which, after grasping the insurance proposition, glistened in his illustrious visitor's eyes.

"Nor have I told you all," Griswold continued in a shaking voice. "When I undertook to impress on my wife the seriousness of our situation, she—she tu-tu-took Bu-bu-baby Bu-bu-boy and ru-ru-ran awu-wu-way to her mu-mu-mother's lu-lu-leaving mu-mu-me a-hall alone—no wu-wu-wife, no-fu-fu-family —a-hall alone."

But in this effort to hammer in the catastrophe Griswold missed the mark a mile.

"Whallee cly for? Le clom black, wont lee?"

"Yes," replied Griswold, startled into admitting the truth.

"Whallee glonna do len?"

"I suppose,"—again the truth—"I suppose I'll act angry awhile—then give her a clucker, a tucker and a pettin'."

It took a little time to make the Mandarin understand that a clucker was a kiss, a tucker an embrace and a pettin' the logical sauce for both.

When he did gather the idea, however, he said very emphatically:

"Nlo."

"Yes," insisted Griswold.

"Nlo, Nlo!"

"Then what ought I to do?"

"Culloff head. *Slish-slish,* culloff! Len glo glet hunled lives. Inslure lem hunlen lousan' dolls each. Culloff len head a leer. Len lunled lousan dolls a leer. Makee you richee. Blig flools, lem inslurance pleeple."

"You infernal murdering villain!" roared Griswold, forgetting self interest—forgetting everything in his revulsion at the horrible proposal. "You heartless, bloody-minded barbarian! Do you think your gift of a few hundred million dollars worth of rubies will enable you to make such a proposition to me under my own roof and get away with it? Take back your rubies, take 'em back I say!" And he pelted the Mandarin with the gems.

Yellower grew the Chinaman's yellow face. Squintier squinted his squinty eyes, which likewise squirted fire. To make a long description short, Griswold's rage was reciprocated.

In fact, the Mandarin loosed a series of terrifying squeaks like the expostulations, magnified a hundred times, of a rat when beset by a terrier. Probably such an attack of anger never before was beheld with human eyes.

"Hiyi Kiyi! Haiyai Kaiyai! Dang Hai?" he shrieked, meaning, "Durst thou then!" With incredible swiftness he leaped upon his chair, stepped onto the table and drew his sword from its bejeweled scabbard. "Slay lee player, slay lem *click!*" he screamed. "I'lm glonna cullee led off."

Poor Griswold saw the awful flash of bare steel—that was all. Resistance? Quite useless. He lowered his head, offered his neck. Might as well let a clean, neat job be done! Anway, when Clara got home she would realize her mistake in buying those infernal chairs! Perhaps the story would sometime be published and become a warning to all wives!

These and many other weighty reflections rushed through his mind for probably a full minute, though it seemed an hour. Then he noticed all was quiet about him; probably his head was off! He thanked the Mandarin for his expertness! Well, well—who'd have thought it so easy to lose one's head! He felt fine; perhaps he could get along without a head; his head had never been of much use anyhow. Yet, by thunder! what was the heavy thing depending from his neck? He reached up with his hand and passed it across his hair and face. A head beyond a doubt, perhaps a dead head, but a head! Then, oh, strange sound! A snuffling and sniffling as of some one weeping! He looked up; what a miracle met his gaze!

There, back in his chair again, his pig-tail flopped across the table like a big black-snake, was the Mandarin, sobbing violently. He made a picture of utter abandonment to grief. "So-ho," thought Griswold. "You're overcome with remorse, are you?"

But Griswold was an exceedingly sympathetic, tender-hearted man. He never could bear to see anyone weep. So he stepped around and patted the Mandarin gently on the back.

"Never mind," he said gently, "never mind. You didn't know any better. I forgive you."

Whereat the object of forgiveness came bolt erect suddenly. Tears still welled from his eyes; though it was with mixed grief and resurging anger that he snarled:

"Blig flool, I'lm nlot solly clause I *dlid;* I'lm solly clause I *dlidn't!* Oh! oh! oh! dlon't you see, you blig flool! all lies, blig lies, I been tellee you. Allee tlime I wlant cullee leds off, allee tlime, and nlever clan! I no got tee hunled wive; I no glot anlee and nlever had anlee. Dlon't see, I onlee plicler of Mandolin? Blig flool, lese chlairs no comee flom Chlina; lay comee flom facly at Glan' Lapids! Oh! oh! oh! I onlee dam no-clount plicler mlade in Glan'———"

Griswold felt a pinch at the arm. It was he, then, who, from a doze with his head on his arms and his arms on the table, started up suddenly. He saw—Clara.

Baby Boy was in her arms and he was saying "Goo-gah, goo-gah." For the minute that followed, Clara thought her husband insane. He looked at the Mandarin's picture nervously, then searched his pockets excitedly, and, on finding five or six dried raisins, stared at them curiously and burst out laughing.

P. S.—The check for this story paid the insurance.

Black Ivory

A tremendously exciting experience of "Blue-funk Carson," the pioneer trader in Africa. Arab slave-dealers raid a native village, and march away with their captives in chains. Then Carson mixes in—whereupon things happen swiftly and with violence.

By JOHN BARNETT

THE native village, far in the interior, had proved itself finely hospitable. Blue-funk Carson, a long, gaunt shadow of a man after weeks of intermittent fever, hardship and hunger, had been received with effusion, to his secret surprise and relief. He distributed gifts with a lavish hand to the chief and his leading men. Then wearily enough he sought the hut that had been assigned to him and his boys.

It was a large hut, and its interior would have provided plentiful occupation for half a dozen energetic charwomen. To say that it was uncleanly simply understates the case. But Carson was an old campaigner, and, in addition, was rocking upon his legs for want of sleep. He did not investigate the awesome mysteries of that hut. There were certain horrid-looking bags upon the shelves, for instance; their contents *might* be of a quite pleasing and innocent character. On the other hand, it was exceedingly probable that they contained smoke-dried human heads and hands! But Carson let them lie. He swallowed a portion of the quaint stew, reeking of palm oil, which Imbono, his giant body servant, had concocted, and then turned in, after one hasty pipe. Almost instantly he fell into the heavy sleep of exhaustion.

He awoke with a start, and mechanically his hand closed upon the butt of his revolver. It was just before the dawn; gray light was stealing into the hut. In his ears was a clamor of shrieks and oaths and a straggling rattle of rifle shots. His boys, all save Imbono, seemed to be cowering in the corners of the hut. Imbono had caught up a rifle and run into the open air: Blue-funk Carson followed him, revolver in hand.

There were panic and terror and hideous confusion in the narrow street. From the huts the villagers were pouring, screaming shrilly in utter fear. Bullets were singing through the murky air; the flashes of rifles flamed red through the dawning mists. The village had been surrounded. A ring of armed assailants were scaling the fence and closing in upon the cowering, bewildered villagers.

Blue-funk Carson understood, grimly cool as ever. One glance at the attacking party informed him as to the object of the venture. Brightly clad negroes and white-robed Arabs formed the ring; he even distinguished the leader of them all, an Arab of advanced middle age, with a cruel, high-bred face. This was a "blackbirding" gang: these raiders were after ivory, black and living!

A young woman at his side spun round with a little gasping cry, and stood for a moment absolutely still, with a dark bluish circle drilled accurately in the middle of her forehead. Then she slid slowly down upon her face, stone dead. Carson was conscious of a wild fury. He began to see red. This is no figure of speech; there seemed to be a red mist wavering before his eyes. He was mad to avenge this woman and the simple people who had given him of their best. These murderers should not work their vileness entirely without scathe! He heard Imbono's war yell, and saw the giant spring forward, gripping his rifle by the muzzle, swinging it round his head like a feather. Carson followed his servant, pulling trigger viciously as he ran. And then—without pain or shock, he seemed to fall forward into utter darkness! A bullet had grazed the bone of his skull, stunning him as effectually as a blow from a heavy club.

The sun was high when he came back to consciousness; its scorching glow had aroused him. He woke with a splitting headache, and for one short moment he lay, wondering with confused brain what had happened. Then he remembered, in a wave, as it were, and ceased instantly to think of his own trifling ills. There were low, hopeless groans in his ears; dead and dying men and women lay around him. He staggered dizzily to his feet, and it was a village of death and desolation upon which he looked.

Along the street Carson reeled, a gaunt, tottering figure with dry blood upon his face and head, searching for Imbono, dead or living. And as he went his heart grew sick within him. The dead men and women were comparatively few. After the first murderous volleys the raiders had made prisoners of the adult villagers. Alive they were of value. But the children were worthless; they could not be kept alive in the chain gang. And it was upon them that the blackbirders had glutted their cruelty. It seemed to Carson that there were dead children everywhere. He considered himself tough in mind as in body; he had looked upon strange sights in his few wild, crowded years, but he came near to tears of rage and pity at what he saw that day. There were dead babies who had been tossed upon spears for sport; there were dead babies— But there are things of which it is not well to write.

He did not find Imbono. But there was work ready to his hand. The wounded were crying piteously for water. Carson did what he might for them, never sparing a thought for his own wound and raging thirst. This duty came first; the other, for which his whole soul cried out fiercely, had perforce to be postponed. Help for the wounded, and afterwards — chastisement and revenge. Carson straightened his aching body at last, and spoke aloud, slowly and very quietly. His face was livid with weariness, but his eyes were like gray flames.

"That's finished! I've done what I can for these poor devils. And now—to follow those reptiles! A life for a life! It's a good old law, when all's said. There shall be no unnecessary rest and food for me until I've exacted it. And if Imbono's still alive, he's to be freed, of course."

He tightened his belt about his lean waist and passed through the shattered gate of the village at a jog trot. The track was plain to see. The raiders had trampled their way through the scanty crops of the villagers, leaving a broad swathe behind them. Here and there lay the body of a wounded prisoner who had failed very early in his time of torment.

It was at the edge of the forest that Carson caught sight of a dark, furtive shadow. It was Peter, one of his own boys, a pleasant-natured, handy youth, but an arrant, unashamed coward. He seemed half mad with terror even now; he did not recognize his master. At the mere sight of another man he had begun to run. Carson wasted no time in shouting, and he was well aware of Peter's fleetness of foot. He plucked out his revolver and fired above the head of the fugitive. At the sound of the report and the scream of the bullet past his ear, Peter gave a wild howl and flung himself face downwards upon the ground. Carson ran up to the craven and stirred him with his toe.

"Get up, you fool!" he ordered.

Peter recognized the voice and caught at his master's knees with a joyful yell. Carson shook off the man's embrace with brusqueness.

"You seen anything of Imbono?" he asked.

Peter became voluble.

"Yes, I seen him. When de shooting begun I run out of hut. Nowhere to go! Debbils firing eberywhere! Lay down under wall and waited for chance to do a bolt. Saw Imbono in de street. My word! he fight like tree mad debbils! Dey got all round him—but no shoot—want take him alive! He give dem no end ob a job! Hit all round him wid rifle butt, like elephant wid trunk. Two, three heads he smashed. Dey only get him down when his arms tire. Knock him down, den, from behind. Dey tie his hands behind him, put big fork on his neck. He taken away wid oder prisoners, men and women, lots ob dem. Dey make more haste, I tink, when dey see you lying dere!"

Carson nodded. He realized that the sight of an Englishman in the raided village would be something of a shock to these hunters of black ivory. The arm of England was known to be uncannily long and heavy. Even here in these wilds the weight of that arm had exacted a vague respect. There was always trouble when an accursed Englishman was killed! That knowledge had probably saved his life, by a very little. The raiders had refrained from cutting his throat as he lay; they had hastily secured their spoil of prisoners, and had left the desolated village with all speed.

"I see," Carson said, quietly. "So Imbono's still alive; that's something. Now he's got to be freed. We going after those devils very quick, Peter!"

But Peter, after staring a moment in utter wonder, began to wail and protest. "No use going! Only two ob us! Lots and lots ob dem debbils. We only get killed!"

"We're going," Carson said, firmly. "Something will turn up. You coming too, Peter. But—it's certainly a pity that you're not a better fighting man!"

He stood, frowning slightly, peering through the golden blaze of sunshine. He had no doubt at all about his action; these blackbirders must be followed; Imbono, who had never failed his master, must be rescued. That was certain. How it was to be done, how two men, one of them a pitiable, confessed coward, were to deal with fifty, must be left to the future. Blue-funk Carson, magnificently self-confident as ever, never questioned that it could or should not be done. A plan would suggest itself in due course, or luck would help him. He believed royally in his luck.

"Some one coming from village!" Peter said suddenly, thankful for any respite from the madness of the proposed pursuit.

Carson turned swiftly. It was a graceful enough figure that he saw coming towards him at a swift, wolf-like trot. It was that of a young woman, tall and comely. But it was her face that came near to startling Blue-funk Carson. She looked neither to right nor left. There was a quiet, grim madness blazing from her eyes. She followed the track of the raiders at that steady, tireless trot, gripping a long spear in her right hand. And that spear was stained with blood.

She would have sped past the Englishman without a check, but Carson signed to Peter to ask her errand. The girl was stayed with difficulty. But in answer to Peter's questions she spoke with a kind of dreadful calm, her eyes still fixed before her upon the track of the murderers, the long, reddened spear quivering slightly in her grip.

"What does she say, Peter?" Carson asked, curtly.

"She say dem men killed her husband and her baby. She fought like mad and dey knock her down and leave her. She found her husband and baby pinned together wid dat spear; she take de spear, and she going after dem, like you. She quite mad, oh! berrah dam mad! She going to kill one ob dem debbils, and she no care a dam what happen afterwards!"

Carson's grim face lit up.

"By gad, I like her pluck!" he muttered. "Tell her that I'm with her. We're both out for revenge. You can go back to the village, Peter; she'll be more

help to me than you. And now—we've wasted enough time!"

The girl received the words of the white man without visible elation; she seemed only intent to renew her pursuit. At a gesture from him she leaped forward like a hound unleashed. And stride for stride with her went Bluefunk Carson, grim, gaunt and untiring, careless of his wound. So he passed upon the maddest adventure of his wild life, alone with one half-crazed girl against some fifty lawless men. Peter stood and watched them disappear. Then he shrugged his shoulders moodily. Doubtless his master was mad!

The caravan of black ivory traveled slowly, perforce. Heartbroken men and women, chained, with heavy yokes upon their necks, cannot be thrashed and goaded beyond a certain pace. God who made them only knows what thoughts were in the hearts of those captives. Undoubtedly they were spared some torment, in that they lacked the keener feelings of white folk. They could not analyze their thoughts; they could not look far ahead; their minds were swiftly dulled by misery. But undoubtedly they suffered. That wild hour of bloodshed, these present blows and oaths, these bonds—even the cheery simplicity of natural barbarians is not proof against such telling arguments! Heavy footed, with bowed heads, with eyes helpless and bewildered as those of tortured animals, they were driven forward through the baking heat.

But to one prisoner at least that apathetic misery was lacking. Imbono, gigantic and heavy shouldered, lurched forward in his bonds like a wild beast newly trapped. By his savage stand against capture he had made himself a marked man in the eyes of his new owners. Here was a slave among slaves! Such brute strength and courage would endure all hardships and fetch a notable price at the long journey's end. But meanwhile such a captive needed to be tamed and closely watched. So there were chains upon Imbono's wrists, and upon his neck and shoulders a yoke of crushing weight. Nor through the long day were shrewd blows lacking for his moral discipline.

Imbono was merely biding his time; he had no hope of life or freedom. Even his master, in whom he believed as some men believe in God, could not help him here. But revenge and a swift death were worth an effort. The irons he wore seemed worn and old; his captors had not reckoned on the almost superhuman strength of his great arms. There was a certain yellow mulatto, ingeniously cruel, whose stick had tortured him through the long day. . . . If Imbono could but get his great hands upon that yellow devil's throat he would die with glee. . . .

His chance came in the evening. And, as it happened, his master saw him take it. Carson and the girl had overtaken the plodding caravan. With difficulty the Englishman had persuaded his strange ally to bide her time, not to spend her life uselessly in one mad rush. Hid in a clump of bush they watched the slave caravan halt near water and make camp for the night.

The mulatto sauntered towards the prisoners, who had sunk wearily down, still in their bonds but with the connecting yokes cast off. In his hand was that heavy, flexible stick with which he had gratified his peculiar instincts throughout the day. He singled out Imbono and struck twice, in sheer wanton cruelty. Carson, watching, ground his teeth with an oath and fingered his revolver longingly. And then—there was a sharp crack of snapping metal and a roar as from a charging beast! Imbono had sprung; his freed hands were upon the mulatto's throat; they crashed down together with a noise as of worrying dogs. There was a rush of Arabs and negroes to the spot. . . . Barely in time to save the yellow man's life they tore Imbono from his prey. He fought like a leopard in a pit, utterly careless of his own life, intent only on revenge. But once again the crushing odds prevailed; they bore him down, weaponless as he was, and chained him heavily. Then sticks were brought for his due schooling. . . . Carson could bear to see no more. Only by a savage effort had he refrained from spending his life uselessly by hurling himself into that hopeless fight. He must bide his time, if he would be of real help to the pris-

oners. But he could not stand by and see his servant flogged by these merciless fiends. With tears of rage in his eyes he signaled to the girl and crept away.

An idea had come to him, and he acted upon it when they were out of earshot of the camp.

Somehow with broken words and signs he made the girl understand that he wished her to lead him to the nearest village. Under the stars they made for it at speed, careless of rest or food, when at last she had caught his meaning.

"And please God it will hold some natural fighting men!" Carson muttered, as he pressed forward. "It's our one slim chance. If it doesn't—!"

Well, in that case, a man could just go back and die quite simply and rather happily in a last wild fight beside his servant! Anyone privileged to possess Blue-funk Carson's acquaintance will have no doubt that that was his resolve, if the worst came to the worst. It was infinitely preferable in his eyes, that course, to leaving Imbono to torment and slavery. But such a course would be unprofitable. Carson had not the smallest objection to risking his life, but he preferred to risk it to some purpose.

As it chanced, that village did hold fighting men. Indeed, the habitual bearing of the whole village would have been too truculent and pugnacious for the taste of most white men unsupported by an armed force. It was a village of head-hunters, with a distinct and natural taste for cannibalism. It had no love for white men; it had a well founded theory that such gentry were least dangerous when quietly dead! It had had experience of white men in connection with slave gangs. Wherefore when those villagers realized that a white man stood almost alone in their midst, they swarmed out upon him in a cheery mood. They were prepared to knock him upon the head with fine simplicity. Then he could work no more mischief.

But this white man was a personage outside their experience. He stood in the torchlight and faced the yelling throng. And they knew, somehow they knew from his quiet bearing, that he had no fear at all of death. They could not put it into words, but they were conscious of this. And this man was stronger and braver than they. Of that fact also those natives were assured. And because he had no fear or thought of death the desire for his slaying fell from them. He was their master; his eye taught them that without need of words. The yells died away; the armed hands fell. They stood around him, panting slightly, waiting to hear his behests. So may you see a cageful of raving lions awed by the potent magnetism of one fearless man.

When silence fell, Blue-funk Carson spoke to the villagers, using the girl as his interpreter. He felt no gratification for the partial success that he had won; his triumph did not appear notable to his eyes. He had a certain work to do, and he would do it, regardless of all risks. Nothing else mattered.

He told the chief that a gang of slave-hunters was encamped very near at hand. At the word a storm of yells broke out once more; they knew—oh, very well those people knew what fashion of men slave-hunters were, and the manner of their work! But Carson hushed the clamor very coolly with a gesture.

That camp was very near, as he had said. With the dawn the slave-hunters would renew their march. This village lay near to their northward route. What would the chief do? Would he await the coming of the raiders and deliver himself and his people into their hands? Or would he and his people hide in the bush like frightened rats, leaving their crops and village at the mercy of the gang?

Carson's hearers were stung by that, as he had meant them to be stung. The chief, a youngish man of splendid build, flushed with rage through his brown skin. His men broke into savage raving. "They were no frightened rats! They were warriors, one and all! There were no braver fighters in the land! How dared the white man insult them in that fashion?"

The chief gained silence and spoke with cold anger.

"The white man is brave. He is brave

to stand here at all. He is yet braver to speak in that fashion in the teeth of my young men. What is his purpose? What does he seek of us?"

The words were interpreted to Carson. He made answer in short, simple sentences, easily to be followed. There was a glow of hope in his heart. These people were answering to his touch. There was a fine heat of ferocity in them.

"Well I know that you are brave. That is why I am come. You will not wait tamely for these evil men to make you slaves? You will not run away and hide from them? Then what may you do? I will tell you. You shall march with me this very night, and when the dawn is gray in the sky we will stamp flat that foul camp beneath our feet!"

The warriors answered with an exultant roar. Only the chief appeared to hesitate. Carson was watching his face.

"There is much plunder in the camp," he said. "I shall claim nothing for myself, not one yard of cloth or pound of powder. I shall claim only the lives of the slaves whom they hold in chains. One of those slaves is my servant, a man tried often, proved faithful to death. For his sake I will go with you and show you how the white men fight!"

And that turned the scale. The chief loved war, but he loved loot with a greater warmth.

"We will go with you, white man!" he cried. "We have heard of the valor of the white man. He shall see at dawn if I and my young men are frightened babes!"

And at that word the warriors lifted up their voices like a pack of wolves at sight of game. Carson spoke when the fierce howling died.

"It is good, chief," he said. "I do well believe that you and your warriors are men. Now let us eat and so go forth."

The dawn was very near. In a loose, ragged column some sixty natives were advancing through the forest. They moved silently as ghosts; before them went a spray of spies. To a man they were armed with spears, clubs and knives. The only firearm of the party hung at the belt of Blue-funk Carson. He walked beside the chief as noiselessly as a white man may. Near to him like a shadow flitted the native girl, brooding upon her vengeance.

Carson touched the chief's shoulder, and the column halted. The skirmishers were creeping back; the camp was near at hand. Through the trees they could see the gleam of dying fires. The stars had faded away. A gray, misty light was filtering down through the canopy of leaves. The air was damp and chill.

Carson had made plain his plan of attack to the chief. It was crudely simple. He trusted entirely to the shock of a surprise attack and to the natural courage of his spearmen. There would be sentries, but the warning they could give must not suffice. The chained slaves lay together. Upon the other half of the camp Carson would lead his rush.

The spearmen were gathered now, on tiptoe, straining at the leash. Carson and the chief led them slowly forward through the trees. The camp lay in a clearing; it was before them now. Carson could see the drooping figures of three sentries. He had a sudden remembrance of that tense moment before the kick-off of a big Rugby football match. Just so he had lined up often enough with the rest of the straining forwards . . . He smiled involuntarily, then glanced at the chief and nodded. And then with one mad yell they charged, the Englishman and the native leader side by side ten yards before the rest.

Carson kept his eyes upon the sentries as he ran at his full speed. He saw them straighten up as the charging yell rang out. They lifted their rifles and fired. Something clipped Carson's right ear like a red-hot wire; his revolver spat at the nearest sentry, and the man crumpled. As he fell, Carson caught his rifle from his hand, gripping it by the barrel, and so charged on into the awakening camp.

And now those slave-hunters were tasting something of the wild panic they had so often caused. Their own strategy of a surprise at dawn was turned against them; they woke with the glint

of steel in their eyes, with yells of hate in their ears, to receive as best they might a savage charge that crashed right home. That charge was led by a gaunt white man brandishing round his head a heavy rifle, and by a huge native who gripped a gleaming spear. Behind came a vision of fierce, dark faces, white eyeballs and a press of steel. The fight was short and desperate. Many of the slave-hunters were brave as cornered rats, but they received as little mercy as such vermin. They died quickly, too quickly for justice! Quarter? Let those who have not seen a raided village prate of quarter; Carson, who could be over-merciful, never gave a thought to pity now. He raged through the screaming, cursing press, that was beginning to suck back and break, wielding his rifle butt like Thor's own hammer. He had seen those murdered children and could not forget.

He saw the Arab leader, well-nigh as stately as ever, bearing himself like a man in the thick of the fight. He made for him grimly, but ere he could engage him a swifter shadow darted by. With a shrill cry the native girl was upon the Arab chief; her long spear flashed home, clean through his body. A sword gleamed, and his slayer fell dead above his corpse. But her vengeance was complete. Carson felt that and chuckled fiercely, as his butt smashed home upon the swordsman's head.

It was ending now, ending swiftly. The heart was out of the slave-hunters. The fight was a slaughter now. Those who cried for mercy died where they stood. Those who fled were followed and hunted down. The bravest and wisest of the gang died fighting, accepting grimly the risks of their dark trade. The last scene was ugly, horribly ugly and cruel. But there were red wrongs to avenge, such countless wrongs that if each one of those blackbirders had died by slow-drawn torture he would have received no more than his deserts!

Carson turned from the massacre and went to seek Imbono. Among the excited prisoners he found his servant, half senseless, prone upon the ground, loaded down with fetters, his bare back a sight to turn even a hard man sick. Carson, fumbling for his flask, looked grimly back towards the camp.

"No, it was hardly a case for mercy!" he said.

The Debt of Honor

By LILIAN DUCEY

FOR the second time in the twenty-five years of her life a man had asked Patricia to marry. The very fact that it had happened but twice may have caused her mind with gleaming recollection to revert to the past; and the fact that she had promised herself again seemed sufficient excuse for any vagrant musing; so she gazed off down the garden path, behind the dusky trees of which the man had disappeared, and compared notes, as it were.

It was a static moment. But she was so beautifully, sensibly free from any morbid sentimentalism that even the dull sheen from her tarnished girlhood hopes brought no vague longings for a fuller love than she and the man had, each for the other. Indeed, it seemed as if both were content simply to gather the driftwood of a happy friendship and touch it with the fire of companionship, secure that their congeniality would keep the home hearth ever warm.

It was an ideal of marriage before which memory of those breathless throbbing days of youthful anticipation should have run with flaming cheeks. But Patricia had, by dint of a carefully developed will power and a determined exclusion of any memory pictures during the past three years, reduced to a minimum the very remembrance of those throbbing days of love and joy in loving. And she reasoned now with a mature wisdom, that impulse soon dies, that upon the rockbed of some higher companionship stands the castle of content towering above the turbulent waters of emotion.

In all things, Patricia had striven for a sanely healthy mind. So now even as she looked past the intervening years of determined forgetfulness, she could smile upon her youthful love. But it was a smile such as a mother gives a child who over-estimates his heartaches. Undoubtedly she had reached a higher plane of living. And unquestioned was the fact that, whereas in youth natural selection enters into the scheme of choice, with riper years the mind outreasons nature. Quite sure, she was, that she would not now exchange this calm, reposeful perspective for those joyous visions of that thrilling past.

Convinced and satisfied, she let her mind drift on. Yet there was one phase of that obliterated past from which she held her thoughts—or rather tried to hold her thoughts. But it persisted, and at last, like some oft recurring picture on the fabric of a screen, it swept into her mental vision, determinedly, importunately.

They had—she and that other—already furnished their nest when the rupture came. To the last detail their house had been complete: pictures hung upon the wall in smiling greeting; yearning chairs showed depths that upon occasion might bear a double burden; in well-stocked closets shining folds of linen were piled in billowy tiers. They had even—in the high tide of their joy—set the table that was to mark the initial meal in this their joyous Eden. And then, just a week before the momentous day, came the knowledge of his perfidy.

Memory labored in that latter thought, unforgiving as at first. But the home stood out, clear and dominant even in its unpretentiousness—four windows looking down upon a city street. And the girl who had planned it loved it. And she had thought he loved it too. It was to them almost as a child they had brought into the world, so wonderful it seemed as it grew and grew out of trips to the shops and happy hours of arrangement. So even now, after the interlude of years, it seemed to Patricia to be an integral part of them. It was a tie whose tugging she still felt, now that thought drew rein before it. So she sighed a little, while she rather envied the birds their heedless, happy building. Did no remembrance of a previous year ever worry *their* heartstrings?

On her way to bed, Patricia stepped into her mother's room. Dimly lit, it seemed a fitting setting for her confidence. She even roused the sleeper—and then went on after only a lingering kiss.

And all night long, as an artist whose picture follows him in his dreams, paints on and on, she trailed through those haunting rooms, arranging, tidying, prying into closets. She even pulled down dream shades to keep out the streaming light.

And that was the last act of this absorbing rite. With it she awoke, to find the sun already high, and every glittering article on her dressing table scintillating. In the glare of the sunlight, she smiled at the memory of her dreams and also the musings of the evening, tossing them from her as she tossed back her dusky hair. She had no patience with them. In fact, she had a very definite view of life, as those unspoiled by unhappy experiences often build up for themselves. And so she took up the day cheerfully, even happily, with the serene pleasure one feels in perfect June.

Among the varied minor tasks set forth on the previous day was a predetermined trip to the city—the exchange of an unsatisfactory purchase, lunch with a newly married friend, possibly a matinée, if she could induce Letty Carson to leave her home for a

few hours. She smiled whimsically as she imagined Letty's delight when she told of her engagement—Letty who, steeped in her gushing happiness, wanted to see the whole wide world in double harness.

But in the city a curious mood possessed Patricia. Having attended to her shopping, she seemed to find no interest in the stores' displays. Indeed, through everything one dominant thought kept forcing its way. It clung in her mind, and with a mocking little laugh at her own weakness, she indulged herself.

Less than half an hour afterwards she stood before a staid apartment house. Actually laughing with hearty raillery, she turned her eyes upward. One—two—three, she counted. Before the fourth floor her eye paused. And across her mind swept a tinge of curiosity as to who might now be occupying those rooms.

But suddenly she gave a start. The smile even left her face with tragic quickness. Wide-eyed, she gazed at those windows, for the pattern of those curtains was knocking at her memory. They challenged time. What a curious co-incidence!

Excitedly she walked across the way. Some unseen force seemed driving her even though she acquiesced. And she did not have to stop to count the burnished letter boxes; she knew just where to look——

Patricia brushed a hand across her searching eyes, looked and brushed again. Her deep, blue eyes deepened with a vague and frightened look. Before her was the same brass plate they two had inserted that last happy day: Thomas A. Thorne.

With an urging, passionate earnestness, she turned to a man with a broom entering the vestibule. "The—Thornes," she stammered pointing to the name, "—they are not in?"

A grin spread itself on the janitor's features. Then out of an unhurried silence he said slowly: " 'e's never in. Though I guess 'e pays 'is rent real proper. 'e aint lived 'ere since 'e took the place three years ago."

Something caught in the girl's throat and hurt her. She put up a hand to relieve the tense, taut muscles. And so, without a backward word to the man, who stood and stared, she walked away, dazed—stunned, as from some well nigh unbelievable piece of news.

What did it mean? She put the unanswerable question to herself again and again, finding no parallel in either life or fiction to give reply. And she walked blocks unseeing, heavy lashes drooping, screening the windows of her soul from every passer-by.

How long she pondered possible reasons for this quixotic keeping of that home intact, she did not know. At last by sheer force of will she crushed the futile wondering. But instead of carrying out her program for the day, she took the next train back to her suburban town.

Something, however, had happened to Patricia on that wandering through the city streets. As a crumbling stone will precipitate a wall, that discovery she had made shattered the cold bulwark of years until she stood once more where she stood three years ago, with bruised heart bleeding, shocked brain protesting, pulses clamoring against the world as she found it.

But for all this she met the man of her choice that very evening with her customary poise and friendly smile. After all, there was no reason why the foundation of *their* friendship should be swept away by this whirlpool in her heart. Rather—so secure was she of his ready understanding—she found herself more than once on the point of telling him all about her discovery, and asking him, if he could, to explain it from the masculine standpoint. But she kept her secret. And when he went away, Patricia wore a sparkling jewel he had placed upon her finger.

But whatever her engagement brought, Patricia seemed only to reflect the radiance of her friends. Across the calm, unruffled surface of her days it cast neither light nor shadow. Perhaps for that very reason she found it endurable. And so she began gradually to relegate the past to the past again, although at times, unbidden and forbidden, visions of that home drifted with mysterious potency into her mind. At last, however, she was content. The

path before her showed no wild heights of happiness, but it seemed straight and sure, presaging serene and uneventful journeying. And so she moved in her little world, the self-contained Patricia as of old, always charming, smiling alike on all except Thorne, whom she occasionally met, those rare times when he attended some social function.

And then one day a most unusual thing happened, one of those things that will make the most philosophical believe that after all we are but pawns in the hands of Fate, our destinies predetermined.

Seating herself at a table in a restaurant in the city, she looked across the white cloth into the eyes of him. It was a tense moment. And while their faces hued themselves as the linen between, the man said gravely:

"How do you do, Patricia?"

It was the first time in all those years that a word had passed between them. And a flaming red deluged the first pallor of the girl's face. The hush of consternation pervaded her voice when she said: "How could I have made such a mistake?" She spoke more to herself than to the man.

"Why, I believe the waiter really placed you here." Thorne's honest eyes —undeniably honest eyes—lingered on hers. "But I'll be going in just a moment. I'm quite through." And as he spoke he placed a bill beside the dinner check.

However, even after the change had been brought him, he made no move to leave. There was no one else at their table, and he looked across a: the girl so long that she seemed to raise her eyes perforce. Then he sa: l in the grave, quiet voice he had used before:

"I'd like to ask you a favor, Patricia. Such an opportunity as this can never occur again. It almost seems as if God had invented it."

But into the face of the girl swept a look that meant hot denial. The man noting it, spoke quickly. And this time a touch of pain seemed to make his graveness almost tragic.

"Believe me, Patricia, it isn't too much to ask."

"Not too much to ask," she echoed him vaguely. Her lips twitched, then steadied into a hard little smile. But she added, and she scarcely knew why: "Very well—ask it."

But without a word he studied her —a gaze so grave, so speculative it almost made her wince. After a long moment he rose.

"I will be waiting outside," he said soberly and went before she could protest or even inquire what favor there was he could not ask her here as well as on the street.

But when he met her at the door and gently urged her into a waiting taxi, the tragic lines of his face startled her.

Without a word he followed her. And neither of them spoke until they had left behind the maze of cars and auto's on Broadway. Then Thorne turned to her.

"There is something I want to show you, Patricia," he said slowly. "That is all. The favor is going with me to view it."

And then Patricia gasped. With swift prescience she knew what it was they two were going to look upon, and she put a protesting hand upon the door. But as he capped it with one of his, she drew back. The rest of the way she sat rigidly erect.

"I've always kept the key with me," the man said as the car stopped and he stepped to the sidewalk. Then he put out a perfunctory hand and helped the girl. And it seemed to him that he really led her up those steps, feeling her sway a little in spite of her slim strength.

Up two flights of stairs he helped her—actually helped her. Before the last she stopped short, crimsoning so that even in the dull light of the hall he could see.

"I'd rather not—" she faltered. "No —I'd rather not. What's the use—or the good? I should not have come as far as this."

The man looked at her.

"If you don't come," he said gently, "I shall think you are afraid. And if you are afraid I shall think you still care—care, in spite of all." His voice broke a little hoarsely.

An angry light flew to Patricia's

eyes. Head haughtily erect on her slender neck, she went on, without assistance now.

"I haven't been here since that last day—" He inserted the little key into the Yale lock. "Since that day we set the table so it would be ready," —the door flew open wide—"when we returned from Bermuda."

Why was he referring to that intimate past? But in spite of him Patricia allowed no emotion to show itself. Head bravely erect, she passed in, then looked.

Dust was everywhere, cloaking everything. Furniture, rugs, floor hid their brightness beneath it. Even the air was filled with it. Only in the trailing, slanting sunbeams where it floated iridescent in swaying cloud-lines did it seem less lusterless.

"Dull as our dreams," the girl suddenly said. "And sullied as our ideals." And with one gloved finger she drew quaint arabesques on a table top.

The man came and stood beside her.

"But brightened and dusted in a moment," he said, and with a pocket handkerchief he wiped the table. "See!" he commanded.

A queer, frightened look flew to the girl's eyes. She had to veil them until she vanquished it. Then she said coldly:

"Is there anything further you want to show me?"

Her coldness only seemed to have the effect of making the honest eyes above her grow sadder. "Everything, I want to show you," he said solemnly. "Surely something must touch you—bring it back—make you remember."

Hurriedly from room to room she made her way. And yet she moved as one, who put to a test of courage, trembles both from fear and haste.

But in the little dining-room he forced her to stand. Hand suddenly outstretched, he grasped her arm—but ever so gently. Then with an old-world ceremoniousness of manner he drew out a chair from the table, dusted it and placed her.

"Just a minute so," he said, and seated himself opposite. "Now this is as it was to have been. Do you remember? Or have you forgotten it all? Can't you take it in again—let it flood your heart for a minute? It's our home—yours and mine. Everything about us arranged by love. Don't you feel any tie even through your bitterness?"

His eyes had seized upon Patricia's and clung to them as he spoke, with an earnestness so passionate in their pleading she felt herself torn with a half mad impulse to answer him somehow—she didn't quite know how. Her hand went tremblingly to her throat to prevent it.

"I wonder if you can imagine how the news of your engagement made me feel?" he went on tensely. "Before that, I always clung to the possibility that eventually everything would straighten out between us. I kept this—this home—ours—always with that in mind. It seemed as if with it, I was holding you. And then— Why, I couldn't believe it at first. Patricia going to marry another! *You* going to be another man's wife!"

She gave a little distracted gesture. "Let's not talk of that now," she said, and made as if to rise.

"Please!" He put out a pleading hand. "It's now or never. If I can't make you understand—*here!* One owes a debt to a love such as ours was."

"Oh!" Again she made a little distracted movement. "Why will you persist in so absolutely ignoring what came between us? I cannot understand your attitude at all, knowing what I know."

He sighed deeply, with a hopelessness that was a revelation of the keenest suffering. "As before—I can't even touch on that, Patricia," he said gently.

She rose quickly, forced to it by her rapidly diminishing self-control. In spite of all she knew about him, he had moved her so that she had a mad impulse to fling the past to the four winds—to blot out his misdeeds. For the moment all the old love seemed to live again, and fearful of it winning a shameful victory over self-respect, she tried to rush away.

But he reached the door before her. Gently he barred her way.

"Wait!" he urged. "Wait, Patricia."

But she would not. And he was as gently determined that she should. He would not let her pass, and to the girl, the hand on her arm seemed steadily to be draining all her powers of resistance. When presently he took her in his arms she made only a feeble protest. But when he lifted her face and found her lips, she suddenly remembered all that stood between them.

"Let me go!" Desperately she pushed against his shoulders. "Let me go! Oh! How could you? How dared you?"

Slowly he released her, holding on to her hands as he let her go. Hungrily he looked at her. "You'll not marry him, Patricia? Tell me that first," he urged. "Promise me that and you may go."

The still rooms throbbed with his strained voice. The pain in his eyes made the girl's burn with unshed tears. "I wont—marry him," she stammered. "Now—let me go."

"Very well, dear." He bent over her two hands with old-world courtliness and kissed them. "After all, you do understand—that it couldn't be. And that is the main thing."

Patricia stood very still looking down at his bowed head. Teeth on her quivering lip, she held her breath. When he dropped her hands and stood from her path, she took one more fleeting glance around their dust-enveloped dream, then silently went out.

What the next few months meant to her neither the friend she had repudiated nor the lover she had spurned even guessed at. All those quiescent ghosts of the past that had nodded so drowsily before the tide of her indifference walked again as real as flesh and blood. And that little home—thoughts of it as she saw it last struck deep into her heart, leaving an ache that seemed to have settled itself for eternal lodgment.

Then on all this chaos of emotion came a letter to her one day, bearing her name written in an unforgettable hand. With trembling curiosity she looked at it, wondering what had caused him to write her. The fact that she had sent his mother a little note of condolence on the death of his father two weeks ago, hardly seemed adequate reason.

But if the Heavens had suddenly dropped and enveloped Patricia she could not have been more astounded than when she opened that envelope.

With one letter she concerned herself not at all after the first reading. But upon the other she bent her burning face and read again and again as if learning the magic incantation of some *open sesame*. And this was what she read:

Dear Patricia:

This letter addressed to you by my father was found in the safe deposit vault. There was one for me also, saying that he had confessed to you that I was bearing the stigma of his wrong doing.

I can't help but feel glad, dear, that at last you will understand. Only I must beg of you—as I believe he has in his letter—to remember that to the world, our world in Sheldown, all must remain unchanged. You see, Mother must still be protected from the truth. It was sad enough for her to think her son could treat that little telephone girl so, but it would have wrecked her whole life to have learned of her husband's unfaith.

I know I can trust you implicitly in this. Even to secure our own happiness we could not shame her. But I feel like a new man to know that again I stand clean in your mind.

To this Patricia made reply a few days later. What mattered the world and Sheldown when she knew the truth!

"Tom!" her letter ran, "I have been on my knees for three days. Perhaps you may remember that I had a key also. I have scrubbed and dusted—polished floors and furniture. And now everything is as beautifully bright again as the day we set that table—that is, all but my heart.

"Don't you want to see? Wont you come here when you leave the office? Perhaps then my heart would also grow light and bright again.

"What your father wrote me will never pass my lips. But dear—I am yours to take or leave, just as you think best. And that home is ready once more.—Your very humble, Patricia."

The Flareback

Another of Mr. Baker's absorbing tales wherein legal legerdemain unties a tangled knot in the lives of some very interesting people.

By GUY C. BAKER

COLONEL FAWSETT, senior member of the eminent law-firm of Fawsett, Dale, Buxton & Fawsett, whimsically complained to his friends that affairs had come to such a pass that all he had to do any more was to divide fat fees earned by his partners, and, at intervals consonant with his own inclination, exhibit his benignant physiognomy at the smartly-appointed suite of law-offices in order to reassure timid clients.

The Colonel's avowal was, in a sense, true. His young, energetic law-partners—university men, all of them—took upon their willing shoulders the extensive business of the firm. The Colonel's friends were fully aware, however, that the extensive business of the aforementioned firm was, in a large measure, due to the widely recognized ability and integrity of Jeremiah Fawsett; and that, oftener than the public suspected, those same active, college trained partners paid homage to the old school by seeking counsel of the courtly, white-haired Colonel.

On that particular morning, one of the law-clerks, deeply engrossed in the mystic depths of a bulky, sheep-bound volume in one of the reception-rooms, glanced suddenly up to discover the genial Colonel smilingly regarding him.

"Good morning, Mr. Fawsett."

"The same to you, young man. What's the subject of your research,—the Rule in Shelley's Case, the Statute of Jeoffails, or the legal status of Hiram Hawkey's mule?"

"Nothing so interesting, Mr. Fawsett. I was running through the digest for some authorities on a question of negligence."

"Another marvelous invention—the digest," commented the Colonel musingly. "Compared with fifty years ago, to-day has the Arabian Nights beat a block. With that digest you accomplish, in five minutes, what formerly took me weeks to dig up. Typewriters! I had to scrawl it all out long-hand on legal-cap. Telephones and desk-buzzers! My, oh my! Files! Why, the old lawyer under whom I studied law kept all his legal documents hurly-burly in a barrel. Fact! He said in that way he always knew where to find his papers."

The law-clerk smiled quizzically. Like everyone else, he never knew whether to take the Colonel seriously or otherwise.

"A question of negligence, eh?" questioned the Colonel. "Railroad?"

"Yes, for the X. & U."

The older man chuckled.

"I have been attorney for that road for forty years. I was appointed attorney for them when I first hung out

my shingle. Got my appointment by the sheerest luck. In those days they 'operated' one train each way daily, and they were always notoriously behind time.

"One day, up in one of the ague-infested towns along the line, a show troupe ambled leisurely from the village tavern to the dingy depot to take the train. They knew of the sluggish habits of the train, and supposed that they were giving themselves oodles of time. But Fate was slipping aces to Jeremiah Fawsett under the table that day.

"For the first and last time in history, the train pulled in five minutes ahead of time. The aggregation of barnstormers missed the train—likewise they missed their engagement in the next town. They sued the company for damages. The Superintendent couldn't coax a first-class lawyer to mosey up to that back-woods town to try the case—so he hired me." The Colonel pushed his shock of wavy white hair back from his forehead as he chuckled reminiscently. "I showed that the train alleged to have departed five minutes ahead of schedule was in fact nearly twenty-four hours behind time—that it was the train of the day before. I won the case."

An office-boy entered with a message from Mr. Dale for the clerk, and the Colonel sauntered into his private office humming the air of some old-time song.

His private office never lost its charm for the Colonel. The furnishings and appointments were like so many playthings to this lawyer of the old-school. He sought excuses for summoning the office-boy or the stenographer simply to enjoy the novelty of jabbing the desk-buzzer.

On this particular morning, he had just settled himself comfortably with the morning paper, when the private 'phone whirred at his elbow.

R. Bruce Fawsett, his son, was on the wire, requesting that his father step over into his private office at once.

The Colonel smiled as he replaced the receiver and rose to go.

"Huh!—*telephones* to me when I can almost hear him whisper through these glass partitions! Why didn't he just yell for me to come over?"

He was still smiling as he entered his son's private office.

"Father, I want you to meet Mr. Vance Kinsey. My father, Kinsey."

The Colonel appraisingly regarded the straight, clean-cut young man who rose to shake hands.

"Kinsey? Kinsey? Let's see—live here?"

"I hardly know," replied the young man quietly. "I guess, however, that I do."

The Colonel tilted his head to one side, adjusted his nose-glasses with severe judicial decorum, and once more let his critical glance linger on the young man's well-formed head, his sober brown eyes, his firm mouth and chin. Then, abruptly, he once more extended his hand.

"You're all right, Kinsey—I've got you placed now. You're the young chap old Jenifer Reed raised."

"I hardly supposed that you would remember me, Mr. Fawsett. It has been twelve years since Bob, here, and I played together."

"It will require more years than that to erase from my memory remembrance of those days of deviltry." He scowled ominously from one to the other of the smiling young men; then, sighing resignedly, he addressed Kinsey. "Old Jenifer Reed is dead, I hear."

"Yes—that is what brought me back."

"And it was mighty decent of you to come," broke in the younger Fawsett, "after the way he treated you."

"He is dead, Bob," Kinsey reminded gently.

"Just the same, I think that it was rotten."

"Where have you been?" inquired the elder Fawsett.

"Oklahoma."

"Become rich?"

"No—broke," announced Kinsey with a feeble smile. "Hit 'er up fine when I first went down there, but—well—I got in with a bunch of sharks, and—pouff!" He spread out his hands in an eloquent gesture. "Been working on a ranch for a year or more."

"Well—er—Janifer Reed was pretty well fixed—I suppose you share equally with that girl he adopted?"

"No." Kinsey cleared his throat nervously. "No—I am told that my share in the estate is to be the old horse and buggy."

"He left a will?"

"Yes—a somewhat peculiar one."

"That is the reason I sent for you, Father," interrupted R. Bruce Fawsett. "Sit down—both of you. Kinsey, tell Father what you know about it."

Kinsey soberly faced the Colonel.

"You knew Mr. Reed, did you not?"

"Oh, yes!—all my life. He was always an eccentric old codger."

"He had his peculiarities. He always treated me, however, splendidly. That is, until—"

"You were adopted by him, were you not?"

"No, he simply brought me up as his son. He adopted Tabitha—she is the girl he reared also, you know."

"But I interrupted you. Pardon me. You were saying—"

"Let's see—oh, yes—Mr. Reed treated me the finest kind until a nephew of his bobbed up from heaven only knows where. After that—" Again he spread out his hands in the gesture so pregnant with meaning.

"A nephew?"

"Yes—Roger Stewart is his name.

The Colonel's white, overhanging eyebrows gathered in a frown as he glanced questioningly towards his son.

"He can't mean that callow, hollow-cheeked, pop-eyed, cigarette-smoking molly-coddle of—"

"Hold on, Father—you're jumbling your adjectives. Yes—that is who he means."

The Colonel sank back into his chair and sighed audibly.

"I know him, Kinsey—fire ahead."

"He had not been here a week until he began a systematic endeavor to estrange my uncle. He treated me contemptuously—as an interloper. He—"

"Was after Uncle Jenifer's shekels."

"Yes—but that was not all. There was Tabitha—she became a factor."

The Colonel pursed out his lips and raised his eyebrows comprehendingly.

Kinsey continued haltingly.

"You see, Tabitha and I had—had become greatly attached to each other. It was perfectly natural that we should—considering our years'-old companionship and mutual cares and joys.

"Stewart at once began to annoy her with his attentions. She disliked him heartily. He had, therefore, a dual object in getting rid of me, and he succeeded — succeeded by perseverance and cunning.

"He was quick to discover that his eccentric uncle was exceedingly suspicious. That gave him his cue. He set about to insidiously poison his mind against me. It was about this time that Mr. Reed's health began to fail.

"One day upon my return home, I discovered Mr. Reed laboring under some strong mental excitement. Alarmed, I asked him what was the matter. He turned upon me fiercely, his eyes shining with intense hostility. That night he requested that I leave.

"I find now that the cause of Mr. Reed's sudden change of feeling towards me was due to Stewart's duplicity. With the aid of forged letters, he convinced his uncle that I was of low origin, and that I was involved in an intrigue with some of my alleged base kinsfolk to poison him and gain possession of his property.

"Mr. Reed's physical and mental condition made the time for springing such an absurdity most auspicious. In fact, his very condition attested the plausibility of the story.

"Had I had the least suspicion of the true facts, I would not, of course, have gone away. In the light of my broader understanding, I censure myself for having deserted my best friend." There was deep feeling in Kinsey's low, pleasing voice as he said it.

"The bitterest part in the whole affair, however, was to separate from Tabitha. She was"—he cleared his throat of a suspicious huskiness and continued earnestly—"she was a dandy girl, Colonel."

"I dare say—I dare say! Well? What became of her? Go on."

"She seemed as much broken up over the affair as I—promised to write regularly and all that sort of thing. She kept her promise for a time; then

abruptly, her letters ceased coming. I have never learned why she stopped writing, but—but I think I know."

"Of course you know!" blustered the Colonel. "More of that infernal *Iago* business!"

"I find," continued Kinsey, "that Mr. Reed left a will." He turned towards the younger Fawsett. "You can explain that part of the matter better than I, Bob."

"It was one of those freak affairs, Father," explained Robert. "It was drawn by Howard, the notary."

"That tells the tale. Howard is a shyster."

"The will is a memorial to Howard's bungling stupidity and Stewart's crafty ingeniousness. It bears the earmarks of both. It was executed shortly before Mr. Reed died—at a time when he was notoriously incompetent to make a will. Stewart and Howard were the witnesses to the instrument.

"You probably know, Father, that Reed's estate consisted entirely of the Reed Building at the corner of Third and Main, the house wherein he lived and its contents; he owned nothing else save a horse and buggy. The Reed Building is worth a quarter of a million dollars.

"He devised the business block, the house, and the household effects, to the girl Tabitha and Stewart jointly. The rest and residue of the estate he bequeathed to Kinsey here. This residuary legacy consists of an old moth-eaten horse and a steel-tired buggy."

"That fish-headed nephew isn't without a sense of humor, anyhow," commented the senior Fawsett.

"But mark you," continued the son, "there was a condition—a unique condition—to the will. The last item recites that it was the wish of the testator that the joint ownership of the real estate be a continuing affair, and that, in order that this might be insured, requires that the devisees thereof shall, within one year, marry."

Colonel Fawsett said something very forcibly under his breath.

"That," continued Robert, "should either devisee fail to comply with this requirement of the will, such devisee should forfeit his or her legacy to some specified old maids' benevolent society.

"That one-year-marrying exaction," concluded the younger Fawsett hotly, "is the rottenest thing I ever heard of!"

"The cadaverous-looking nephew is some 'villun' all right," dryly commented the Colonel.

"That provision," stated Kinsey, "might, under certain circumstances, become abhorrently impossible."

"I can't imagine circumstances under which it wouldn't," snapped out the Colonel. "Has this remarkable document been probated?"

"Not yet," answered the junior Fawsett. "The hearing for probate is to be held this morning. That is the reason I wanted you—to have your judgment on how best to proceed. Of course we'll contest that will to the—"

"Now don't get excited, Robert. Just wait until I get my hat and my walking-stick and I will trot along to the court with you."

As the Colonel was briskly passing the open door of Mr. Dale's room on the way to his private-office, Dale hailed him.

Dale was the polished, suave second member of the firm. He specialized on consultation work, and catered to affluent corporations and rich widows.

As Jeremiah Fawsett obligingly stepped inside the elegantly appointed room, Dale rose and came affably forward to greet him.

"Pardon me for intruding on your time, Colonel, but I wanted you to meet this young lady. Miss Reed, this is Colonel Fawsett. Colonel — Miss Tabitha Reed."

In his surprise, the Colonel almost forgot his manners. For just a moment he stared stupidly at the engaging, fresh-cheeked, gray-eyed girl who quietly rose and confidently extended her hand. The next moment he was bowing and smiling with all the courtliness inherited from a line of Fawsetts that reached back into the age of mailed English knights.

"Miss Reed was directed to me by some mutual friends," explained Mr. Dale. "She intimates, however, that she would also like very much to consult

with you. She has an unusual legal problem to be unraveled, and her judgment in requesting your additional advice is, no doubt, very good."

"It is a sad commentary on modern chivalry that our lovely womanhood has to bother her pretty head with such dull, unpoetic things as law," complained the Colonel. "Tell me about it."

The young lady glanced appealingly towards Mr. Dale, and he, divining her wish, promptly repeated the story Colonel Fawsett had heard a few moments before from Kinsey.

When Dale had finished, the Colonel was in a position to reconcile certain matters of which both Kinsey and Miss Reed were in ignorance.

"Of course we will contest," ventured Mr. Dale.

"Maybe—maybe. Just wait—we'll see," answered the Colonel. Then, turning to the young lady:

"Are you satisfied with the will, Miss Reed?"

"I am not."

"Why?"

"The condition is impossible."

"If the will were to be set aside," mused the Colonel, "you would, being the only legal heir, inherit everything."

"I do not want it all. But it is intolerable to think of Mr. Stewart getting half. He is not deserving of it. It is his will, anyway—not Mr. Reed's."

"But," persisted the Colonel, his eyes twinkling, "if Stewart were not to get it, and you do not want it, where do you wish it to go—to those old maids?"

The color mounted to the girl's cheeks. For a short space she considered thoughtfully; then, her voice low and tremulous, she said resolutely:

"Mr. Kinsey is entitled to half."

The Colonel rubbed his chin thoughtfully. The answer pleased him immensely. He had an hilarious impulse to jump up and kick over a chair. What he did, however, was to become suddenly sober.

"I have been consulted on the other side. I am sorry."

Dale sat up with a disconcerted jerk. The young lady's eyes widened.

"I am terribly disappointed," she said. "You see, you settled my grandfather's estate many years ago, and I have heard my mother speak of you often. And I always said that if I ever needed—"

The Colonel interrupted her with a laugh.

"I have it! We'll just combine our forces."

He rose and walked to the door.

"Bob!—come over to Dale's room—bring your friend along."

A moment later, when Kinsey unsuspectingly trailed the younger Fawsett into Mr. Dale's room, Miss Reed rose quickly to her feet with an exclamation of pleased surprise. Her face went white as she gazed at Kinsey with widened eyes and parted lips. The next moment the color rushed back into her face, and, her eyes sparkling, she stepped eagerly forward with outstretched hands.

"Vance!"

Kinsey seized her hands and held them tightly as he searched her face in silence.

"Bob—Mr. Dale—come into my room a moment," commanded the Colonel precipitantly. At the door he paused to glance back at Kinsey and the girl. "Five minutes is all the time you get."

Thirty minutes later, the two Fawsetts and Mr. Dale, followed by Kinsey and Miss Reed, filed into the Probate Court.

Roger Stewart, the nephew, and Howard, the notary, were there ahead of them. They sat importantly at the lawyer's table near the Judge's bench.

The Probate Judge entered, nodded cordially to the attorneys, and took his seat on the bench. A clerk at once placed a bundle of legal documents before him. Then, amid the ensuing silence, he opened and formally read the will of the late Jenifer Reed.

At this point the Judge turned inquiringly towards the Colonel.

"Do you represent any of the interested parties, Mr. Fawsett?"

"Yes—two of the legatees."

"Have you any objection to make regarding the admission of this will to probate?"

Dale and the younger Fawsett leaned forward in unison to whisper to their

senior member in marked agitation. The Colonel shook his head.

"We have no objections, your Honor."

Stewart and the Notary were thereupon formally examined as to the execution of the will. They unequivocally testified that they saw the testator sign the will, that he acknowledged it to be his will, that they witnessed the document at the testator's instance and request, that the testator was laboring under no duress or undue influence, and that he was unquestionably capable of making a will.

The testimony was reduced to writing and signed by the two witnesses.

All the while, the group over by the wall watched the proceedings in silence.

"Everything appears to be regular," announced the Judge, "and the order of the Court will be—"

"One moment, Judge," interrupted the Colonel. "Before you make the order admitting this will to probate, I would like to ask one question."

"Go ahead."

The Colonel cleared his throat, rose, and crossed over so as to face the nephew.

"Mr. Stewart, you say that you witnessed this will?"

"That's exactly what I said."

"And you are also the Stewart named as a legatee in the will?"

"Y-e-s." A look of quick, apprehending concern leaped into his face.

The Colonel turned and quietly addressed the Court.

"I wish to direct your attention, Judge, to the fact that Stewart the witness and Stewart the beneficiary under this will are one and the same person. Under the law, this cannot be. 'If a devise is made to a person who is a witness to a will, and the will cannot be proved except by his testimony, the devise shall be void.'

"The Court must, therefore, inasmuch as the witnesses have established its sufficiency, declare the will probated as to everything, save the devise to Stewart."

"How's that?" choked out Stewart, his habitual pallor taking on a greenish hue.

Howard, the notary, blew his nose nervously, and began to perspire like a hod-carrier.

The Judge selected a law-book from among several on the desk before him, turned the leaves until he found that for which he sought, read thoughtfully for a time, then, with judicial finality, announced.

"There seems to be no question, Mr. Stewart, but what Mr. Fawsett's position is correct. Such will be the order of the court."

There was a moment's silence. Stewart's hands trembled noticeably as he took up his hat.

"I—I'll see about this," he mumbled as he hastily left the room.

"But what does it all mean?" anxiously questioned Miss Reed.

"It means that Stewart got hoisted with his own petard. He cannot inherit under that will. He cannot even say that the will is bad—he has already asserted, under oath, that it was O. K."

"But—but where will that portion of the estate go?" she demanded in sudden alarm.

The Colonel smiled benevolently.

"Where was it that you said you wanted it to go?"

"Oh! But does it?"

"Sure—Kinsey gets it. Don't you remember?—he is to have all the rest and residue of the estate after the payment of specific legacies. There is just one specific legacy. So far as Stewart is concerned, there is no will. Therefore, after you get your share, Kinsey gets the rest."

"But—" stammered Kinsey as he also joined the two.

"Lucky rascal!" exclaimed the Colonel, as he tapped Kinsey on the arm. "Besides the other, you also inherit under that one year clause."

"By George!" enthused the younger Fawsett, "that's so!" Impulsively, he thrust out his hand to Kinsey. "Congratulations, old man!"

"Now see here, Robert," protested the Colonel with assumed severity, "don't make a fool of yourself. I heard you say, not an hour ago, that that clause was the rottenest thing you had ever heard of."

The Story-Book Lady

A shipboard romance of a most engaging type. The "story-book lady" proves she is a real human being, and the right man gets her after all.

By W. CAREY WONDERLY

ANNIE HAMILTON was going to Europe to-morrow for the first time. The expressman had come for her trunks early in the forenoon, and the tiny flat was dismantled and shrouded in brown holland so that when she came in, from a last call at her publishers, the rooms struck her as being unpleasantly chill and bare.

There was a letter in the box from Meredith Walker, and she took it listlessly and went to the window with it, standing with her back to the light. Walker was in London, where she was going first; at home in America, he was a professor of modern languages at one of the great Eastern colleges. It was generally taken for granted, among their friends, that some day he and Annie would marry—a very good thing for Miss Hamilton, declared their well-wishers.

Now Annie held the thick, square envelope with the foreign stamp between her thumb and forefinger, but she seemed in no hurry to break the seal. Her blue eyes, lovely in color and expression but a trifle short-sighted, were gazing far into the future, and her lips, slightly parted, seemed undecided whether to smile or to frown.

"Of course he was only a boy—after all!" she said once, speaking aloud.

Then she turned round and looked out of the window, holding the letter with the London postmark behind her.

It was June, but the New York summer had not yet arrived and the air was balmy and almost fragrant with the perfume of new earth and growing things. Across in the Square, the trees were still green and fresh looking, and the grass was the grass of meadows, long and thick and dewy. Annie raised the sash and leaned out. At the end of the street was a round, pale moon—and he had pleaded for a roof garden!

She closed the window with a bang and gazed around the deserted apartment. It was uninviting, but . . . And even if it wasn't quite the most unconventional thing in the world, why, she had no clothes; her trunks were gone!

At the next corner was a little French restaurant, as yet undiscovered by Manhattan, and Annie planned to go there for a bit of supper and then home and to bed early.

Considering that it was at Bequit's she was dining, and alone, and she had nothing to wear, it took Miss Hamilton an unusually long time to get ready. And when she did leave the house, while she still wore the gray linen suit and the poke bonnet-like hat, there was an indescribable something different about

her which cannot be put down in words. Perhaps it was her face, which nine persons out of ten called sweet—just that, not beautiful, nor even pretty, but just sweet.

Instead of going down the street, towards Bequit's, she walked up the block and stopped at the corner of the Square where an Italian boy was selling bunches of half-withered flowers to shop-girls for a few pennies. Annie chose a knot of pansies and waited patiently while he ransacked his pockets for change from her quarter. And it was not until he had counted out a nickel and ten pennies and slid them into her palm, that Annie remembered. Then she gave them back to him, insisted with a smile, and turned into the Avenue with the pansies pinned at the front of her dress.

She might have hailed a taxicab, just as she might have gone to a florist and selected the finest blooms in his shop, but it had become second nature with Annie Hamilton to walk, and she had had no flowers since she came to New York that she hadn't bought on the street. Her good fortune was too sudden and overwhelming for her to remember all at once that such economy was no longer necessary. Europe, even to-morrow, seemed almost like a dream; she had always thought of going there when she was quite, quite old, and after she had saved for years and years. And the amount at her banker's would have fairly taken her breath away—except that it never seemed really her own. So this was the reason Annie was hurrying up the Avenue at seven o'clock of a June evening, while Meredith Walker's letter lay at home, unopened.

On the pavement of the Flatiron Building she saw him, at first a half-block away. She stopped, undecided for a minute, whether to retrace her steps or keep on. He hadn't seen her. Then, something seemed to settle the question for her, for without knowing why—and she had never done such a thing before—she deliberately crossed the street and went to meet him.

Off came his hat and he put out his hand.

"I knew you would come!" said he triumphantly.

"But I told you—"

"Yes, you did."

"Then why were you so sure?" Annie asked.

"Because I am so horribly lonesome and because I wanted you so," he answered.

She smiled a little, liking the frankness in his voice and the open, boyish look in his eyes.

"I only came to tell you—that I couldn't possibly do what you wish!" said she, quite gravely although she flushed.

"You mean you wont have dinner with me—after all!" he cried.

Annie shook her head gently.

"But I thought— When I saw you just now my spirits rose to the seventh heaven—!"

"I'm truly sorry," she murmured.

"Listen to me for a minute," he begged then. "I arrived in New York last night and I am going away in the morning. I don't know a soul in all Manhattan and I haven't spoken to anybody for the last twenty-four hours but cab drivers, and hotel clerks and shop keepers. It—it is sort o' maddening! I knew a chap who used to work at Harland-Browne's—the publishers, y' know; and while I was never very keen about him, I determined, desperately, this morning, to hunt him up—anybody but servants to talk to! . . . When I got there, he had left their employ—months ago. I was quite ready to jabber to myself. And then I saw you! We came out of the office at the same moment, and we got in the same lift, rode down fifteen—or was it a hundred stories? And—"

"And once in the street you pulled me back on the pavement just in time to escape an automobile," cried Annie, with a deep, quick breath. "Of course I am in your debt—"

"Eh?"

The young man seemed to stiffen all over, at once. The smile fled from his eyes; the boyishness disappeared.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "It was a mistake for me to ask you to take pity on my loneliness and dine with me to-night. It was done—on the spur of the moment. I had no thought of presuming—"

"Please!"

Annie silenced him with her hand.

"I shouldn't have said what I did, but you are only making matters worse by saying the things you are. . . . I am quite ready to go," she added.

This time he shook his head.

"I will call a cab. . . . Say you forgive me!"

"But I want to go," she insisted gently, and the color mounted from her neck to her brow. "I wanted to go with you—all along!"

Still he seemed to hesitate.

"You spoke of a roof—the Astor. I've never been on a roof," said Annie, smiling bravely up in his face.

He caught her hand and squeezed it until her fingers ached, yet she didn't wince, or draw away.

"Bless you," he muttered. "First of all now, I am—"

"I am I, and you are you," she interposed quickly.

He looked at her for a full minute in silence.

"But," he protested, "how am I to write to you after I've left New York?"

"You aren't!" declared Annie.

"To thank you?"

She laughed and repeated firmly:

"I am I—you are you!"

Again silence, then:

"Very well! And now if *you* will direct *me* to that celestial roof garden—"

"*I* will," said she demurely. "Come!"

It was a night to be remembered, high up above the city, under an orange moon, and with a Puccini accompaniment; and all her after life Annie Hamilton never quite forgot it. That it seemed like a dream, the next morning, on awaking, wasn't strange, for never before had she known such an evening. She had pictured them, occasionally, in the books she had written and which Harland-Browne had published, but her own days had been as barren as Sahara. She had fairly reveled in it!

It was midnight when he put her into a taxi at their tryst-place, the Flatiron corner, and she saw him, glancing back, standing there in the moonlight, hat in hand, as her cab disappeared south on the Avenue.

"So it's just 'hello' and 'good-by,' eh?" he had asked, when she gave him her hand in parting.

"Yes," she had replied, thinking of Meredith Walker. "Good-by."

And now it was daylight and the steamer sailed at noon!

She dressed slowly. In the modest studio building in which she lived Annie had made few friends. At one time there had been a little dancer, a good, pretty child, who occupied the flat above with her black-alpaca-ed mamma, but Vio had married a young millionaire, in true story-book fashion, and the Square knew her no more. So there remained only the janitor and her baby, and it was when she went to say good-by to the mother and take the infant a mechanical dog that the girl seemed to realize her utter loneliness.

Mrs. O'Hara wiped her eyes on the back of her hand and presented Denny to be kissed.

"Thank 'ee kin'ly, mum," said she. "God save us, an' to think afther livin' wit' me tin years you should be l'avin' to go to England—England!"

"But I'm coming back to New York," Annie told her.

"I hev me doubts," nodded the woman. "Good-by, mum. Denny!—shake a day-day to Miss Annie."

The boy waved his hand furiously; Mrs. O'Hara broke into loud weeping; and Annie hurried out to the taxicab which was to take her to the pier. At sight of the vehicle, however, Denny stopped waving and his mother stopped wailing, but Annie was gone.

"An' it must be a fortune she come into wit' her tips an' the auty," opined the janitor. "But England—ugh!"

There was no one at the pier to wish her *bon voyage*, and Annie went at once to her cabin, an outside room on the main deck—an extravagance which she hoped would never reach the ears of Meredith Walker. Of course, six months ago the suite would have been out of the question, but now— Well, she had wanted it; she had felt that she even could afford it, and, it was hers. As she opened the door she cried in her heart that she was sick and tired of economy—of always buying the things which nobody else seemed to want, suits out of

season, inside flats, and dark clothes instead of light to save laundry bills. Deliberately she had booked one of the most luxurious rooms on the ship.

Then, on the threshold she stopped, breathless, astounded. The cabin was a bower of roses. And there were baskets of fruit and boxes of books everywhere, on the floor, so that she could scarcely step about.

Her first thought was of the young Englishman with the boyish eyes and the pleasant voice. How he had discovered her identity never once entered Annie's brain, but then Annie wrote fiction, and in books, as everyone knows, any situation is permissible which enhances the hero's cause. A second later and the bubble burst. She had found a card:

To dear Annie from Vio and Frank.
Sorry we couldn't get to N. Y. to see you sail.
Bon voyage!

The flowers, the fruit and the books were from the little dancer and her millionaire husband.

Of course she was pleased with them and glad to know she had been remembered, but somehow or other, after that, she discovered there were too many roses and that their perfume was too heavy. And it was out of the question to keep all that fruit in one small room! As for the books—

There were six in edition de luxe bindings—by Annie Wentworth Hamilton! She took them up, one by one, turning the pages slowly. They were workman-like novels, written with a purpose, novels pronounced good by the critics and neglected by the public, and not a one of them had ever gone into a second printing. It is scarcely probable that either Vio or Frank ever had read even one of Annie's books from cover to cover, but Vio was tremendously fond of Annie, and Frank was still in love with Vio—hence the bindings.

"It was sweet of her!" said Annie, with a sigh.

There were other books, by other and more successful authors, and among them Annie glimpsed the year's best seller, "Hearts Adrift." It was in a gayly colored jacket and filled with pictures of a hero at least eight feet tall, while on the cover the publishers announced that this was the twentieth large edition.

Annie studied the book from beginning to end, reading bits of the text at random.

"'All American girls are princesses,' said Comte Raoul, with a low bow." "He caught her passionately in his arms, and swore, for love of her, even to snatch the stars from their celestial home and bring them for her to deck her beauty with." "Grace Church was filled with a smart throng." "'This is a case for Mr. Hemlock Jones, the great American detective,' said the Prefect of Police." "Elsye saw, with a start, that Hemlock Jones, the greatest detective of his time, was none other than her youthful sweetheart, Abe Lincoln Earle." "'I wish to report to you, Madame la Comtesse,' said Hemlock, 'that I have found your diamonds—in the keeping of Fluffy de Vere, of the Follies. The Comte presented them to her not twenty-four hours ago!'" "Sarah Frost, her faithful English maid, entered the room. 'Moosoo the Count 'as taken the new limousine, my lidy,' said she, with downcast eyes."

Then the last page:

"Elsye swayed like a lily in the wind. 'You mean—' she gasped. He nodded, not daring to trust his voice. 'Then the car?' 'Over a steep embankment, yes.' She seemed to hesitate: 'Was he—alone?' 'That,' cried Hemlock Jones, the world's greatest detective, 'is a question I refuse to answer—for your own peace of mind!' 'Such beautiful loyalty,' she murmured brokenly. 'Oh, Abe, I have been so foolish, so blinded by title!' He raised his hand, a wonderful light in his eyes. 'Hush! Let the dead past bury its dead, as the poet says. Will you return to America—that glorious country!—as my wife?' Elsye wept, but this time it was for joy."

Annie put down the book and stood staring at the gay jacket with eyes which expressed both fascination and disgust.

"It can't be true," she said, half aloud. "Twenty editions, a fortune in royalties, and a dramatization in the fall! While this—and this—and this"—she tapped each of her six purposeful novels with her forefinger—"hardly earned me bread and butter!"

Then she felt the throbbing of the engines and suddenly realized that the steamer had cleared her dock.

It was pleasant up on deck. The ship was crowded with those Americans who deem an annual pilgrimage to Europe as a necessary evil in their otherwise well-regulated lives. It amused Annie to see how very business-like even the young girls were, about their chairs, their personal belongings, even their parents or chaperons: it didn't seem like a pleasure to them; certainly it wasn't a luxury; and she had been dreaming of a trip to Europe all her life! She was watching the people, listening to the music, and reveling in the sea air when, suddenly, somebody came up and took both of her hands and clasped them tightly.

She raised her eyes.

"Hello!" said a pleasant English voice.

"You!" she said, not at all in the manner of Annie Wentworth Hamilton, but ridiculously like *Elsye* in "Hearts Adrift."

"Yes." He was smiling his nice, boyish smile. "Luck, eh?"

"Where in the world are you going?" she asked, still a trifle dazed.

"Home. . . . Told you I was leaving New York to-day."

"But you didn't say—where. And to pick out this steamer!— For both of us to pick out this steamer!"

"Like a story-book, eh?" he grinned.

"I suppose it is," she acknowledged, and this time she smiled.

There came a mischievous twinkle in his eyes. Leaning on the rail, he said with a certain significance which she couldn't ignore:

"And maybe *I'm* not glad to meet *you!* You see, I wasn't very keen about this trip—about going home, the way I am going. Oh, yes, *I'm* glad to see *you* all right!"

Annie flushed like a school-girl in a mid-Victorian novel.

"My name—" she began stiffly.

"Good Lord, if you'd rather not, you know!" interposed he. "Besides, there's the passenger-list; and the captain—"

"I am Annie Wentworth Hamilton," she told him, and straightway perceived that the name conveyed nothing to him.

Again that frank, boyish smile.

"Eric Southery," he confessed. "There's a lot more name in between—such as Arthur and Algernon and Fanshaw, but I find I can get along just as well with the two, so I generally let the others slide. . . . 'Anne Hamilton!' That's a bully name, you know."

"Annie," she corrected.

"Of course! I beg your pardon. It's a great little name."

She nodded.

"I like Anne better too," she said, and watched his face. But instead of muttering an apology, or showing any signs of confusion, as she thought he would do, Southery only bobbed his head vigorously and exclaimed:

"Then change it to Anne—nothing simpler!"

She remembered her books, six neat volumes, and the fame which was hers because of them. She had always been proud of her novels, and Meredith Walker never let a chance go by to mention them, in affluent praise, in the literary weekly to which he occasionally contributed. That his pæans didn't add to her success in a financial way was a matter of small concern. Walker did believe that her work was good. Annie caught herself wondering what Eric Southery would say when he learned of her profession; at least he would understand then that changing her name for a mere whim was entirely out of the question.

It interested her greatly to contemplate what he would say—and do—when he discovered about those six purposeful books of hers. Her name had never stood for any cheap, vulgar fiction; to the chosen few it spelled character and end desired. Annie, with a sigh, reflected that Southery didn't impress one as being of the chosen few, and it troubled her to think of what his verdict of them might be.

"Although why in the world should I care two straws what he says?" she demanded of herself. "Meredith has said—"

But the truth of it was that she didn't care what Walker had said half as much as she did what Southery might perhaps think.

She went back to her cabin and re-

mained there until the bugle sounded at five o'clock. And in that time she had made a wonderful discovery. Upon entering her room she had found a trunk which didn't resemble her old-fashioned Saratoga at any possible angle, and although her name was on it, she was just about to send for the purser when she saw a letter, newly arrived, on the dresser.

Annie tore open the envelope and a card dropped out, scrawled across in pencil:

Please accept the trunk. With much love.
VIO AND FRANK.

At first she solemnly declared that nothing in the world could tempt her to accept the splendid wardrobe which the trunk contained. And yet as she lifted out dainty gown and smart steamer-coat her very heart went out to the pretty things. She had never worn such clothes, never in her life. Especially one frock, of palest pink, with lace and crystals, held her fascinated. She turned it over and over, touching it with fingers that caressed, while, slowly but surely, one desire burned in her breast. If Eric Southery could only see her in such a dress!

When she went on deck, at tea-time, Annie was still undecided. Even when Southery met her, changed to white flannels, and led her to her chair, laughing that he had taken the liberty to have his placed next, she had only half yielded. But when she left him, an hour later, to dress for dinner, her mind was made up—fully, for all time. She would keep the things and mail Vio a check for them the moment she arrived in London—which was quite foolish and utterly unworthy of Annie Wentworth Hamilton.

She entered her stateroom at six o'clock a plain, colorless little nobody in a shabby gray linen suit. She might have sat for a portrait of—"A Spinster." Her hair was drawn tight back from her forehead and coiled in a hard, round knot. Her shoes were of that make advertised as "common sense;" and she wore a very high, mannish collar—which made her neck appear long and her chin sharp.

More than one man looked, and looked again, when she appeared in the dining-room. For she had called a lady's maid to hook her into the pink chiffon, and the woman's clever fingers had arranged Annie's soft brown hair, simply yet tastefully, so that the little authoress, glancing at herself in the mirror, had murmured, like Cinderella of old, "This can't be I!"

And, if her glass' answer hadn't satisfied her, there was Southery's start of admiration to remember when alone in her cabin, later on.

"By George, you look—wonderful, you know," was his greeting.

She feigned innocence, waiting hungrily for his next words.

"I like that gown and the way you've got your hair done," he continued. "You're wonderful—that's what you are, wonderful!"

She laughed, and even her laugh was different. Somehow, now, it seemed to suit the pink and crystal creation as if it had been sold with it—a merry, rippling note of merriment.

"I'm glad you approve of it—it's a Callot," said Annie, mentioning the name of the maker she had seen on the band. "It is nice—being together at table. Did you—?"

He nodded, short, boyish bobs of his head.

"Do you mind?"

"Mind? Why, it was an inspiration!" she laughed.

After dinner they paced the decks for a time in the starlight, Annie luxuriously warm in a smart black and white steamer coat. No child on Christmas morning was ever happier. In fact, it seemed to her that she must be a child again, living a fairy tale as she read.

"Shall we take a turn around the floor?" asked Southery once, as they came to a stop at a brilliantly lighted doorway.

"You mean—?"

"They're dancing. Take a spin?"

"I never dance," returned Annie.

So they went back to the ship's rail and watched the stars, and spoke of their chances for a good crossing and of the people at their table; but he had robbed the night of its magic, and in a little while she pleaded fatigue and said good-night.

Their steamship was one of those modern leviathans of the Atlantic which boast of a golf course, a swimming pool and a tennis court as well as a ball room, an à la carte restaurant and a roof garden with growing flowers. Annie heard her fellow-passengers go into raptures over these luxuries; she knew that Southery took a plunge every morning and played a set or two of tennis after luncheon; he was constantly in demand when there was dancing; and the family from Kansas, with a marriageable daughter, deluged him with invitations to dinner in the grill; but she herself avoided all this magnificence as she would the plague.

He came to her one morning, when he should have been in the cool waters of the pool, and throwing himself into his chair, said:

"I have just heard a most remarkable thing."

"What is that?" she asked, smiling.

"The millionairess from Kansas says you are literary."

Annie laughed softly.

"Of course you don't believe her!" said she.

"No-o, I don't." he replied.

"Why not?"

"Well, I came across a young woman who was literary once—at a studio party in London," Southery explained. "She wore her hair in a knot on the top of her head, and she had on shoes without heels to them. Somebody told me she was the cleverest person in England—well, she looked it. I'll wager she never saw a frock like your nice pink taffy thing, and as for curling her hair—"

"Eric," she interposed gently, "the first time you saw me—at Harland-Browne's—remember? And later, at the roof garden dinner—and even here, the morning we sailed—I was dressed—how?"

"All in gray. Yet you reminded me of a wren—somehow or other," he replied promptly.

She flushed with pleasure.

"My hair was done up in a little knot at the back of my head and I had on heel-less shoes," said she.

"Sure! But all your real clothes were packed in your trunks."

She was silent a moment; then:

"Yes, I do write books; your little friend is correct."

"What kind?" he asked, curiously, like a child.

She named over the titles of the six volumes to her credit, demanding if he had ever read any of them. He hadn't; neither had the little heiress, although she had heard of Annie.

"You see, I never read books," Southery told her apologetically. "I've only read one in the last—oh, five years, I guess. And everybody's read that."

She nodded, divining what his answer would be before he spoke; and yet she asked him.

"What was it?"

"Why, 'Hearts Adrift'—seen it?"

"Yes. . . . What did you think of it?" she said timorously.

"That's something like a book!" he declared, with fervor. "To be honest with you, Anne, I've read the bloomin' thing through three times! Do you—are yours—?"

"No." She shook her head, eyes grave and lips smiling. "You'll never find my name signed to anything I'd be ashamed to own. And if you like such fiction as 'Hearts Adrift' I am sure you will not care for my stories—and I'm just as well satisfied!"

"Then—you're not angry?"

"No-o. On the other hand, I am pleased to death. You wouldn't advise me to plan a novel relating to the morality of working girls in accordance to the minimum wage?"

"Good Lord, no — never!" cried Southery.

She smiled; she was pleased; she could have clapped her hands. Meredith Walker had been pleading for such a book from her pen for nearly a year. He claimed the world demanded it; he promised to bring her material for it; the subject was bound to come up whenever they met.

Eric watched her mysterious smile with something like alarm.

"You're sure you're not angry?" he pleaded. "You see, I'm such a solid ivory sort myself."

Annie allowed her fingers to rest lightly on his arm while she told him the whole truth of the matter.

"This is a deep, dark secret, and I'm

heartily ashamed of it, too," said she, "but you are the very first man I have met—in all my life, I believe!—who has treated me as if I were a woman and not a fiction factory. You talk to me as men talk to women in books, and I have never known that before. It's delicious! From my early girlhood I have been thrown among workers. Every idea is 'copy;' every thought is 'shop.' Men say things to us—to the women—to make us say things, and then our viewpoint appears later in an article or story. Oh-h, we do the same things to the poor defenseless male! But, I'm sick of it! I'd rather hear you say that my frock is becoming than have Meredith Walker write that my new book is decidedly worth while!"

Southery sat staring at the point of his shoe.

"You know, I'm not clever, Anne."

"Thank God for that!" she breathed softly. "I'm tired of men with just brains."

"And I'll read your books—the very first chance I get."

"Indeed you'll do nothing of the kind."

"You make me feel like such a fool—"

"You make me remember I'm a woman—after all," she said gently. "I'm going to tell you the sad story of my life, Eric: When I was twenty I came to New York from a little town in the Middle West. I had been a prodigy from my cradle. At the time other girls were playing with dolls and hoops I was writing verses. It seems, looking back, that I have never done anything else but write from the day I was born. My first book was published when I was twenty-one. I have now six to my credit—and I am thirty-one. I have lived thirty-one years and I didn't know until the other day that it made any difference whether my hair was in knots or curls!"

"Poor little Anne!" he said tenderly.

She nodded, her lips smiling, her eyes tragic.

"Poor little Cinderella!" she murmured. "It was all work and no play . . . her own fault at that, I guess. Do you remember when you asked me to dance, the other night? Well, I don't know how. And I don't know how to play golf, or tennis, or bridge; and I've never learned to swim—and the pool looks heavenly! You see, when I was growing up, Eric, I hadn't the time to spare from my work for all these foolish pastimes. Some day I was going to be famous—"

"You are!" he declared stoutly.

She shook her head.

"I gave ten years of my life to writing six books," said she, "fame and fortune which fell to me from all of them can't begin to compare with that earned by 'Hearts Adrift'—a hodge-podge written in two months."

"But—*that* isn't art!" muttered Southery. "You said so yourself."

"And I meant it!" cried Annie warmly. "Eric, I wrote 'Hearts Adrift.' I wrote it because I was sick and tired of standing sponsor for purposeful novels which returned me nothing more than scholarly notices in scholarly papers. I wanted—money. I was losing my youth and I wanted money and happiness before it was too late. So I wrote 'Hearts Adrift'—after studying the best-sellers of the past few years. But when it was finished, I was ashamed to put my name to it. See what a fraud I am? What a coward?"

He reached out and clasped her hand with his, unmindful of the passing at that minute of the Kansas heiress and her mamma.

"Dear little Anne, even granting that you are a fraud and a coward—which you are not!—listen to my tale of woe. Know ye then that I have an uncle who is an earl—not necessarily wicked, but sixty. And penniless. I was his heir. So I gathered together my credentials and following the advice of him who said 'Go West, young man!' landed a month ago, in Chicago—where the rich little girls come from."

"How ridiculous!" she cried, as he paused dramatically.

"It was!" he acknowledged. "For while I was gone, my uncle got married—no, not to an adventuress but the rector's daughter . . . my one-time sweetheart. So now I'm going back to London to look for a job instead of a wife! Moral? Little children, beware of the fortune hunter."

She got up out of her chair; he

joined her, and they strolled along the deck in the sunshine.

"Anne," said he, "you're the most wonderful girl! I haven't a shilling to my name; at least, I haven't many of them. But I can work and I will—like a Trojan, for you."

"I'm thirty-one, Eric," she returned lightly.

"Thirty-five myself."

"You're nothing but a boy!"

"Evidently you haven't looked at yourself in the glass lately."

His words were like honey to her, but she only laughed, looking him squarely in the eyes.

"I'm going to London to get married," she said. "A college professor who speaks every language under the sun, I believe, but the language of love. He is very proud of my books—my signed books. I honestly think if he found out after we were married that I wrote 'Hearts Adrift' he would—shoot me or else divorce me. That's the real reason I published it under a pen-name."

"Afraid of his shooting you?"

She smiled.

"I wanted money and respect—both."

Annie also found, as day followed day, that she wanted Eric Southery always near her. With him she became a girl, a joyous, happy girl who laughed and sang all the time, such a girl as she had never been before, even at sixteen. He insisted upon teaching her to play tennis, before luncheon when the courts were deserted. She herself asked him to teach her to dance—which he couldn't do—and to swim—which they later decided had better be postponed until they landed in England. She was crazy for happiness, and he desired nothing more than to teach her how to be happy.

"Anne, you wont marry that old fossil," he would cry. "Good Lord, why, you sha'n't!"

"Meredith's not a fossil, Eric," Annie would reply. "In fact, I believe he is even younger than you are—in years. What can I do?"

In the end she sent him a wireless, the first day the steamship was in connection with the station at Southampton. With almost Machiavellian cunning she said:

> I am author of "Hearts Adrift." Answer. ANNIE.

After that she felt better. And their last day aboard ship she and Southery spent together on the tennis court.

"I ought to get his reply by to-morrow morning," she said, with a rueful smile. "Goodness, I hardly believe the telegraph company will send it!"

"If they don't, why, that let's you out—as they say in the States," laughed he.

Instead of hurrying on to London, Annie went to the Queen's Hotel and prepared herself to wait for Meredith Walker's answer to her wireless. It arrived at Southampton the next morning, sure enough, and Southery was pacing up and down in the lounge, as nervous as a colt, when Annie came out to tell him the news.

"Well, what does the bounder have to say?" he demanded savagely.

She smiled sweetly.

"He says—but read it yourself." And she thrust the bit of yellow paper in his hands.

> Congratulations! Letter all a mistake. Will arrive in Southampton at four. MEREDITH.

Eric crushed the message in a ball and tossed it angrily from him.

"What does he mean? 'Congratulations?' " cried he.

"Yes. I fancy even in England they've heard of my neglected step-child," Annie cooed. "Oh, he knows—Meredith Walker follows the world of books pretty closely. I'll wager he can tell you my royalties for my very own little children to a penny. And he knows too that 'Hearts Adrift' has already earned its author nearly fifty thousand dollars."

Southery was silent for a minute or two. Then:

"What does he mean about the letter being all a mistake?"

Annie folded her hands meekly on her breast.

"Behold a jilted female," she piped. "It's a long story—draw near. The very day I left New York there came from London a letter from Mr. Professor. Now that was also the day I had met

you in the elevator at Harland-Browne's, and you had asked me to take pity on you and—go to the Astor roof for supper. I hadn't time to read the letter and keep the date, so I tucked my *billet d'amour* in my purse, unopened, and flew to meet the Englishman with the pleasant voice and boyish smile and the—"

"Oh, piffle!" he protested.

"But it isn't!" she declared. "What I did was to meet you, go to supper and forget Meredith's letter entirely until I received his wire. Then I looked it up—in my purse. He had jilted me! I've been jilted ten days and haven't known it. Think of that!"

"Dear, be sensible," he pleaded. "Remember I'm only an Englishman—solid ivory!"

"Solid gold!" she cried. "Listen, Eric: Meredith Walker himself broke off our engagement—or what stood for one in the high art set—more than two weeks ago. In his letter he told me he was going to marry the daughter of 'Sir 'Enry Watkins'—a city knight, most likely. Well, let him. When he arrives in Southampton this afternoon, faithless to his 'Arriet, to my purposeful novels, to—to himself even, why, we—"

"You wonderful girl!" said Southery, making further speech impossible. Then, a moment later: "See here, Anne, what's the matter with that 'Hearts Adrift,' anyway?"

She laughed a low, happy laugh.

"The matter with it? Why, there's nothing the matter with it, Eric," she cried. "And, the best of it is I am going to turn out another one of the same type every year!"

Eat-em-up Makes a Mis-cue

By GRANT OWEN

THE wiry, gray-haired little man, who came briskly around the corner of Cross Street, paused before the windows of Mel Sheehan's chop-house and peered sharply within.

Evidently satisfied with that brief moment of scrutiny, the little man opened the door and bounced briskly in; but he did not seat himself at any of the little clothless tables. Instead, he went to the back of the place, where in the little enclosure behind the cashier's brass cage, Mel Sheehan himself was running over certain bills and incidentally keeping an eye on the doings of the employees of his establishment.

The little man, like one who was sure of his welcome, lifted a hinged portion of the enclosure's barrier-like counter, whisked a litter of papers out of the only unoccupied chair and sat down.

"I've been hearin' things, Mel," said he, "and I want to know if they're true."

Mel Sheehan looked up from his bills with an amiable grin.

"Well, now I dunno about that, Eat-'em-up," said he. "How can I say things is or aint true, till I know what you've went and horned into?"

The little man leaned forward.

"I've heard," said he, "that that big cook of yourn—Bullet Welch—has been matched up for twenty-five rounds with Simmy Grant. Now is it or aint it so? Has my ears went and deceived me, or have I heard aright?"

Mel Sheehan's amiable grin broadened. He was a big man, of a breadth and girth that seemed almost deformities.

"You aint went and fell for nothin' like that, have you, Eat-'em-up?" he asked with pretended scorn. "Not with

things fixed the way they are in this town now. Who's goin' to risk promotin' any fight, what with the lid down tight on the boxin' game as it is, and the new police commissioner just achin' to git his hooks on some one tryin' to run a mill, and makin' an example of him? Who told you?"

The little man cocked his gray head pertly.

"Maybe 'twas a little bird," said he lightly, "and maybe 'twas a el'phunt. Anyways, it come to me straight, Mel—straight as a die. If the Bullet is really goin' to fight, lemme in on it. I need some dough—I need it bad."

Mel looked thoughtfully at the eager figure in the chair beside him. He seemed debating some question in that ponderous head of his. Then he straightened up and sent the ash of his cigar flicking far out on the floor.

"Look ahere, Eat'-em-up," he said judicially, "you know just as well as I do that this good-citizenship crowd that's runnin' things in this burg now has put the fight game on the ker-blink. Still"—he chewed the end of his cigar and one eyelid drooped slowly—"still stranger things has happened than Bullet Welch and Simmy Grant mixin' it up for a few rounds by reason of a little private argument betchune 'em as to which is the better man. And if they is goin' at it, why it seems cruel to have the good coin they might draw goin' to waste. You better have a word wit' Andy Coakley, Eat-'em up."

The little man hitched about in his chair.

"Then it's really so," he muttered. "Look, Mel, once you told me that if I ever heard of that Bullet felly goin' into the ring, to back him wit' every cent I could rake or scrape—that he was fast and clever and just ett up punishment and could stand up wit' the best of 'em. Do you feel that same way now? Simmy Grant's a bear; he's faster'n greased lightnin', too. Would the Bullet stand a ghost of a show wit' him?"

Mel patted the little man's arm.

"Eat-'em-up," said he impressively, "the odds is three to one on Simmy. There aint none of 'em wise to what the Bullet really is. I've loaded up with the short end till I'll have to mortgage things if he loses, which there aint the least chance of his doin'. That's my opinion of him."

"When's it comin' off?" Eat-'em-up asked.

"Friday week."

"Where?"

"You'll have to ask Andy Coakley about that. The last I knew he hadn't decided on a place."

"Is there any of the long-end coin round loose?"

"Doherty's got plenty of it down to his place, I hear. Now run along, Eat-'em-up. You're interruptin' me, and I've told you too much already. This thing's all got to be strictly under cover, o' course."

The little man arose, chirped a few words of heartfelt thanks to the big-souled Sheehan and went out. He was whistling blithely to himself as he went. The world had taken on a decidedly better aspect since that brief interview with Mel Sheehan.

Eat-'em-up McCusker—he had been christened Patrick Aloysius—had come by that name of his quite naturally. Following all the fights for years, he had marked his favorites, and, whenever any such appeared in the ring, McCusker on the sloping seats by the ringside might have been heard exhorting frantically, "Eat-'em-up! Eat-'em-up, boy!" any time the said favorite got in a telling blow. Moreover, his exhortations were delivered in a voice out of all proportion to his size. It boomed and roared and bellowed, and made the other ringside fans chuckle delightedly and turn to gaze at the wiry little chap with that voice like some weird combination of a fog-horn and the roar of a jungle beast.

Eat-'em-up was supposedly well-to-do; nor had the suppositions been wrong. But of late, Eat-'em-up had fallen on evil days. The comfortable little nest-egg he had laid aside as the result of his activities in the paving-contracting game had recently melted as if by magic. A sudden attack of get-rich-quick fever, a plausible gentleman with some gilt-edged, high-interest-bearing but unlisted industrial bonds, and the deed was done. Eat-'em-up was facing the problem of how to live (or

starve) gracefully on nothing per week and nothing in sight.

But with this fight coming off, he could see at least a prospect of getting comfortably through the next few months of stress, and in the spring he'd buck the paving-game again, beginning where he had retired. Indeed, it was the question of funds for the winter that had been troubling him most seriously. Let's see! He'd have to raise about two hundred dollars, place it with Doherty on the short end and by the morning of Saturday week he'd have six hundred dollars coming to him. That would be sufficient. The whole thing was simplicity itself.

Eat-'em-up began a round of his friends, and to each friend he told the same story. He was temporarily embarrassed for ready money, but he had plenty coming Saturday week—oh, plenty of it. Now if he could get a loan of say ten dollars till Saturday week—oh, sure he'd pay it back then; dead sure he would.

Twenty friends of his dug down into their pockets and produced, obligingly, or grudgingly, according to the temperament of each, the requested ten-spot.

By eleven o'clock Eat-'em-up was at Al Doherty's Elite Café, passing twenty ten-dollar bills across the far end of the bar to Al Doherty himself.

"The short end, mind," whispered Eat-'em-up knowingly.

Al Doherty shook his head.

"And are ye gone clean batty, Eat-'em-up?" he asked darkly. "Mind ye, it's Simmy Grant the Bullet is goin' against. He aint never seen the day nor he wont never see the day he's got a look-in wit' a guy that's got Simmy's speed and his cleverness and that awful kick he keeps in his mitt for the right minute of the foight. 'Tis yer own money, Eat-'em-up. Ye've a right to trun it round as ye want to, so I'll place it like ye say. But moind, I do it ag'in' me own better judgment, and wit' a warnin' to you to the same effect, Eat-'em-up."

"The short-end, jest the same, Al," said Eat-'em-up, and forthwith he departed.

Andy Coakley was feeling particularly fit that morning. Mr. Coakley, having just discovered and rented an ideal spot for staging his forthcoming fistic festival, beamed broadly at all the world from the tiny office where he conducted his piano- and furniture-moving enterprises. Thither came Eat-'em-up McCusker, beaming also, in that he had raised the necessary funds so easily and had even now in his coat pocket a bit of paper calling for the payment to him of eight hundred dollars in event of one Bullet Welch winning a decision over one Simmy Grant on a certain October evening.

"Aw, don't try to look innercent when I tell you I know all about it," chuckled Eat-'em-up to the erstwhile promoter. "I know all about it. I want a ticket."

Mr. Coakley slowly shook his sparsely-thatched head.

"Couldn't do it, Eat-'em-up," he said.

"Aint my money good?" snapped McCusker angrily.

"It aint that," said Coakley. "Yer money's all right wit' me, and yer word's as good as yer money. Naw, that aint it. It's yer voice, Eat-'em-up—that bellerin' you always does. It wouldn't do. You'd git excited and git to yellin' and then where'd the whole push be. They'd hear you for miles. They couldn't help it. This thing has got to be kept mighty quiet. I can't take no chances, what wit' the new commissioner jest watchin' for a chance to nab the scalp of some felly wot's tryin' to pull off a fight. Naw, Eat-'em-up. Sorry. But I couldn't, honest!"

Long and heatedly the disappointed Eat-'em-up argued; quite as tenaciously Mr. Coakley stuck to his point. At last Eat-'em-up turned sadly away.

"Well, where's it going to be?" he pleaded. "Tell me that much."

"Naw, it aint likely I'll tell you that if I don't want you there," said Coakley.

But Eat-'em-up McCusker had various and diverse sources of information. It wasn't many days before he had learned the mill was to take place in the loft of a certain old and deserted stable down on Fruit Street, back of the hospital. Thither went Eat-'em-up, as soon as he heard the news, and inspected the place carefully. To his delight he found there was a skylight on the stable roof. He chuckled to himself.

"Well, I save the ten the ticket would 'a' cost me, anyway," he said philosophically as he turned away. And for once in his checkered career he had run up against a time when ten dollars seemed eminently worth saving.

Behold then, the Friday night of the fight, Eat-'em-up McCusker clinging precariously to the deserted stable's ridgepole and peering eagerly through the dirty skylight upon the scene in the stable loft below him.

It was a huge loft. It had been swept clean of its litter. In the center of it was the usual squared ring with its canvas padding, and crowded about it were perhaps a thousand devotees of the forbidden game, eager, expectant, but, from the exigencies of the case, for once strangely hushed and quiet. The two principals were in their respective corners with their seconds. The referee was making an announcement in so guarded a voice that Eat-'em-up on his perch could not catch it.

It was an overcast night—foggy and drizzling rain—cold, too, on the roof of the stable; but Eat-'em-up merely turned up the collar of his frayed raincoat and peered breathlessly below.

The referee waved his arms; the two men advanced, clasped gloved hands and squared away. The fight was on. Simmy Grant led off with a quick feint with his left, and Eat-'em-up had to stuff his hand into his mouth to smother his war-cry, which was in imminent danger of bursting forth when the Bullet came through with a lightning-like right uppercut which rocked back Simmy's red head.

After that it became a fast and furious mêlée. The spectators pressed against the ropes; Eat-'em-up flattened his nose against the skylight. Never had he seen such a pace, and the second and the third and the fourth rounds were worthy successors, each a bit better than the former.

Simmy found his foeman worthy of his steel; the Bullet was going at it doggedly, taking enough punishment to put out ten men, and smiling blandly under it.

Then matters changed. Halfway through the fifth round the Bullet grew careless, or else he was tiring. Anyway, Simmy's right caught him a crashing blow in the jaw and sent him prone to the mat. He staggered up to be floored again. This time the referee began to count. At the "seven" of the count the Bullet got up and went down under another blow. He did manage to get to his feet before he was counted out, lurched into a clinch, and hung on desperately, until the waving of the referee's arm in lieu of a gong, announced the end of the round.

The Bullet wabbled to his corner and collapsed into his chair while frantic seconds plied towels and squirted copious libations of water over him.

Eat-'em-up, his nose pressed flat and white against the dirty skylight, was shaking like a leaf. Mel Sheehan had been wrong for once. The Bullet was outclassed. One more round would finish it. And how about the two hundred Eat-'em-up had borrowed? How could he ever hope to pay it if the Bullet lost, to say nothing of the six hundred which he felt in his heart now was wealth he had forecasted altogether too lightheadedly and too confidently? Eat-'em-up, shivering in his raincoat on the ridgepole, began to do some most disquieting thinking.

But Mel Sheehan had never been wrong before. Perhaps with the rest between rounds the Bullet would come back strong. Perhaps—

The referee was waving his arm for the beginning of the sixth round. Out wabbled the Bullet; down he went at once, his heels waving absurdly in the air, before one of Simmy's vicious short-arm jabs.

With a groan, Eat-'em-up slid, panic-stricken, from the roof.

Over a fence he toppled and up the street he ran, his raincoat flapping out behind him in the wind. Why on earth had he waited this long? Why hadn't he come away after the fifth round? He might have known! Perhaps he'd be too late—too late, and he owed two hundred dollars.

The clerk in a near-by drug-store looked up frowningly at the little man who tore in from the street, fell into

the telephone booth and began banging the receiver-hook frantically.

"Police-headquarters. Emergency!" yelled Eat-'em-up, as soon as the operator answered his impatient summons.

"Hello! Headquarters? Gimme Station Eight!"

A pause.

"Hello! This Station Eight? Say, they's some guys pullin' off a fight down in McGlinchey's old stable down on Fruit Street back of the hospital. Yep, get busy and send the wagon and some men down there. Who 'm I? Never mind who I am! Get busy and do as I say. Goo'-by!"

Then he went back to the corner and waited nervously till the wagon from Station Eight, loaded down with helmeted figures, tore past him and drew up at the fence back of the stable.

Then he turned away with a sigh. Maybe the six hundred he had so fondly counted on was gone, but at least if they got in there before Simmy had his man fully out, the bets would be off and his two hundred—the two hundred he owed to twenty different parties, would be safe. That would be something.

Eat-'em-up slunk sadly up the street. He reached the avenue. At a little lunch room he paused, then went in. He had an idea a cup of coffee and some doughnuts might relieve that awful feeling at the pit of his stomach.

He ordered the coffee and doughnuts, and, taking them to one of the wide-armed chairs, sat him disconsolately down. Presently the door opened. A man with his face scratched and bleeding, his clothes torn, his hat smashed in and himself limping painfully, ambled to the counter and ordered apple pie and coffee. As he turned he grinned ruefully at the man already seated, the sole occupant of the chairs.

"Hello, Eat-'em-up!" he said.

"Say, wot's the matter wit' you, anyway?" asked Eat-'em-up, staring at the other's dilapidation.

Big Jim Thoney sorrowfully shook his head as he sank into the chair next McCusker's.

"You heard about the fight between Bullet Welch and Simmy Grant that Coakley was engineerin' down in McGlinchey's stable to-night?" he asked covertly.

Eat-'em-up nodded.

"Well, some dub went and tipped it off and the place got pinched. When the bulls come bustin' in I was right near a winder. I kicks out the winder, sash and all, crawls through and dropped. I lit in some kind of prickly bushes. I'm a sight, aint I?"

Eat-'em-up saw no reason for denying it. He merely grunted.

"And that aint the worst of it," Thoney complained. "I lose just nine hundred iron men by them bulls comin' in just as they did. One minute more—one minute at the most—"

"You had yer money on Simmy, then?" Eat-'em-up asked in a colorless and perfunctory voice.

"I *did* not!" Thoney denied soulfully. "I got the tip that the Bullet was a tough customer, and I backed him—three to one I got. I thought my money had took wings in the fifth, all right. Simmy had him down three times, and all but out, too, it seemed. Then he knocked him down again right at the beginnin' of the sixth. But after that—" Thoney's face became animated as he described the exciting scene—"after that the Bullet seemed to git his second wind. Gee, you'd ought to 'a' seen him git up and fight back after that knockdown at the beginnin' of the sixth. He was a whirlwind. He druv Simmy into a corner and he was whalin' sin outer him when the bulls busted in. Simmy couldn't 'a' lasted a minute—aw gee, what's the matter wit' you, Eat-'em-up?"

Eat-'em-up had just taken a generous mouthful of coffee. Half of it came out through his nose; the rest he blew sputteringly about in painfully indiscriminate directions. Thoney thumped his back lustily for some seconds before he found gurgling speech.

"That—that coffee," choked Eat-'em-up, "it tastes like burnt peanut shells, and this place is too hot and stuffy for me. I gotter have some fresh air."

He slouched towards the door, his chin sunk far down on his raincoat. Thoney noticed he was muttering half-intelligible reproaches as he went.

The Invisible Bullet

One of the most interesting exploits of Magnum, the scientific consultant. This time, he turns detective in earnest, and solves a mystery which has puzzled the keenest brains in London.

By MAX RITTENBERG

MAGNUM heard the revolver-shots from the street—Sloane Street—on one of those misty midwinter afternoons when the sun is a mere ball of dull-red metal passing from incandescence to sullen coldness.

A single shot would be taken by any sophisticated Londoner for a tire-burst on a motor-car; but two in rapid succession—

The sound came from above, from an upper story of a pleasant-looking stone building, recently steam-cleaned and a trifle proud of its cleanliness compared with untubbed neighbors. The ground floor housed "MADAME PAULINE, MODES." On the first floor, as Magnum looked upwards, was the announcement in plain lettering, "ARKWRIGHT and NUGENT, Solicitors and Commissioners for Oaths;" above that, in larger and more fanciful lettering, "NURSE PALMER, Massage and Electric Baths;" and on the top story, "GYMNASTIC AND FENCING ACADEMY, Sergeant Mc. Intosh," swung outwards on a hanging sign.

Magnum, grasping a stout umbrella, darted for the open stairway at the side of Madame Pauline's entrance. He moved quickly but not recklessly, with an ear alive to the possible hasty descent of a murderer with four shots still in his revolver. In that case the scientist would have stood aside and contented himself with registering the appearance of the criminal. He had no intention of foolhardy bravery.

On the first floor, at a quarter-opened doorway, a flabby little solicitor's clerk peered out. "What's the matter is anyone shot who is it?" he asked all in one quivering breath.

Magnum, without wasting time in answering, pushed upwards. The second-floor landing was empty and the door of Nurse Palmer's establishment closed. On the third floor, a woman's scream rang out—in high-pitched hysteria rather than in sheer terror. The scientist quickly threw open the door, to find himself in a gymnasium, a broad, open room, high and arched by an ample skylight, through which the misted sun sent a pinkish glow like a stage dawn. Two slight young girls in fencing masks, short skirts and leather jackets were endeavoring to carry to a couch a middle-aged woman in hysterical convulsions.

"Are you a doctor? In there!" called one of the girls, pointing to the farther

end of the gymnasium, curtained off by hanging cretonne in cheerful blue and white reaching two-thirds of the way up to the arched roof.

"No," answered Magnum, releasing his umbrella and snatching up a bar-bell. He hastened to the curtain, and with a belligerent grip on his weapon, pulled it aside. Lying on the bare wooden floor of a second gymnasium—or rather, the continuation of the same room—was an elderly man, stout, pasty-faced, bald, in white flannels and with a gaudy scarf girt about his waist. A spreading pool of blood around him, and on his white flannel shirt, told the story. Bending over him, trying to staunch the blood with a towel, was Sergeant McIntosh, also in gymnasium flannels.

"It's impossible! It's juist impossible!" gasped the Sergeant, middle-aged, graying, stiff in attitude from long military training even in this moment of tragedy.

"Have you shot him?"

"*I*, man?" His amazement cut out any further questioning along the line of Magnum's first thought.

"Who?" demanded Magnum.

"I don't know."

"Which way did he escape? It wasn't by the staircase."

"Which way? I ask you that myself!" cried the agonized Sergeant.

From beyond the blue and white of the cretonne curtain, so incongruously cheerful, came the sound of one of the girls demanding a telephone number. Evidently she was calling up a doctor.

"It'll juist ruin me!" cried the Sergeant.

"He's dead?"

"Stone dead, and never a word!"

Magnum, with his bar-bell, peered cautiously round an open door leading off from the side of the gymnasium, the only door in sight. It led into a small dressing-room with a shower-bath. Quite empty. The window at the end of the room was shut and the catch locked in. Nevertheless, Magnum opened it and looked around for a possible method of escape for the criminal. The wall went down sheer three stories to a back-yard. There was no fire escape, no staples in the wall, no water-pipe.

The Sergeant had followed. "I tell you, man, the room was empty! And the window shut! And there's no way of getting down from the window!"

"Or up to the roof?"

"I was here within three seconds of hearing the shots! I was just beyond the curtain with the young ladies when I heard them. I ran in at once."

"With a weapon?"

"No—as I was."

Magnum made an unspoken compliment to the Sergeant's courage. He strode back to the gymnasium and pointed up questioningly to the roof with its half-open skylight.

"I tell you, man, I was up yon rope to the skylight in a brace of jiffies. There was no one on the roof. Go up yourself and look. Oh, but it's juist impossible!"

Magnum threw off his coat and swarmed up the pendant gymnasium rope till he had reached the skylight. He established a foothold and looked out over the roof, heavily grimed with London soot, able to carry traces which no criminal could efface. It seemed impossible that the shots could have been fired by a man crouching near the skylight. Indeed, when the doctor appeared, that point was corroborated in a startling manner.

"He was shot at point-blank," said the doctor. "Look at the scorching on his shirt."

Two shots from behind, through the lungs, had killed the man. One of them had passed clean through the body.

"It might possibly have been suicide," suggested the doctor doubtfully.

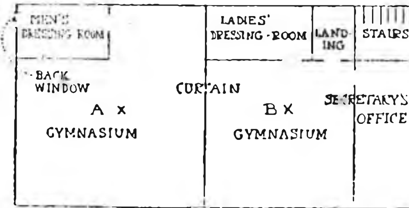
But no weapon had been found.

The police speedily appeared. There was a babel of cross-examination, through which the agonized Sergeant repeated at intervals: "It'll juist ruin me!"

Out of the welter of questions and answers the facts of the tragedy came into bold silhouette. Sergeant McIntosh had been engaged in instructing the Hon. Sybil and Winifred Lennox in the art of the foils. The secretary, she of the hysteria, was in her front office. Beyond the cretonne curtain, Mr. Barclay Walsh, the dead man, had been going through a course of dumb-bell

exercises alone. Then the two shots, the Sergeant rushing in to the rescue, and the astounding mystery of the gymnasium empty save for Walsh lying gasping on the floor, and the empty dressing-room.

A gruff police inspector made a notebook sketch of the floor-arrangement, "A" representing the position in which the dead man was found, and "B" where the fencing-lesson was proceeding.



There was naturally a search into every nook and cranny of the suite of rooms. A hiding mouse could not have remained undiscovered.

"Must have escaped by that open back window," muttered the gruff inspector.

"I tell you, man, the window was shut when I ran in!" protested the Sergeant. "To avoid draughts. Shut, and the catch locked."

The inspector looked open disbelief.

"Why should I lie to you?"

"My-duty-to-warn-you that-anything-you-say may-be-used-in-evidence-against-you," rattled off the officer in three words.

"I've nothing to hide!"

The inspector shut up his note-book with a professional snap. "Pretty evident how the fellow got away. Ran into the dressing-room and hid behind the door. You came in, then left the room to climb up the rope. While you were doing that, out he goes by the window. Easily fooled *you*."

The Sergeant's stiff shoulders bowed sadly. The tragedy on his premises might ruin his academy and sweep away the savings of a lifetime. On top of that, he was suspected of complicity —or at the best, of crass foolishness—in letting the criminal escape.

Magnum, remembering the Sergeant's courage, felt a sudden wave of sympathy for him. Therefore he interposed, remarking authoritatively: "The window *was* shut and locked."

"Who are you, sir?" demanded the inspector.

Magnum passed over his card.

"Doesn't tell me anything," said the officer curtly.

"Drafted in lately from Devonshire?" inquired Magnum, stung in his very human vanity.

"My-duty-to-warn-you that-anything-you-say may-be-used-in-evidence-against-you."

"Very good. Make a note of that question of mine. Hand my card to the commissioner, and ask him for some elementary information about me. Now listen to me, inspector or whatever you are: when I entered that dressing-room, less than a minute after the shots were fired"—Magnum strode to the room and finished his sentence at the window —"the window was shut and the catch locked in. I had to press back the catch in order to open it and look out."

"Then the fellow must have shut the window from the outside and pushed home the catch with a knife-blade."

"Will you stand out on the window-sill and demonstrate how it was done?" asked Magnum.

The tension of the tragedy was broken by a light laugh from the doctor. "Better have a mattress in the back-yard," he suggested.

The inspector scowled on Magnum. "If the fellow didn't escape this way, then tell me how he *did* escape!"

For once, Magnum had no ready reply to make. The only reasonable solution of the mystery had been choked off by his evidence. Where could the criminal have hidden in a few seconds, and how could he have escaped except by the window, the skylight or the curtain leading to the first half of the gymnasium? In the latter room were the two Misses Lennox and the secretary—how could he have passed them unobserved?

Grudgingly, Magnum suggested the rope leading up to the skylight. The sun had now disappeared sullenly in a bank of gray, half cloud, half mist. The electric lights were switched on, and the inspector clambered up the rope to examine the roof.

But he could find no trace there of an escaping man.

"You can both come with me to the station," he told the Sergeant and Magnum curtly; and gave orders that a policeman should remain to keep guard over the gymnasium, leaving everything precisely in the position in which it was found.

The dead man had of course been removed; around where he had fallen, the crimson pool had blackened into a dark, ugly clot, gleaming dully under the electrics.

Magnum and the Sergeant were speedily released from the police station, the former after a telephone message to the Commissioner of Police, the latter on Magnum's bail. But the scientist was not one to lie down tamely under such an insult.

"You can write out an apology or a resignation," he snapped at the inspector.

"Only did my duty," was the sullen answer.

"Your duty," retorted Magnum, who rather liked lecturing, "was to remain on the spot until you discovered how the crime was committed and how the criminal escaped."

"If you can prove to me how he escaped," flared back the inspector, "except by the back window, I'll write you an apology *and* a resignation!"

Magnum, having no tenable theory whatever, ignored this challenge. But it remained in his thoughts, thrusting itself disturbingly between his ordinary professional work and himself. The murder, as Sergeant McIntosh had phrased it, seemed "impossible." A man shot at point-blank in a well-lighted gymnasium, and the criminal to escape within a few seconds without leaving the remotest clue!

There was no doubt of the essential correctness of part of the Sergeant's story. Aside from the evidence of his secretary, there were the two Misses Lennox, whose word was indisputable. They testified that the Sergeant, on hearing the shots, had rushed at once through the curtain, unarmed.

But they had not followed him. For what happened beyond the curtain, the police had only the word of the Sergeant and of Magnum, who arrived a minute or so later. The police theory was either suicide and the concealment of the weapon by Sergeant McIntosh or complicity in the criminal's escape. After the inquest, the case began to look very black against the unfortunate gymnastic master. He was re-arrested and charged with being "an accessory after the fact."

Magnum, who prided himself on his judgment of men, was completely satisfied of the Sergeant's innocence. And pitying him, the scientist found himself irresistibly drawn towards the unravelment of the mystery. It was bad business to do this, a sheer waste of professional time, but for once Magnum laid aside his usual attitude of profitable money-making.

"This thing worries me," he told young Meredith, chief assistant, hunching his bushy reddish eyebrows. "I can't get it out of my thoughts. I must put Stacey on to defend the man."

A note from the Sergeant thanked him gratefully for the offer of legal help. Magnum then rang up the offices of East, East and Stacey, solicitors.

"Is that Stacey? . . . Magnum speaking. I want you to defend Sergeant McIntosh—the Barclay Walsh case. . . . Don't run away with the idea that there's big money in it for you. I'm paying costs, and if you pile up a stiff bill . . . I'm asking it as a personal favor. A return for that forty thousand pounds I helped you to in the Seven-oaks Tunnel case. . . . You're a sportsman! Thanks. Now get busy."

A few days later, young Stacey, brisk and trim, came to Magnum's laboratories with a not very hopeful report.

"We'll do our best for the Sergeant," said Stacey, "and he's got a clean record in his favor, *but* . . . it's devilish awkward to find a plausible defense. I'm beginning to think there's something in the police theory."

"You reckon that he *let* the criminal escape?"

"He might have thought that it would hush up a scandal. Foolish, but natural."

"I don't believe it!"

"It doesn't depend on what you believe, but what the jury believe."

"It depends on what *you make* the jury believe," retorted Magnum. "On your counsel, which comes to the same thing."

"Of course we throw the onus of proof on the other side. The case will rest on circumstantial evidence. But you can't get away from the fact that the criminal escaped *somehow*. Suicide is out of the question. Walsh had no reason for suicide. He was a prosperous business man, a sleeping partner with not a financial worry in the world. He was doing exercises in the gymnasium to reduce his figure. There was no hidden disease—the P. M. proved that. He must have been shot by some one with a grievance against him."

"By the way, have they found the second bullet, the one that passed clean through the body?"

"No. Every inch of the gymnasium was searched, but it hasn't been found. Curious point."

"Another mystery!" growled the irritated Magnum. "This case annoys me. I hate mysteries which wont clear up. I'll have to search for that bullet myself."

But professional matters of urgency prevented him for a full week. He was called up to Scotland, and returned to London barely in time to give his evidence on the opening day of the trial.

The following morning, accompanied by Meredith—whose sight, trained by the exacting standards of the laboratory, was abundantly keen—Magnum went to search the now deserted gymnasium. A permit from the police allowed them in. They attacked their task with mathematical precision, dividing the wall-area of the room into sections and examining one section at a time. After that they went over the furniture and the gymnastic apparatus with similar care. But the missing bullet remained invisible. It had vanished as mysteriously as the criminal.

"Damnation!" concluded Magnum.

"Two unknowns in an equation. The one might be a function of the other," suggested Meredith mildly.

"We'll go down to the yard and have a look up at the back window."

"Will that help?"

"Probably not. But I want to satisfy myself as to whether the fellow could have escaped that way."

By permission of Madame Pauline, they passed through the millinery establishment on the ground-floor out to the yard—a small, grimy enclosure used for dust-bins and the storing of shop rubbish. Magnum gazed up to the window three stories above, furrowing his forehead in an effort to visualize the escaping criminal.

"I don't see it," he concluded growlingly. "A cat could hardly have escaped from that window. Let's go."

As they moved away, Meredith suddenly exclaimed: "Why, here it is!"

"What?"

"The bullet."

Meredith had picked it up at his feet. He passed it to his chief, who examined the object as though it had been a diamond of the first water. Undoubtedly it was a twin to the bullet which had been extracted from the body of Barclay Walsh, imbedded in the spinal column. How came it to be lying in that yard?

"Could some one have thrown it out of the window?" suggested the young fellow.

"Even a policeman wouldn't be so idiotic as to throw away evidence of this importance," mused Magnum.

"Would the criminal have dropped it, do you think?"

Magnum ignored this suggestion.

"Or the Sergeant?"

"What earthly reason could he have for doing so?"

"Then how—?"

A mighty slap on the shoulder from Magnum sent Meredith reeling. "Whatever is the matter?" he inquired patiently, while rubbing the affected part.

"Upstairs again to the gymnasium!" cried Magnum, now as eager as a ferret.

"Why?"

"To get the trajectory of the bullet. I believe you're right in what you said: two unknowns in an equation, and the one dependent on the other!"

The art of the advertisement lies largely in making the public believe that the advertiser has goods or natural gifts far beyond the ordinary ruck. Magnum was fully alive to this truism. Even lawyers and barristers, hedged in by professional etiquette, are not above utilising the chances of life in a dramatic form which will arrest public attention and procure for themselves an advertisement to which their professional censors can raise no objection.

Accordingly, Stacey and his counsel held the winning card in hiding until the Crown prosecutor had exhausted every effort towards the piling up of argument against the unfortunate Sergeant, and the case seemed at its blackest. Counsel's speeches had been made on both sides; there remained only the summing up by the judge and the consideration of their verdict by the jury, before Sergeant McIntosh would be convicted of being an accessory after the fact, an accomplice in the criminal's escape.

Just as the judge, clearing his throat, and turning sideways towards the jury, was about to deliver his summary of the case, counsel for the defence jumped up after a whispered consultation with Stacey. "I ask your ludship's permission to re-call Mr. Magnum for further evidence!" he interposed hurriedly.

"Very unusual," frowned his lordship.

"Most important evidence has just come to our knowledge."

The judge looked inquiringly at the Crown prosecutor; and the latter, following the traditions of British justice, answered: "I raise no objection. Of course your ludship will permit me to cross-examine."

"Then proceed to call your witness."

"Mr. Magnum," called counsel for the defence; and the scientist, by no means displeased at having the searchlight of publicity focused upon himself, mounted briskly to the witness-box and took the oath, ignoring the insanitary custom of kissing the book, and instead, swearing with uplifted hand in Scotch fashion.

"You are Mr. Magnum, the scientific consultant, of Upper Thames St., E. C.," rattled off the barrister.

A nod.

"You were recently endeavoring to find the missing bullet, the one which passed through the body of the deceased?"

"Yes."

"You failed to discover it in the gymnasium?"

A nod.

"You then proceeded to the yard at the back of the accused's premises and found it there?"

"I did."

"Is this the bullet in question?"—holding it up.

"It is."

"You believe it to be the second bullet fired by the murderer?"

"Undoubtedly."

The object was handed round by an usher for the inspection of the Crown prosecutor, the judge and the jury.

"Why," inquired the judge, "did you look for it in such an unlikely situation as the yard?"

"Because it was bound to be somewhere. Bullets don't vanish into thin air. Having exhausted the likely places, I continued a systematic search into the unlikely. That is merely a commonplace of the scientific method." Magnum looked as though the innermost secrets of nature were an open book to him.

"Confirmatory evidence will be given by Mr. Ivor Meredith, the witness' assistant," mentioned counsel, and then proceeded: "Have you any theory as to how it came to be lying in the yard?"

"Dropped there."

"In what manner?"

"After passing through the body of the deceased, it left the gymnasium by the open skylight and fell to earth in the yard."

"How came it to travel upwards through the skylight?"

"Obviously it was fired from *underneath* the deceased."

"By some one in the gymnasium?"

"The criminal was not in the gymnasium."

A buzz of excited whisperings broke out amongst the spectators. "Silence!" ordered an usher.

"Explain to the court how the tragedy, in your opinion, took place."

"It is not a matter of opinion," corrected Magnum. "It is a question of fact. Mr. Walsh was engaged in carrying out a course of health exercises. One of the exercises set for him was to lie on the floor, face upwards, and raise himself repeatedly into a sitting posture. He was doing so at the moment when the two shots were fired at him, *through the floor.*"

"That would leave shot-marks in the flooring," interposed the judge.

"No," returned Magnum. "To be exact, the shots were fired through a knot-hole in the wooden flooring. The criminal was lying between it and the beams of the ceiling below. She was never in the gymnasium at the time of the murder. That is how she escaped detection."

"But this knot-hole you speak of—"

"Obviously the knot was replaced in position after the firing. An elementary precaution on her part. It was kept in position by a brad-awl. I know that because I sawed through a portion of the planking and took it up."

"My lord, I assured you I was innocent!" burst forth from the Sergeant.

"Please be silent," rebuked the judge, and proceeded to consult a plan of the building. "I see that the floor below is occupied by a Nurse Palmer, Massage and Electric Baths?"

"At this very moment," said counsel for the defence, "the police are taking possession of her rooms. We have reason to believe that the name Palmer is an alias, and that her profession was not precisely that of nurse."

The judge nodded comprehension, but added: "There must be no further statement made about this Nurse Palmer in court. The present case deals solely with the innocence or guilt of the prisoner in the dock."

"Now, Mr. Magnum," continued counsel, "let us have further details of your discovery."

The details were merely an elaboration of the central fact; Meredith's timid evidence was hardly necessary. The Crown prosecutor wasted little time in cross-examination, and half an hour later, Sergeant McIntosh left the court in triumphant acquittal.

He grasped Magnum's hand in overflowing gratitude. "You are marvelous, sir!" he exclaimed.

"Merely an application of the scientific method," said Magnum in an offhand manner. He had no intention of letting the world know that his discovery was the result of an outrageous fluke. "Now you'd better transfer your academy to some other building, and I expect you'll work up a fine business again. Good luck to you! You understand that I pay the legal costs?"

"That's most generous of you, sir."

But the advertisement for Magnum was fully worth the monetary loss.

Mary Carmichael and I

By JAMES VALE DOWNIE

I

ONE day Miss Jane Carmichael, one of the finest old ladies that ever lived, came into the office and told us that her brother William was dead, in Texas, and she wanted us to look after some matters in connection with the administration of his estate.

I was reading law, that summer, in the one-story brick office of Rufus McCullough—or under the big maple tree, in front of the office, to be strictly accurate—and not making very much of

a "go" of it. The atmosphere of Woodford, seat of the county of that name, in southwestern Pennsylvania, does not tend to fire the soul with ambition.

William Carmichael had gone West twenty-five years before, and it was a matter of common report in Woodford that he had struck it rich. It was equally the occasion of general wonderment that he had failed to send some of his millions to Aunt Jane, who was a trifle poorer than the most indigent church-mouse in Woodford County.

The mystery was now cleared up. William Carmichael had died rich, sure enough, but not along the lines we had imagined. We had got the impression, somehow, that he had won out in a mining deal. Of course there aren't any mines, to speak of, in Texas; but that never struck us. His wife, a Western woman, had died about ten years before and, since there was nobody but Aunt Jane left to take an interest in his fortune, she—the fortune—came East in a couple of weeks, arriving in Woodford with an old, canvas-covered trunk that was wrapped with about half a mile of clothes-line. I am certain of the amount, for I took it off the trunk myself. I had to look after having her baggage carted over to the house and I helped the dray-man carry the trunk up stairs. It wasn't very heavy.

Aunt Jane—she was not really my aunt, of course, any more than Uncle Rufus was my lawful uncle—introduced me to Mary Carmichael right there in the presence of the canvas trunk.

"And I hope you and Tom are going to be good friends," she added, smiling. (Tom echoed the wish.)

"I don't think Mr. Buchanan and I will quarrel immediately," said Mary. "It was good of him to trouble about my baggage."

It had been nothing but a pleasure, of course, and I told her so. I called her "Miss Carmichael" once or twice; but, on my way back to the office, a little later, I called her "Mary—Mary Carmichael," a hundred times over. There was something about the name that went right down into a fellow's heart, without any preliminary fooling. . . . It has a charm, even yet, that tempts a lingering pen.

It was the innocent looking clothes-line on that trunk that got me into trouble, or at least slightly precipitated the inevitable. I volunteered to untie it and, in doing so, being somewhat awkward and embarrassed, I tore my hand slightly on one of the hinges.

"Oh, you are hurt!" cried Mary, clasping her hands and looking up at me with wide, sympathetic eyes.

"Not at all," said I, heroically.

"But you are," she persisted. "You cut your hand on that wretched hinge. You must wash it at once and tie it up."

She turned quickly and poured some water into the bowl on the wash-stand. While I dipped my hand in the water she went with Aunt Jane and got enough linen bandages to supply a field hospital.

Then she tied up my hand. She was afraid she might hurt me and she kept looking up into my face, from time to time, to see whether I was suffering very much. I wasn't—not just then, at least. Later on, I kept remembering something about her eyes—a something that I am hanged if I can explain—a sort of soft, appealing mistiness and a wistful tilt of the brows that caused me far greater and more numerous pangs than were to be laid to the account of that blessed trunk-hinge.

I had a great mind to tell Mary I loved her right there; but I figured that it might frighten her and concluded to let it go until the following morning. But something turned up that I didn't get to see her the next day and, as a matter of fact, it was nearly a week before an opportunity to speak to her alone presented itself. By that time half the fellows in Woodford were ahead of me and I didn't seem to have a ghost of a show.

What a despicable thing is procrastination!

II

THE problem that presently confronted Uncle Rufus and me was safely and securely to invest eighteen hundred dollars—realized from the winding up of William Carmichael's interests in Waco—in such a manner as to bring one

hundred per cent interest. In the end, we had to content ourselves with the legal rate, of course, putting one thousand dollars of Mary's little patrimony into a mortgage on the Henry Nedrow Farm, a rather barren tract of fifty-odd acres lying four or five miles east of town.

The returns promised were not large, but the investment was apparently a safe one. Mary and I drove out and looked the place over ourselves. Uncle Rufus, having great confidence in his client's judgment, had suggested this plan and I could see nothing objectionable about it. We explored the farm with great thoroughness and, although it doesn't sound like much in the telling, I have lived that June day over in retrospection a thousand times.

A picturesque creek wound through the place and this pleasant stream we followed for a mile beyond the confines of the farm, through coppices of dwarf pine and dim, green gulleys. We skipped round, flat stones on limpid pools and Mary gathered a bunch of wood-lilies and late violets.

I do not know what useful purpose our investigations in this direction were designed to serve; but Mary pointed out that, as the stream flowed through and irrigated the farm, it was essential to know whether it would go dry in periods of drought. This could be ascertained only by examining into its sources of supply.

When Uncle Rufus asked me what I thought of the Nedrow Farm I told him it was a delightful place. Not satisfied with general impressions, he wanted to know how many acres were under cultivation, what the crops had amounted to, and so forth, *ad infinitum.* I couldn't tell him much, except that, if the place were mine, fifty thousand dollars of no man's money would suffice to buy it from me. Also I had heard that iron ore had been discovered just across the ridge.

He didn't seem very well pleased and, in the end, went himself to confirm our report, before letting Nedrow have the thousand dollars. He grumbled a good deal and doubted whether, at a forced sale, the proceeds would more than keep us free from loss.

It was about a month later that I made an astonishing and painful discovery regarding the character of Mary Carmichael—she had a temper.

A well-digger, Heneker Schell by name, came into the office one day with a communication from Henry Nedrow. Schell had been so ill-advised as to contract with Nedrow for the drilling of a well, guaranteeing to find, thereby, a supply of artesian water. To make good his agreement it had been necessary to put down, not one, but three holes in as many different locations, through formations of rock so hard that, in comparison, blue granite could be cut like cream cheese. He had been at it six months, had worn out his machine and had left an expensive equipment of drilling tools stuck in the first hole. He had finally found a fair supply of water, however, and had gone for his money to Nedrow, who frankly told him that he hadn't any and offered him, instead, a note for six hundred dollars, due in one year, stating at the same time that he would secure this debt by a second mortgage on the farm and hinting that Mr. McCullough might put up the money and take the note off his, Schell's, hands.

Schell was a pitiable object, certainly. He wore dilapidated rubber boots, a worn brown coat over a faded purple jersey, and a leather cap, all much be-spattered with mud. There was a week's growth of beard on his chin and the misery of despair in his eyes.

The well-digger was in the inner room telling Uncle Rufus how badly he needed money, when Mary Carmichael, most unluckily for our peace of mind, chanced to come into the outer office. I endeavored to entertain her as best I could; but she could hear everything that went on within, of course, and, at the mention of the name of Nedrow, she was at once interested. Schell said that his family was in actual want.

Uncle Rufus was engaged in gently but firmly declining to risk any more capital on so scant security, when Mary appeared timidly in the doorway and asked him why he couldn't let the poor man have the money.

"Well, in spite of yours and Tom's glowing account of the farm, it is prob-

ably not worth any more than we have already put into it," said he.

"I don't know why," said Mary sadly. "It seemed a fine farm to me. I'm sure it would be a very good investment."

It was plain that Schell's habitual rags were making a powerful appeal. Uncle Rufus told him to go away and come back in an hour and he shuffled out of the office with a nod and a smirk at Mary.

"It's simply out of the question," said Uncle Rufus firmly. Mary pouted. She had a softly curved mouth most admirably adapted to the purpose.

"Please," she said, turning to me.

"Uncle Rufus is right," I felt bound to reply. "It wouldn't be fair to let you take any chances, Mary, and I'm sure—"

"Are you speaking to me, Mr. Buchanan?"

Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were misty, almost to tears.

It was out and I had done it at last —had called her "Mary."

"I'm sorry," said I, in some confusion, and I was going on to protest that she was "Mary" to everybody in Woodford; why, therefore, should she make an exception and public example of me; but she tapped her dainty pump on the floor impatiently and silenced me with the loveliest frown in the world.

"It is of no consequence," she said and, turning her back upon me, she devoted the next half hour to wheedling Uncle Rufus into taking a second mortgage on the Nedrow Farm. He finally consented.

I had by this time retired to my quarters in the outer office.

As she went out she passed without even a glance in my direction.

III

I THOUGHT it all over, during the afternoon, and began to feel that I had been unjustly treated.

True, I had called her Mary; but why shouldn't I call her Mary? Was I not, in a sense, her legal adviser? If I had not been so intent upon her interests I should not have made the slip; but had she taken into account this redeeming aspect of my offense? Apparently not. Taking it by and large, I was forced regretfully to the conclusion that I had been misled regarding Mary's disposition.

My emotions are slow in kindling, but when once thoroughly aroused they burn with a fierce and consuming heat. After mature deliberation I resolved to tear her delightful image from my heart and, instead of going to Aunt Jane's, as my custom had been, I spent the evening in my room upon the gory business in question.

I took the withered bunch of violets, that she had given me the day we were at the Nedrow Farm, out of my pocketbook and threw it carelessly into a drawer of my book-case.

The next day I met her on the street, looking very fresh and charming.

"Good morning, Miss Carmichael," said I coldly.

"Good morning, Mr. Buchanan," said she with her eyes on the paving stones.

Then we went our separate ways.

When I saw her again, later in the day, she was with Henrietta Deming and her brother Maxwell, in his big touring car.

Maxwell Deming was big, handsome in a way, rich and idle. We had been at college together and I knew him down to the ground. I realized sadly that he was just the sort to appeal to an unsophisticated country girl like Mary.

In the days that followed, Mary Carmichael seemed to do a good deal of automobiling. What irritated me most was the matter-of-fact way in which Deming accepted favors I would have sold my head for. I saw him one day teaching her to drive his car, with his hands over hers on the wheel—and this upon the Main Street of Woodford! For a time I considered whether I did not owe it to Mary to warn her against Deming, a cold-blooded oaf; but I feared she would think me prejudiced or jealous and gave up the idea. Then I thought of warning Deming against Mary, on the grounds of feminine frivolity; but, having so little evidence of her heartlessness that I cared to exhibit, I was compelled to give up that plan also.

In the course of a few weeks I did arrive at a sort of an understanding with Deming, however, one which left nothing to be desired.

We chanced both to be present, with a dozen other fellows, at a supper given by Ben Hollister, who elected to signalize his arrival at years of discretion by such questionable means. Late in the evening, the conversation happening to turn upon the subject of girls, some one took the liberty of bantering me about Mary Carmichael. There was a story that she had come to the office one day to sign a power-of-attorney and I had been so rattled that I formally attested her signature upon a blank lease.

I disclaimed any knowledge of the gossip and old wives' fables that might be going about the town.

"No fable, this," objected Bobby Blain. "I heard it in the straightest possible manner. Come, 'fess up, Buckey; you are in love with Mary Carmichael."

They were all preparing to enjoy my confusion and it came to me, of a sudden, that a bold front would be a better defense against these darts of ridicule than embarrassed silence or a half-hearted denial.

"If I were not in love with Mary Carmichael," said I, "I should be ashamed to face this intelligent company and confess it. For my sins she has forbidden me to call her 'Mary' and I will not call her 'Miss Carmichael;' but when I propose a health to the prettiest, kindest, sweetest girl in Woodford, or in all the world beside, I am sure you will know the girl I mean."

The toast was drunk amid a shout of applause, led by Blain, the only discordant note being supplied by Deming, who left his glass untouched and thickly volunteered the information that he knew six prettier girls within a mile radius, one of them being a waitress in the hotel.

Details of what thereupon passed between Deming and myself would not be edifying. I believe I made some effort to reason with him and there may have been an exchange of blows. It is certain that he landed a terrific jolt on the point of my jaw, and the thread of recollection is parted.

I was presently aware of Bobby Blain emptying a carafe in my face, the while he breathed out threatenings against Deming over his shoulder.

It was a disgraceful piece of business, any way you took it, and Hollister's guests, as they said good-night, swore to breathe abroad no word of what had taken place.

Thus did I drag Mary Carmichael's name into a loutish brawl at the Hollister House.

When the first installment of the interest on Nedrow's loan was due, in September, he came in and explained briefly that, for ten years, he had harbored the suspicion that nothing would grow on his farm; the outcome of the present season had proven it to his complete satisfaction. He allowed he'd quit and go to live with his married daughter, in Indiana. He wanted to know whether we'd prefer to buy the place now, or foreclose the mortgage and buy it at a sheriff's sale, later on. In the end we were regretfully compelled to buy.

It was a disquieting transaction and I felt no better for the realization that the responsibility for the unfortunate investment rested upon my shoulders.

One thing was clear. Mary must, in any event, be kept from loss. I told Uncle Rufus that I would take a half interest in the place, if we could not unload it at a fair valuation. I happened to have a few four-per-cents in the safe that I could readily convert into cash.

I was engaged in looking for a buyer for the Nedrow property, an almost hopeless task, when I ran across no less a person, one day, coming out of the bar of the Hollister House, than Mr. G. Heneker Schell. He beckoned me waveringly. When I asked after his family he blinked vacantly and said "What family?" With a feeling of disgust that could not be entirely dissembled I tried to escape.

"Wait a minute," he mumbled, laying a hand on my arm. "Somepin of the greates' importance to tell you. . . . That girl—Miss Carmichael—she's a wonder, aint she?"

"A charming young lady," I conceded.

"Purtiest little—say, you're kind of sweet on her, aint you?"

"Well, it's surely no concern of yours," I replied, as calmly as I could, "what my feelings toward Miss Carmichael may be."

Was there anybody in Woodford, I asked myself, who had not felt at liberty to form an opinion upon this interesting detail of my private affairs?

"P'raps not; but you needn't git huffy. Thought you was a particler friend an' I heard she had bought Nedrow's place."

"You can be sure of my devotion to her interests, if that is what you mean," said I.

Schell blinked at me suspiciously for a few moments; then he drew closer and proceeded in a hoarse whisper.

"I guess you know there's a big New York concern bought ten thousand acres of land, east of the ridge, about five miles from Nedrow's," he confided. "They call it the Maldon Tract an' the idea is to mine hematite. I know a good bit about it, for I done some prospect drillin' for 'em once. Well, there's more iron ore under Miss Carmichael's farm than there is under Maldon's ten thousand acres, an' I've got the sample cuttin's to prove it!"

I took Schell by the arm and half dragged him to the office. Fuddled as he was, he gave us a pretty clear statement of the stratification under the Nedrow Farm, as shown by samples taken at various depths from the three wells he had drilled in quest of water.

These samples we secured without delay, together with a signed statement from the driller. Thus prepared, we communicated with Mr. George Maldon, who wrote that he would be glad to investigate the property.

The investigations were conducted by a couple of mining engineers, who came, bored some more holes, made a survey and, in time, returned to New York.

A week later Maldon telegraphed that he was ready to see us.

IV

"There is no reason why you can't handle this business," said Uncle Rufus, who loathed traveling and detested New York. "All you've got to do is to keep cool, name your figure and stick to it. Maldon has got to have that farm and he knows it better than we do. He has already invested millions in coal land, in this region, and to discover iron within a short haul of his fuel spells enormous profits. Whatever he says or does, hold out for ten thousand dollars."

Two days later I took the evening train to the Junction and caught the main-line express to New York.

Next morning I walked from the station to a good hotel near Herald Square, where I had stopped several times before.

At eleven o'clock of the same morning I entered the offices of George Maldon, Inc., which I found in a building near the corner of Broadway and Maiden Lane.

A long-legged secretary, whose clothes were about eighteen months in advance of Woodford styles, being cut scantily and short on extraordinary, bird-like lines, took my card and smiled. He carried an unlighted cigarette pendant from his lips.

"Mr. Maldon never comes until two," he said apologetically. He managed to leave the impression that he was apologizing to himself for me.

I went away and came back at two. Mr. Maldon was in, but was unable to see me that day on account of press of business. He requested that I come in to-morrow.

This sort of thing continued for three days. Somehow I got the impression that it was all part of a carefully formulated plan to put me in a state of mind favorable to the purposes of George Maldon, when the time should arrive for our interview. This irritated me, or emphasized a feeling of resentment that had been engendered in the first instance by the sandpiper of a secretary.

I knew that the delay in consummating the deal must be a source of worry to Mary and Uncle Rufus, and I wrote them every day, giving as much encouragement as I could, which wasn't a great deal.

I got a letter from Uncle Rufus, enclosing a kindly note from Mary.

She had read between the lines of my letters, she said, that I was worrying about the outcome of my trip, and she begged me not to do so for she didn't care two straws whether I sold the farm or not. In order to set my mind completely at ease she mentioned that she had been promised a position as assistant to a vinegary old milliner who kept a dingy little shop on the main street.

This missive filled me with an unreasonable rage against Maldon, in the midst of which I came to a curious determination. His time was worth "a thousand dollars an hour," was it? (The Sandpiper had dropped a hint to that effect.) Well, he ought to be willing to pay that for it. Why not charge it to him and increase the price of the farm by so much?

Upon leaving Woodford a hazy plan had been in my mind for the fixing of a price to be asked. I thought I would get Maldon to make me an offer and then hold out for double the amount. I anticipated that he would know the value of the property better than I and I suspected that he would offer me about half what it was worth. When I got a glimpse of his offices I decided again to double this figure and when I was finally admitted, at the end of a week, to his luxuriously furnished private sanctum—it looked more like the library of a patron of art and literature than a place of business—I came up one more arithmethical notch.

"You have a farm that you desire to sell, I believe," said the magnate. He was a gray, not un-handsome man, of fifty, and he sat in a deep-cushioned leather chair, behind a flat-topped mahogany desk.

"I have a mineral property, which you desire to buy," I amended, smiling.

"That phase of its value remains largely to be determined," mused Mr. Maldon. He laid the stump of his cigar in a bronze dish and sat up to his desk. There were a number of papers, blue-prints and type-written sheets spread out upon it. "Nevertheless, I am prepared to make you an offer, and let me preface a statement for your guidance in the consideration of it, that will save both your time and mine and avoid misapprehension all around. The offer that I shall make has been carefully considered and it is absolutely the maximum figure. Furthermore, it is only open for immediate acceptance and, if rejected, will not be repeated. I presume you are empowered to act without further reference to your client?"

"Yes," said I.

Mr. Maldon referred to a sheet of note-paper before him.

"Twenty-three thousand dollars," said he. "If that is satisfactory I will hand you a check for the amount."

My heart sank. If he had said five thousand I suppose I should have been fairly happy; now Mary Carmichael seemed suddenly to have gone twenty-three thousand miles beyond the golden moon. "Twenty-three thousand"—and I was morally certain, from the way he watched me, that it was only a feeler.

"May I borrow a pad?" I asked wearily.

Mr. Maldon gave me a block of note-paper, upon which I made the following memorandum, after multiplying his offer mentally by eight.

Estimated Minimum Valuation	*$184,000*
Eighteen hours on Anxious Seat at $1,000 per hr.	*18,000*
Insolence of Secretary, whose clothes offend me	*10,000*
Total	*$212,000*

I can only say, in defense of this absurd piece of business, that this was the moment in which I came to my first full and bitter realization of the vanity of all my hopes for winning Mary. The thought stung me to madness.

I studied my memorandum glumly for five minutes, then tore it from the pad, folded it and put it in my pocket. Then I arose.

"I am sorry to have taken your time," I said. "I was so confident we would be able to come to an agreement that I hadn't even looked for another prospective purchaser; but your offer is so much below our very lowest figure that I fear it is of no use to discuss the matter further."

I waited for an invitation to resume my seat, but it did not come.

"As you like," said Maldon coolly, "but it is all the place is worth.

"There must be some mistake," said I. "Your engineers have surely had time to make their report."

"They have reported."

"I am glad to have met you," said I, and offered my hand.

He shook hands listlessly. He had picked up the dead cigar stump and put it in his mouth; there was no other sign that I had become more to him than a wearisome and inconsiderable detail in an endless routine.

I passed through the outer office, nodded at the Sandpiper, and gained the elevator landing. Here I paused. I had allowed three cars to pass me going down before the secretary burst open the door behind me.

"Just a moment, Mr. Buchanan," he said. "Mr. Maldon desires to ask you one more question."

I returned to the private office, but did not sit down.

"I meant to ask you what valuation you have determined upon," he said.

"The information will be regarded as confidential, will it not?" said I.

"Certainly."

"I shall ask two hundred and fifty thousand dollars," said I, "and come down by graceful stages to two hundred and twelve thousand."

"Sit down," said Mr. Maldon.

We talked for an hour. In the end he agreed to my figure. I learned that the reports of his engineers had been even more glowing than those of Heneker Schell.

There was still time to catch a night train west and, having a few minutes at the station, I sent a telegram in which I apprised Uncle Rufus that I had sold the farm at a good figure.

When I got to Woodford next morning, I found Aunt Jane, Mary and Uncle Rufus at the office.

I pulled out my wallet and extracted the check, which I laid in Mary's hand. I have no doubt my manner suggested that of a condemned man delivering his death warrant to the executioner. She stared at the figures for a moment and handed the paper to Uncle Rufus.

"I don't—quite understand about checks," she said tremulously.

"Two hundred and twelve thousand dollars!" gasped Uncle Rufus. *"Good Lord!"*

Mary danced across the room and kissed Aunt Jane.

"Why Auntie, we're *rich,"* she cried joyously. "We're as rich as Rockefeller!"

Then she kissed Uncle Rufus, to his added astonishment and turned to me. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were more disturbingly wistful than ever.

She gave me both her hands and, for a moment, looked up seriously, half shyly, into my face. Then she suddenly laughed, the flush in her cheeks betokening a degree of embarrassment.

"You needn't look so frightened," said she. "I shouldn't really have done it."

"I was afraid," said I resignedly, "that you wouldn't."

V

Mary confided to Uncle Rufus her intention of buying a larger house than the one she and Aunt Jane now occupied, and instructed him to be on the look-out for a suitable one. Meantime a new portico was added to the cottage and numerous other long needed repairs were made.

Aunt Jane being made thoroughly comfortable, it was no surprise to me at least when Mary departed, in October, with the Demings—Henrietta and her mother—for a winter in Europe. The surprising thing was that Maxwell did not accompany them; for it was now generally understood in Woodford that he and Mary were engaged.

Woodford became an inconceivably dull town. Having nothing better to do, I betook myself with great assiduity to the reading of law. The back office contained a fine library of general literature, in addition to the usual tiers of legal tomes, and was fairly comfortable, for all its dinginess. There was an open fire-place and a comfortable armchair. I began to spend most of my evenings here.

One evening, late in November, I was greatly surprised to receive a visit from Maxwell Deming. I gave him a chair by the fire and invited him to help himself to the cigars on the mantel.

He seemed ill at ease.

"Do you ever hear from Miss Carmichael?" he blurted out presently and eyed me curiously.

"In a business way," I replied with some surprise, which was no doubt apparent. "I believe she is in Italy, with your mother and sister. I should have thought—"

"Yes, I know. Sis sends me a picture-card once in a while that contains no information but the post-mark. The Mater's letters are not as full of interest as you might expect. I suppose she is enjoying herself."

"Miss Carmichael? Yes, I've no doubt she is."

There was an uncomfortable pause.

"Do you know, Buckey," he went on, with an awkwardly assumed familiarity, "I've felt for a long time that I owed you an apology. I behaved like a chump at that party of Hollister's and I'm beginning to realize it."

I advised Deming to forget it.

"But I can't," he said. "I can see, now, that everything you said was exactly true and everything I said was unmitigated piffle, or worse. You were crazy about her then; but, by heaven, you weren't half as crazy about her as I am right now!"

Deming bit off an inch of his cigar and spat it in the fire. I could not help wondering whether Mary's two hundred thousand dollars had not had something to do with the curious change in his feelings toward her.

There seemed to be nothing to say, so I said nothing.

"Do you think she'd have me?" he asked.

"I rather think she would," said I, controlling my voice with an effort.

"After the things I said about her?"

"She may not have heard. You remember the fellows promised to keep quiet about it."

"But if she *has* heard?"

"That would be awkward," I admitted.

"And if she hasn't heard it yet, it's ten to one it'll get around to her *some* time. I wish to God Hollister had never been born!"

"Look here, Deming," I said. "If she really cares for you she'll forgive that little slip, although it surely was a disgraceful piece of business—not only to you, of course, but to me equally and, in fact, to the whole bunch of us. Why not begin by making a clean breast of it? Then, when you have squared yourself, make a new start with her. That would at least avoid the possibility of any come-back later on. I can give you her address, if you want to write."

"Much obliged, old man," he said, "but I think I have a letter from the Mater that will give me the address. It sounds like good dope. Still, I don't think I'll write."

"Better. You never can tell," said I.

"I wont *write*," he re-iterated. "I'll *go!*"

Deming made some more clumsy apologies for having knocked me down, and said good-night.

VI

I NOW became pretty miserable. This was due in part, no doubt, to certain imperfections in the floor of the office, which had no cellar beneath it and was consequently rather draughty in winter weather. There was also a rat that worked nightly in the wall back of one of the book-cases, to my great annoyance. I worried myself for a week trying to imagine what a rat would want in a law office.

The rat and the holes in the floor cannot be made to account for the full depth of my melancholy. The truth is that I suffered from a damnable disease, of which it is the peculiar effect that he who has it worst is least likely to wish himself well. If it has not heretofore in this account been made sufficiently clear and explicit, it must now be understood that I was in love with Mary Carmichael.

I considered upon several consecutive evenings whether I ought not to take her picture off the mantel and put it out of sight. I gave Deming ten days to get to Naples. Then my conscience

began to bother me a lot; for it is plainly not right to have a picture of another man's affianced wife on one's mantel, if one is prone to think of her as I thought of Mary Carmichael. On the other hand it was not my photograph nor my mantel; so I let it stay.

I had long since given over Blackstone in favor of Dumas, and now I found nothing in romance to hold my interest. My whole attention was, in fact, devoted to burning an intricate dotted pattern in the wooden floor around the edge of the hearth. For this purpose I used the end of the poker. I gave so much systematic care to this matter that the result was commented upon one day by Uncle Rufus, who offered to facilitate my work by getting me an additional poker. He remarked that, when I had finished with the floor of the inner office, the outer room would afford a fresh field for my artistic endeavors.

One snowy evening early in January, as I sat before my fire listening sulkily to the music of the sleighbells in the street, somebody entered the outer office and knocked upon the inner door. I thought it might be Blain, who was in the habit of dropping in once in a while to smoke a pipe with me.

"Come in," I called, and glanced over my shoulder. The door was very slowly pushed open and there stood Mary Carmichael, a new and different Mary, richly clad, with noble furs and a bunch of violets upon her muff. Her cheeks were pink and her eyes sparkled wondrously.

I got out of my chair, but could only stare and stammer incredulously.

"Isn't Uncle Rufus here?" she asked shyly. "I saw the light in the window and thought he might be in the office."

"It's too bad to disappoint you," I murmured haltingly.

"No matter," she said, smiling, "I'll see him to-morrow. You see I have just gotten home—the evening train was late leaving the Junction. I hope you have been well, Mr. Buchanan."

"Quite well, thank you," said I. She remained just inside the door. "It's good to see you again; but what brings you back so soon? Where are the Demings?"

"In Italy, I believe; and I came home because I wanted to. Is that a sufficient reason?"

"Quite!" I answered with emphasis. "It has been a dull town, M-miss Carmichael."

She laughed gaily.

"It sounds funny," she said. "You know you declared publicly, once, that you would never call me that again."

I started.

"Deming told you about that?"

"Everything—the whole story; how you and he were a little gay, perhaps, at a supper party, and said a lot of things you didn't mean, as the sequel so plainly showed. But there, I must run along. I'm dying to see Aunt Jane."

"Wait," I begged. "Surely Aunt Jane can spare you another minute or two."

In truth I was dazed and, fumbling awkwardly, could not lay my tongue upon the words to express the thing I wanted to say. Her coming home was an impossibility, to begin with, and now a golden, gracious, ridiculous suspicion was throbbing in my dull and befuddled brain.

"Deming may speak for himself," I said slowly, "and drunk we may, or may not, have been; but, for my part, I don't recall saying anything at Hollister's party that I didn't mean most earnestly."

She laughed shakily, with her hand on the door-knob.

"How about your resolution not to call me Miss Carmichael?"

"If you mention it again," I said grimly, throwing caution to the winds, "I'll call you to your face what I called you then—the kindest, sweetest, prettiest girl in Woodford, or in all the world beside!"

She laughed again, more softly. I had taken a step or two toward her and may have, involuntarily, assumed a threatening attitude. She hid behind the muff. Her eyes—I could see them—were full of laughter and of something else maddeningly delicious.

"The violets are very sweet," said I, finding them thrust into my face, "but . . ."

She did not reply; but presently the coal-fire took the liberty of chuckling a bit at Mary Carmichael and me.

The Sheriff's Son

A vividly appealing tale of the Tennessee mountains, where life is lived simply, and the elemental emotions still retain their primitive force.

By HAPSBURG LIEBE

HIS given name was Franklin; but as a little chap they'd called him "Tot," and he never got rid of it until he'd set hisself on the bench of a Jedge. He was the only child his parents had, and they shore done everything on earth to give him the best sort o' chances: he was sent off to school as a boy, and as a young man he went through one o' them thar big colleges up No'th; then come a year's travelin' in the countries acrost the big waters; and in it all he wasn't never lackin' for money to spend. And Tot he shore let loose o' cash, too; it seemed like he couldn't re'lize that his pap's job as high sheriff o' the county wasn't no millionaire's position.

Well, Tot he'd decided to be a lawyer, and a big one right from the start—so's he could step into the gov'nor's chair at a' early date, perhaps. Tharfore it hit him sort o' hard when his lawyer sign had been a-swingin' to the breezes for several months without him a-makin' a cent. Everybody liked him, and called him a good feller—a mighty good feller; but somehow him a-bein' so pop'lar like that didn't make for good business. Thar was older lawyers, you know, men who wasn't so gay and so fond of a good time.

Then Tot he commenced a-goin' down hill fast, and after ten months o' dissipation, Tot got to be powerful unhappy and blue; I reckon he was about the bluest man in the world.

One mornin' in the late spring old Cyrus, who was then nigh to the end o' his last term as sheriff o' the county, called his son out into the back yard, under a June-apple tree.

"Tot," he says hoarse-like, "I'd ruther see you die than to see you go on as you've been a-goin'. You jest wont understand what me and yore mother has done for you in the matter of givin' you a good eddication. You cain't re'lize the dangers I've went through with desp'rate characters for yore sake. I hung to the dangerous job for no other reason 'cept that I wanted the salary so's I could give you money and l'arnin'. Tot, I've got no more patience with you. I'm a-goin' to show you what it is to be a sheriff. You're a-goin' to start right now for the Blackfern Mountain to arrest and bring back with you a mountaineer named Mort Oliver, who killed a man named Nap Dethridge three years ago in Nawth Ca'liner. You may never come back. But if you don't, you can try to die like a man—sence it seems you jest cain't live like one. Oliver, the descrip-

tion says, is a big man with a heavy beard as black as a crow. Raise yore hand, Tot," he says, "and take the oath of a depity."

A troubled look comes over Tot's smooth, tender face. His blue eyes begins to stare at the grass at his feet. He takes off his hat and runs his slim, white fingers through his brown hair.

"Raise yore hand!" repeats old Cyrus, and in a tone o' voice his son hadn't never heerd him use afore.

"Well," says Tot, with a weak smile and a little pink spot in each cheek, "well, I guess it don't matter much if I do git potted. Life hain't more'n wo'th the livin', nohow."

He raises his right hand, and takes the oath. Old Cyrus he goes into the house, and after a minute comes back; he hands to his son a big blue revolver and a' under-the-arm holster, a badge, a piece o' paper which was a warrant, and two pair o' handcuffs.

"You'll find my black hoss in the stable, saddled and ready," he says. "Leave the hoss at the foot o' the mountain, and go on afoot. Don't tell yore mother good-by; she—wouldn't let you go."

Tot he went. He wore the clo'es he was used to wearin' in town: a light felt hat turned up on one side and down on t'other, a gray suit, a white shirt and collar, a gray tie, and soft brown shoes.

It was well in the afternoon when Tot he reached a cabin some distance above the foot o' the Blackfern. He stopped and axed whar Mort Oliver lived. The feller who had come to the door, a heavy, bearded feller, said he was a stranger in the community, havin' jest moved down from Virginny, and that he didn't know Mort Oliver. Tot he then axed if he could leave his hoss in the little stable, and the feller said he could; so Tot he put up his sweatin' hoss, and struck out up the mountain on foot.

O' course the young depity wasn't much of a jedge o' the hill country. It took him until sundown to reach a set o' thick-wooded benches jest under the mountain's crest—and them benches was about two miles no'th o' the p'int which he had aimed at. In short, Tot he was lost as bad as a mountain dog would be in the place you call Broadway: everywhar, he couldn't see nothin' but trees and laurels, rocks and rottin' timber, ferns and rattleweed. He'd blundered into a section o' the mountain knowed as Baker's Hell, a place so wild that even the mountaineers hardly ever went in thar for game. Tired plumb out, his gray suit all picked up with briars and his white shirt all stained with sweat-spots, he sunk down on the thick cyarpet o' leaves to rest.

Night come afore he knowed it—and he didn't have no matches. It was pitchy dark; he couldn't see his white hand afore him. The interlacin' branches overhead shet out even the light o' the stars.

Tot got to his feet, with his pap's big blue pistol in his hand. He felt that he must git away from the spot—from the stillness and the blackness that seemed about to smother him. It was the first time in his life that he'd been alone like that, and it was quare to him. He started to walkin', with both hands stretched out to feel his way; he'd made about fifty yards, when he fell headlong over a rotten log—and as he fell thar come a buzzin' sound that no man ever forgits oncet havin' heerd it: the warnin' o' a rattler.

He got up and went on, a-staggerin' and faint. In a' hour he'd made a quarter of a mile. But the blackness and the stillness follered him, and he couldn't stop. In another hour he'd made another quarter of a mile. Ag'in the silence and the darkness follered him. He raised his voice and cried out three times for help; but thar wasn't no answer 'cept the dim echoes of his own voice.

You understand, Tot Belden wasn't no coward in the common sense o' the word: Tot had whipped bigger men than him; but this black silence was a master fighter, and he jest couldn't grapple with it at all.

Then he come to a low clift, and fell over it, 'lightin' in a pile o' sharp-cornered rocks. He had bruised one hip, and it sent keen pains in every direction; thar was a broad gash in his head, from which a warm little stream

trickled. He set up with a groan, tied a hankercher around his head, and commenced a-draggin' hisself on. For he was now aside o' hisself.

It's shore one o' the greatest wonders that he got out o' Baker's Hell that night. It was about two o'clock in the mornin' when he reached the bald crest o' the mountain, whar he could see the twinklin's stars; and no stars ever twinkled so bright, nor was so welcome to the eyes o' mankind, as them was to Tot Belden that night.

And as Tot set thar a-thinkin', a breeze sprung up. It come from down the mountain, on t'other side o' the crest from Baker's Hell; and it had the scent o' honeysuckle in it. Tot decided thar must be a cabin some'eres below, and he commenced a-draggin' hisself along on the leaves with his face to the breeze.

Soon he had reached a path. He follered the path, and come to a gate in a palin' fence, which was new. He straightened up, a-holdin' to the gate, and his eyes made out a small cabin all run over with vines. The scent o' honeysuckles was plainer now, and mixed with it was the smell o' roses. Tot hoped that he wasn't applyin' at the house o' the man he'd come to arrest for help; then he hollered, "Hello!" and sunk to the ground, mighty nigh a-faintin'

Everything seemed dim to him. He couldn't make out the feechers o' the gyrl who come out with a candle and found him a-layin' in the weeds aside o' the gate. He barely re'lized that somebody was a-tryin' to help him walk to the vine-kivered cabin. He didn't know nothin' when his shoes was pulled off and quilts spread over him. He had fainted now.

The first thing he saw when he opened his eyes the next day was smoke-blackened rafters. He lowered his gaze, and seen four small walls o' rough logs. He looked still lower, and made out a few home-made chairs, a bare home-made table and some cracked and broke-up dishes on it, and a' old cast-iron stove which was a good deal wired up to hold it together.

Then the gyrl who had been Tot's good Samaritan come into the cabin's one room. She was about fifteen; she was dressed in a patched and faded gyarment o' caliker, and she was barefooted; she had a bad crippled foot, and walked on a home-made crutch.

"D'you feel any better?" she axes, a-layin' a handful o' bloomin' things on Tot's pillow.

Tot looked up into her soft-brown eyes, and seen that she seemed to be a born smiler. He put one hand up and laid it gentle on her sunburned black hair.

"Yes, I feel much better," he says. He begins to wonder what he'd do in the case she was Mort Oliver's daughter, when the time come to arrest Mort. "What's yore name?" he axes, worried like.

"Betterton," says the gyrl, and the sheriff's son looks a heap relieved. "What's yores?"

In a second the young depity re'lized that it might be the best for him to keep his name to hisself, him a-bein' on the hunt of a man who was supposed to be in that section.

"I've got a funny name," he tells her. "My name is Tot."

The gyrl she didn't seem to be so powerful tickled over the name. She changed the subject:

"Aint you hongry, Mister Tot?" she says. "Dinner's been ready for so long that it's mighty nigh cold."

"Dinner!" exclaims Tot. "Is it the middle o' the day yit?"

"Yes, and a good deal a-past," is the answer. "You groaned and went on until daybreak, and then you went to sleep and slept until jest a few minutes ago. I give you some medicine that made you rest and done away with yore fever—you see, my pap he was hurt by a fallin' tree a few months ago, and he was out o' his head the same as you was, and thar was some o' his medicine left."

"I shore am much obliged to you," says Tot, a-buryin' his nose in the honeysuckles she'd brought in. "Whar's yore pap at now?"

"Off in Hunetrell's Cove, a-cuttin' stave timber, and wont be back until Saturday evenin'," says the gyrl. "I'm all by myself when he's gone, and I

almost wisht it was Saturday to-day instid o' what it is—Thursday. You see, I'm a sort of a fool about my pap, him a-bein' all I've got; and pap, I reckon, is jest as big a fool about me, me a-bein' all he's got sense maw she up and died four year ago. Well le' me bring you some dinner. I know you must be hongry, Mister Tot."

She hobbled acrost the screakin' floor on her crutch, and got some things out o' the stove oven; she set the things on the little, bare table, and then pushed it over clost to the bed so's Tot he wouldn't have to git up to eat.

"Now Mister Tot," she smiles, with her soft-brown eyes a-twinklin' joyful like, "jest help yoreself to what you see." She pours some black coffee outen a tin can into a teacup with a piece broke out of it and the handle gone. "It's pore enough, goodness knows," she continues, "but it's the best we've got. Pap he's so deep in debt to Rush Enderby that we cain't hardly git enough to eat. And pore old hard-workin' pap—he's in rags! I hate Rush Enderby—that is, Mister Tot, if I hate anybody it's him."

"Don't worry none about yore grub," says Tot, a-takin' a sip at the black and unsweetened coffee. "Yore grub's all right. This here bacon is shore fine, and so is the cawnbread and the coffee."

"When we can git out o' debt to Rush Enderby," the gyrl she goes on, a-seemin' pleased at what Tot had said, "we're a-goin' to try to git enough money together to go down to the hawspital at town and have my foot fixed up so's I can walk good. Thar was a doctor up clost here last fall on a campin' trip, and he said for pap to bring me to the hawspital, and he said he knowed that the op'ration would do the trick all right. He said he wouldn't charge pap more'n ten dollars, which was jest to pay for the nussin'. But we shore cain't lay up no sech a sum o' money as that until Rush Enderby's debt is done paid."

"I think I owe you enough to pay the bill for you," says Tot. "You and yore pap go to the hawspital; I'll settle all of it."

"D'you mean to tell me, Mister Tot," says the gyrl, "that I'd let a stranger pay for a bed and somethin' to eat at my house?"

She said that last so funny-like that Tot decided that he'd drap the subject for the time bein'—but for the time bein' only. Tot he then tried to git her to eat with him; but she told him she'd done eat.

And at supper she wouldn't eat with him, a-tellin' him that she'd done eat; also at breakfast the next mornin' she give him the same story. She *had* done eat—but it was afore Tot had come. You see, her pap had jest left enough grub to last her till he'd bring more on Saturday, and she was afeard thar wouldn't be enough for both of 'em.

Along up in the mornin', jest after the gyrl had hobbled out o' the cabin, Tot he heerd her a-talkin'. He wondered who it was she was a-talkin' to. Then the thought struck him that it might be Rush Enderby, come to collect more money—maybe he'd sort o' got Rush Enderby on the brain; I don't know. So Tot he got out o' bed, put on his shoes, and went a-slippin' out o' the cabin with his bruised hip so stiff and sore that he had to limp mighty bad.

When he'd reached a p'int from whar he could see, he didn't know whether to laugh or not. He seen his good Samaritan a-settin' on a stick o' pine wood a-talkin' to a' old one-eyed white goose!

He limps to her side.

"It's a pet?" he says, a-p'intin' to the goose, which commences a-blowin' at him as geese will.

"Yes. Her name is Waddles—acause she waddles when she walks," says the gyrl, her soft-brown eyes a-twinklin' teasin' like. "Don't you think it's a funny name? I do. We're too pore to keep a dog. A goose, you know, don't eat half as much as a dog, not nigh."

"Yes," replies Tot, thoughtful like, "I reckon a goose eats less'n a dog."

"Seein' that you're able to be out," smiles the cripple, a-goin' to her one good bare foot and a-takin' her homemade crutch under her arm, "I'm tempted to show you my flowers. Look—see them thar roses thar? Them was wild roses; I set 'em out here and tamed 'em, and they're as sweet the

same as any. The honeysuckles, I found them along a' old fence row."

They walked around the cabin. Everywhar, all over the yard and on the log walls, thar was tame wild roses and honeysuckles.

"Pap, he says that anybody who don't like flowers haint wo'th a durn," the half-grown woman goes on, a-smilin' her born smile. "I think he's right. You like flowers, acause I seen you a-smellin' them I brought you like it done you good. And le' me tell you right here, Mister Tot—anybody who would kill a mockin' bird would kill a man jest as quick!"

"You aint far wrong, I guess," replies Tot.

"A course I aint,"—in the most confident tones you can imagine. She looked up into Tot's blue eyes, and talked right on: "Rush Enderby he don't like flowers. And Rush Enderby he killed a mockin' bird—while it was a-singin', too; now what d'you think o' Rush Enderby, Mister Tot?"

"It shore was mean," answers the Sheriff's son.

"Yes, it was—awful mean. He'd come here to git pap to pay him some on the debt. He shot the bird out o' the top o' that thar young poplar in the edge o' the yard thar. It was the he-bird. The she-bird she'd set on her nest jest below the top, and the he-bird he'd set above her and jest sing and sing and sing to keep her from a-gittin' lonesome while she was a-settin'. But sence Rush Enderby shot the he-bird the she-bird has went and wont never come back. I miss 'em so much, Mister Tot. I never hear no other music; thar's nobody lives clost to here, and I don't even hear a banjo."

After a minute o' silence, she goes on in a choked-up way:

"Pore old hard-workin' pap! . . . Him and me we buried the he-bird. It was at sundown and the red light made pap's beard jest the color o' yore hair, Mister Tot. Pore pap he took my hands in his'n, and looked sort o' up, and says: 'Lord, whatever else me and this here gyrl here, pore, weak worms o' the dust, is or aint, we love yore birds and yore flowers.' . . . But I jest mustn't think o' them thar sad things. I was put in this here world to be happy, Mister Tot, and I shore am a-goin' to be. In fact, Mister Tot, I am already happy. And I'm thankful for everything I've got. Are you?"

Was he? He shore wasn't. It hit him like a bullet. He set down on a rock and put his face in his hands. He seen all his ungratitude to his father and to his mother and to his Maker. He had all the eddication that money could buy; he had traveled acrost the big waters, and was a l'arned man; he had a fine home . . . And thar was a little gyrl, a cripple at that, who was happy with, and even thankful for, a few wild flowers that she had tamed, a rough and porely furnished cabin in the wilds o' the mountains, and a' old one-eyed goose! And her soul was as good as his.

"What on earth's the matter with you, Mister Tot?"

Tot, he looked up. The gyrl was a-smilin' down at him, with tears in her soft-brown eyes. Acause maybe she sort o' understood.

"Nothin'," says Tot.

He found his gaze fixed on the vacant nest in the poplar. The words o' the little philosopher come back to his mind—"Anybody who could kill a mockin' bird would kill a man jest as quick." And then Tot remembered that he'd come to the mountains to arrest a certain person wanted in Nawth Ca'liner for murder.

"Say," he axes, "whar is this here Rush Enderby from?"

"Nawth Ca'liner,"—ready like.

"Good!" says Tot to hisself, addin': "Mort Oliver could 'a' changed his name, o' course." He goes on, talkin' out for the gyrl to hear: "Does Rush Enderby wear a heavy black beard?"

"No," is the answer. "He's smooth-faced. He's a big, hulkin' man with the eyes o' a snake and the jaw o' a brute. He likes to go dressed up. He wears b'iled shirts so stiff that he cain't bend over, which rattles like a pile o' boards a-fallin'."

"Smooth-faced," says the sheriff's son under his breath, "—but he could 'a' shaved. Yes, I haint no doubts at all about Rush Enderby a-bein' reely Mort Oliver; and as soon as I can

walk a little better I'm a-goin' to arrest him."

Early the next mornin' Tot Belden found out in some way that the little crippled gyrl had been a-doin' without eatin' in order that he would have enough. This here part of his lesson come mighty nigh a-breakin' him down. He tried to git her to take all the money he had in his purse; but she wouldn't do it.

Tot he got down on his knees, took her hands in his and kissed 'em, with the old white goose a-blowin' at him. Then he limped off on the hunt for Rush Enderby. And he'd clean forgot to ax whar Rush Enderby lived.

When the sun lacked about a' hour o' bein' down on that same day, the gyrl's pap he come home. His job a-cuttin' stave timber over in Hunetrell's cove had give out, and he didn't know of no more work that he could git. He walks slow and weary-like up to the doorway, throws a bag o' provisions to the floor, kisses his smilin' daughter on the forehead, and sinks to the door-step like he's mighty tired. He was a tall man, rawboned and bearded, with deep, sad black eyes. His clo'es was jest the rags o' what had oncet been clo'es. His knees was a-stickin' through, and the cloth was too old to hold another patch; his elbows was out, and so was the toes o' both feet; the black slouch hat he wore had sech a bad crown that the top o' his black head was sunburned to a brown.

This o' course, was in order that Rush Enderby might have plenty o' stiff b'iled shirts and plenty o' ammunition to shoot at mockin' birds.

D'ye reckon, now, that the little cripple cuddled into his big tanned arms to be petted? Not much, she didn't—not a bit of it! She set down in the doorway, put her crutch to one side, and pulled her pore, tired pap's bare head over on her shoulder; then she commenced a-smoothin' back his long hair and a-pettin' him.

"Pap, honey," she axes, "what's the matter of you?"

It had come so soft-like that the big bearded man jest broke down. His heart was so full that he couldn't help a-tellin' what was the matter. It was like a little boy a-confessin' somethin' to his mother.

"Rush Enderby—I heerd that Rush Enderby is a-huntin' me ag'in," he says, half a-sobbin'. "Betty, honey, you'll know it some time, and you might blame me more'n if I told you now. Betty, I don't owe Rush no debt like you think I do—and God 'lmighty knows I cain't never forgive myself for a-lyin' to you, Betty! But I thought you'd be happier, honey. Back in Nawth Ca'liner whar we come from three year ago, Betty, the evenin' afore I left thar a-carryin' you in my arms, I killed a man named Nap Dethridge. Rush he seen me do it. He makes me pay him to keep him from a-tellin'."

Betty's hand stopped smoothin' back her pap's hair. She didn't say a thing. She set thar a-starin' at nothin', her soft-brown eyes dry and wide.

"And Rush," Mort Oliver chokes as he goes on, "and Rush he follered me here, so's he could live offen me and not work none. The yaller dog—he wont even let me buy you a caliker dress, Betty!"

"I don't need a dress, nohow," says Betty, in a small, far-off voice. "I've got one, and I can wash it at night in the dark."

After a little silence, Mort continues, his heart plumb broke:

"Betty, honey, don't blame me too much. I've done suffered a thousand times hell. It's awful to kill a man, to take a human life! How I do wish, Betty, darlin', that I had jest stopped to think! I was so hot-headed, and I didn't think. I'll admit that Nap Dethridge had treated me lowdown mean—he'd spied out my still for the revenuers. . . . I can see it all yit, Betty. I got away from the officers. I hurried back to the mountains, so mad that I didn't have no sense, got a rifle, and went to look for Nap. I found him a-sneakin' through the laurels, a-lookin' for another still to turn up to the law. I raised the gun and shot; he fell to the ground. Then I went home, gethered you up in my arms, and left the state.

"Betty, honey, the world is full o' good people who wont let a pore or-

phant suffer. If I was in prison as I'd ought 'o be, you'd be a' orphant, and then you'd git the op'ration on yore crippled foot, so's you could walk good like other gyrls. I think I'd better give myself up."

"No, pap!" says the gyrl. "I'd ruther be a cripple and have you. I don't blame you for a-killin' that thar man. I understand that you was so mad you didn't have no sense."

"But—" Mort begins, and breaks off. He had seen Tot Belden's tracks in the loose earth around a tame wild rose. He p'inted to the tracks, and looked towards his daughter with a question in his eyes.

Betty told him everything she knowed about Tot, even not a-forgittin' to mention the pistol he had and the star of a thing on the inside of his coat.

"You told him yore name was Betterton," says Mort, slow and thoughtful like, when she had finished. "I—I see: he thought it was yore last name instid o' yore first. Betty, honey, that man was a' officer, and I'm the only man on this here mountain that the law wants. He was after me. He'll be back to git me when he finds out that—"

"No—no!" breaks in the gyrl. "He wont arrest you when he knows you're my pap—and all I've got. No, sirree, pap. Mister Tot, he wont do that after what I done for him, a-doctorin' him and a-starvin' myself for him. I tell you, pap, honey, Mister Tot he *couldn't* be mean enough to do that!"

Mort he shakes his head and begins to run his fingers through his black beard.

"You don't know, Betty," he says. "A' oath is a' oath. He raised his hand afore the Almighty and swore to do his duty to the law without no regyard for his own feelin's. And I'll let him take me, Betty, honey, so's you can be took keer of better. And when the op'ration is over, you can walk good without no old crutch. Wouldn't you like to walk good?"

Thar was a little and pitiful gladness in his voice at the thought of his daughter a-bein' made well. He was willin' to give up his liberty for her. Betty understood. She bent her head into her sunburned hands, and the toes of her sound foot tucked under like she was in great mis'ry. Mort put out one of his knotty hands, and begun to pat her on the head, blind-like.

"Don't, honey," he says, "don't cry."

The sun was a-goin' down. Its red light was a-shinin' on Mort's face, a-turnin' his black beard to a brown, the brown o' Tot Belden's hair. Mort's eyes was a-starin' out acrost the valley that laid atween the Blackfern and the Little Madfawn, and his knotty hand went on a-pettin' his daughter's head. Then Betty she raised her eyes, and commenced a-lookin' at the sunset too. I think she was sort o' comparin' her life to it.

Then thar was a heavy step ahind o' 'em, and a coarse voice with a creepiness to it says one word of greetin':

"Hi!"

Mort and his crippled daughter turned their gaze from the red rim o' the sun. They seen, a-standin' thar with his thumbs hooked ahind o' his green s'penders and with his stiff b'iled shirt a-stickin' out in the middle, and with his broad-brimmed hat a-settin' away over on one side o' his head, a big, hulkin' man with snaky eyes and the jaw o' a brute.

"Hi!" replies Mort, his face a-turnin' a little white. And for a few seconds they stares hard at one another.

"Well," Rush fin'lly growls, "I'm a-needin' money. What did you do with that thar money you got for a-cuttin' stave timber over in Hunetrell's Cove, as I've jest heerd?"

"I took my pay in bacon and cawnmeal," replies Mort, defying-like. "Is thar," he says, "anything about that which you don't think I'd ought to 've done?" He rose to his feet.

"Yes," snaps Rush Enderby.

"Then help yoreself, if you can," says Mort.

Well, sir, it shore come mighty nigh a-sweepin' Rush offen his feet. But he wasn't a goin' to be bluffed out in one little minute. He takes a fresh hold on his green s'penders, cocks his head to one side, and says, with one eye half shet:

"If I tell what I know about you, whar'll you be?"

Mort Oliver jest turned up his nose. He looked like he was about seven foot high, even if his bare hide *was* a-showin' through his rags in a dozen places.

"You'll hang higher'n Haman," Rush goes on, and makes the sign of a rope about his neck.

"Go ahead and tell," says Mort. He smiled the smile his old friends knowed meant nothin' very funny.

And that thar smile fooled the snaky-eyed man with the jaw of a brute. Rush he stared hard at Mort for a second, and then turned away. And as he done so he run his face right ag'inst the blue barrel of a big pistol, which same was a-bein' held in the hand of the person Betty Oliver knowed as Mister Tot! Tot he had jest come up, and he'd reco'nized Rush Enderby by his b'iled shirt.

"Please elevate yore upper limbs, my dear man," orders Tot, a-flashin' his badge. "You're shore caught, and the one thing for you to do is to behave yoreself. I'm a-goin' to see that you pay the penalty for killin' Nap Dethridge, in Haywood County, Nawth Ca'liner!"

Rush Enderby had done raised his hands high afore Tot had said his first six words. Tot s'arched him, took a cheap pistol offen him, made him lay down and then handcuffed his ankles and wrists. The two Olivers watched it all with their hearts a-runnin' away.

"Now," says Tot, a-fishin' into his pocket, "I'll read the warrant."

"You needn't to mind a-readin' the warrant," whines Rush, the coward who had shot a singin' mockin' bird. "I—I own up. I killed Nap after Mort Oliver had shot at him—it was in a cyard game that same night. I carried him to whar he was at when Mort had shot at him and he'd fell to fool Mort; then I told that it was Mort who done it. I—I own up. You've got me."

You see, Oliver's desp'rate talk had done got Enderby's s'picions up, and Tot had done the rest a-thinkin' he was reelly Oliver.

And Betty shore got the op'ration, which was a fine success; also she got a good eddication. Well, it wasn't so much for Tot to give her, seein' as she had teached him the lesson that made him what he is.

A Rose Lifted Up

By ALLAN UPDEGRAFF

THE clean smell of fresh-cut muslin was in the air; the wide, low room throbbed to the speeding of multiple-needled hemmers, tuckers, and joiners. At benches and tables, two hundred operators worked together like so many parts of one big machine. Crandall's Ladies' Underwear Factory was a clean, airy, finely coördinated establishment, and James V. Crandall himself stood near one end of the cutters' bench to see that it remained so.

Rosa Gianelli's place was in a corner where a glint of sunshine reached her black skirt-hem from across the roofs to south and east. She was a ribbon-girl. All day she ran three rows of ribbon through the tops of corset-covers: four dozen an hour, forty dozen a day, two hundred and forty dozen a week—

and nearly eight dollars in the little yellow envelope that represented life.

"It'll put off your weddin', wont it," asked the girl beside her, straightening up with a grimace for eased back-muscles, "if we're called out?"

Rosa's little brown fingers hesitated a moment, and then flew faster than ever.

"You mean—strike?"

"Sure—called out. That's how they say it. Why didn't you never come to none of the meetings?"

"I have been too busy." The bodkin flushed steadily, but the dark little face was troubled.

"Meanin', your trousseau?"

"Maybe so. You think we get called out—sure?"

"Gee, I hope we do; and I hope they make it sudden! I'm tired to death a'ready, and I got less'n nine dozen."

"No talking over there, please, ladies," called Mr. Crandall from the other side of the room. "Remember the rules."

Both girls bent lower over their work. Rosa's smooth, old-ivory-colored cheeks turned ruddy with distress and shame.

"Gee, he must've seen our mouths movin'!" said the other girl, behind her hand.

"He's most awful polite this mornin'!" she added spitefully. "I guess he thinks he can put over his little jolly on us—but he'll see!"

Rosa paid no attention. Her head bowed until the smoothly parted blackness of her hair almost touched the white materials forming up in her lap. Her lips pressed together; her black-fringed eyelids blinked like an offended child's.

"Say, old Crandall aint goin' to bite you!" sniffed the girl beside her: the girl beside was free-born American, and properly proud of it. "Gee, I'd hate to have no more spirit than what you got! Aint you a human-bein'—aint you just as good as anybody else? Why don't you spunk up?"

There was an abrupt pause; and then an explosive, excited "Gee!"

Still Rosa did not look up.

"Strike!" screamed a thin, sharp girl's voice near the door. "All out!"

Immediately the purring of machines, the whirr of cutting knives, the many little noises, stopped. Rosa looked up in time to see a flock of red handbills fly in at the outer door and go careening down among the near-by workers. In the sudden stillness, she could hear the soft rustling sounds of the paper.

The moment of silence was followed by an uproar. The finely coördinated machine exploded into two hundred different pieces.

"Strike! Strike! All together!"

Chairs grated on the floor; a work-table was overturned; a few white garments rose and fluttered in the air like flags of revolt.

"Come on! We're called out!"

"Strike!" "All out!" "Be orderly—don't knock over the tables!" "Everybody out—solidarity!" "Come on—strike, strike, strike!"

Two hundred girls crowded near the door, elbowing, shouting, gesticulating with a sort of tense, hilarious, holiday abandon. Mr. Crandall made way for them, philosophically, as if their outbreak constituted a sort of natural phenomenon which it was useless to resist. "Fine!" he remarked to the leaders, crowding by him. He folded his arms across his broad chest. "Fine!" he repeated, and scratched his chin.

As the strikers went, their eyes turned back in varying degrees of appeal, demand, scornful threatening, toward the few workers who still remained beside the tables, Rosa shrank down in her chair, cowering like a little frightened mouse.

A girl rushed back from the crowd, the talkative American girl who had worked beside her, and caught her by the arm. "Come on! You aint goin' to scab, are you?"

Rosa protested, trying to get free: "No, no! Me, I only think—"

"Then come on, and stick by your class! You want more money, don't you? You want a half-holiday on Saturday, don't you? Then shake a leg—come on!"

Rosa was small and terrified and undecided; she let herself be dragged into the crowd of deserters. When, in the cloak-room outside, the hold on her

arm was released, she sniffled softly into her sleeve. She took no part in the wild talk and enthusiasm about the lockers. Silently, miserably, alone in a multitude, she went down the three flights of stairs and out into the crisp, sunny air of Fourth Avenue.

A young man stood near the doorway, passing out red handbills like those that had been thrown into the shop. She accepted the one he put in her hand; it announced the strike, predicted victory, mentioned justice, human rights, freedom, and other things that had no particular meaning to her, and called on the strikers to go at once to a mass meeting at Liberty Hall. But Rosa stopped undecided on the edge of the sidewalk.

One black, staggering fact occupied her whole mental horizon; she had lost her job, her lovely job that had paid her nearly eight dollars a week. How good it had been to sit there, disregarding back-ache, numb fingers, twitching shoulders, and compute the increasing pennies as the pile of corset-covers on her left decreased, the pile on her right grew! The clean ribbons, the bright bodkin, the fresh-smelling muslins—they had grown to seem almost an end in themselves, no less than a means to that higher end, her marriage.

With the single-mindedness of a little brown hen-sparrow in the spring, she had starved, over-worked, over-worried, exhausted herself body and brain, all to feather her nest. She and Giovanni—or John, as he preferred to be called—had both worked: but she had been more interested in the nest, and had worked harder than he. John, in the masculine way, had been more interested in her, in the threatened strike, in the garment-workers' union. He had been inclined to regard the subject of lace curtains as frivolous, and he tolerated rather than admired the eagerness with which she pinched pennies and worried over the details of their house-furnishing. Only under protest had he agreed to rent a dress suit for the wedding ceremony and the grand banquet afterward.

They would have had money enough to be married in a month; and now?

There was only one hope, and that a faint one. John might not have gone on strike. He was a cutter in Rand and Goldberg's, a white-goods factory on Lafayette Street. If he kept at work, perhaps, by giving up the real Wilton rug, and taking the seventy-four-dollar set of installment furniture instead of the ninety-nine—

Rosa, heaving a distressed little sigh at the thought, set off down the avenue toward Rand and Goldberg's.

Knots of excited men clogged the sidewalk before the long, low, red-brick building, as she came around the corner from Astor Place, and a sprinkling of policemen prodded with voice and club to keep them moving. Rand and Goldberg's had struck too. The girl was distressed, bitterly disappointed; and then frightened.

Rosa elbowed her way into the crowd, a little desperate, a little cowed, but tremendously eager to find Giovanni, take him away with her, and show him the necessity of returning to work. She was sure he was somewhere in the thick of the excitement; he had been interested in the strike-talk from the first, and lately he had spent so much time at meetings and conferences that she had hardly seen him at all. Besides, it was his way to be in the thick of things.

A policeman took her by the shoulders, turned her around, and gently started her back.

"This is no place for you, kid!" he said; and she was appalled by the white anger behind his soft words to her.

"Somebody put a bullet into a policeman's leg a little while ago," explained a man standing beside her. "The strikers say it was one of the company's guards; but I guess the policemen think it was a striker. You'd better go across the street."

Rosa shot a quick, appraising glance at him. He was middle-aged, by the grayish hair around his temples, and he had gentle brown eyes that blinked often behind thick eyeglasses. His lips looked at once amused and sorry.

"I look for Giovanni—John Donat'," she said trustfully. "You know him—maybe?"

"I'm sorry to say I don't. You see,

I'm not one of the strikers; I'm only an innocent bystander."

"Oh, I know of course you are not one like us. I think only maybe you know."

"Maybe I can find him for you; I know some of the leaders. You say his name's John Donat'?"

"Yes. Oh, I thank you so much if only—"

"You stand back there by that lamp-post," he interrupted; "and don't move till I come back."

He gave her a little push, nodded at her, and went into the crowd.

She took her place by the lamp-post, cowering down among the excited men all around her. She almost smiled in her confidence that the amused, regretful man would bring John safely out of the embroglio where, her primitive intuition told her, a fierce danger lurked. She was so confident that she found time to be a little angry with John because he was threatening to spoil their last chance for the Wilton rug. Even when she noticed an increased commotion in the crowd before her, she was not much disturbed.

Suddenly a man's stiff hat, dented down almost to the brim, sailed over the heads of the crowd and bounded to the sidewalk near her. A hoarse, evil human roar arose.

"Ave Maria!" she prayed.

The roar swelled as if controlled by the opening stops of some huge organ. There was a terrible shuffling and trampling of many feet: heavy, meaty blows, curses, screams, and that hoarse, harsh undertone of hate rising to break through it all. She screamed. Like a chip on a turbulent river, she was borne out into the street; but she remembered the amused man's orders, and struggled back to the iron pole that marked the corner.

Two patrol wagons clanged up to the sidewalk; she caught glimpses of big policemen throwing disheveled little men into them, and before she had time to finish an *"Ave"* the crowd was scarcely more noisy than it had been before the uproar started.

But it increased in numbers from all sides until the crush became stifling. The mass of it began to surge backward, around and past her; a line of determined policemen had begun to clear the sidewalk. She put both arms around the pole and resisted the efforts of the human current to drag her away from it. The line of policemen came up to her, steady, grim, their clubs and faces carrying a threat that was sufficient to awe a hundred times their number of angry men.

"Back up—back up—back up," they kept repeating monotonously. "Back up," said one of them, a grim-faced Irishman, loosening Rosa's arms from the pole. "Back up."

"Please! I wait for Giovan'—for John! Oh, please!" she pleaded. "I do not do anything—I—" But the policeman had passed on without the quiver of an eyelash to show that he had heard. She hugged the iron pole to her breast, trying to merge herself with it so that she would not be noticed.

A hatless, collarless, disreputable man hurried up to her as soon as the police-cordon had passed. Over one eye he had a big cut that had dropped dark stains on his shirt-front; but he was smiling as if gently amused. She retreated around the pole from him before she realized that he was the innocent bystander who had gone to find John.

"Quite a fracas," he remarked, "—and so unnecessary." He dabbed at his eye with a handkerchief he held in his hand. "Your young man must be somebody in particular; I was talking to him when the storm broke, and every cop in sight seemed to have it in for him. I wish their aim had been as good as their intentions! Lord! Lord!"

Rosa gasped: "Oh—they beat him!"

"I believe not; I think I can account for all the beatings let loose in my vicinity."

He chuckled and blinked near-sightedly into her face. She saw to her horror that one of his cheek-bones was colored in several tones of red, violet, and orange. "There—your John's all right," he assured her, mistaking the cause of her alarm. "He's pounded a little, and at present he's probably occupying a furnished room in the Jefferson Market Jail; but I guess they'll bail him out

within half an hour or so—especially if, as I understand, he's a shop-chairman. You can meet him if you go round there and wait at the side door—the West Tenth Street door. Know where it is?"

She didn't, and he gave her plain, emphatic directions.

"Oh, please, I—I so much thank you—" she began.

"I wish you good luck—you and the other forty thousand of you: stick together and you'll win!" he said. Then he bowed, smiled, and hurried away.

For a little while she was too glad to get out of that frightened turmoil, to know that John was not much hurt and that he would soon be free, to think much about anything else. She walked along Eighth Street, across Sixth Avenue, and into the side street that runs beside the high red wall of Jefferson Market Jail. Several little knots of strikers, kept in motion by policemen, were walking up and down before the side door. She went across the street and stood in the entrance to Patchen Place, a narrow little blind alley that opens opposite the prison.

Now that she had time to consider how matters stood, a great bitterness, a great, fretful disappointment, tormented her. John was out of work, disgraced, forced to spend some of his scanty savings—their savings—to get free again. She could have been very short and sharp with him, for she felt a sense of outraged proprietorship in him as well as in his earnings.

As a matter of fact, she had never loved him, himself, very much; she was too much of a machine to love anything very much. She had loved as she had worked. It was necessary to work to get money; it was necessary to love to get married. She had worked in a single-minded, thorough, mechanical way; and, in the same occluded fashion, she had given her attention to getting married.

Her love had been as much a means, as little an end in itself, as her work had been. She had grown to love Giovanni, the well-built, the wide-awake, the clean-cut, much as she had grown to love the bright ribbons, the shiny bodkin, the clean, sweet muslins. When Giovanni protested, as he often did, that she did not really love him, she replied: "But, you see yourself, if we are to get the furniture and the rug, we have so little time for that."

Perhaps, she reasoned, she ought to have shown more interest in Arturo Rocco, who would soon fall heir, unless doctors were hopeless prevaricators, to a bank account and ice-cream business. Now that John was out of work, how could she get married?—unless, of course, she resigned herself to living wretchedly below her station. It was really a matter to be considered, if one were at all open to reason. She was as much perturbed as a Fifth Avenue débutante torn between an heir to millions and a manlier gentleman in reduced circumstances.

Arturo would be more amenable to reason in the matter of Empire lace curtains; and he would show a more fitting appreciation of the place that Wilton rugs, nice furniture, and nice apartments hold in all well-regulated lives. Arturo would never reproach her for pinching pennies.

Everything was deadly dull and miserable. Would the iron door opposite never open to let out Giovanni—who foolishly insisted on being called John?

Besides, there was her family. What would wise old Mamma Gianelli say if she clung to a jail-bird, a man out of work, a brawler? Mamma Gianelli had always preferred Arturo: and so had Papa Gianelli, whose ice, wood and coal business, conducted under the firm name of "Jim," might take on fabulous dimensions if assisted with a little of Arturo's patrimony.

She moved from the foot on which she had been resting most of her weight to the other; her shoes were small, even smaller than were required by her little feet, and her toes ached. The clock in the tower above the prison wall said a quarter to one. She had been waiting fifteen minutes; she had not lunched, and she was worn out with the unusual events of the morning. But if she went into the little restaurant a few doors away, she might miss Giovanni; and she might be stared at, and she would certainly have to pay out several cents.

How long he was in getting bailed out! She sighed, her pretty little mouth drawn into a downward bow, and turned to look in at the shop-window beside her.

It was an undertaking establishment. There were some dusty artificial palms, and a pair of yellowish lace curtains. The curtains were not nearly so desirable as the Empires she had picked out.

"Why, hello, kid!" said a natty, red-faced youth with a cigarette cocked up toward the downward angle of his derby. "Was you waitin' for me?"

"Go 'long, you cheap loafer!" she returned, in the purest East Side Anti-Masherese.

"Aw, don't be crool! Say, b'lieve muh, I like your style! Couldn't yuh lick up a soda?"

"G'wan!" she sniffed, and turned to look at the curtains again. The youth strolled past, glancing back hopefully over his shoulder. She watched him from the corners of her eyes, but she made no sign.

She was a little proud of the incident, for the young man's dress, air, and glibness were proof that he didn't "fall for anything." It was a compliment, a courtesy of the street, a tribute to her personal attractiveness.

The prison clock pointed to one. She had been waiting half an hour, and Giovanni had not seen fit to appear.

If she walked across to West Houston Street, Arturo would give her a maple-and-walnut sundae. And a plate of cocoanut wafers. And she could sit down.

She glanced up at the clock. "I wait ten-a min-*ootes!*" she decided, and went back to the corner by the undertaker's shop.

She looked across at the heavy iron-barred door of the jail and imagined how Giovanni would look coming out. Undoubtedly he would be heavy-headed with disgrace, sneaking, cowed as she herself had always been under the heavy hand of authority. If she still wanted him, he would be in a proper condition to heed her reproaches, to obey her entreaty that he return to work humbly, peaceably, immediately—

There was quick stir among the parading strikers. They hurried together and crowded up to the jail door.

Some one was coming out; it was Giovanni, for she caught a glimpse of the dark oval of his face in the sunlight before he descended into the group of welcoming strikers. Her heart gave a faint little leap of interest and excitement. She started across the street.

The white profile of a young man with a bulging jaw-muscle, who stood near her edge of the crowd, sent a thrill through her. Why was he so fierce, so white, so wide of eyes, so tight of mouth? And the hand that hung by his side was clenched into a fist.

She was awed and a little frightened; but her instinct to reach and take away the man who belonged to her sent her hurrying into the group. She stood on tip-toe so that she could see the faces in the center. Giovanni was there; and she gaped in amazement at the astounding wildness and upliftedness of his face.

He was talking furiously, but when his eyes caught hers he took three quick steps over to her. "Oh—hello—hello—Waiting for me? Thought maybe you would come—good girl!" he murmured absently, caught her left hand in his right one, put them both in his coat pocket, and pushed back to the center of the group. He began to talk Italian like a streak, his eyes all pupils, his free hand waving in the air; he took no more notice of her than if she had been a handkerchief dangling from his pocket.

"Move on, now! Get out o' this!" said a policeman, and the group obediently straggled toward Sixth Avenue.

Rosa went, pressed close to Giovanni by excited men who took no notice of her. She bowed her head and tried to comprehend the meaning of the wild faces all about her, and of the queer thrills that began to play along her spine. She recognized the emotion as religious even before Giovanni cried out, in Italian, that resistance to tyranny was obedience to God. Indeed, she did not exactly understand what the words meant; but the crowd-emotion,

the feeling behind those explosive words and gray faces and compressed lips, bathed her soul as the acid bathes a negative.

As a week of reasoning and reading could not have taught her, she arrived by a sort of instantaneous contagion at the spirit of the strike, at the spirit of all rebellion. The birthright of the downtrodden was hers, immediately, wonderfully, because she thought as a child and felt as a child.

Her hand ached with the grip of Giovanni's fingers, and at times he pressed it until the very tendons seemed about to snap; but the very fierceness of the pressure seemed to communicate something to her, something that made her eyes widen and her heart leap like an awakened bird. She pressed his hand back, and was not hurt because he took no notice of the pressure. Her back and shoulders straightened, her head lifted, her little chin went up, and her eyes looked straight before her. In all her life she had never stood up so straight and tall.

She began to get the drift of what the excited men around her were saying. They had been attacked and beaten, without provocation, while picketing; and the laws recognized the right to picket. It did not occur to her to doubt the absolute truth of this; how could she doubt in the presence of that electrical flow of conviction that vivified her soul? The bosses had bribed the policemen to beat the strikers into subjection; she knew that was true when Giovanni had shot out the accusation and the men around him had shot out assent. But they would win, for right and justice and freedom and God were on their side: and that, too, she knew was as true as that she had a soul!

The group paused again at the corner of Sixth Avenue. She gathered from the talk that Giovanni would have to speak at a meeting within an hour, and they were urging him to eat and have some court-plaster on his face before that time. For the first time she really looked into his face; he had an ugly cut, covered with dried blood, along one temple.

"Oh, Giovan'—I fix you—come!" she cried, pulling at his arm in a flurry of remorse at her thoughtlessness.

The quick Latin temperaments unbent; smiles flashed on the dark faces; she found herself in a sudden deluge of repartee and banter. Several hands reached out to shake hers; hats were lifted in ceremonious adieus, and almost before she caught her breath she was hurrying along, alone with Giovanni, eastward on Tenth Street.

Although her hand still clasped his in the pocket of his coat, he seemed to have forgotten her again. He strode along, fairly dragging her after him, his eyes fixed on the horizon, his lips working with the intensity of his thoughts. She did not venture to interrupt him, nor wish to.

"I guess I can't see much of you in the next few days, *cara mia*," he said, suddenly turning toward her as they waited for a Broadway car to get out of the way. "I got my work cut out for me, I guess."

"Yes!" she admitted.

"And you got yours, too, little girl! You must be present at all your shop-meetings—and picket, picket, picket! That is what will win!"

"Yes—every day I go!"

"And you ought to improve somewhat your English, too." He touched on the point with diffidence, for it had caused disagreements between them. "Since you are not now working, you will have much time. You should read, learn. We must know if we would rise —not so?"

"Yes!" she agreed again. "I will learn!"

"Say, you're a peach, little girl!" He pressed, with great gentleness, the bruised hand that lay in his coat pocket. "I was afraid you would not like it—this mix-up. I got afraid you would not like it because—"

"No—no!" she interrupted.

They walked on, across the wide, dirty Bowery, very close together and not hurrying so much as when they had started.

"Say—you *do*—got some affection in your heart for me—not so?" he asked suddenly, bending over her.

*"Si—si—*I mean, *yes!"* she whispered.

The Mule

Because he was stubborn and moody they nick-named him "The Mule," and he got into difficulties. But he had good stuff in him, and a girl made a big change in his life. . . . You will find this an excellent story and a "human document" of exceptional interest.

By CHARLES WESLEY SANDERS

HE WHOM they called The Mule, by rightful name Jake Schmidt, sat on the bank of the river and stared at the water rippling by in the summer sunlight. He had removed all his clothing except his shirt, and he sat hunched down into this. Swimming was his only pleasure, and it was easy to be seen that something was wrong with him since he did not at once send his slim young body deep into the river's cool depths.

As he sat, The Mule heard a step behind him. He sprang up. His lips fell apart and his breath came fast between them.

But the man who came into view on the river path was not the man The Mule expected—the man whom he hated with all the hate of youth. This was a stranger. He was a tall, rather slender man of thirty, perhaps. His eyes had doubtless once been as clear as Jake's, but there was a suspicious redness about them now. Beneath them shadows lay, and a mesh of wrinkles ran from them. The stranger's mouth, too, showed that he had lived unwisely. It was somewhat tremulous, and the lips were pale. But in spite of these markings his face was prepossessing. The lips curled swiftly in a winning smile at sight of The Mule, and the eyes lighted up. The Mule relaxed, but he did not sit down. Though the stranger was not his enemy, he might represent his enemy. He might even be some sort of officer.

"Hello, son," said the stranger. "How's the water?"

"Aint been in," The Mule answered.

"Looks nice," the stranger said, still smiling.

He sat down on the bank and swiftly disrobed.

"Going in?" he asked.

"Mebbe," said The Mule.

The stranger went rapidly down the bank and out on the spring board which the boys had erected. He jumped on the end of the board once and sprang. His body cut the water with the slightest possible splash. In five seconds his head popped up and he lay on his back and moved to the center of the stream with long, easy strokes.

"Gee," said the Mule, admiringly.

The Mule knew and loved a good swimmer. He was attracted toward the stranger. The Mule knew just how the stranger was feeling now. Many a time The Mule had brought his misery to the river, and while he had lain on his back and looked up at the far blue sky, he was happy for a time.

By now the stranger was in mid-

stream. He floated and swam in all the fashions that good swimmers know. . . . Then what will happen to the most expert happened to him. A cramp seized him like the clutch of a giant's hand. The watching Mule saw him drop from sight. The Mule thought the stranger was performing another trick. He waited a little to see the stranger come to the surface. But the stranger did not come. The Mule sprang up. There was a chance that the stranger was not at play.

The Mule ran out on the board, jumped on it with all his weight, sprang, landed far out, and with rapid overhand stroke swam to the spot at which the stranger had disappeared. Then like a frog he went under. Down, down into the deep, cool gray-green of the river he sent his body. His wide-open eyes caught sight of the stranger's doubled body. Like a fish, The Mule darted back of the stricken man and seized him under the armpits. Then he propelled both of them to the surface. The stranger, despite the suddenness of his seizure, had kept his head. He had swallowed no water, and after he had gulped at the air a half dozen times, his cramp straightened out.

"I'm all right," he said. "I guess I'd better go in, though."

They swam slowly to shore and climbed up on the bank. The stranger began to get into his clothing, and The Mule followed his example. He had had enough of the river for that day.

"Barney Coffey is my name," said the stranger after a while. "What's yours?"

The Mule looked out across the shining river. A slow, hard smile curled his full lips.

"They call me The Mule," he said simply. . . . "My real name is Jake Schmidt."

They did not speak again till they had finished dressing. Then Coffey meditatively rolled a cigarette.

"Son," he said slowly, "I know just how you feel. I've been through a lot of that in the last dozen years or so. It's fierce, isn't it?"

"Why do they knock you?" The Mule asked.

"Booze," Coffey answered. "Oh, I've no kick coming. I'd have been all right if I could have conquered my appetites. But I couldn't—I can't. That's all there is to that. Since I left college, I've done everything. I've been a painter, a miner, a farmer, an iceman, a truck driver—oh, everything you could think of. I just work till I get a stake. Then I blow it. I'm broke now. I go to work in the mine to-morrow. You're a trapper, aren't you?"

"Yeh," said The Mule.

"It isn't booze with you—yet," said Coffey. "What is it? You were acting like a young tiger when I came into sight awhile back."

The Mule was silent for quite a while. This man was the first that had ever talked to him in this kindly way. A lump was in The Mule's throat. He knew that if he spoke at once, tears would crowd to his eyes. Coffey let him take his time.

"Well," said The Mule at last, "it's like this:"

If a mule is kept in a mine for a long time, he goes blind when he is brought to the sunlight of the upper air. The villagers said that Jake Schmidt was as blind and as stubborn as any real mule that had ever been stunned by light suddenly piercing its eyes. These critics were mostly women, women with boys and girls of their own, and it came to pass that they forced their boys and girls to shun Jake as one who might contaminate them. The result was that Jake had only the murmuring river for friend.

Those good women did not know that in the beginning Jake had been only shy. They did not know that he had lived the life of toil and poverty while other children were at their play. They could not understand that this youth whom they thought stubborn would have leaped greedily at a kind word.

Jake was a trapper in the mine. It was his duty to open the doors to let the real mules drag the coal-laden cars through and to close the doors after them. He had been working in this mine for two months, and he was now nearly nineteen years old. He had worked in various mines since he was fifteen. Before that, he had done such

odd jobs as he could find since he had begun to sell newspapers at six.

Though none guessed it, his desire in the first place had been to do his work well in this mine. He knew he was approaching manhood and he wished to take his place among men. But one day a door had stuck a little and a driver had cursed him. He had raised his begrimed face to the driver and had looked him up and down for a full minute with his shining, blue eyes.

"By Chris'mus," said the driver afterwards, "that boy will be stickin' a knife into somebody some day. Yuh oughta seen the look he gimme when I called him down."

The Mule did exactly as the man had prophesied. The miner he stabbed was saved from serious injury by the mere fact that the knife was small and the blade dull. Near quitting time the man had driven up to The Mule's door with a load. The mine had been very close and hot all day. The Mule was tired. He swung the door back slowly.

As the man drove his mule through the door, he turned his blackened, scowling face toward Jake and spat out curses on him. The heart of a boy is a brooding heart if he thinks the hand of the world is against him, and that is what Jake thought. He lifted his own face and he gave the driver as good as he sent, with some interest.

"Listen to him curse—like a man," said the driver. "I'll slap your face off you when we get out of here, kid."

The car passed through the door and The Mule slammed it shut. This driver was the first to offer him physical violence. His hand slipped into his pocket and clutched his knife.

The mine was at the edge of a sweet valley in which the river ran. In the evening the day shift was in the habit of clambering down the hill and washing away the dirt of the mine in the river. The Mule was always the first into the river and the last out.

On the evening of the day of his encounter with the driver he swam to shore as the sun was disappearing behind the western hills. He got into his grimy clothes speedily and started up the bank.

"Hey, you," said a strident voice.

He turned. The driver stood at his elbow. The driver was grinning. All the peace which the river brought to The Mule was suddenly darkened by the fierce hate which usually burned in his heart nowadays. His hand again clutched his knife and his long fingers pulled the blade open.

"Well?" said The Mule.

The driver reached out and slapped him across the cheek. The Mule's hand leaped from his pocket and described a circle. The blade of the knife sank an inch into the driver's side. Frightened, the driver dropped to the ground. A red stain flowed on his shirt. The Mule stood above him. The Mule was astonished that he himself was not frightened. But he did not seem to care whether the driver died or not. They couldn't any more than take his own life, and he didn't care about that.

After a while the driver found that he was only scratched and he dragged himself home.

"And what happened after that?" Barney Coffey asked as Jake finished the recital, of which the foregoing is the meat.

"Nothing has happened—yet," Jake answered.

"Where's the fellow you stabbed?"

"He came back to work in a couple of days," said Jake. "He wasn't much hurt." He turned to this new-found friend, confidingly. "There's something funny about it. He never says nothing to me. He just looks at me an' smiles. It gives me the creeps. He's layin' for me, I can see that, but I don't know exactly how he figures on gettin' me."

"Yes, he's laying for you," said Coffey. "That's sure. He's either going to beat you up or he's going to have you arrested after he has tormented you for a while. What are you going to do?"

"I do' know," said The Mule. "I guess I'll have to keep on doin' just what I been doin'."

The sun had gone and the spangled sky was arching over them. The river murmured and plashed below them. The peace of night was all about them.

The situation appealed to Barney

Coffey. He leaned to Jake and gripped Jake's strong young arm.

"Boy," he said, "it's a raw deal. Damned if it isn't. Listen: I don't amount to much myself, but I never have kicked a man when he was down. They've got you flat on your back. They're squeezing the heart out of you. Don't you stand for it. If that driver—or any of them—molests you, you come to me. I've got one good fight in me yet. . . . Let's go home. I'm boarding up at Mrs. Jackson's. I'll move over to your house to-night, wherever it is, so that I can be near you. I'll stick, son. Don't you worry. Come on."

He jumped up nimbly. But Jake sat still. His face was averted from Coffey. Coffey heard him choke back a sob. He—the outcast—knew just how Jake felt. He turned and walked away.

"Come over to my house after supper," he called. "I'll be looking for you."

It was nine o'clock when Coffey heard a knock on his door—a swift, rapid knock that spoke of haste. He threw the door open. Breathless as if from running, Jake entered the room.

"He tried to land me an' I licked him," he said. "That driver, you know. I was comin' over here when him an' his wife come down the street. 'There goes the little wretch now,' she said. 'How much longer you goin' to wait?' I started to run across the street. I didn't want no trouble with him, especially with a woman standing by. But he took after me an' he clouted me back of the ear. I couldn't stand for that, could I? I went after him an' I got him. Gee! I didn't know I was so strong."

"You didn't use a weapon of any kind—a knife or a rock?"

"Oh, no; just my fists. I skinned my knuckle on one of his teeth. . . . What'll I do? His wife beat it to get the constable. She said she'd have me pinched."

Coffey put on his hat and coat.

"Come with me," he said.

They left the boarding house by the back door. Coffey headed for the river. That was the safest place he knew of just then. They sat down on the bank.

"Got any money?" Coffey asked.

"I got twenty-four dollars sewed into my shirt," said Jake. "I wouldn't trust none of them people."

"God!" said Coffey below his breath. And then aloud: "Son, you're just at the parting of the ways. You've got a good heart, I'm sure. You risked your life for me the way a good, game man does. But these people are getting to you. You must beat it. If they jail you to-night, it may be the last straw. I know, because I've been through the mill. Life is hell to me, but you're young and you've got a fighting chance. Will you take it?"

"I aint bad," Jake breathed. "I know I aint. I can feel in here that I would be all right if people would just be friends with me. But someway they wont. . . . What can I do?"

"Listen! I'm a judge's son. He's an old man. I've just about broken his heart and my mother's. I was their only child. I told you what ails me. They know I'll never be a real son to them. The best I can do is to go to see them once in a while when I'm sober. . . . My father has a big place in the country. He eases his heart by trying to help other people that are in trouble. He's straightened out half a dozen young fellows that I've sent to him. He'll help you if you want to go to him. I'll give you a note if you say the word."

"What'd I do?" Jake asked. . . . "Where is it?"

"He'll give you work to do and pay you for it. If you'll study, he'll help you to get an education. In any event, he'll be kind to you. . . . It's half way across the state. You can easily be there by morning."

"Would I have to tell him everything?" Jake asked.

"Tell him nothing. I'll say that you're in trouble, and that's all that he will require. Will you go, son? . . . I wish you would. When I'm bad—just getting well after a jamboree—I take a little heart of grace when I think that maybe I gave a lad a boost. . . . Will you go?"

"I'll go," said Jake, and he almost choked on the words.

"We'll go down to the railroad," said Coffey. "There'll be a freight before

long. You can take it over to the Junction and wait for the night passenger there. Keep under cover. . . . And, son, when you get to my father's, don't sew your money in your shirt."

II

At first Jake did not see the girl, when, after an hour of wandering over the judge's farm, he came to the back porch. She stood on the top step and looked down at him. She was the prettiest girl Jake had ever seen. Because he had come upon her so unexpectedly he stood abashed. She wore a blue gingham dress. Jake had seen dresses like that before, but he had never seen one so fresh from tub and iron.

A while before, as he strolled, Jake had stuck his nose into a rose. He had seen roses before, in store windows and in women's corsages. He had never had one in his hands. But this one he had found extremely sweet. It had been cool and fragrant and moist. That was how this girl's mouth seemed to him—cool and fragrant and moist.

Then the girl laughed, a low, easy laugh of self-confidence. Jake, frightened more than any miner had ever frightened him by a threat, turned and fled toward the fenced-in garden. The gardener was just entering from the other end. He was to be Jake's boss while Jake sojourned at Judge Coffey's.

"Gimme something to do," Jake gasped.

Jake had arrived at the Judge's home the night before. It had taken him many hours after his arrival in the village to summon his courage to a sufficient pitch to enable him to present himself.

When he at length faced the Judge, he found that what Barney had told him was true in every particular. The Judge read Barney's note of introduction, smiled at him sadly, asked him no questions, and sent him off to a room on the third floor. It was an immaculate room, and Jake lay in his white bed most of the night, his eyes wide open, and wondered whether he were not dreaming.

This morning he worked for the old gardener faithfully. The gardener told him many things about plants and flowers which he had of course never heard of before. Every once in a while he raised his head and drank in the sweet air. He wondered how he had ever been able to breathe in a coal mine.

About ten o'clock the gardener sent him to the house with vegetables for dinner. The girl opened the screen door for him and bade him lay them on the kitchen table.

"Where did you come from?" she asked before he had time to escape.

"I—I just blew in," said Jake.

"I didn't know there had been a wind," she said. "It semed very still all night."

Jake felt himself turn hot. He knew he was being "kidded," but there was so much of mirth in it, so much of good feeling, that he had to grin. But he could not bring his eyes to her dazzling face, and he was glad when he was in the open air again.

He saw her two or three times a day during the week that followed. She was very kind to him, he felt, but she was so alert mentally, so quick to catch him up in everything he said, that he couldn't get to a basis of common feeling with her.

Besides this, something more serious began to rankle in his heart. This new, sane life in which no one suspected him was cleansing him. He worried about his fight with the driver. What, he asked himself, would this dignified old judge say if he knew that Jake had stabbed a man and was a fugitive from justice. Many a boy like himself had faced the Judge in the Judge's long career, Jake supposed, and many of them had been sent to prison by him. Certainly, it was quite unlikely that the Judge would shelter a criminal under his roof.

This feeling was growing morbid in him when one morning at the end of his week, he again came upon the girl sitting on the back porch. As he glanced at her, he knew that if he were to lose this opportunity which poor Barney Coffey had given him, the loss of the girl would be the greatest loss of all. Since he had exchanged few words with her, this rather mystified him. She

seemed to see something of the mystification in his face. She dropped to the top step with a rustle of her starched garments.

"Sit by me," she commanded.

Somehow he got to a place beside her.

"Tell me about yourself," she ordered. "Are you going to live here right along? How old are you? What's your name?"

"My name is Jake Schmidt," he answered. . . . "They call me The Mule. I'm nineteen."

"Who calls you The Mule?" she demanded. "And what for?"

"Oh, it's just a nickname," he said evasively.

She looked at him keenly.

"Are you an orphan too?" she asked.

He turned his slow gaze upon her. All the mirth had died from her face. Something finer than her mere prettiness had displaced that. Her red mouth drooped a little as the rose had drooped under the dew.

"Yes," he said, "I'm an orphan. I don't remember my mother. My father was killed in a mine accident when I was a little kid. The Judge's son sent me here."

"The Judge and Mrs. Judge are always doing something for people like you and me," the girl said. "They took me from an orphan asylum when I was ten. They've been awful good to me. I get my lessons every day. The Judge gives me books out of his library. . . . Are you going to study too?"

"Who? Me?" Jake asked helplessly—the idea was so staggering.

"You ought to," she said earnestly. "Orphans always ought to. You see, somehow or other, they always get a bad start unless they're rich. So they've got to make up for lost time. Just the way it was with you and me, you know."

"Sure, I know," said Jake.

"I've got to go in and take Mrs. Judge's breakfast up to her now," the girl said. "I'll be out here about six o'clock this evening. I'm generally here then. But it's kind of lonesome. Everybody around here is old but you and me. . . . If you happen to be here this evening, you may go with me to the woods to get some ferns."

"I'll be here," he murmured, but he did not look at her.

He couldn't quite make her out, but he felt her friendliness. There was no one to tell him it was youth's call to youth. It wouldn't have made much difference if there had been. She had said "you and me" as if they were of a kind.

All the woods were green. Jake and the girl had come across the meadow and entered the quiet shade. The day had been hot. The sun had gone down like a red ball. No air stirred.

"Gee," said Jake, taking off his cap, "aint it still here?"

"Don't say 'gee,'" she commanded.

"All right," he said.

"Have you talked to the Judge today?" she asked.

"I saw him when he come home. He told me to come to the library after he had had his eats. But I aint going."

"Why?" she demanded with a stare. "You must. The Judge has a plan for you, I'm sure. That's why he wants to see you. Why aren't you going?"

Jake could not tell her. He somehow could not bear to have her withdraw from him. He would be here so short a time that he wanted to get what he could of her sweetness. But there was no use in his seeing the Judge. He had decided he would not lie to these people who had been kind to him. And yet he could not tell the truth. If he did, the Judge could do no less than send him back to the mining village and let the law take its course. Undoubtedly the Judge would be strong for the law. And Jake felt, with this clean, alien air in his lungs, that he would die in prison in a day.

"Why aren't you going?" the girl repeated.

"What's the use? I don't know nothin' about them books. I picked up a little readin' and writin', and that's all I know."

"That's the reason you should start," she said. Her voice dropped. "I know you've never had a chance. I can see just how it's been. But everybody here will help you. I'll help you myself.

You'll get along fast. You're bright enough."

Jake shut his teeth hard.

"What was them things you said you wanted to get down here?" he asked.

"Ferns," she said. "I want to put some in Mrs. Judge's room. They seem to make it cool."

Under her directions he gathered an armful of the fine, green plants. They came to the edge of the woods again. The girl sank down on a log and began to arrange the ferns. Her brown head was bent.

The day had hushed itself into evening. The sky was like steel with a giant's breath on it. On a hill in the distance lights were coming out in a cluster of houses. They spoke of home to one who had known no home. A little, spired church, dark till now, was suddenly illuminated. It spoke of God to one to whom God had been remote. . . . The girl hummed to herself. Then she began to sing in a low voice that crooned and murmured words strange to Jake's ears.

Jake suddenly dropped his face into his folded arms. The girl glanced up in pained astonishment. Sobs shook the boy. They tore up from his heart and fell in gasps from his lips. The girl put her hand on his arm. The hand was a little unsteady. He sprang to his feet and stepped back from her.

"Don't touch me," he cried. "Don't touch me. I aint worth it. . . . I wouldn't lay a hand on you for a million dollars. Come home. It's time I seen the Judge."

They walked to the house in silence. He went up the steps of the back porch. She sank down on the top step, holding the ferns to her breast. He paused an instant, leaning down.

"What's your first name?" he asked.

"Lucy," she replied.

"Lucy," he repeated. And again, "Lucy."

The Judge was waiting for him in the library. It was a big room, lined with bookcases. The Judge sat at a dark old desk, a book in his lap. The soft light of a reading lamp fell on the book. The Judge's face was in the shadow.

"Judge," said Jake hoarsely, "you don't want me hangin' around here. I'm a criminal. I stabbed a man. And I run away."

"Sit down, Jacob," said the Judge. . . . "Tell me now."

Jake told his story haltingly. When it was done, he stood up.

"Judge," he said, "will you do just one thing for me: When you send me away to-night, will you let me go out by the front door?"

"Suppose," said the Judge, "that I didn't send you away. Suppose I gave you a chance? Would you promise me faithfully that you'd reform?"

"Oh!" Jake breathed.

"Remain with us," the Judge went on. "You have the making of a good man in you. Your voluntary confession shows that. The slate is clean as it now stands. Try to keep it so."

Jake's eyelids flew wide. He got unsteadily to his feet.

"Judge," he said, "I guess I'll go out the back door."

About nine o'clock the Judge went to the kitchen to get his nightly drink of buttermilk for his old stomach's sake. With his hand on the lid of the ice chest he was arrested by voices beyond the screen. He listened, this dignified old judge.

"But you must be good from now on—good, good, good," he heard Lucy say. "Nobody out here but the Judge and me will ever know about your past."

A soft, low chuckle from him they had called The Mule astonished the Judge.

"Oh, I'll be good if you'll stick by me," came Jake's voice. "All my life I guess I been lookin' for somebody to talk to me that wouldn't act as if they thought I was goin' to murder 'em. But I never met 'em till I met Barney Coffey—an' then you. You learned things before you was ten years old that the Judge will never know." The chuckle rose to a burst of boyish laughter. "In there the Judge ast me if I would try to reform. Why, Lucy, I reformed a week ago—that day I first saw you here on the porch, an' afterwards in the kitchen when you kidded me!"

Complete Résumé of Previous Installments

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

Yeoman, the art dealer, reminds Landrum that to offend Buchanan will be to ruin his career; but his influence is counterbalanced by that of Kathleen Morrison, a wealthy young heiress and philanthropist, who urges the artist to be steadfast in his refusal.

Buchanan meets Landrum, Esther and a number of their artist friends in a Bohemian restaurant, and contrives to influence the whole party to accept his invitation to a dinner at the Café de l'Opera.

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

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

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

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

Yeoman tries again to persuade Landrum to sell "Innocence" to Buchanan, and to influence the artist to take advantage of the vogue for his work which the millionaire's offer has created. Landrum declines to be persuaded; and even when Kathleen Morrison duplicates Buchanan's offer of ten thousand dollars for the picture, he refuses. Meanwhile, Esther, cast off by Landrum, seeks Buchanan in his office, and they spend a gay evening together in the all-night cafés.

In revenge upon Esther and Buchanan, Landrum sells "Innocence" to a saloon-keeper on condition that it be hung in the barroom. Yeoman, at Buchanan's behest, offers Landrum various valuable commissions for portraits if he will have the painting removed, but the artist refuses. Buchanan, in pursuance of his plot to capture Esther, causes her to be discharged from her place as model at Yvonne's.

"INNOCENCE"

The sixth installment of this powerful novel of life in New York's Bohemia : Esther angles for Buchanan; the millionaire defeats Landrum's attempt at vengeance; Kathleen Morrison rescues the artist from the gutter.

By EDWIN BLISS

HER mind worked swiftly. A born gambler, as all women of her type are, she thought swiftly, surely, knowing her play must be for all the chips before her. She had the notion that Buchanan was behind this; it would be like him, playing soft on the outside and using the steel within the velvet. It was typical of him. If she could only be certain. She rather hoped he was. It would show the lengths he was ready to go to obtain her. She liked the rigorous delicacy of his method. It was so typical. Yes, it must be a Buchanan play. But how turn it to her own ends?

The answer came simply, readily. She was Innocence. She was Innocence, pleased with trifles, hurt by trifles, overmastered by power and poise and experience. That would suit the man. She must take her dismissal immediately, take it and wear herself out looking for another position. She would take good pains that no milliner would employ her, even should Yvonne be ready with a recommendation. She knew how to do that. And she could not appeal to Buchanan—never!

She was smiling when she went to the cashier's window and got her envelope, smiling behind the tears when she bade good-by to her compatriots in the shop. First, she went swiftly home and changed to her shabbiest slippers, slippers that would crack open within three blocks. Then she started the rounds of the Avenue shops.

It was four o'clock before she returned home. The natural actress in her had dominated, made her dead tired. All the weary stretch of time she had wandered she persuaded herself that she was starving, was trying "to be good," was dying upon her feet, and the mental suggestion had put her in a hollow-eyed condition. She had not even allowed herself to think of the goal she was playing towards. But now, in her own room, she perched on the edge of the bed and stared out the window.

Surely he would send around his car—could not resist the impulse to look upon his work. Time passed. Her eyes were strained from watching, her ears tortured by the sound of every horn, her heart a-flutter with the constant hammering. Five hours she had been waiting for her opponent to decide whether to call the bet she had made or declare it good.

The landlady poked her head in the door and glanced at the sleeping girl, then crossed the room and shook her gently. Esther looked up swiftly, startled at having fallen asleep. Something told her instantly that Buchanan

was outside, something in the landlady's face. She burst into hysterical tears and turned her head toward the wall. The too-soft tones of Buchanan sounded from the doorway and she dabbled vigorously at her eyes before casting them down in pretty confusion before his glance. Mrs. Martin discreetly tiptoed from the room.

"There, there, don't try to talk," the millionaire soothed her quietly. "I have the motor down stairs. A little ride—"

Esther rose obediently and went to the bath-room on the floor, carrying her towel with her. Inside, she gave a few extra sniffles for the man's special benefit, smiling meantime in the glass to find how greatly the tears became her. When she returned, her expression was the gay one of the grave person facing a crisis bravely, determined to make no one unhappy because of it.

All through the evening's gayety she maintained the same attitude, laughing with a little sobbing undercurrent, talking too rapidly that he might not think such chatter occupied her real mind—flattering, flattering, flattering as only the kitten-woman can flatter when fighting for the silk-lined basket occupied already, but which belongs by right of birth to her Angora Highness.

It was in the Park, with the trees whispering in all their leaves, volubly returning the sighing love of the breeze that she broke down and, holding tightly, convulsively to his wrist with her right hand and his great index finger with her left, told him the reason why she limped so, the reason why she had fallen asleep, why she was so tired, so preoccupied.

Buchanan leaned back against the cushions of the car. Under the fringed shadow of her long lashes she watched him. She saw the determination to play the masterful cross his face—the steel of him; she saw the suavity of the flesh drive it away. And then she saw a tender expression soften the lines about his eye and mouth as he looked down at the tiny fingers holding to his index finger, clasping it tightly as though pleading with him not to draw it away. He trembled and her heart sank, for she did not want him to tremble with the softened, protecting expression on his face, the expression called from some mysterious pool in his nature which was exposed by the child-like, innocent faith *of a child as a child.* She wanted him to feel toward her as the child—a-quiver for womanhood and innocent of the desire.

When he spoke, his voice was so clouded she could not understand him. He stopped and she could feel in the very atmosphere of the car's interior the effort he made to curb this symbol of his passion.

"You have worked at Yvonne's, Esther. You know about me, about—about—about things—well, that you do not know yourself."

"You know why I have taken such an interest in you. You have called to me—called to me ever since I first saw you. You demand, respond to the same life as I. We belong to one another. We belong to the city, to this city. We belong to it—you and I.

"Why do you waste your time at Yvonne's, putting over coarse undergarments the exquisite things that belong to you from the very pleasure it gives the eye to see them upon you? You love them; your nature demands it. It was a desire born in and with you when you were born.

"I'm not going to preach silly sophistries. Probably there is a right and a wrong about it. But, Esther, we were born wrong. It isn't our fault that we are exotic. It isn't our fault that this life supplies the proper mixture to our blood which no ozone or iron in the earth can give us.

"I look at you and see you in your home, see you surrounded with beautiful, fragile things, see you at ease, wearing the clothes you should wear, living the life you should live, eating the foods you should eat, doing—" He stopped short, catching his breath and clearing his throat of the cloudiness which was again making him incoherent.

"God, Esther," he cried in his muffled voice, "don't you feel your steps grow heavy at times as though you could not carry about the weight of blood within you and yet that you would suffocate for lack of blood?

Don't you think when you see the wonders of the orchid that you are like the blotched and weird faces painted on its petals, staring out for something that you may devour? You know what I mean—you know, Esther, for you are the woman of myself, the man."

Her bosom was rising and falling swiftly as he interpreted her to herself. She turned away her face that she might not look into his eyes, might not read her even though he knew her very heart and soul. In the glass of the car she saw the great arteries of his neck standing out like blacksnakes, caught the *pump—pump—pump* there. It held her eyes with a weird fascination.

"You have no right to be blistering your feet, looking for work. You have no right putting on for others the things that belong to you. Take that which belongs to you. It is the right of such as you and I. Take it and hold to it and use it, Esther."

Her finger tips twitched, quivered, burned for the desire within them to touch them to those arteries in his neck, to press her hands against the fattiness of his face, press the palms there just so that the finger tips would feel the surge within those great swollen arteries. But she must not—must not—must play the game longer—before— She bit her lips, nervously, regaining control of herself. She was hard again, playing a game.

"When I saw 'Innocence,' I wanted you," Buchanan continued quietly. "I made up my mind that I would have you. I did not expect to find what I did find. The 'Innocence' of Landrum was not the Innocence that the promise of maturity he suggested in the painting gave to me. The 'Innocence' of Landrum was a very different thing from the Innocence I know. And to think that that 'Innocence' is in that vile hole of an El Oro, for drunkards to look at and leer at—"

"El Oro—what?" Her voice was shrill, piercing, almost a screech although it was low pitched. Something seemed to snap within her. Buchanan nodded.

"I did not mean to tell you. But Landrum sold it and had it hung there. He will not allow it removed. I have tried hard. But the painting is not you, Esther; I know it is not you. I am not making the love to you that I ever made to any woman before—you know that. Landrum painted a child, an innocent child, with a promise that was a mystery to him, a promise which he interpreted from the dreams of his own nature and the theories of right and wrong which have been the world's standard for ages. But I saw the promise, the real promise of maturity there. I saw the woman you were intended to be, Esther; I saw it and I claimed it."

Rage at Landrum, shame at her own shame, joy at this analysis of herself which she recognized for truth, everything swept over her, engulfing her brain, suffusing her heart. The man's arm was about her slender waist, the hand reaching, groping, reaching. She clasped it feverishly as though to fight it away from her. The long, steel muscles of the arm convoluted like snakes. Her fingers closed about the iron ones of the man. She made as though to fight them away. Suddenly she was aware that they were relaxed to her slightest touch, that she could do with that giant arm as she pleased, that she was being left to decide.

Her fingers clasped the index finger of him and shyly drew the great hand toward her breast. At the touch, her cheek was blown by some breath of emotion toward the soft cheek, the fat cheek under which there were such tremendous bones. She lifted her free hand and caressed that cheek, her finger-tips stealing down toward the swollen blacksnake of an artery in his neck.

The blood pumped her finger tips away with its force and then the blood relaxed and drew them back. And she sighed, her eyes veiled stars of wonderment at the elucidation of the mystery of it all.

XVI

CONCERNED WITH DELAYS

LANDRUM smiled bitterly at himself in the mirror, studying with all the artist truth in his nature the changed

lines of his face, the thousands of tiny wrinkles, infinitesimal in themselves, that went to make up the weary net-work about his eyes, the sagging droop to his lips that told the tale of the brain-enemy he had poured past them, the bleared expression in his eyes, the droop to the already heavy lids.

And he had the grace to blush as he looked from his reflection there to the tiny hypodermic set upon the dresser. He had found the easy way and taken it. It had been three months since Nye introduced him to cocaine, and already he was familiar enough with the drug to call it "coke."

He knew what that set meant—knew, when he sneaked into the drug store and purchased it, that it was merely through fear that Nye might some day turn upon him and that then there would be no lessening of his misery until he had pulled himself together enough, out of pure exercise of will, to make a presentable appearance when he wished to make such a purchase.

The moral fiber of his nature was rotting now. Only in great bursts of passion could he call back the old hatred for Buchanan and Esther. His work had deteriorated badly. Times there were aplenty when he got out of bed resolved to straighten up. For days at a time he would fight against the whisky. Then would come the one little drink, the drink to force vitality into his work. But the whisky would not work in the old way now. There was no counting upon the line, the fine line of demarcation where reason topples and strength flees. And then it was the old misery over again.

Orders had been neglected. Word had traveled quite as speedily in his case as that of any other artist who opens the seam in his armor for anyone to shoot. Moreover, in addition to his work falling off, all the spirit, the ideals had gone out of his brush-work, and it had been marked by many.

Well, he always had the remedy, and some day he would show the world what it was had brought about this astonishing change—when he quit using the stuff and became himself again. Tears of self-pity filmed his eyes.

He had enough to make him wish to drown his griefs. Buchanan had stolen the woman he loved, and the woman he loved had proved the soul rottenness within herself by permitting herself to become such an easy victim.

He nursed that hatred with all the strength within him. Without that, he realized in a vague sort of way that he would become abjectly pitiful. He dared not look the truth in the face, the bitter realization that he cared little for Esther now. Whisky alone brought memories of her and he drank the whisky to recall her and his wrongs. It was his excuse and he nursed it tenderly as a mother does her new born babe.

And this morning he told himself that he would end the bitterness of his life—just as he had told himself the same thing a hundred times. He had just returned from a short tour of the art offices of magazines where his work had formerly been eagerly sought. Some had been too busy to see him, all had been unable to give him any work. He cursed them in his soul, cursed them from the depths of his being for cads and followers of the herd, but something within told him the story of delayed promises here, hurried work there, always some good adequate reason.

Wrapped in his cloak of melancholia he had alienated those friends who felt pity and would have helped. In moods of drunkenness he went out of his way to exhibit his shame and to alienate by his bitter revilings those who had been closest to him.

And who had brought it all about—who and what? Innocence had been stolen from him. Esther had been taken away from him. Buchanan!

But this morning he was clear-headed and strong and full of rage. This morning was the time once and for all to close his account with the millionaire. He carefully tucked the little hypodermic in the top drawer of his dresser and locked the door of his room behind him. He had grown fearful, lately, that there were thieves in the building. Nye, now, would commit any crime for the sake of a little money.

Swiftly he walked up town, avoid-

ing the glances cast at him. A sense of elation was in his soul, a song of hate in his heart. He was strong again. He had not touched a drop for three days. He could almost walk the crack in the sidewalk. He felt no shame of his fellow men. He was going to meet Buchanan, the powerful, and he was going to best him.

A policeman passed, throwing him a curious look. Clay wondered why the man had glanced at him in that manner. Had his secret showed upon his countenance? He twisted his face into a bitter grin. Whisky was the stuff to put a bit of cunning in him, make of his face a mask. But he would not have more than one—just one, so that he might reach the millionaire and no one be the wiser until he had wreaked his vengeance.

Carefully he tilted the bottle, measuring out a medium drink. He caught his reflection in the bar mirror and smiled to see the obvious hatred there. Yes, he was ripe for anything this day. He paid for the liquor, waiting a second, hunched over the bar, for the stuff to take effect. Then he shuddered and gasped. It had struck at his heart, squarely.

A minor panic came upon him lest his heart give out. It was in very bad condition lately. Nights he was able to sleep in but one position, for the strain the weight of his body placed upon the heart. And there were times when he could not find that position. He hurried his footsteps now, the fear urging him on that Buchanan might escape him through his heart giving out. Perhaps another drink might settle that.

It turned out to be precisely the proper remedy. All fear of anything happening to intercept his purpose had fled when he left the Balkingham, two drinks more burning the lining of his stomach. The little telephone girl who had admired "Innocence"—he had forgotten the child's name—looked up timidly as he passed her board, and smiled.

He passed on haughtily. There was something that Kathleen Morrison had told him of the girl that made him weep, and this day he only wished to hate. But the thought obtruded. Yes, Kathleen had said that she was one he had helped by his concept of Innocence—his lie of Innocence.

He chuckled aloud at his revenge. Richardson Buchanan had attempted to purchase the painting from Buckmaster, the dance hall proprietor, and the fellow had begged Landrum to allow him to accept the offer, but he would have none of it.

Yes, it had been a fairly complete revenge upon the girl. One of the Sunday newspapers had carried a full page story on its front page of the colored magazine section about the affair. There had been a storm of protest from leagues; preachers had used the tale as the text for sermons; friends had turned their faces to avoid speaking to the artist. And, instead of hurting, all these things had given him the satisfaction he craved.

When Buchanan was through with her, had cast her aside—as he had always done with the other favorites of his harem—then she would have nothing left but her public shame, the knowledge that she was advertised in the garish bar-room of El Oro.

Innocence had been stripped of her natural robes, had been shown for what she was. And he, Clay Landrum, whom men affected to despise, had done this thing. He gritted his teeth at recollection of the insults he had suffered for his great work. And that was Buchanan's fault also.

Buchanan's fault that men turned from him. Buchanan's fault that his fingers were cramped and refused to do their old-time office. Buchanan's fault that he was alone and miserable. Buchanan's fault that debts had piled up until nobody would allow him further credit. Buchanan's fault that he was shabby and unshaven and that he cared for nothing save the hate he had fledged so zealously.

But he was only a block away from vengeance now. And he was primed for it. He laughed aloud at his triumph over the whisky. He had only taken three, and all the devils of hell were in his heart urging him on, pouring fuel upon the fires of his black hatred. Yes, it was but half a block now.

He rounded the corner, then stopped. A great crowd had gathered about some object in the street. Policemen were pushing them back. Clay tried to force his way through, telling the officer he lived in the block. The man looked at him and laughed, pushing his locust against the artist's chest to drive him from the way.

Well, it could be but for a few moments. Merely a horse that had fallen down. Eagerly he waited, nervously cursing the slowness of the driver in unbuckling the shafts to allow the animal to struggle to his feet.

Was there some strange demon in league with the millionaire that this should happen now? He could feel his fingers twitching, but a strange fear was on him that the twitching was not all for hate but for fear of a frustrated hate. Once he staggered slightly and the fumes of the three drinks partially smothered him. Ordinarily he would not have noticed them, but his brain had been keyed so high that it beat him into a sort of panic.

He had taken the drinks on an empty stomach. If only he had eaten a couple of eggs! Would he have time to do so now? He squared his shoulders as the horse clattered on his way and the crowd was loosed. No, there could be no delay. He stepped briskly to the stoop of the rich man's residence.

On the first step he faltered slightly. That accursed third drink had done the work. Firmly he mounted another step and a cold perspiration broke out upon his forehead. A policeman was passing, idly twirling his club. He must wait till the man left.

The fellow paused to exchange a word with a watchman. It seemed to the artist, as he waited there, tense and rigid, that they never would have done with their chatter. His knees were trembling now. He reached out his finger toward the bell when the man passed on.

It trembled so that it missed the button altogether. He drew away and thought a moment. He must never allow Buchanan to see that he trembled. The coarse-fibered ruffian would take it for fear. He would wait a moment.

If only that horse had not fallen, that policeman paused to chatter. He ground his teeth together, then gave way to incoherent sobs. In the areaway he crouched, trying vainly to pull himself together. He only had a few moments. Buchanan made it a custom to stroll to his club soon after this hour. Bitterly Landrum fought for control of himself.

A great black fear was gripping at his heart with icy fingers. Buchanan was powerful. The man had worked as a section hand. Under that mass of fat there were iron muscles and sinews. He was a devil. And the artist felt his own weakness now. He sobbed over it, staring at his fingers, those fingers that were puffed and swollen and a few months before had been so powerful and supple.

Light steps sounded above him. He knew it for the step of Buchanan. He dared not look up at the man. He did not need look up, for he could visualize him, his horrid, white eyes, the over-red lips, the gross body and the pantherish step that matched it so illy.

Buchanan's laugh sounded very close to him and he stared out of tear-dimmed eyes at the millionaire, who leaned upon the stone balustrade and stared at him from those pin points of black in the sea of clammy white eyelid.

Landrum attempted to turn away and run. Some other time would do, when so many impediments did not cross his purpose. A cramp struck him squarely in the calf of his right leg. He writhed in the pain of this alcoholic symptom. Slowly, Buchanan moved down the little steps that led to the area and approached him. More swiftly than the striking of a snake his powerful hand reached out and grasped the lapels of the artist's coat, dragging him to his feet, all a-quiver with nervous fear.

"My old friend Landrum, again," purred Buchanan, his thick lids drawing wide, the white about his infinitesimal pupils, growing a dirty yellow, in foreboding contrast to the bursting fullness of his negroid lips.

"This is the last time I am going to

be bothered with you, my friend," he continued quietly. "After this I am going to give you such a thrashing as you never had in your life. What are you doing here?"

Clay felt a great rage stirring within him, greater even than that with which he started on this mission. He tried to speak but his eyes dropped before the menace of that horrid face.

With a contemptuous laugh, Buchanan dragged his helpless bundle down the steps, across the sidewalk, then kicked him brutally to the street. Landrum sprang erect, bounded up like a rubber ball. Every scintilla of manhood that had ever been in his nature rebelled against this final insult. He started to rush the man, but Buchanan had turned his back and was walking away, laughing softly to himself as he brushed his hands daintily together.

He had turned his back. It took all the nerve out of Clay. He lifted his clenched fists aloft and muttered something about "next time." But the blackest fear that had come upon him was that there would never be a next time with this man.

Yet he was strong, was proud, had been everything, could do anything within reason. What was the reason, the answer?

He cursed the delay, the horse that had fallen. If only he had encountered the millionaire five minutes before his nerves were shaken. If only——

XVII

ONE WOMAN

He was brushing himself when the swift swerve of a great black limousine made him glance up, his overwrought nerves making him jump back. Leaning over, the chauffeur threw open the door and a woman leaned far out, her hand extended, her face wreathed in a cordial smile.

"Why, Mr. Landrum, I'm so glad to see you again. Wont you let me take you where you are going?"

Clay drew back in quick shame, regarding Kathleen Morrison from under frowning eyebrows. He had grown to have suspicions of all mankind and he did not like this meeting. He blushed as, again, he regarded the condition of his clothes. He glanced at the driver but the man's face was expressionless.

Her gloved fingers fell upon his wrist and there was a touch of sympathy in the caress of them that drew him irresistibly inside the tonneau. Sullenly he crouched back in the corner, not heeding her light chatter, studying her frowningly.

Had this woman seen his shame and taken this means of revenging herself for the insult he had so gratuitously passed her when she called at his studio to purchase "Innocence?" Or was it that she pitied him? Surely she knew all the things being spoken of him, the manner of life he had fallen into. Everyone knew about these things. Apart from the frigid greetings of the boys in the studio building, Nye was the only human being with whom he ever spoke. Surely this woman must know. And then he heard that wonderful voice of hers, throbbing with feeling, thrilling him just as it had thrilled the first day he saw her.

"And it was so strange that only an hour ago the little girl at the Balkingham—Mary Moffatt, you remember, who fell so deeply in love with your painting—"

" 'Innocence?' " He forced the title from him with a bitter laugh. He looked at her to see whether she drew away, hoping in the heart of him to hurt her and yet loathing himself for the impulse.

She did not flinch; but a shadow crossed her eyes and again her finger tips sought his own.

"I know, Mr. Landrum, and I have felt so sorry for the suffering your act must have caused you."

"I ask no pity," he grated.

"But it is not pity to feel sympathy." The voice was sighing, gentle, like balm upon his troubled spirit. He looked at her hungrily, aweary of the black mood always controlling him, longing to reach out and take some of this sympathy from one so plenteously endowed with it.

"Please let me help you just a little bit—please, Mr. Landrum. I know

something of what must weigh you down. I know that all the soul-suffering I feared for you must have come true. It is not only as one proud to have known you as the great artist with the great endowment of ideals and of nobility that I wish to help—it is as a friend. Wont you let me help?"

He did not answer, for the quick tears that had swept his eyes, the constriction that compressed his throat. Strangely, moisture was gathering there, cooling the parched, cracked spots, soothing and refreshing for all of the pain.

She was looking at him strangely, her eyes drawn speculatively yet with a soft expression in them that he could feel, without glancing up to meet them.

"You are so proud," she sighed heavily, "that I do not know how to speak what is on my heart. I know you understand and yet I am selfish enough not to be able to be hurt—by you. And you always like to hurt me. Why is that, Mr. Landrum?"

He made a motion to draw his hand away, then allowed it to remain where it was at the pressure of her resistance. He stared through the window, watching the white strip of park road being eaten up by the flying monster of steel, the foliage of the trees melting into each other, the scampering squirrels dodging from out the road and mockingly wagging their comical paws at this invading giant.

"I don't know," he answered slowly. "I can't understand. I think it is because you represent what I thought I might have found if my eyes had not been bandaged by a lie. I think it is because you understand right now everything that has happened, everything in my heart. Because there is no height to which you could not reach, no depths to which you could not sink for—love."

"No depths?" She murmured the words over questioningly, a tender smile parting her lips, then again, nodding assentingly. "No depths—no, there are no depths where love is. Life may be sordid where love is; the lovers may be more sordid, but they are on the heights because they know love, and love is always elevating them above themselves."

"And yet I loved when I was prosperous, when everything seemed to have turned for the best in my life," Landrum objected, a bit of vehemence in his voice which grew as he continued. "I had fame, honor—for me, riches—love. Yet in three short months and a little over I have lost them all. I am in the depths and I still know love."

She drew herself erect, staring straight ahead of her. The frown that knitted her eyebrows had deepened and her lips were twisted in pain.

"Listen, Mr. Landrum, and please don't be offended. I know all that you say. I could not help hearing. Do you think it love that has caused all this?"

"Go on," he said quietly. "I am attending."

"You have one other mutual friend with me," she continued. "A man who has charge of one of my most recent works. He is a great admirer of yours. You don't even know his name. But he knows you, I believe, better than you do yourself. His name is Doctor Cresswell."

"Don't recall him," Clay answered shortly. He had an ingrowing horror of physicians, which had been implanted in him by Nye. Nye seemed the shadow in his life—which some people call co-incidence, though in every life there is just such an one—which forecast his own future.

"You called several times at a certain public hospital to inquire after a poor man who had been taken with—with—"

"Delirium *tremens*," Landrum laughed.

"Dr. Cresswell was the physician in charge of the psychopathic ward there for several years. He spoke with you several times. He was very much interested in you. Dr. Cresswell was not the physician of herbs and remedies alone—he spent his waking hours in that ward of Bellevue and, nights, he slept on a cot next to some unfortunate and slowly, sympathetically got the man to tell the true history of his case. Thousands of such cases did he get acquainted with. Dr. Cresswell is in

charge of the hospital I have endowed, a man who knows that back of every case of that sort there is a deep-seated reason—"

Landrum drew back, his eyes flashing angrily.

"He told me that he has often studied your painting of 'Innocence' in the—the saloon, and how it fascinated him. And he wanted to help you so much—just as I wish to help you."

His laugh was ugly, venomous. But she did not draw away from him as his hand clasped her own so tightly that the glove split squarely along the fingers.

"Please, once and for all time, forget this idea you have of me. It is a delusion. There is nothing in me but the vilest of thoughts. It was hate that brought me where you picked me up, hate and cowardice. Buchanan—" He stopped short, staring incredulously into her eyes, reading something there.

"You saw the whole thing," he muttered, "and—picked—me up. You saw and went away so you would not let me know you saw?"

She bowed her head slowly, the great masses of bronze hair glowing with a greater luster for the contrast with the white gloves that covered her face. Her splendid form was racked with silent sobs, yet when she finally quieted them she did not lift her face.

"Forgive me," he said humbly. "Forgive me all the insults I have heaped on you. But please do not think of me as a human being any more. I am quite lost. I wish to be lost. I revel in it. Only now, I was thinking of proposing to you, Miss Morrison. And do you know what prompted my hypocritical thought of promising to reform if you would only help me—it was to gain money to fight Buchanan."

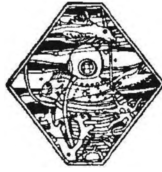
She slowly lifted her face and looked at him, then shook her head sadly, a tender smile in her eyes.

"Please don't say any more now, Mr. Landrum. The one who thought and the one interpreting the thoughts are two different beings. That is all. I understand."

The artist nodded slowly, then, leaning forward, took the speaking tube and called to the chauffeur to put him down as soon as they could leave the park.

Kathleen Morrison did not speak when he got down, bowing low over her hand. And he did not see, could not see, as he wandered sadly down the street, that she was taking the broken glove from her hand, taking it off and regarding it with a tender light in her eyes, the light that reminds of the day at dawn, when the breeze treads the new grass of the fields all radiant and fresh, the light that slowly changes to that of midnight, when the long shadows grow even longer; and that was when she kissed the rent with a passionate fervor that would have surprised anyone knowing Kathleen Morrison.

The next installment of "Innocence"—one of the most vividly dramatic in the whole powerful narrative—will appear in the April BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE. This will be on sale everywhere, March 1st.



Adventures of Matt Bardeen, Master Diver

"When the Ship Turned Turtle"—one of the most delightful of this fine new series of under-water adventures, recounted by the old diver in his own inimitable manner.

By FREDERIC REDDALE

"YA-AS, YA-AS," drawled Matt Bardeen, slapping his thigh, "I knowed it! Thar she goes, by mighty! The clumsy lubbers, after all my work on the blamed old hull!"

Even as he spoke, a quarter mile off shore, where the North River debouches into New York Bay, the gaunt, rust-pitted hulk of a British tramp steamer, shiny and greasy from her month's sojourn at the bottom of the river, and surrounded by a fleet of tugs, scows, and pontoons, slowly careened to starboard and went down with a mighty splashing and heaving of waves in twelve-fathom water.

Bardeen, the veteran deep-sea diver, who had gone down and patched up a great rent in the tramp's side while she lay on the bottom, so that she could be pumped out and raised, spat disgustedly into the tide, while he filled his big pipe, shifted his seat on the stringpiece to where a bollard made a convenient back rest, muttering the while:

"The clumsy lubbers!"

"How did it happen, Matt?" I ventured, when the pipe was well alight.

"A month ago that there tramp was comin' up the bay, loaded deep with five thousand bags o' raw sugar from Cuby. Just abreast o' Liberty Ileyand a big B. and O. car-float rammed her amidships, making a hole as big as a barn door, an' before they could tow her t' the Communipaw flats she sank like a dipsy-lead.

"Well, they sent for me t' plug the hole, which me an' my gang did all proper; then we battened down every blessed porthole an' ventilator, so's she was reasonably tight, workin' in the rottenest kind o' dirty water. Next thing was t' put the steam-pumps t' work, an' as soon as she lifted off the mud—North River mud, mind ye, ten foot of it—we divers slung the pontoon chains under the hull fore an' aft, which finished my end o' the job.

"But what does the lubbers do? 'Course the sugar had all melted an' run into the river, so she'd practically a swept hold. When they got the pumps goin' they must 've sucked her dry, 'stead o' leaving a hundred tons or so for ballast. Consekently, when she floats an' the pontoons hauled away, she jest gives a wallow an' rolls over on her side, as you seen with your own eyes. Ya-as, ya-as! That's how it happened, son—plain case o' foolishness."

"And what'll they do now?" I queried.

"Pump her out agen, provided she aint broke her back or tore her ingines off their bedplates. In which case Uncle Sam's harbor-master'll have her blown up as an obstruction t' navigation, like they did that craft off Owl's Head a few years ago. But you can wager your best pair o' boots that old Matt don't go down to her a second time."

"Why?" I wanted to know.

"Bad luck. Ya-as, ya-as!" And that was all I could get him to say about the *Conway Castle*. So I tried another tack, for I was determined to have a new yarn out of Matt's budget of deep-sea diving experiences.

"Do ships often turn turtle like that?"

Matt suddenly sat up, the laughter rumbling in his tawny beard, his mighty Berserk chest and shoulders heaving in merriment over some reminiscence.

"Not often, son, but when they do—"

He broke off to refill and light his pipe. Then:

"I was jest thinkin' of a yarn I heard som'ers about a steamer bound from Ceylon t' London. She was loaded deep with sugar like this feller. When they'd rounded the Cape and was well t' the norard o' Madeira, skipper an' mates noticed the boat had riz a good two feet out o' water. They set it down to the coal they'd burned. But the ship kep' on a-risin', until one fine day, off Finisterre, she jest gives a roll t' port an' another roll t' stabbord, and then quietly turns turtle. Y' see, m' son, she'd sprung a bit of a leak in her shaft tunnel—not much t' notice—an' the water'd melted the sugar till her cargo was all gone. That meant another dipsy divin' job for somebody. Ya-as, ya-as."

Matt laughed in huge delight at the colossal joke on the steamer captain and his officers. But that didn't bring me any nearer to my destination. I wanted a first-hand story—and meant to have it. When the veteran of the Seven Seas had quieted down I put out another and a more direct feeler.

"Were you ever caught foul by a ship that turned turtle, Matt?"

Again came that resounding smack of horny hand on massive thigh.

"By Jupiter, son, I did that—an' not so many years ago either. 'Twas this-a-way." And, once more launched on the sea of adventure, Matt Bardeen spun this vivid tale of the Ship that Turned Turtle, which I'll let him tell in his own inimitable style:

"Well, son, in the airly spring of, I think it was 'ninety-six or seven, the steamer *Circassia,* one of the smaller English liners on the Liverpool-Boston run, got lost in the fog. Her skipper'd had no sights between Cape Race an' the tip of Cape Cod, an' his dead-reckonin' was all wrong. Anyway, he piled her up on Minot's Ledge, that nest o' rocky fangs jest outside the entrance t' Boston harbor.

"The poor old *Circassia* ripped out thirty feet o' bottom plating, pounded a while in the heavy sea that was runnin', an' then, as the tide rose, floated off or backed off an' sunk in fifteen fathom—call it ninety feet—so that only her topmasts showed above water.

"They were so near t' Boston town that before daylight there was a whole ranikaboo of tugs around her, but no sooner had they taken off the passengers an' crew than the ship sunk, as I said. No lives were lost, but there was fifty thousand pounds in gold sovereigns in the purser's safe, consigned to Boston bankers, an' o' course that could be, an' had t' be, recovered.

"Well, son, they put me on that part of the job. It turned out t' be jest a plain, easy, straight divin' proposition. The *Circassia* rested on an even keel; less than forty feet o' water covered her boat deck at low tide—an', well, me an' Tom Powers pried out that safe an' sent it up.

"No orders had been given about salving the cargo—only the speechie—an' we dipsy divers was kind o' wonderin' about it, when there kem a dispatch t' the skipper which read: 'Have divers report probability raising ship.'

"Me an' Powers hadn't been off her main deck, y' understand, but I knowed she was restin' easy, an' with even a

fairish spell o' quiet weather I figured that the ship could be floated after repairin' the hole in her outer skin. But it would be necessary for a diver t' make a thorough survey and examination of the hull, from stem to starn, t' see jest how she rested, an' all that. Just then Powers got word that his missus was sick, so he planned t' lay off for a few days, which was all O. K., since one diver—meanin' me—was enough t' go down an' see how things were under water.

"So next morin' I gets into harness an' drops over the side o' the scow, as I'd done hundreds of times before. I landed on the *Circassia's* flyin' bridge t' rest an' have a look around 'fore going t' the bottom t' inspect the hull. An' while standin' there, with one hand on the rail, I was suddenly attacked on all sides by, what d' y' s'pose? A lively school of savage dogfish—young sharks from four t' six feet long. Seemed there must've been a million of 'em. An' how they did rush, an' snap, an' bite! Once or twice I was feared they'd knock me off my feet an' get me down an' helpless. Then I was worse scared that they'd bite through my air-hose in some of their rushes, an' that gave me the hot shivers, chilly as the water was at that depth an' time o' year.

"Seein' that I wasn't goin' t' do any work that mornin'—only look around like—I had no tools or weapons with me 'xcept a broad-bladed, heavy-backed knife—like a machete, in fact. You want t' remember, son, that them was the days 'fore we had th' electric torch, th' oxygen helmet, the water-gun, or the tellyphome.

"Well, I cut an' slashed at the doggies fast as I could thrust an' parry, but no dipsy diver can keep up that sort of thing very long. I was gettin' mighty tired, an' simply couldn't drive the beasts away. They'd dart between my legs an' under my arms, snappin' an' bitin' at my suit, so that any minute I expected they'd puncture the tough fabric—an' then I'd be done for. I tell you, son, I felt might sorry that Tom Powers'd gone t' Boston, leavin' me th' only diver on board.

"However, thinks I, this mustn't last. Guess I'd better give the signal t' be hauled up pretty pronto. 'Course they'll nip my legs an' maybe do some damage, but if I stay here there'll sure be another dead diver—what the papers call a 'marine fatality.' Well, I didn't feel much like furnishin' no such headlines for the Boston papers on account of a lot of pesky dogfish. So I gives the regulation three hard yanks on the life-line, an' 'twas just as I'd expected. Those baby sharks—for that's what they really are—followed me all the way t' the side of the scow, bitin' at my legs an' fixin' their teeth in whatever slack they could find. One feller got his teeth so fast in the rubber that they had t' pry him loose with a belayin'-pin 'fore he'd let go. Ya-as, ya-as!

"Well, son, I wasn't reely hurt, only het up some, but still I didn't feel like goin' down again that day, so I jest laid off, snoozin' an' loafin'.

"Now comes what I started t' tell you about—them dogfish was jest a little warnin' side-show, as you might say. Next mornin' I goes down again after the crew on the scow had given a careful look around for any signs o' the doggies. This time I dropped clear t' the bottom, landin' right under the *Circassia's* bilge, where the reef had gone through her plates. But I was some surprised when I found that bilge fully a fathom above my head, with clear water right under her keel. 'Course, I soon saw how it was with the old ship. All the bottom thereabouts bein' mighty rocky an' uneven, it so happened that when she backed off the ledge an' sunk she'd berthed herself right over a submarine trough or depression, bow an' stern restin' on either bank of the little ravine. Couldn't have been better from the wrecker an' diver's point o' view, 'cause it would enable us t' pass the pontoon chains right under the hull without any bother of lightenin' her first.

"However, I had t' make a thorough report, so I clawed my way over the rocks, slippery with seaweed an' kelp, walkin' far enough toward bow an' stern t' learn all I needed. Then I slipped and slid back t' where I'd first landed alongside—about amidships of the hull. Mighty grim and ghostly everything looked; she might have been

twenty years under water instead of as many days, an' there was coal an' miscellaneous cargo still dribblin' out of the gash in her bottom. That observation set me thinkin' a bit—evidently the hull was not as tightly wedged as it looked—there was some slight roll which set the loose things in her hold to slidin' outboard. On that account I made a note t' put in my report that unless raisin' operations were begun pretty pronto the *Circassia*'d roll off the reef during the first heavy gale an' sea that kem along.

"But the end I'd foreseen in my mind came quicker than I'd have thought possible, an' gave me one of the narrowest squeaks for life a dipsy diver ever had before or since. I was standin' right under her keel about amidships, lookin' upward, in that little trough or rocky ravine I told you about, when I noticed a peculiar heave an' roll t' the whole hull. Dim as the light was down there, you could plainly see the heavy keel buckle an' bend like a piece of rotten or 'bender' ice when a skater makes a quick shoot over it.

"Son, I sensed what was comin' even as the clock struck. Before I could take ten steps backward, or even give the signal t' be hauled up, that four hundred feet of hull and ten thousand tons of ship an' cargo gave a mighty heave an' a groanin' grunt an' slowly heaved t' port, turnin' turtle as neatly as you please an' smashin' every rock an' boulder in her fall.

"I was swept off my feet by the whirlpool an' the rush. Next thing I knew was when I came to on the deck of the scow an' they'd got my headpiece unscrewed. Luckily they'd seen the *Circassia's* top-masts beginnin' t' sway an' swing, an' hauled me up without waitin' for any signal. As it was, I landed at the surface feet foremost an' with air-hose an' life-line all snarled round body, arms, an' legs—trussed up, you might say, helpless as a mummy. Next day I was black an' blue all over from the rollin' over an' over I'd got among them pesky boulders.

"Them dogfish was certainly intended as a warnin', only I didn't sense it that way. Or p'raps they was a hoodoo. Ya-as, ya-as!"

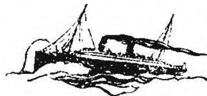
"But I don't see even now how you escaped being crushed to death when the ship turned turtle so suddenly," was my breathless comment.

"Why, you see, son, that little cherub that sits up aloft an' watches over poor sailors an' dipsy divers so fixed matters that me on the bottom an' the scow an' the tug was all t' stabbord when she rolled t' port; otherwise all hands'd have gone t' Davy Jones."

"And what became of the poor old *Circassia*—did they raise her after all?" I queried.

"They did not, son. After her scand'lous behavior the wreckin' folks came t' look on her as a hoodoo ship, an' none of 'em 'd tackle the job. Abandoned by underwriters an' owners, she was blown up piecemeal for the old iron in her, which was afterward dredged out.

"They wanted me t' go down an' plant the first shots, 'cause I knew the lay of the land, so to speak. But I gen'rally know when I've had enough, an' I didn't want no more of ships that turn turtle on a dipsy diver without a moment's notice. Ya-as, ya-as!"



A Matter of Record

How a young man came to turn detective; how he reads a curious communication in cipher; how he captures a burglar in the governor's mansion; and how he wins a rich reward.

By PAUL LEE ELLERBE

MANNING sighed as he laid another letter on the neat pile before him. He was tired. He turned rapidly the leaves of his note-book, and saw with relief that he had to write but one letter more.

He snapped a sheet of paper into his typewriter, shot the carriage to its place, and wrote the date. Then he paused to look at the clock. Half-past two! He had done a record night's work.

As he sat alone in the unfamiliar first hours of the summer day, the wheels of creation seemed to have stopped. He felt that the tiny island of brilliant electric light about him formed the center of an illimitable sea of blackness; that the ticking of the clock on the wall of the big, empty office was the one dying sound in the dead universe.

From the basement, in which slept the big engines that run the elevators, to the top of the twenty-fifth story, where the Government wind-gauge stood motionless in the dark, he knew that his was the only illumination in the great office building. Not one little noise came from the city spread about him. Even the breeze had perished in the grasp of the heat. He listened intently to the ticking of the clock. Presently that would stop too, and then—

He smiled at his childishness and commenced to write steadily, his eyes never leaving his shorthand notes, his fingers running quickly and evenly over the keys.

Half way down the page he stopped. He distinctly heard a footstep near his door. As he glanced up, his heart jumped like a live thing. He sat rigidly still, his hand resting on the typewriter, while he stared at a man in the doorway.

A tall, powerful fellow, he made him out, even in the edge of light where he stood. The man took a step forward. Manning sprang to his feet, sending his chair spinning behind him.

"What do you want?" he said sharply, wondering if the office contained anything more formidable than the heavy ruler upon which he instinctively closed his fingers.

"Why," said the man in a voice evidently intended to be friendly, "I saw your light, and I came up because I thought maybe I could get you to write a letter for me. You see," he went on, stepping into the light, "I have hurt my hand, so that I can't hold a pen, and I

must get the letter mailed on an early train."

He came closer, and Manning saw that his right hand, heavily bandaged, hung in a sling, and that he had an intelligent face.

"Do you mean to say," Manning demanded, trying not to let his excitement show in his voice, "that you have come up six flights of stairs at two o'clock at night to get a letter written?"

"Just that," said the man. "It is a very important letter, and I've got to get it off to-night. It ought to run to about fifteen pages. If you will do it for me, here's twenty-five dollars for your trouble. You are a stenographer, aren't you?"

Now Manning's life revolved around the girl who had promised to marry him. They were putting it off only because they could not afford it. For her sake he had worked all night to clinch a promotion promised him. Twenty-five dollars was a good deal of money to him just then.

"Yes; I am a stenographer. What is your letter about?"

"Oh, just business."

"What *is* your business?"

"I am traveling for a hardware house," said the man, "selling farming implements, principally."

Manning was a shrewd young man and careful. He asked a great many questions. The answers were plausible. Finally he agreed to write the letter.

"It will take about five minutes to finish what I have in the machine, and then I will be ready."

He completed the letter calmly, added it to the others, carried the pile to the Chief Clerk's desk, to meet his eye the first thing in the morning, and returned. Then he pulled his note-book towards him and told the other to begin.

"I must have your shorthand notes," said the man. "It's a rule of the house. I forgot to mention it."

Manning considered a moment.

"Very well," he said, and took a fresh note-book from a drawer. "Go ahead. I am ready."

The man had a handful of notes, badly scrawled in pencil. He commenced reading them slowly, pronouncing the words carefully.

"Theophanic dicentras argot stipulaceous heron, anginous winding beater—"

"Is your letter in cipher?" cut in Manning.

"Yes. They require everything important written in the code."

"Will you translate it for me?"

"No. It's against the rules."

"Then," said Manning shortly, "I wont write it, and that's all there is to it. I don't know what you're up to, and until I do, I wont help you."

"I will make it fifty dollars, if you will do it at once and stop all this talk."

"I wont do it on any terms," said Manning.

He closed his note-book, rested his hands on the back of a chair that he drew near him, and looked the other steadily in the eye. The man returned his gaze calmly. He pulled his chair closer. Laying his papers on the desk, he reached with his one serviceable hand into an inner pocket of his coat and drew out a long, stout hunting-knife. It glittered in the bright light.

"Now look here, young man," he said quietly, "I've got to have that letter, and I don't want any more foolishness. You do as I tell you, or I'll put four inches of steel into you and pick out the letter myself on your typewriter."

Manning had been carefully bracing his feet on the floor as they talked; now, agile as a cat, he sprang back, whirled the heavy wooden chair high above his head, and almost in the same moment brought it crashing down—where the man had stood! It was a quick and clever attack, but the other had been watching. He jumped clear of the swinging chair, leaving only his own seat to bear the force of the blow. As the chairs smashed together, he took two short steps forward and struck Manning a full, clean, left-handed blow in the face. It bowled him over like a nine-pin. He lay still for a moment; then he pulled himself together and sat up on the floor. His head spun and ached. He rose slowly. The man was picking up his knife.

"You've got plenty of sand," he said grimly, "and I like you for it; but don't

try it again. It wont be my knuckles next time. There's no use being a fool, you know. I will kill you as dead as a herring if I have to. . . . Now let's get to work."

Manning staggered to his desk and sat for a moment with his head in his hands. Gradually he recovered himself.

"I guess you win," he said at last, with a pale and feeble smile. "We will finish the letter. Go slow on the hard words."

By the time the dictation was finished, Manning's head was serviceable enough. He transcribed his notes with his usual deft and even touch, though very slowly, as he found the words extremely difficult to spell. The man watched him sharply. He asked for a carbon copy; so Manning took out a box of fresh carbon sheets. At the end of every page the man handed Manning two sheets of paper for the next—one for the original and one for the carbon copy. He looked carefully at the paper in the typewriter, to assure himself that Manning was not making a third copy.

The hands of the clock crept forward. The rhythmical staccato clacking of the type, the tinkle of the bell and the noise of the drawn carriage at the end of a line were all the sounds there were. When a page was finished nothing was said.

Towards dawn the breeze came faintly back to life and lightly fanned the sensitive carbon paper. As the day reddened in the east, Manning laid the fourteenth and last page on the others, gathered them together and handed them to his visitor.

Deep satisfaction settled on the man's face as he folded them awkwardly and thrust them into his pocket.

"Now the note-book, please. . . . Thanks."

He rose at once. With his knife he cut the wires of the three telephones. He turned on more light and examined the room thoroughly.

"No fire-escape," he said, and came back to Manning, who sat watching from his chair, fighting down his great fatigue.

He looked at Manning intently, and said, in a grim, hard voice:

"If I ever hear *anything* from you about this night's work, I'll come back and kill you."

He continued to gaze for a moment or two, and then went quickly into the hall. He shut the door and kicked under it from the outside the heavy wooden wedge sometimes used to hold it open. In the flood of light, Manning could see the thin edge come in. There was the sound of rapid steps, and then, the *tick-tock, tick-tock* of the clock, and the faint rustle of a loose piece of paper in the breeze. The light of battle came back to Manning's tired eyes.

"It is just possible," he muttered, "that you will hear a good deal from me about this night's work."

"If you had been an office-man," he continued, "you might have remembered the messenger call. It is just as good as the telephone. I suppose I could smash the glass in the door, but there's no use unless I have to."

He went to the electric signal on the wall and considered it for a moment.

"The police would come more quickly, but there would be explanations to make, and they would probably insist on taking me to the station." He turned the hand to "Taxicab" and released it. "This fellow wont be interested in anything but his fare."

Each time, as the hand came back to its place, he turned it again to "Taxicab," and so kept the signal ringing for five full minutes. Then he sat back in a chair and waited.

The city had begun to awaken, and a pale, unhealthy light diffused itself. Some sparrows chirped on a neighboring roof. The scattered sound of hoofs and wheels came up, and the clang of a car. That unreal season that holds the world between day and day had vanished.

"I wonder if he will climb all these stairs for a fare," Manning thought.

After a while, a step echoed in the silent corridor. Manning jumped up, carried his chair to the door, stood on it and shouted through the transom.

The steps turned his way, and he saw the cabman.

"Here!" he called. "This is the place! Kick that wedge from under the door and let me out."

The cabman looked up at him incredulously.

"Do *what?*" he demanded.

"There's no use staring at me like that," said Manning, irritable with fatigue. "Look *down*—at your feet—there's a piece of wood there. Kick it out."

The man looked, saw the wedge, and kicked it out. Then he opened the door.

The taxi-cabman looked curiously at Manning's pale, swollen face.

"Well, what the hell?" he said slowly.

"I have had a fight," said Manning in a matter-of-fact way. "The other fellow beat me up a bit and fastened the door so I could not get out without breaking the glass. I didn't want to do that, so I rang for a taxi. What will you charge to take me to 2130 Washington Street?"

"Two dollars and a half."

"I'll make it three and a half if you will drive fast, and wont waste time asking questions."

"That's me," said the man. "Come on."

These events took place in the capital city of Manning's state. A fortnight later, at nine o'clock in the evening, Manning climbed the steps that led to the front door of the Governor's residence, a large, colonial building, set in spacious grounds.

He gave his card to the butler and asked to see the Governor upon a matter of importance. He was shown into a large room, furnished as an office. As soon as he was left alone, he stepped rapidly first to one window and then to the other and pulled down the shades, while he did so, standing so that he could not be seen from the outside. In a few moments Governor Cantrell entered.

"How do you do, John? I have not seen you for a long time. How is your father?"

"Very well indeed, thank you," said Manning.

"Sit down," said the Governor, pulling forward a chair. He took another himself and drew out cigars. "Do you smoke? You must tell me your business quickly and then join us in the music-room. We have some young people here to-night—friends of my daughter. You would like them, I think."

The cigars were lighted. The blue smoke drifted out under the shaded electric lamp. The Governor lay back comfortably in his chair to listen. Manning leaned slightly forward to talk.

"Thank you," he said. "I would join you with a great deal of pleasure, if I could. Is Winfield here to-night?"

"My secretary? Yes. He lives in the house now. Do you know him?"

"No. I have never met him. But I know something about him—something not wholly to his advantage. It is Mr. Winfield I want to talk to you about."

"What?" said the Governor sharply. He sat up in his chair and looked keenly at Manning. "You know something against Winfield? Hush! There he is now!"

A man had come in at the door at the other end of the large room. As he advanced, Manning, to the surprise of his host, rose and turned on two overhead lights. Winfield was a young, competent looking fellow, with shifting eyes.

"The ladies are clamoring for you, Governor."

"All right, Winfield; I will be there in a few minutes, and take Mr. Manning with me. Manning, let me present Mr. Winfield, my secretary. Manning's father and I are old friends, Winfield—went to school together."

Manning acknowledged the introduction, and said at once:

"We were talking about you. As soon as I heard it was you who had come in, I turned on the lights. I want Governor Cantrell to see your face, Mr. Winfield, when I ask you if the basement room is locked to-night."

"The basement room!" stammered Winfield, and turned as white as paper. "What basement-room? I don't know what you are talking about." He grew calmer as he spoke. His roving eyes rested on Manning malignantly, and estimated him.

The Governor went quickly to his desk and opened a small drawer. As he examined its contents closely, an expression of surprise came into his face. He closed the drawer, bit his mustache,

and watched the younger men without speaking. But he moved a little nearer Winfield and threw away his cigar.

"You didn't know," queried Manning—and his voice bore down on Winfield relentlessly—"you didn't know that there is a store-room in the basement of this house? A room just to the right of the furnace-room as you go downstairs? You didn't know that to-night, for the first time in years, it is unlocked? You didn't know that a man is hiding in that room right now? Keep your hands *up*, Mr. Winfield! If you lower them another inch, I'll shoot!"

Manning's revolver gleamed in his hand, but Governor Cantrell moved even more quickly. His fingers encircled Winfield's wrists before the secretary knew he had moved.

"Never mind his hands, John," said Cantrell. "Take his gun from his pocket."

Manning secured it. "Hold him just a moment," he said. "Let me see if I can't find something else. He rummaged in Winfield's pockets, piled their contents on the table, and finally selected from them a key.

"Do you know that key, Governor?"

"That's it," said the Governor grimly. "Key to the basement room. He stole it from my desk there."

He released Winfield and stood looking at him.

"So you were after the diamonds, Winfield? What's the matter? Have you got into debt? I could have lent you some money, you know."

"I wasn't after anything," said Winfield sulkily. "I found that key on the floor. This is a put-up job."

"And you found this somewhere too, I suppose?" Manning held up some sheets of letter paper that he had picked from the things taken from Winfield's pockets. He commenced to read from the first one:

"*'Theophanic dicentras argot stipulaceous heron, anginous winding beater fore-father abdication well-favored, anginous opalescent monodactylous nitre theurgist winding beater filigrain thrill donas inbeing castle-guard inbeing theophanic vellication inbeing theophanic rallaes huckster.'*

"If we gave you a chance, you could explain what those words mean, couldn't you? But suppose we don't trouble you, but hazard a guess ourselves. (Keep your eye on him, Governor, and take his gun, there. He's in pretty deep and may turn desperate.) Suppose I tell you this letter—this carbon copy of a letter—says:

"*'The diamonds are still here, and will be for a week. And on Monday night there will be fifty thousand dollars in cash in the vault in the Governor's house.'* That vault right there, Mr. Winfield, before your eyes. Suppose I say the letter means that and a good deal more, and that I have a translation of every word of it?"

A groan broke from Winfield's lips, and he hung his head in silence.

"It's all up," said Manning quietly. "Put your hands behind you and hold them together."

He slipped a pair of steel handcuffs on Winfield's wrists.

"Winfield," said Cantrell, "I am sorry about this—mighty sorry. I'll give you a chance to talk it all over with me, if you want to, and we'll see what can be done. First of all, why did you do it? Has anything gone wrong?"

But Winfield did not raise his head and did not answer.

"This is a pretty serious thing, Governor," said Manning, "and we can't waste any time. If you'll allow me, I'll gag Winfield here—we'll put him away somewhere, out of harm's way, and it will then be safer to talk things over."

"Go ahead," said Cantrell; "you seem to know all about it."

"Open your mouth," said Manning, producing his gag.

"You see," he said to Cantrell, "I figured out just how it would happen, and I brought everything I thought we would need."

Winfield kept his lips tightly closed.

"If you don't open your mouth, I'll chloroform you, and that will be worse than a gag. I don't know a great deal about using chloroform, and I might give you too much."

Winfield opened his mouth, and Manning gagged him to his complete satisfaction. For several hours the preceding

day he had practiced the operation upon a hapless younger brother.

"I would like to have him as far away from this room as possible," he said, "and in a place where there is something permanent to hitch him to."

"Why not tie him into his own bed?" suggested Cantrell. "His room is at the other end of the house."

"The very thing!" said Manning. "I have the rope in a package in the hall."

The rope was brought. The two men led their prisoner away. In his room they tied him very carefully, and in silence.

"Remember, Winfield," said Cantrell as they left, "I shall always be ready to hear anything you want to say, and, for your mother's sake, make a clean breast of it, it seems you haven't *done* anything yet—only planned. I may be able to hush it all up, if you will let me.

"I have known his mother all my life," he continued to Manning. "It was on her account I gave him the place." He sighed sadly. "We must get him out of this if we can."

They walked back to the study, and stood soberly facing each other under the light.

"So there is a man in the storeroom?" said Cantrell. "And he and Winfield meant to get my wife's diamonds and the money. You are right about the money: it's in the vault there—fifty thousand dollars in paper. I was keeping it here to close up a transaction that is pending. It is a deal that I am very anxious to put through. Several other people are trying to do the same thing, and the men on the other side have been demanding cash. I knew it was a risk to keep it, but I have a private detective watching the house, and I thought I had kept the presence of the money a complete secret. How did Winfield know it? He must have been watching me. I suppose he has got hold of the combination of the vault. In spite of the fact that he is my secretary, I have never given it to him."

"Yes," said Manning, "he has the combination."

"We must do something about the fellow in the basement," said Cantrell thoughtfully. "What do you propose? Call the police?"

"No," said Manning. "If you let the police in, they will insist upon taking charge of everything. They will make a great deal of noise; there will be shooting, and maybe they'll get Sampson, and maybe they wont, but they're pretty sure to let Wyman get away.

"Perhaps you have heard of Wyman and Sampson? *I* have. I have been over their complete records in the last week, and I have their photographs. They are two of the most desperate crooks unhung, and there's a reward of fifteen thousand dollars for one of them, and ten thousand for the other. Now Sampson's in the basement, if their plans haven't failed, and Wyman is to come in at the window there some time to-night, after Sampson has opened it. I know Wyman personally," he added grimly.

"What?" cried the Governor.

"He gave me that bump over my right eye a short time ago," said Manning, "and now I am going to see that he pays for it, and pays heavily. I guess it will be the penitentiary for life if we get him."

"Look here, John," said Cantrell seriously, "you have no right to try to deal with these men single-handed. You are running too many risks, and you are subjecting my family to too many risks. You should have notified the authorities."

"I have thought the thing out very carefully, Governor Cantrell," said Manning deliberately, "and I don't agree with you. I am not single-handed, because you are here to help me. We are both armed and can shoot straight. We are going to take these men one at a time. Your family wont know anything about it until it is over. If the police came in, they would probably bungle the whole job. Now *I* want the rewards. I am tired of grinding away as a railroad stenographer. Besides, it is too late now. If the police were notified, Wyman would not come, for your private detective, who is watching the house, has been bought, and would give warning. And we *must* have Wyman.

"You had better let me handle it. We've got Winfield, haven't we?"

"I am afraid there is nothing else for it," said Cantrell ruefully.

"Is the room in the basement strong enough to hold a man, when it is locked?"

"Yes."

"Then give me the key. I know where the room is. I have studied the plan of your house in the office of the architect who built it. In fact, I made a copy of it."

Manning took the key. He got a typewriter oil-can from the bundle he had brought, covered the key with oil, wrapped it in his handkerchief, and put it into his pocket. Then he pulled off his shoes.

"My guests are just leaving," said Cantrell, as he opened the door and caught words and laughter.

"Hadn't you better see them?" said Manning. "And keep them away from the back part of the house. Try to get the others to bed as soon as you can. The servants are not about, are they?"

"No," said Cantrell. "Don't you want me to go with you?"

"I'd rather you would not," said Manning. "I shall be back here in a few minutes. I want to be sure the man is in the room, if I can."

Manning descended to the basement without a sound and at the bottom of the steps he waited a long time, motionless, before he began slowly to feel his way with stockinged feet.

The road was clear. He knew there was but one door, and presently he found it. Passing his hands gently over it, one of them rested on the heavy lock. Now came the most delicate part of his task. He slipped the key into the lock so slowly that, had there been light, it could not have been seen to move, and his very soul seemed to hang upon its turning. There was the faintest of clicks as he felt the bolt of the lock fall into place—so faint that he felt sure the man behind the door had not heard it.

And now he must find out if, after all, he had a prisoner. A wild fear leapt into his mind: suppose the man was hidden somewhere else, and he had but locked an empty room! There must be no doubt about this.

He took his pistol in his right hand, his pocket lamp in his left, and, standing close by the door, whispered, in a voice that he meant to make like Winfield's:

"Sampson! Are you there?"

The silence closed in heavily on his sibilated words. A hint of a woman's high-pitched laughter came from far away—that was all. In the hot night Manning grew cold with fear. He listened with all his mind, and thought he should have been able to hear the man breathe, had he been there.

As he stood, tensely waiting, there was a sound behind him in the dark—a slight sound, but enough to imprint upon his mind instantly a picture of a man standing there, ready to shoot. He spun round and recklessly flashed his light in all corners of the room, finger on trigger, looking for his target. A lawn-mower and a pile of garden tools stood against the wall, and there was nothing else in the room.

"Why didn't you show your light before?" said a quiet voice behind the door. "How was I to know it was you, without the signal?"

Manning slipped his pistol into its holster and wiped his forehead before he replied.

"It's all right," he whispered. "I wanted to be sure you were here. I am afraid some of these people will be up very late. Don't do anything until I let you know." And Manning flashed on his light again and hastily made his way upstairs.

"As Winfield must have let him in," he thought, "he will wonder why Winfield didn't know he was there. But I could not think of anything else to say."

As Manning entered the study, the Governor stopped short in his walk and looked at him anxiously.

"It is all right. He is down there and locked up. I spoke to him and he took me for Winfield. I told him to be quiet and wait for word from me, and left before he could ask questions. Have your guests gone?"

"Yes. And everybody else is going to bed."

Manning sat down and put on his shoes.

"Of course you want me to tell you

all about this," he said. "I think I know all about it, except one thing, and that is at what time Wyman is to come in at that window. It may be scheduled to take place as soon as the house is quiet, and you and I must be ready for him, so we must not waste time."

He stood up energetically, and continued: "Briefly, the arrangement is this: Sampson, in the basement there, was to get Mrs. Cantrell's diamonds from their hiding place in the dummy copy of 'The Spectator' in the library,"—the Governor started—"because he is rather a specialist in that kind of work; and he was to let himself out by that window, leaving a small piece of white paper under the sash as a sign that his job had been done and the window left unlocked. He was then to leave town as soon as he could.

"Wyman is an expert in cracking safes and vaults. He does not expect to have to use his skill on yours, as the combination was mailed to him by Winfield. He is to come when Adams, the detective, lets him know in his hiding place that Sampson has gone. Then, so that Adams can clear himself afterwards, Wyman is to tie him up and gag him and leave him in a corner of the fence. It is a warm night and Adams wont be hurt. We ought to find him there in the morning, ready for jail. When Wyman gets the money, he is to leave town too. Adams and Winfield are to be paid for making the robbery possible. They are not to have any part in it.

"How I found all this out is a long story—too long to tell you now. We've got to hide somewhere. Do you mind if we use this little closet?" He pulled it open as he spoke. "We would have to bore two small holes in the door, so that we can watch the room."

"All right," said Cantrell; "I'll get an auger."

He returned with it almost instantly. The holes were bored. Manning got inside and declared that he could see excellently.

Manning next oiled the hinges of the door thoroughly. "We had better let the house quiet down now, and put out all lights as soon as possible. Adams is prowling around watching things carefully. I observed him for a long time from the hedge next door before I came in. He does not know I am here. He was on the other side of the house when I entered. He will suspect something if he thinks you have not gone to bed. You had better go to your room at once and let him see you through the window. Put your light out and open the window, just as you usually do; then come quietly back here to me. I think we can get Wyman, if you will follow my plan.

"You might look in on Winfield, to see if he's all right. And get the money out of the vault, Governor, and hide it somewhere. There's no use taking chances with that."

"You ought to have been a detective, John," commented Cantrell.

"I am in love," said Manning, "and I want to be married. I've got to have this reward."

Cantrell opened the vault, went in, and returned with a large package in his hand. He closed the door of the vault and spun the combination lock.

"You had better put out this light, Governor, before you go. You will find me here, in the big chair. Feel for me when you come back, and don't speak above a whisper. Be sure to bring your pistol."

Cantrell put out the light and went upstairs. For about half an hour Manning kept perfectly still. Then the Governor returned and walked softly to Manning's chair. He took the one next him. They touched in the dark and whispered together.

"Oh, yes; Sampson will keep quiet. He will think something has caused Winfield to grow frightened and lock him in. Besides, he will be afraid to make a noise. He's *sure* to get caught that way."

"Adams wont be able to tell Wyman he has *seen* Sampson get out of the window, but when they find the paper there and the window unlocked, they will think that Sampson is sure to have done his job and gone."

"If, by any chance, the fellow should open the door to the closet, we must both shoot, and shoot to kill."

There was more whispering, and then silence.

They sat comfortably and quietly for about an hour. Then Manning got up silently, warning Cantrell with a touch, and walked to the window. He unlocked it, raised it a little, slipped under it a piece of white paper, and closed it again. He and Cantrell felt their way to the closet, and, having removed their coats, took their places inside, closing the door behind them.

Manning found that long night of waiting, with tense nerves and cramped body, the hardest thing he had ever had to bear. Cantrell, he thought, being an older man, stouter, less accustomed to physical strain, must be suffering keenly. But the Governor had been a soldier at one period of his life, and did not believe in useless complaints; so Manning never knew.

He was wondering if there was not danger of his giving way under the strain, losing consciousness, perhaps; then he heard a light touch on the window. Instantly he put out his hand to warn his companion. But Cantrell had heard it too, for their hands met.

They got out their revolvers and held them ready. If they had not been listening for it intently, they would not have heard the window go up. The sound it made was almost inaudible. When it ceased, they strained their ears for many minutes without detecting anything except the faint murmur of leaves in a light wind.

They distinctly heard the shade go up. The closet faced the window. It was set in the wall which ran at right angles to the wall into which the vault had been built. Manning made out two stars through the window. He watched them carefully, thinking that the man's body would blot them out when he entered, but an interminable time dragged by, and they glittered always unobscured.

Manning began to fear that the stars would hypnotize him (he had heard that such things were possible) when the lightest sound in the world came from the vicinity of the vault and Cantrell touched him gently. A brilliant ray of light leapt out of the blackness, and at its end gleamed the metal knob of the lock on the vault door. A hand grasped it. Without a moment's pause, expert fingers twirled the knob silently, first one way and then the other. The Governor's vault had never been opened so quickly before. The great door swung out, shutting off any further view, and the man passed around it and into the vault.

Manning waited a few seconds before he gave the appointed signal. He pressed his companion's arm three times. They stepped out quickly, crept up to the big door, and touched it with their hands. Suddenly a shaft of light shot past them from the vault, boring a round hole through the blackness of the room, and they heard a little noise inside.

"He's coming out!" thought Manning, and threw his weight and strength against the door.

Cantrell pushed too, and none too soon. He *was* coming out! He met the door, in fact, half way, and he got one foot through the opening. Manning kicked it savagely back, and both lost purchase. But Cantrell put his full strength forth and while his opponent wavered from Manning's kick, was near to winning. Only a crack remained, when the man found a firm brace for his feet inside, threw every bit of strength in his great frame into his effort, and forced the door out again.

"Push, John, for God's sake!" said Cantrell through his shut teeth.

A chair was all that saved them. Manning's foot found it in the dark, forced it back against a heavy flat-topped desk, and the desk stood the strain. The door swung to slowly, relentlessly. The heavy bolts shot home, and a kind of sobbing groan told that the man inside knew he was trapped.

A few weeks later, Manning and his wife stood at the rail of an outward bound steamer. You would have agreed, had you seen her, that she was worth a fight or two in the dark. As dusk fell over the great, lonely spaces of the ocean, Manning felt that she was worth the round world and all that it held.

She was going over his exploit, for the twentieth time.

"Were you glad that the Governor let Mr. Winfield go?"

"Yes," said Manning. "I don't think he will ever go wrong again. He was very badly scared."

"Were they nice to you about paying the money?"

"Oh, yes. Governor Cantrell managed all that. He even succeeded in keeping it out of the newspapers. I did my best to prevent his giving us the thousand dollars. He said it was not for me at all, but for you, and finally I saw we would hurt him if we did not take it."

"He said," said Mrs. Manning proudly, as she slipped her arm around him and looked up into his face adorably, "he said you were the bravest and cleverest man in the state."

"He said that to *you,*" Manning replied, "because he knew you were a little goose and would believe it." And he kissed her softly.

"You *are* clever. I would say you were clever even if you weren't my husband. No one but a clever man would have thought of using a new piece of carbon paper for each page when he wrote that letter. How did you manage to read it from the carbon sheets?"

"I stuck them up in the window of my room with wafers, so that the light would shine through them."

"And then you made a typewritten copy of the letter. Do let me see it."

Manning took some sheets of paper from his pocket. She looked at the first one curiously.

"'*Theophanic dicentras argot stipulaceous heron,*'" she read slowly, like a child with a first reader, "'*anginous winding beater forefather abdication well-favored, anginous opalescent monodactylous nitre theurgist winding beater filigrain thrill.* . . . . . .' But it is too dark to see. How on earth did you succeed in getting the key?"

"Well," said Manning, "the first thing I did was to go to the public library and read what I could find about cryptograms. I felt sure that a man like Wyman was incapable of using any but the simplest kind of cipher, and thought it not unlikely that, with a little knowledge of the principles of cipher construction, I could myself translate what he had written.

"I learned at the outset that there are two kinds of cryptograms: those wherein each *letter* is represented by a symbol, and those where *words* are so represented. The first kind is by far the more difficult to unravel. Of course it was obvious, since I had taken it down in shorthand, that Wyman's was a *word* cipher, constructed by replacing certain words with other words.

"Of course it was done according to a rule. It remained to discover the rule. I read that the commonest words in the English language are *the* and *and,* far outnumbering their nearest competitors. The most superficial examination of Wyman's letter showed that the words *theophanic* and *anginous* occurred more frequently than any others. I guessed at once that *anginous,* having the first two letters of *and,* stood for that word, and that *theophanic* even more evidently meant *the.* Plainly Wyman had used the simple expedient, mentioned by all writers on cryptography, of representing each word in his letter by the word in a given relation to it in the dictionary.

"I commenced my search for an edition of a popular dictionary wherein *anginous* would be exactly the same distance from *and* that *theophanic* was from *the,* and *argot* from *are,* and *beater* from *be*—for I soon guessed these and a few other words. It seemed most probable that the dictionary would be Webster's.

"At the largest book store in town I was enabled to examine a number of editions, and, in a 1908 edition of "Webster's Collegiate Dictionary," I found my key. There *theophanic* is just fifty words beyond *the, dicentra* fifty beyond *diamond, argot* fifty beyond *are,* and *still* fifty beyond *stipulaceous.*

"It was very simple. Taking the word used by Wyman, I counted back fifty and arrived every time at its equivalent, except in a few instances where he had counted wrongly, and then the obvious word was so close at hand that it was easily found. *Abdication* converted itself into *a, well-favored* into *week, opalescent* into *on,*

monodactylous into *Monday,* and so on, down the letter.

"The cipher was a long letter, you know, from Wyman to Sampson. Wyman made me write it, instead of doing it himself, because he had hurt his right hand pretty badly, and because he wanted two copies—one to go to Sampson in Williamsport, and one to go to Winfield, who was away on his vacation—or pretended to be, I don't know which. The letter gave detailed directions to both of them—told all about the money and the diamonds, and the arrangement which had been made with Adams, the private detective. Everything was repeated several times and made so clear that even a child could have understood it. You see, all I had to do was to study the copy I made from my carbon sheets (after I translated it) to know as much about their plans as if I had originated them. Wyman kept close watch on the paper I used, but paid no attention to the carbon. He probably didn't notice that I used a fresh sheet of carbon for each page of copy, but if he had he would have thought nothing of it, and when he carefully gathered his pages together, he had no inkling that the black sheets of carbon I had slipped back into the drawer of my desk held as complete and clear a copy of his letter as the white sheets of paper he carried away.

"But I don't want to waste time on these things any more. Surely you and I have something else to talk about!"

"There are more things to talk about," said Mrs. Manning, "than we shall ever have time for; but I like to know all about your letter. The Chief of Police said it was the finest piece of documentary evidence he had ever seen. He said you had every detail of their plan in your hands—that it was all a matter of record."

The Dowry

By SIDNEY HODGES COLE

THE big windows of the prison office faced west. Through them on pleasant days you could see the river, a muddy, sluggish stream, its yellow waters crawling turgidly between the low banks. Just below the office windows the north wing of the prison ran sheer to the high, gray wall; beyond the wall was a badly-paved and narrow little street, lined sparsely with poplars, which could hardly be termed flourishing.

Convict 2346 stood by one of the office windows looking out at the sorry vista. By reason of a low-hanging mist, creeping up from the river, the view was much curtailed. He could see nothing save a short stretch of the narrow little street, the shiny slated roof of the north wing, a bit of gray and forbidding wall and perhaps a half-dozen of the sorry poplars with their overloads of dead branches.

It was not the sort of a day you would expect a man to be looking much out of those windows of the prison office; but 2346 had been looking out that afternoon far more often than he ever did on a sunny day. Indeed, every time he had stepped to the file cases, which were close to the windows, he had peered out keenly, noting with eminent satisfaction that the mist was thickening. Now, with the dreary early twilight of the late October day, the mist was growing yet denser; it was leaving little globules of water on the window panes and on the heavy iron

bars outside them. In a few moments he found he could distinguish but three of the poplar trees, and one of these was only an uncertain wraith-like shadow in the fog.

Convict 2346 was not in stripes. He wore the dull gray clothes with the single wide black stripe along the seam of each coat sleeve and trousers leg which proclaimed him a trusty. He worked in the office, caring for the files which contained the lists of the prison transfers. He was a little, thin, gray-headed man, with kindly eyes and a certain humorous uptilt at the corners of his mouth—a philosopher, too, in his way.

Against the number 2346 in the prison books you would have found the name Robert Clendenning; had you been interested further you might have found he was in for murder in the second degree and that his sentence was for life.

Probably you would have looked at those mild eyes and the humorous uptilted corners of the mouth and wondered how on earth it ever happened. Murder, in any degree, was the last crime you would have been apt to lay at the door of the little rabbit-like man standing there and watching with a certain covert satisfaction the row of poplars across the street grow fainter and fainter in the mist.

Behind him a deputy warden sat at the desk talking with another of the office trusties. What a night for it, if he could only get a few moments alone! Those bars before him—two of them he knew were sawed through, the cuts plugged up and so concealed with a mixture of soap and filings. Why shouldn't he know they were cut through—he who had patiently done the cutting in the odd moments he had been left, from one stress or another, alone in the office? It had taken him over three months to do it, and now they hung there by the barest threads, as it were. A swift, noiseless raising of the window, a full-armed tug at those two bars, and freedom was before him. And what a night for it—what a night, with the darkness coming on and the mist shutting down!

Then, afraid his continued open staring out of the window might arouse suspicion, he began to make a pretense of going over some of the cards in the top drawer of the file; but his eyes were still darting swift, eager glances out into the mist.

The talk of the deputy and the other trusty droned on. It was about some matter of expenditure for raw material for one of the prison shops. Apparently it would go on for some time yet—until he had left the office for the day and it would be too late. He glanced at the big clock on the wall above the desk. It was nearing five. In another half-hour it would be too late. His work for the day would be over; he would have no excuse for lingering in the office. Indeed, it would arouse suspicion if he did, and there must be no suspicion now.

The deputy and the other trusty wrestled on wordily with their problem. Clendenning fell to thinking of all those weary months he had bided his time, hacking at those bars little by little—afraid every moment of the time some one would come in and find him at it. He thought of the day the scheme had first come to him, of how he had to take into his confidence Pig Broderick, an expert machinist, who was doing a ten-year trick, and worked days in the prison shoe-shop; of how it had been necessary to go into minute detail and tell Broderick just why it became necessary for him to do this thing he had planned; of how the scheme had touched Pig Broderick's heart, which was as big in its way as his ideas about other people's money were queer.

He remembered the day he had found it necessary to go to the shoe-shop to verify a certain transfer, and, in passing Broderick, something had been suddenly and covertly slipped into his hand. He remembered the awful tightening at his throat; the fear that the things he had received might not be what he had expected after all; he could feel again his feet in the shambling run back through the corridor, the pause in a dark corner, the quick, breathless inspection of the things

Broderick had slipped into his palm, the hot tears which had seared his cheeks when he beheld the six little small-toothed saws of finely tempered steel. And now they had done their work on the window bars, and the bars merely waited his touch at some moment when he should be alone. What a night this would be for it!

He was idly fingering the cards in the case before him, when he was aware the deputy had arisen from the desk.

"We better go down and see Keller about this," the deputy was saying. "He'll know about it. Bring that book along. We'll be back in just a few minutes, Clen," he added to the man at the case.

Through suddenly filmed eyes Clendenning saw them go out, and heard their footsteps echoing down the stone corridor. He was alone. His heart was crowding into his throat.

But with amazing swiftness and amazing noiselessness he had the window up. One tug at the bars and the way lay open before him. In a trice he was through, crawling along the slippery roof of the north wing. The back of a wall-guard was just disappearing in the mist as he paced eastward on his beat.

Clendenning slid from the roof to the wall. It shook him up considerably, for it was quite a drop. Then, thrusting over his legs and keeping his hold on the wall, he swung himself outward, pendulated, dropped. It being farther from the wall to the narrow little street than from the roof of the north wing to the wall, he landed shaken, dazed, with a feeling that his knees had been driven up somewhere into his thighs. For a moment he sank to the ground; then he was up, darting limpingly down the misty little street, around a corner, into an alley, and so down to the river bank.

Downstream lights glowed in the little hovels that lined the river bank; so he turned his steps quickly upstream. Nor had he taken a dozen swift strides before he collided with something in the darkness and went sprawling flat. In an instant he was up, making queer little whining noises of delight as he discovered the thing over which he had fallen was the very thing he was looking for—a skiff, and in the skiff a pair of oars. He tugged it to the water's edge, shoved off and scrambled aboard.

He pulled with might and main into the mist and the blackness. Perhaps he was two hundred yards on his way when the night was shivered by a wailing, whining crescendo roar that froze his blood and set each separate hair on his scalp a-quiver. It was the booming of the big siren on the prison power-house: the announcement to the world at large that a prisoner had escaped. One blatting blast—just one—then an interval, then the blast again. Just one prisoner had turned the trick, the single blast announced; and he was that prisoner, tugging away for dear life at the oars while the current worked him steadily farther and farther downstream.

Well, he had a fair start, a very fair start of them, better than he anticipated; and now if he could only manage a landing unseen on the opposite shore at, say, about Pottsville, where the current would probably set him, and make the stretch of woods there, he would be reasonably safe. He'd got to keep out of their clutches for a week; after that it didn't matter so very much; but for a week anyway, if his plan were to succeed, he must elude them. He was panting and far spent; the sweat was streaming into his eyes, but still he pulled away with no lessening of his stroke.

Presently—it seemed only after centuries to the man in the boat—the skiff's prow chunked upon the opposite bank. He scrambled out. It was pitch dark. He took a few cautious steps forward and banged into a wire fence. He felt his way along this for some distance and came to a road. He dropped down on his hands and knees and pressed his palms to the surface of the highway. This was a tarvia road, the only one in the vicinity, the road running from the river to Pottsville village, and halfway up to the village was a spur of the big stretch of woods.

He went running puffingly up the roadway. Ten minutes later he had stumbled through a wayside ditch and was floundering through the underbrush deeper and deeper into the woods. Here he must lose himself for a week somehow, living on roots and bark with such snatches of real food as he might hope to filch from stray houses along the edge of the woodland, did he dare venture there. Anyway, he'd make sure they didn't get him for a week at least. That was one of the main things in the scheme. And he'd take precious good care they didn't get him. He wallowed on into the woods, now stumbling along, now crawling, until, from sheer exhaustion, he curled himself up in a hemlock thicket and fell into troubled slumber.

Eight days later, haggard, unkempt, gaunt, he crept out of the woods at that point where the Mason Farm in Glendale backs up to them. It was very early of a frosty morning. He heard a blithe whistling and crept to a fringe of barberry bushes and lay there shivering weakly as he peered out. A man, evidently a farm-hand, was spreading on the grass a suit of khaki hunting clothes. It was clear the man had been out gunning early and had received a good drenching from the wet underbrush of the woods.

Clendenning waited until the man, pail in hand, went whistling into the big barn. Then like some wan wraith he shot out of the barberry bushes, gathered up the khaki hunting clothes and slid into the woods again. His own trusty's suit of gray, now sadly in rags and tatters, he stowed in a hollow tree. He moved along the edge of the woods. Farther along he surreptitiously sneaked into the open back door of a house, filched a cap which fitted him more or less badly and went on his way.

Later on that morning, he managed to get a job with a farmer cutting corn stalks. He got out of it his meals, a chance to remove his stubbly beard with the farmer's razor, and fifty cents. Also, the farmer, aware that a tramp in khaki clothes must suffer considerable discomfort at that time of the year, gave him an old overcoat.

Clendenning crawled into a piece of sewer pipe on one of the gondolas of a long freight which stopped to take water at Westby Crossing that night. The evening of the following day he crawled out of his pipe and left the train at a freight yard on the outskirts of his home city.

It was a clear night. Myriad stars winked frostily high overhead. The old familiar smells of soft-coal smoke and asphalt and decaying leaves in the gutter set his pulses bounding. By devious turns and alleys, avoiding always the better lighted streets, he came finally to a quiet street lined with old swell-front houses, once the city's standard of domestic architecture. He went to number 468 and rang the bell. A maid in white cap and apron answered his summons, and stepped back with a little exclamation of surprise as she beheld the tattered figure on the stoop.

Clendenning smiled. A man with a smile like that couldn't be very dangerous, the maid decided. She opened the door, which she had closed to the merest crack, a bit wider.

"Does Matthew Brice live here?" Clendenning asked.

"Yes. He rooms here."

"Is he in now?"

"I think so."

She looked him over narrowly. Something, she could not have told just what, about the shabby figure on the stoop touched her strangely.

"Would you like to see him?"

"Not now," said Clendenning quickly. "Will he be in all the evening?"

"I think so."

"Then I'll be back a little later. Thank you. I just wanted to be sure he'd be in."

There was a drug store on the last corner he had passed, Clendenning remembered. Back to it he went and stepped into the telephone booth.

"I want Riverton 8005," he called, "and I want this call reversed. That's the state prison. Tell them I have some news of that convict that escaped."

Then he stood in the shadows behind the booth until the bell jangled.

"Hello!" he heard over the wire. "This the party calling Riverton 8005? Before they accept that call they want to know what convict—his name."

"Robert Clendenning."

"All right. Just a minute."

Clendenning waited, the receiver glued to his ear.

Then came the operator's voice. "Hello! All ready with the Riverton call."

"Hello!" called Clendenning. "This the state prison?"

"Yes."

"Is there any reward on that man Clendenning that got out last week?"

"Yes. The usual five hundred offered for any escaped convict that has been at large a week. Why?"

"I've got him for you."

"You've *what?*"

"I've got him for you. What'll I do with him?"

"Who are you and where are you?"

Clendenning told where he was, first. He hesitated a moment. Then he said: "I'm Matthew Brice. I'm going to marry Clendenning's daughter. I have your man here in my rooms. I get the reward, don't I?"

"Sure you do. Say, keep him and we'll get in touch with your police headquarters right away and send a couple of men round for him. When had they better come?"

Clendenning looked out at a near by clock.

"Say, half-past eight. Number 408 Hartwell Street. Yes. And say, see it's all done quietly. Better send round plain-clothes men."

"All right. You're sure it's Clendenning?"

"Well, rather. At half-past eight I'll expect some one to take him. Good-by!"

Back to the house on Hartwell Street Clendenning went and tugged the bell.

"Now, if I may, I'll see Mr. Brice," he said to the maid.

"Wont you step inside. What name, please?" she asked as Clendenning moved into the softly lighted hall.

"Smith," he said, and watched the maid trip upstairs.

Presently she came down again, and following her was a tall, blond young man with clear blue eyes and a very firm mouth. He looked frowningly at Clendenning.

"This is Mr. Brice?" the shabby man asked almost timidly.

Brice nodded.

"You're Mr. Smith, I take it," said he. "Frankly, I don't just seem to place you."

Clendenning was fumbling his cap. He seemed suddenly aware what a ridiculous figure he made in the khaki hunting-clothes and the old overcoat.

"You see, I'm a very old friend of Robert Clendenning's—Rose Clendenning's father. May I have a word with you in private?"

Brice's frown grew rather more pronounced.

"Come up to my room," he invited none too graciously, leading the way.

It was a cozy room, lined with books and lettered sweaters and gunning and fishing paraphernalia. A long oar, crimson-tipped, stood in one corner. A fire burned on the open hearth. There were many easy chairs filled with inviting cushions. Brice kicked one forward and motioned the older man into it.

"Now?" he suggested, rather coldly. He seemed to think this man before him might be some sorry blackmailer or something of the sort.

Clendenning cleared his throat.

"You're going to marry Rose Clendenning, I believe," he began.

"The 25th of next month," said the young man succinctly, but his face grew softer.

"You know about her father?"

"Where he is and for what reason? Yes."

"And you're still going to marry her?"

"God bless her! I'd marry her if she had a thousand such fathers. Besides, as perhaps you know, there are mitigating circumstances. Clendenning was beside himself when he did it. His partner had done him out of all he had—and at a time when Clendenning needed it sorely. You probably know this as well as I, if you're the old friend you claim to be."

Clendenning nodded. He fumbled the cap again. His face worked nervously.

"You wont—that is—this thing about Rose's father," he stammered anxiously, "you wont ever let it come between you, will you? You're sure of yourself on that point, aren't you? You wouldn't, my boy, sometime in anger forget yourself and mention it to her, by any chance, now would you?"

Brice's face flushed angrily. His teeth closed with a click. He advanced threateningly towards the man in the chair.

"Merciful God! What kind of a man do you think I am?" he said hoarsely.

Clendenning smiled at him. There was perfect trust in that smile.

"Thank you for that answer," he said with simple dignity. "I had to be sure of that. I have come a long, hard way to be sure of that."

Brice leaped back with a startled oath. He stood staring at the little shabby figure in the chair. Then he uttered a low cry.

"I know now," he said. "Man, you're Robert Clendenning yourself."

"Yes," Clendenning admitted.

"And you're out—*out,*" Brice said tensely. "You'll stay out, too. Look! I'm the very one to help you. I know a purser on a boat of one of the South American lines—a discreet fellow—"

Clendenning interrupted him.

"Oh, no," he said sadly. "I killed him all right. I'll take my medicine. I'll go back. I didn't come out to stay out. I knew I was going back when I came. I got away for another purpose. Listen! When Rose told me she was going to marry you and what a splendid chap you were, I was very thankful, she was so happy about it. Then I got to thinking about it up there. It's funny how things obsess you in—in a place like that. I got to thinking Rose was coming to you penniless. You see, when—when *it* happened, he'd just cleaned me out. I left them, Rose and her mother, who died shortly afterwards, without a cent. It hurt to think there wasn't a thing—not a single thing I could do for her—and she's the best girl in all the world. Then it came to me.

"Up there, if a convict escapes and isn't taken in a week, they offer a reward of five hundred dollars for his capture. Well—well, I managed to get out—how doesn't matter; and I've been out ten days now. I 'phoned the prison to-night to be sure. That reward is offered for me. They'll be here after me now in just three minutes. The prison officials will get in touch with the police and some one will be here for me at half-past eight. The reward will be paid to you. Please, please take it and give it to Rose. It's all I can do."

Brice jumped forward and caught him by the shoulder.

"Do you think either Rose or I would touch a cent of money at such a sacrifice? No," he roared. "You're out and I say you shall stay out. Come, there isn't a minute to lose—"

The door-bell jangled. Voices, asking for Mr. Matthew Brice, sounded in the lower hall.

Clendenning got up. There was a gentle dignity in his face and bearing.

"I was a trusty. I had the run of the prison," he said simply. "Of course all that will be changed when I go back. I want to do something for Rose—promise you'll take the reward and turn it over to her. Tell her I sent it, but don't tell her of this, will you—about my getting out? Just tell her it was money I'd saved out of the wreck for just such a time as this and that I've told you how to get it for her."

"I can't," Brice groaned.

Some one tapped on the door.

"It will give me great happiness if you will," said Clendenning.

Brice caught his hand and wrung it hard in promise, but for the moment he couldn't speak. Then he opened the door.

"Two gentlemen to see you, Mr. Brice," the maid announced.

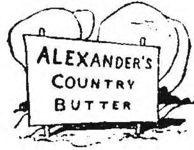
"Yes, yes! I'll be right down," he said.

He caught the older man by the arm and drew him back into the room.

"Clendenning, for God's sake—" he began brokenly.

But Clendenning smiled, took him by the arm.

"Come," he said, leading the way to the stairs.



Alexander's Country Butter

Concerning the remarkable career of Henry Alexander: from bookkeeper to frenzied financier by means of big buncombe in butter.

By MARSHALL JEWELL BAILEY

"HENRY!" Mrs. Alexander's voice was surcharged with the tone of allegation.

She put the neat bundle of bank checks on the dining table near her plate and placed an index finger on a particular line in the passbook Mr. Alexander had brought home. "On the third of the month I gave you three hundred dollars, my dividend check from my L. & C. Railroad stock, to deposit to this account. There is no entry for it in the passbook. What became of that three hundred dollars?"

Mr. Alexander sipped his coffee placidly and stiffened the evening paper against the dish of beans. "Isn't it in the book, Georgie?" he inquired absently. "Georgie" was not Mrs. Alexander's name, but Mr. Alexander called everyone either "Georgie" or "George." "Funny!" he added, "they must have forgotten to enter that item."

Partly because Mrs. Alexander was a good wife, partly because her income of three hundred dollars quarterly made up more than half their income, the family fiscal affairs were managed by her through a bank account in her name.

"How could the passbook balance if the bank had failed to enter that three hundred dollars?"

"They could have posted it to some one's else account, couldn't they?" asked Mr. Alexander irritably. Being a bookkeeper, and making such mistakes during the course of earning his salary of ninety dollars a month, he could understand and conceive such possibilities. "What you women don't know about business is appalling."

"Thank you,"—coldly. "Since I married you, I have not noticed your brilliance in that line. But in this instance, I happen to know more about my own business than you suppose. You took this bank book to the bank when you made the deposit."

For reply, Mr. Alexander stabbed his knife in the butter.

"That being the case," continued Mrs. Alexander, "the deposit should have been entered on this book—if you deposited the money! Henry Alexander, don't try to evade me again! What did you do with my three hundred dollars?"

"Oh, well, Georgie, if you must know—"

"Must know!" exclaimed Mrs. Alexander indignantly. "Must know! I think I very well must know what you did with my own money! The idea! I—"

"I bought butter with it, Georgie," Mr. Alexander interrupted hastily.

"Butter!" Mrs. Alexander half rose.

"Yes, butter! What you have there on your plate."

She looked at her plate and then eyed him suspiciously.

"I'm telling it straight, Georgie!" said he, interpreting the glance. "Bought butter with it. Made a little investment —believe it will prove a profitable one, too! Didn't mention it because I intended to surprise you; but, as usual, I get no credit for good intentions."

"But what shall we do with three hundred dollars' worth of butter?" she asked incredulously.

"I didn't buy it to eat; I bought it to sell—when the price goes higher. When I dropped in the bank to deposit your three hundred I met George Sully. George is down in the commission row you know, expert on produce markets, and all that sort of thing. He mentioned we'd have a terrific scarcity of butter this winter and advised me to invest your three hundred in butter, keep it in cold storage until a great demand came, then sell at top prices. It looked such a sure way to pick up a little change, Georgie, I let him have your check to handle the deal for you. We now have sixteen hundred pounds of butter at twenty-two cents. It'll go above forty cents, he says. That means we sell at a profit of double our capital."

"Well!" breathed Mrs. Alexander when he had finished. "And this with my three hundred dollars!"

Mr. Alexander smiled propitiatingly.

"Do you know we haven't paid the rent for the month?" asked Mrs. Alexander.

"Hadn't thought of it." Mr. Alexander turned again to the newspaper. "Thought you would attend to that."

"I've just bought a new dress," said Mrs. Alexander, her voice very suggestive in its firmness. "It will come home C. O. D. to-morrow. The baker will be here for his bill also, and the butcher, and there is not a single piece of coal in the cellar. Did you notice what my bank balance was?" She picked up the passbook and shook it to emphasize her words, which snapped like the crack of a whip. "My bank balance, Henry Alexander, is one dollar eighty-nine cents! I counted on that three hundred dollars to buy my dress and pay these bills! What I want to know is, where is the money coming from to meet them!"

"Gracious, Georgie!" exclaimed Mr. Alexander indignantly. "I just deposited my entire salary!"

"Never mind about your salary,"—disdainfully. "Don't talk to me about your salary, after you've squandered my money in gambling."

"Very well!" Mr. Alexander frowned and squared himself with an impatient twist in his chair. "I'll sell your butter to-morrow."

But next morning, although his departure for his daily seat behind the dog-eared books of a downtown real estate firm was proclaimed to the neighborhood by Mrs. Alexander, as she adjured him to dispose of it, Mr. Alexander did not sell the butter. From nine until six, that day, he juggled debits and credits with ability born of long practice; then, sighing wearily, he jabbed a red ink pen into the holder and repaired to the lavatory for a brush and a wash. A brother employee was at the basin when he entered. Mr. Alexander leaned against the doorway to wait his turn and emitted a long sighing "Gee whizz!"

"Tired eh?" said the one at the basin, as he shook water from his hands and reached for a towel. "So am I, dead tired. That aint the worst of it either. I've got to pike about ten miles before I go home to-night. Got to get my wife some country butter; she's got a craze for it—been bothering me to bring some home every day now for a month. To-night, I'm afraid to go home without it. All my excuses have gone lame."

Mr. Alexander opened his mouth to relate the job which awaited him as regarded his own butter, then suddenly shut it again. An inspiring thought had crystalized in his mind and paralyzed his tongue. Somewhere, in some business magazine, he had recently read an article entitled "The Gullibility of the Public." It stated that fully sixty per cent of the public made purchases first because a desire had been subconsciously stimulated through consistent advertising; secondly, because that advertising had educated them to dogmatical belief in the qualities of the product marketed. If a man selling

"shoes," therefore, called them simply "shoes," he could not get half the price nor do half the business of a man who next door advertised "good shoes" or "the greatest shoes in the world." By constant re-iteration of the word "good" or "great" in connection with the product, the public believed it such and paid its price without a murmur.

Being a reader of business magazines, Alexander quite naturally believed in opportunities. During his long career as bookkeeper he had waited patiently its knock; and now the scheme suddenly born through the theme of "gullibility" of the public, plus a demand for country butter, seemed a blatant call of the goddess fortune, and *open sesame* to a business and success. If a certain category of the buying public wanted the word "country" associated with the butter they used, then—why not put it there? It was then that Mr. Alexander found his tongue.

"I got a cousin who lives in the country," he remarked, turning on the spigot for hot water and reaching for the soap. "He brings us the greatest country butter you ever tasted."

"That's great stuff," said the other.

"It's made right on the farm," continued Mr. Alexander, eloquent in his visualizing of the imaginary farm. "Wonderful farm, that place, George! Don't know how many cows he has, must be near a thousand, though. Employs a lot of help, regular dairy business, y'know. When he don't bring us the butter, he sends it in. Often told him he ought to build up a city trade. He'd make a fortune. He's going to bring us in five pounds to-morrow."

"Well," said his brother in toil, hesitating to brush his derby with his sleeve, "wish I had a cousin that lived in the country. Maybe I wouldn't have to hike unnecessary miles this evening. He ought to build up a city trade, tell him for me. Here's one that would buy from him." He started out the door and then turned back. "Say," he asked tentatively, "you couldn't arrange for me to get some of that butter, could you, Alex?"

Mr. Alexander thoughtfully regarded the palm of a clean right hand, rubbing it with the thumb of his left. "I don't know. You see, when he sells to outsiders he gets a mighty good price for it. It's about the finest country butter within miles of this burg. How much you been paying for your country butter?"

"Expect to pay forty cents a pound for what I get this evening. He aint higher than that, is he?"

"That's about what he gets for his. Tell you what I'll do, George!" Mr. Alexander smiled a beaming smile. "Don't you get that butter to-night. I'll bring that five pounds of ours down to-morrow morning and have him send in another five pounds for us. It'll save you a trip and give you a good excuse for your wife, George! Tell her this is the very finest country butter made, best in the world, George, and I want her to try it."

And accordingly it was agreed. Whereupon, Alexander, still scheming, still planning, boarded a home-bound street car, humming absently out of tune, too preoccupied even to glance at the headlines of the evening paper that protruded from a pocket of his coat. When Mrs. Alexander greeted him at the door with a pecking kiss, he acknowledged the salutation mechanically.

"You didn't forget to sell that butter?" she asked, observing his bemused state with an air akin to disapproval. "I had to send my new dress back today because of your making so free with my money. And the butcher threatened to put our bill in the hands of a collector."

"Eh!" Mr. Alexander jerked up his head and regarded her very much as though he had for the first time noticed her existence. "Oh, no, I didn't. Your dress and the bills have got to wait. I've got a scheme to sell that butter, that sixteen hundred pounds, off at forty cents. How's that, Georgie?"

"Bother your schemes!" said Mrs. Alexander, acidly. "We've got bills to pay. Mean to tell me you didn't sell that butter, Henry!"

But Mr. Alexander hardly heard her. His mind was on the plan that with each turn-over mentally became to him as a gold mine which gives a more startling assay upon each analysis. He was discovering new and greater possibilities, it seemed to him; his brain,

long dormant, water-logged with the routine of bookkeeping, reveled in a fantasia of big advertising, big business, and big money.

"By George!" he murmured aloud, grinding the palm of his left hand with a fist. "It's so simple, George! Simple as can be! Here Billy MacFarlane's wife wants five pounds of country butter. Willing to have him walk five miles or so and pay forty cents a pound to get it. She's only one in a million. Must be others, plenty of 'em, George, just like her. To-morrow morning, I go down to Sully & Gibbs and get five pounds of our cold storage butter bought at twenty-two cents, and deliver to them at forty! If I aint mistaken in the gullibility of the public, because *I say* that's *the finest country butter made,* they'll taste it, and agree with me.

"That aint going to be the finish either, Georgie!" Alexander rushed on hastily as he unconsciously noticed a foreboding twitch about the lips of his better half. "There's a big demand for country butter that can be stimulated by its name alone. I'm going to create and feed the demand, going to begin drumming country butter after office hours, going to sell that sixteen hundred pounds of butter we bought at twenty-two cents for forty cents, as the finest country butter made. I'm going to advertise, advertise, advertise, plaster the town with signs that yell: 'Alexander's Country Butter is the Greatest in the World,' Georgie! We'll make 'em sit up and take notice—watch us! We're going to educate 'em to believing that in these days of germs and bacteria, country butter is the only butter fit for a healthy educated human to eat!"

Despite Mrs. Alexander's countenance retaining its rigid severity, her eyes glistened a little as she listened to his outburst. There was a shrewd philosophy in his words never before suspected by her; bustling about, walking to and fro energetically, as he talked, first striking a fist into palm, and toward the last, shaking an index finger determinately under her nose, he was a Henry Alexander born anew. He was become a man with a purpose, one idea, that seemed to dominate his body and soul.

"But how about my new dress and the butcher and the baker and the coal?" she asked almost meekly, for her. "If we don't pay them, Henry, they'll soon take notice."

"Got to wait—they've got to wait, Georgie, that's all!"

"Well, I hope you're right," said Mrs. Alexander. "I'll do my best to stave off the bill collectors if you want to try it, Henry. But please don't get to dreaming. Sell the second and the third and the fourth five-pound package of butter before you begin to build air castles. And I've just got to have that new dress within a few weeks; I want to go to Sally Gibbs' euchre."

II

It being a lull in the morning rush, George Sully, senior member of the firm, Sully & Gibbs, commission merchants, had lighted his evil-smelling blackened pipe and sought restful comfort on top of a barrel of pippins. Business had been very good that morning, but despite the fact, he now frowned across at his partner, who rolled a cigarette the while he rested on a crate of Florida oranges. "We're stung on that oleomargarine," he said bitterly. "And it's just as I warned you at the time. Look at 'em!" He waved a canvas jacketed sleeve toward their cold storage rooms. "Five hundred tubs. Five hundred tubs bought at three cents above the present market. And here we are selling 'em every day at a loss to keep trade. Maybe, next time, you'll listen when I venture an opinion on the dairy market!"

"Aint there some way we can choke off the loss?" inquired Gibbs, gazing thoughtfully across-street where a number of Italy's sons were loading banana push-carts for the day's business.

"I'd like to know who about these diggings is likely to let you sting them on five hundred tubs of oleomargarine at three cents above the market," replied Sully disgustedly.

"Humph," grunted Gibbs, shifting his gaze up street. "Here comes a friend of yours, bustling Alexander, walking like you owed him money and he'd come

to collect. We still got his sixteen hundred pounds of butter, I suppose?"

"Sully yawned, slid off the barrel of pippins, and stretched lazily. "Yes, we have," he said. "And I aint in any humor to talk to him about 'em this morning. Seeing as how you got the firm in a hole on that oleomargarine, I'll let you suffer. I'm going in and fix up the books. Talk to him, Gibby."

"I'll do that all right," replied Gibby, "if it'll appease you any." Then as Sully disappeared in the doorway of their glass-inclosed office, he twisted around on the orange crate to greet the hurrying Mr. Alexander. "Morning, Mr. Alexander. You're certainly up with the early ones this morning."

"Business, George!" breathed Alexander, breathing a little heavily from his hasty walk. "Come to see George on business. Where is he?"

"Busy tending the books right now. What'd you want?"

"'Member that sixteen hundred pounds of butter he bought for me several weeks ago?"

Gibbs nodded, jerking his head toward the cold storage doors. "They're in there."

"Well, I got a scheme to get rid of 'em at forty cents a pound, George, greatest scheme you ever heard!"

"Sounds fine," said Gibbs, passively, unmoved by Alexander's bubbling enthusiasm. "Sounds almost like a fairy tale. What's the scheme?"

Mr. Alexander began walking up and down before him very much as he had done before Mrs. Alexander the night before. "Well, I can, George!" he said snappily. "I can do just what I said. I can sell that butter at forty cents a pound. I've come down here this morning to ask you to let me have five pounds—break a tub—do you do that?"

"No, we don't—not as a rule. But I guess we'd make a concession if you wanted to, with your butter." Gibbs eyed him with a mystified air. "How in tarnation you going to sell cold storage butter at forty cents retail when a man can buy all he wants at twenty-five cents?"

"It's a scheme, George, a scheme I have. It's—" And Alexander, walking in a gesticulating promenade between the barrels of pippins and crates of oranges, thereupon launched into another eulogy on the gullibility of the public and the hidden demand for country butter. Inasmuch as he had rehearsed exactly what he intended to say over the breakfast table with Mrs. Alexander that morning, it was a masterpiece of short, snappy sentences that stood Gibbs on his feet in admiring awe.

"Jumping mock oranges!" said he, "there's something in that, Alexander. Leastaways, what you say about the public being gullible is true—true as gospel!"

"Absolutely, absolutely!" asseverated Alexander, bobbing his head with the words. "No doubt about its practicability, either—no doubt at all, Gibbs. I feel very confident of success."

Gibbs stopped pumping at his arm to move toward the store.

"George is busy with the books, but I want to let him in on that. Wait a moment. Have a seat on a barrel of pippins; it's the best we have to offer down here. I'll get your butter while I'm gone, too." He tramped away and into the glass-inclosed, boxlike office, where once inside and the door shut, he leaned against the end of Sully's desk and chuckled happily.

"You sound like he brought some ready money," remarked Sully, hesitating in act of charging a customer a couple of dollars more than his purchase had been worth. "I didn't know *he* owed us anything."

"He don't," Gibbs grinned, "but he brought me some ready money. Just gave me a lesson on the gullibility of the public, as he called it, that I think is worth a practical application with the oleomargarine. Leastways, I'm going to try it on *him*."

Sully jabbed the charge slip on a spindle.

"What are you talking about?" he growled, impatiently. "Come down to brass tacks!"

"I'm talking about the gullibility of the public," said Gibbs, still smiling. He gave Sully an outline of Alexander's theory. "I can't see where there is any harm in letting him try it."

"He aint any salesman, Gibby," was Sully's unsympathetic response. "He's

only a ninety-dollar bookkeeper. He'll be that all his life. Why, if butter was selling for five cents, he couldn't sell a half-pound!"

"He aint going to sell the butter, anyhow; he's going to sell our oleomargarine," cried Gibby, patting Sully on the back. "I'm sure strong for this gullibility business, George. If Alexander can fool the public on cold storage butter, we can fool him on oleomargarine. By doctoring it a bit we can make it look better than the cold storage butter." He laughed heartily. "And when butter goes up," he finished, "we'll keep selling him oleomargarine at the butter market price!"

"Humph!" grunted Sully, thoughtfully inking his pen. "It aint the public there, Gibby—you don't want to forget the government and the Pure Food Law has something to say about oleomargarine. If we got caught fooling with that revenue mark on those oleomargarine tubs it'd ruin our business."

"We wont get caught," said Gibby confidently. "What's more, you just admitted he aint any salesman."

"No, he aint," said Sully. "I doubt if he'll sell a pound after this. Go ahead and let him have five pounds of oleomargarine. We might as well get rid of that much anyhow; we've lost enough on that stuff in the last week. If he gets wise, we'll just say it was a mistake."

Gibbs didn't need any second bidding. Almost before Sully had finished speaking, he was out of the office and had disappeared in the cold storage department.

Sully laid aside his pen and went outside to join Alexander.

"I can't say I exactly admire your plan, Henry," he replied to Alexander's query. "It's a bad idea, this not being on the level in your business dealings. I've always held strictly to honesty in the transactions of this firm."

"But it's a big opportunity for me, George, a big opportunity!" protested Alexander, whose conscience stirred unpleasantly at Sully's righteousness. "Understand, I don't intend to continue this business this way. I'm only depending on the gullibility of the public to give me a start. I don't believe in doing the public all the time. George; it has a bad ending. After I get going, I'll treat 'em square, George, I'll treat 'em square."

Gibbs joined them with a package and handed it to Alexander, who tapped the package to emphasize his next words.

"I'm going to make 'em believe though, boys, going to make 'em believe me, understand? They're going to break their pocket-books to buy this at forty cents because I say it's country butter. I'll do a little advertising, George; advertising is the life-blood of business, you know. I've got big ideas about it; all I need is capital and a start!"

"Well, to hear you tell it, it sounds pretty good, Henry," agreed Sully. "But I wish you were starting honestly. We'll do all we can to help you, however, and you'll find us on the level in our business dealing. We'll stick by you. Good-by, and good luck."

There have been many phenomenal rises of little men from obscurity to greatness and fame, but the rise of Henry Alexander eclipsed any ever witnessed by the citizens of his town.

During the time Alexander awaited the opinion of the wife of his brother employee, which was to prove his theory as regarded the gullibility of human nature, his confidence never wavered. And when the buyer of five pounds of Sully and Gibbs oleomargarine pronounced it excellent country butter, the smoldering fires of ambition, long smothered below years of servitude at ninety per, now burst into a consuming flame. He had been confident, but having his confidence confirmed developed the greatest factor in his later success —his self-reliance. Thereafter, in the mind of Alexander, there was no doubt that he must succeed.

He hardly slept of nights, so active and prolific became his brain. With careful attention to every detail, he planned the beginning and the climax of his selling campaign. He would begin by soliciting orders through argument. The argument would be based on some vital element that would appeal to the person approached. If a man was thin, he would argue it was the butter he

ate, that Alexander's Country Butter would make him fat. If a woman was stout, he would argue his butter would help to keep her from being more so. And in the cost, forty cents per pound, he would make a climax to his campaign: he would flood the town with advertisements stating that while his butter was necessarily high because of exceptional qualities, the price would not be subject to change. Everyone who became his customer would be assured his price would remain staple.

From the first, the selling campaign was successful. His theory on the gullibility of the public proved undoubtedly correct. They bought as fast as Sully and Gibbs could doctor the oleomargarine they continued to unload through Alexander at butter prices. Of course, there were skeptics who scorned, but they were in the minority; the majority clamored for more and proved themselves apt pupils the while Alexander educated them into the belief that country butter was the one requisite of good health and happiness. Once given this taste of the wine of quick dollar-making, Alexander's ability surprised even himself. At the end of two months he had sold eighteen hundred pounds of his butter, secured a list of one hundred and twenty-two regular customers, resigned his position, and invested part of his profit in a little wagon that displayed the monogram, "A. C. B."

"We're going some, by George!" he wheezed over the dinner table one evening, shortly after the purchase of the wagon. His selling campaign was far enough advanced now, he figured, to stage his climax, the advertising storm. He had in mind a vivid picture of how he would paint the farm where the butter was made, the cows, the sanitary dairy, everything that would invite the public to purchase. "Nothing can stop me now, Georgie," he told his wife. "I'm going to make this a big business, a great business, Georgie! I dropped in the City Bank this morning and the president made it a point to come out and shake hands with me. I asked him for a loan of four thousand dollars. He said it would be O. K. with your endorsement. You've got to let me have it, Georgie."

Mrs. Alexander, after witnessing this sudden awakening of her husband, had come to a firm belief that failures in life were made and not born, as she had always supposed. Where before she had dominated the family business affairs, she did not now feel capable of venturing a word. She remained silent, and Alexander without hesitation accepted her silence as consent.

"We've got to have a store," he said. "I'll take a lease on one I've had in mind, to-morrow."

"But, Henry, you don't need four thousand dollars for that, do you? I don't think you should borrow any more money than you need."

"Got to advertise, Georgie. I'll need two or three thousand for that."

"Two or three thousand for advertising, Henry!"

He smiled reassuringly, and rose to pat her affectionately on the shoulder.

"Advertising is the life-blood of business, Georgie! The store and its opening, with my advertising, will form the climax to the work I've been doing the past two months. Advertising will do it; mark you, I know what I'm talking about! You thought I was mistaken when I said the public was gullible. I saw George Sully and his partner Gibbs laughing at me too. Thought I was a bookkeeper, a joke when I talked of selling!" He launched into a lengthy story which pictured the ridicule he had incurred from the many who laughed at a bookkeeper selling butter. From his words one might have believed him a forlorn orphan struggling for existence beneath a blanket of cynicism. When he had finished, Mrs. Alexander would have given him her entire principal had he asked it.

A week afterward, he took the town by storm with screaming newspaper advertisements, bill posters, and window cards that held fake illustrations of his farm, cows, and dairy, and announced the opening of his modern butter emporium. He claimed Alexander's Country Butter the greatest in the world; and there was a sincere ring to the wording of them that simply exuded persuasion and conviction.

The new store was a palace in glistening marble and shiny brass. There was

nothing the lexicon of modernity contained that Alexander overlooked; there was nothing he could not do either through a clerk or himself to accommodate the customers who responded to his advertising on the opening day.

Sully and Gibbs had been among the first to extend congratulations, and now they stood together on the pavement, where they had prepared to escape the rush, watching the gullible public who bought their oleomargarine under name of Alexander's Country Butter, in an amazement akin to awe.

"Jumping mock oranges!" murmured Gibbs, removing his derby and scratching his head with a reflective hand. "He's certainly hitting one awful pace, George. And with oleomargarine! And we thought he couldn't sell!"

"I'm wondering if he ever stopped to think what might happen if some one got wise to his game," said Sully. "He'll be attracting attention of the big competitors if he don't look out. It's about time we trimmed sail, Gibby. I aint forgot there is a pure food law in this country, if Alexander has!"

"Not yet, George!" protested Gibbs, as they turned to move on. "Why, it looks as if the whole town has gone crazy over his stuff. Look at 'em buying it, will you! And that's oleomargarine, remember, we're selling him at butter prices! Wait till butter starts up—we'll jump the price on him every time she rises! We'll get rich selling him oleomargarine at price of a high butter market! Think of it, George!"

And so, along toward the Christmas holidays, and several months after Alexander had opened his store, the butter market began to rise.

Sully and Gibbs noted each advance with satisfaction. They promptly raised the price of the oleomargarine delivered to Alexander to the butter market level. Where several months before, he had purchased of them at twenty-two cents, and sold at forty, he was now obliged to pay twenty-eight. Inasmuch as the market price for oleomargarine remained stationary, the operation became highly profitable to Sully and Gibbs. In the end it resolved itself into a sort of mechanical performance which on each advance in the butter market helped them to subtract just so much from Alexander's pocket and place in their own.

Alexander's margin of profit gradually shrunk from eighteen cents per pound on the butter he sold to ten, then eight, then six, and then four. And shortly after, one morning, Sully called him at his residence over the 'phone to announce another rise. Butter had jumped to thirty-nine cents per pound. Alexander's profit had been cut to one cent!

Alexander, seated in the tonneau of a newly purchased automobile, frowned over the message as he rolled down to the store. He frowned so blackly at the back of his chauffeur's head that that person felt the look and turned to observe his employer.

"We'll stop by Sully and Gibbs this morning, George!" said Alexander.

III

When Cæsar was made Imperator for life by the Roman senate, it was the crest of his triumph, realization of his dreams—and the beginning of his end. It was then that the very powers who had helped in his triumph became jealous and began plotting to destroy him. Unfortunately, Henry Alexander was not a student of Roman history, or he might have benefited by the example set in the fate of Julius Cæsar.

He moved into a larger house in a better neighborhood, and furnished it luxuriously. He bought Mrs. Alexander fine clothes for the first time in his life. They entertained, clubbed, golfed, traveled and owned an automobile. He became inured with a tolerant contempt for those he robbed so easily, and finally, oblivious to any standard of honesty he might have once thought necessary, money, at first a secondary thought, now became a paramount necessity.

And when the first advance in butter reduced the profit he reaped from customers he served, he began to plan and scheme. Quite naturally the planning and scheming was without consideration of their welfare. He wanted to maintain his profit at the original figure, or,

if possible, increase it. As his advertising had promised the price would remain staple, that precluded possibility of charging them more, and left him but the one alternative—to give them less. To give them less could mean only one thing; to give them oleomargarine.

He had, however, postponed visiting Sully and Gibbs about the matter, because deep within he dreaded result of such a proposal made to the honest Mr. Sully. Somehow, despite his disregard of the feelings of his customers, he had never quite forgotten the contempt of that gentleman when on the morning of his start he deplored the scheme which now earned him eight hundred dollars a month. Sully had seemed so strict in adherence to the principles of integrity in business!

"Rather cool this morning, George!" Alexander said crisply, as he entered and took a seat on the bookkeeping stool with an unconscious ease that was amusing with the dignity he had assumed since his success in business. "I didn't like that message about another rise in butter, George! Didn't like it a bit! I've got to go out of business unless I can make more than one cent a pound—you know that, George."

"I'm sorry, Henry," said Sully sympathetically, "but it aint our fault. The butter market keeps going up, and we can't sell you butter below the market."

"That aint the worst of it, either," remarked Gibbs, producing a bag and papers preparatory to rolling himself a cigarette. "Butter aint going to stop at thirty-nine cents a pound, Alexander. It's going to fifty cents a pound in another month, or I miss my guess!"

Alexander extracted a handkerchief, thrust back his hat, and mopped his brow nervously. "Gracious me!" he cried. "I hope not, George! Not until I can come to an understanding with your firm. It's why I came straight down here to see you this morning."

"Just what do you mean by understanding?" inquired Sully. "We'd like to help you, Henry, but I don't see how."

Alexander climbed down off the stool and began to walk to and fro as was his habit when he wished to impress his audience. "I've been advertising my butter at forty cents, George. Been telling 'em it was a price that would stand. Great thing in business, you know, making a staple price for a necessity. People get to lean on you, like a crutch; they always can count on your cost. Well, I've educated 'em to that price of forty cents, George, and it's got to stay. If I raised it they'd lose faith in me—my business would be ruined. Now here comes this rise in the butter market. If I'd had any experience in this business I would have been stocked up at low prices—but I didn't have the experience. And now, it looks as if butter will go higher—am I right, George?"

"It looks that way, Henry," nodded Sully.

Alexander took a silent turn up and down the room.

"The gullibility of the public," he continued, after a moment, and stopped to make emphasis with his index finger, "is a wonderful thing, George. It gave me my start in this business and it's got to keep me going through this crisis, George—got to do it, understand? And you, George, and you, Gibbs, have got to stand by me. If the public will buy my cold storage butter as country butter they've got to do more!" He shook the index finger and concluded sharply: "They'll buy oleomargarine, if I sell it, George! I want to know if you wont arrange to sell me oleomargarine?"

To Alexander's surprise, Sully's face grew very red and his eyes filled with tears. For a moment he seemed to be choking; then, turning aside his head, he emitted a loud, coughing sneeze. Gibbs hurried outside the office with an atmosphere of sudden business activity. It occurred to Alexander their actions were much like suppressed hilarity. Probably they accepted this proposal as a joke.

"I'm not joking, George," he said a little testily. "This is business, George, business! Nothing funny. Because you don't believe the public gullible—"

"They are gullible, Henry," agreed Gibbs, seriously, as he re-entered the office and closed the door. "But you don't understand us. Your proposal struck us as funny, because Sully and I can't allow you to sell the public oleomargarine for genuine butter. It aint right, Henry, that kind of business!"

"It's crooked," said Sully stoutly, frowning at Alexander. "Henry, I'm surprised at you! Especially for making such a proposal to a firm with the reputation for integrity we bear, especially as you know our principles on honesty. You're playing mighty careless with the law now—calling that country butter."

"That's right, Henry," averred Gibbs wisely. "Not being square with the public got you in this hole—after you've been in business as long as Sully and me you'll realize honesty is best. When George and I started out in business we took for our slogan, 'Be on the level.' And you see how we've succeeded."

Alexander listened to their storm of disapproval during several walks from the bookkeeping desk to the big office safe on the opposite side of the room. He had expected them to object, at first, but he hoped to convince them later. He would threaten to sever connections with them! He would see what effect that would have.

"And another thing, Henry," said Sully, climbing from the bookkeeping stool to reach along the desk for his disreputable looking pipe. " 'Nother thing: don't you think the public is so easy—you're one of the public, you know; you'll get fooled some day!"

"Can't help it, George, if I am," said Alexander. "This is the crisis in my business. I've either got to sell oleomargarine with genuine butter at forty cents in the open market, or I've got to go out of business. I'm going to sell oleomargarine, George! And, if you wont sell it, I know others that will!" He took out a little note book and leaned on the desk. "Oleomargarine is selling at twenty-two, George. I'll need a good many thousand pounds."

"Sure you will," said Sully, easily. "I didn't say we wouldn't sell it—did I? I didn't mean to. I'm advising you against trying to get along by dishonesty, Henry. Really, I'm surprised at your disregard of such a thing as honesty—it's the backbone of my business!"

"Very well, then, George—hereafter it's oleomargarine."

"It'll be delivered that way," said Sully. "And you've got to attend to anything else you want done. Not Sully and Gibbs. We sell this as oleomargarine, but we don't sell it as butter—understand?"

Alexander bustled over to the door and turning the knob, hesitated a moment. "I understand, George, and you understand also—you're not supposed to know or care what I do with it. I'm not sure my customers will stand for it yet, George, not sure!" And he slammed the door to hurry down the lane of boxes and crates to his waiting car.

"Well!" said Gibbs, watching him climb into his machine. "Here's one that's pretty sure his customers are going to stand for it! What'll you and I do now—color plain lard? It looks like he's grabbed every honest nickel this time, for sure!"

"I aint so sure he has," replied Sully thoughtfully. "As a fact, Gibby, a genuine fact—I aint sure Alexander owns that business any more."

Gibbs eyed him curiously.

"Don't take it so hard, George," he said. "We got a pretty good profit out of him anyhow."

"I aint sure," continued Sully, thoughtfully, ignoring his facetious remark, "because it begins to look like a game where Sully and Gibbs hold all trumps and the joker. Remember, we were selling him oleomargarine, and he didn't know it. Now, he knows it's oleomargarine and he's selling it to the public just the same. It'd be mighty embarrassing for him to lose a nice business paying eight hundred per month, Gibby, if we should decide the government ought to practice the pure food law business on him!"

"Jumping mock oranges!" murmured Gibby, slapping his hands together and rubbing them with energy.

"We're going to own that business pretty soon, Gibby," said Sully, sagely. "It's no more'n right, too. I don't think Alexander has been treating the public square. He ought to get it in the neck, eh?"

And while they discussed his downfall, Alexander sat at his desk, behind the brass railing which divided his luxuriously furnished little office from the store, and worked assiduously over an advertisement that painted him a phil-

anthropist and public benefactor rolled into one.

Having arranged a deal whereby he could now indefinitely supply his customers with Alexander's Country Butter no matter how high the market might climb, he could not overlook the great opportunity it offered as an advertising subject. Furthermore, if its sale were pushed by an advertisement which increased their confidence in his product, so much less a chance of their detecting his fraud.

Accordingly, several weeks later, when butter made a spectacular jump in price to fifty cents a pound, he seized its advance as the psychological moment to declare to the public his prices would not be raised. Alexander's Country Butter, having been advertised for the past six months at forty cents per pound, would still be available at that price. The result was as much business as he could handle—the money poured in at a tremendous rate—within a week he had cleared a profit of a thousand dollars.

His tactics created havoc among the butter dealers, who held several special meetings from which dire warnings reached Alexander's ears. By this time, however, Alexander's success had instilled within him a belief in his own powers that was remarkable. So long as Sully and Gibbs were willing to sell him oleomargarine and keep his fraud a secret, he saw no cause to fear butter dealers or anyone else.

But Sully and Gibbs, with an ear for the grumbling of the butter dealers, did not remain quiescent. The second week after butter had reached fifty cents a pound they made him a visit and took chairs about his desk.

"I have come as a friend on serious business this morning," began Mr. Sully after Alexander had greeted them jovially with a facetious remark as to his fast increasing wealth. "There was another meeting of the butter dealers last night. Of course, Gibby and I were there. They've noticed our heavy buying of oleomargarine of late."

"What of that, George?" replied Alexander. "Perfectly natural, isn't it?"

"Yes, that part is all right, maybe. But they're getting mighty suspicious of you, Henry. Gibbs and I have come to tell you we can't risk our reputation for integrity by selling you any more oleomargarine."

Alexander twisted nervously in his chair and frowned at that. As the full meaning of the significance in the words dawned on him he arose for his eternal promenade. "That's bad news, George, bad news!" he wheezed, shaking his head slowly. "I don't exactly know what to say."

"Well," said Gibby, we don't need any second hint. We're getting out before they put the government on us. If I were you, I'd do the same."

"Be more explicit, Gibbs; don't be afraid to use your tongue. What do you mean by *me* getting out?"

"He means," explained Sully, "he'd quit selling oleomargarine and sell genuine butter. It's the only thing for you to do."

"Very likely!" snapped Alexander, walking a bit faster. "I've fixed my price at forty cents. I wont raise it, Gibbs, wouldn't if I could. I'd look fine, after all this advertising, coming out with announcement of a raised price! If I raised my price, I'd lose nearly half my business; if I gave them genuine butter at forty cents, I'd lose more than I've made since I've been in business!"

Sully got up impatiently.

"Come to business," he said shortly. "That's your funeral—what you're going to do, Alexander. I don't want to be seen in here talking to you after that meeting last night. We've done our duty in warning you. If they ask me, I'll have to be honest, Henry, and tell what I know."

"You don't know anything!"

"Oh yes, we do!" cried Gibby. "We know a heap sight more than it would be well for some others to know!"

Alexander sat down abruptly. He realized with a very disagreeable feeling that they did know considerably more than he cared to have others know. Also, they had the evidence; they could prove, the two of them together, that what they said was truth.

In such case, thought he, it would seem unwise to incur their enmity—better that he first test their sincerity. "I've got a fair proposition, boys." He

stopped, smiled, and leaned forward to tap Sully's knee. "Let's make this a partnership. I've got a good business here. I need experience more than anything to help out. And with two good business men like you, Sully, and you, Gibby, we'd make a fortune apiece in no time. Silent partnership, boys, if you'd like—how about *that,* George?"

But Sully shook his head.

"The only thing I'll do with this business, Henry, is buy it out. And when I buy it out, I'll run it on the level. I'll raise your price to fifty cents, or even with the butter market, and sell the real thing. There'd be none of this gullibility business! It's only a matter of time before some one is going to show you up anyhow."

Alexander took another turn about the railed enclosure. They did not want a partnership on present basis, but they were willing to buy him out. And if they bought him out they would run the business on the level with the public. That certainly looked as though they were sincere. It looked as if there were indeed considerable danger in the attitude of the butter dealers.

"Boys," he said tentatively, "how much will you give me for this business?"

"One hundred dollars," said Sully.

"One hundred dollars!"

"That's all—it aint possible for us to say how much it's going to pay when run honestly, Henry. We might have to shut up in a week."

Alexander waved an arm.

"But the fixtures? This desk, here, George! Never heard of such a proposal—couldn't accept it!"

"You can have the desk," said Gibby, "and the fixtures too—most of 'em. We aint going to run any reception room for society. This is going to be a business. And the chances we take in starting to run it honestly ought to make an offer for less than a hundred look good to you."

"Humph," Alexander shrugged. "Well, by George, if you don't want the fixtures, I do. I'll have the desk moved out to-morrow."

It had come over him of a sudden that if he wanted to sell, and in reality he had to sell, Sully and Gibbs were the only people he could sell to. It would be impossible to dispose of the business to another, who would demand an examination of the books, which would disclose this fraud he had practised. If he wanted to keep his own reputation clean, the easiest way was to allow them to have the business and with it the risk of its later success. "I think Mrs. Alexander and I will take a little trip, George, before I consider another line. It'll be an honest business, George; you'll like that, eh?"

"I will," nodded Sully. "I want to see you get started right, Henry. Honesty is the only foundation you can start that way on—it made us the success we are to-day."

It was several months later that Mr. and Mrs. Alexander, rolling into their home station, gazed curiously out of the windows of the dining car to observe huge billboard signs that advertised Alexander's Country Butter at fifty cents per pound. At first sight of them Alexander's heart beat a little faster. A wave of regret swept over him. These were not his signs; Sully and Gibbs had put them up, and to advertise in that manner they must have prospered greatly with butter selling at fifty cents per pound. Then it occurred to him that butter was no longer selling at fifty cents. As Sully and Gibbs had intended to sell with the regular market it seemed strange these signs quoted the price so high. They looked old too, looked as though they had been posted some time ago. In one was a large bare space where the board of the fence shone through because the paper had been torn away. He looked up as a waiter hesitated beside their table with the check.

"George," he said, "is this town still crazy over that Alexander's Country Butter?"

George grinned.

" 'Deed, boss, thuh fellows that sold that stuff got pinched six weeks ago! Twan't nothing but oleomargarine, they say!"

"Why, Henry!" exclaimed Mrs. Alexander indignantly. "Did you ever hear of such audacity. To think that they could fool the public on oleomargarine!"

Bad-Man's Bluff

A Western editor prints some pointed and precise truths about a would-be local bad-man. The B. M. comes to shoot up the editor—and finds his bluff called.

By JOHN E. ROSSER

BEN HANSON'S manners at times bordered on the uncouth. At least, so the citizenry of Austin believed—and the Austin of thirty years ago demanded no milk-and-water brand of etiquette, at that.

If Ben Hanson wanted to ride up and down spacious Congress Avenue facetiously wrecking windows and making pedestrians take to hasty cover, why, it was a prank any citizen might relish for himself when the spirits moved him. Men will be boys, they argued sententiously. But when two inebriated cattle punchers from nowhere in particular had attempted, with remarkable success, to slice each other into shoestrings, the fair-minded patrons of the Red Front Saloon, where the exhibition of expert butchering took place, scowlingly whispered adversely when Hanson flippantly shot out the brains of one of the combatants, who sought, with dying ineffectiveness, to sink his knife, by way of farewell, in the lifeless body of his foe.

In nice appraisal, then, weighing each virtue against each vice and having due regard for numerical totals, Austin viewed with deprecation the several sanguine exploits of Hanson, and covertly voted him a bad man—covertly, because Ben was known to be sensitive of criticism of his conduct and to use ammunition to soothe his wounded feelings.

However short of ethical dogma Hanson's achievements might fall, theirs was no lack of picturesqueness. Those who espouse art for art's sake alone will instantly discern the dramatic in the manner of Hanson's slaying the Mexican where Sixth Street intersects Congress Avenue. (It is necessary thus accurately to indicate the spot, because this particular target's name was never learned, and Ben was especially prodigal with Mexicans.) On this cloudless summer's day, when the sun was shooting down vertical rays with a viciousness that only Austin knows, a lone vender of equally torrid tamales furnished the sole semblance of traffic on the Avenue. Beneath a grateful clapboard awning with which Sam Engel made the front of his pawn-shop inviting to possible hard-put customers, Hanson was lolling idly against the door-jamb and mentally objurgating alike the withering heat and the inherent insipidity of life. As if seized with an impervious inspiration, letting his spurred boot-heel clink musically to the threshold, he said:

"Come here, Sam!"

There are times when no mercenary consideration should prevent one's prompt attendance upon the wishes of a friend, so the man of a hundred per cent interest abruptly discontinued negotiations for a silver-mounted saddle and bridle, which he had just convinced a spendthrift cowboy was worth not one cent more than five ready dollars.

"Yes, sir, Mister Hanson; vhat iss it, sir?" he inquired with deferential earnestness, as he came up rubbing his hands together.

"See that greaser yonder?" asked Hanson, pointing toward the dealer in tamales shuffling wearily along.

"Ye-yes, sir, Mister Hanson—I see heem!" admitted the now very nervous Engel, who knew Hanson's fondness for practical joking.

"Well, Sam," said Hanson, swinging his wiry body free of the doorway's support, "I'm goin' to make you a little bet—five dollars, even money. I bet you I can stand here in this door and shoot that Mexican so dead he wont kick after he falls! Maybe I can't, but you win five dollars if I fail to do it. That would be just like pickin' it up, Sam, just like pickin' it up! Whatcher say—he's about to get out of range!"

"B-b-ut, Mister Hanson, I—I don't never bets on not'ings!" objected the quaking, chalk-faced Sam.

"Come on; be a sport!" urged the whimsical Hanson. "Besides, Sam, I'm givin' you the better end of it, because a greaser just naturally wants to run away, even after he's been plugged clean through!" And he laughed heartily at his merry conceit, while the palsied Sam tried vainly to achieve an appreciative smile. Hanson's hand slid to the handle of his revolver, as he turned squarely toward the distruster of chance, whose inexplicable apprehension multiplied.

"All right, Mister Hanson," he agreed, "I betcher vun fife tollar he—he keeck!" Engel's gasping breath belied his attempted show of ready acquiescence in Ben's novel wager.

Slowly Hanson lifted his revolver, squinting along its gleaming barrel, which followed the shuffling tamale man's peaked hat. A bungling amateur would have aimed for the heart, but Hanson had come to regard a brain shot as of greater merit where immediate results were desired. And, as a sporting proposition, the more difficult shot appealed to him. A deafening roar ran out: Sam's store seemed to make an admirable soundbox. As the Mexican sank inertly to the ground, like an ox that has received the blow of an ax squarely between the eyes, his knees collapsing limply under him, Engel too dropped heavily upon an empty box and sat, wide-eyed with terror, looking at the Mexican prostrate in the street.

"Damn my luck!" said Hanson, in mock disgust. "He kicked, and you win, Sam! What'd I tell you about a greaser's feet?" And, having blown the smoke from the barrel of his recreant revolver, which he turned to its holster, he drew from his wallet a crisp five-dollar bill and placed it in the rigid fingers of the horror-stricken winner.

Despite the piquant news-value of this incident,—being no mere adjudication of personal differences, but a killing of absorbing artistry,—the recently established Morning *Sentinel*, Austin's only daily palladium of the people's liberty, gave no inkling that a scene good enough for any melodramatic stage had been enacted in broad daylight, on Congress Avenue, with a limited audience. To be sure, the doubly careful reader found, at the bottom of an inside page, an item which averred that an unknown Mexican had dropped dead on the Avenue, which was true enough, with the possible exception of an omitted costly, final kick, indicating life even after the fall.

While Austin's citizenry, as a whole, with tactful restraint, confined its comments on Hanson's latest prank to sage noddings of the head, and while the *Sentinel* seemed to miss utterly the incident's appeal and even rudely to ignore the hero's colorful rôle, there was one man who evidently deemed that noonday spectacle worthy of his highest journalistic enterprise. This conspicuous exception was George Washington Brant, editor and proprietor of the Austin Weekly *Blade*, which, until the Morning *Sentinel's* unwelcomed coming, had borne alone the torch of such civilization as its editor deemed his

clientele in need. Brant was a little wisp of a man, hardly up to the five-foot mark, and weighing perhaps a scant hundred pounds. Yet his appearance would invite the casual observer's second look, and this verifying glance inspired no smile of ridicule. The viper of the plains may lack the heft of a bar of laundry soap, but it has a little lulling way of its own. Brant's eyes showed no white; you saw two slits of polished jet. His glossy black hair was always innocent of the ministrations of comb and brush, and habitually he kept his mouth so tightly closed that he had worn down his teeth to half their former length. Ten years before, he had come, it was said, from the mountain district of Tennessee. He said his name was Brant, and Austin let it go at that.

It was a Tuesday when Hanson impressed upon the Mexican the Horatian maxim of the uncertainty and brevity of human life. Each sennight, on Thursdays, the trenchant *Blade* was given to a waiting world. Believing that personal news is the doughtiest ally of circulation, Brant had more than once made mention of the spicy doings of Ben Hanson, not always to this latter gentleman's great enjoyment, but to the keen and paying, though unvoiced, delight of fireside readers. Noting the *Sentinel's* stupid treatment of Hanson's quasi-martial prowess, Brant essayed to teach this new-Richmond-in-the-field something of the art of pointed writing. When, after a feverish day of typesetting, the *Blade* came red-hot from a reluctant Washington hand-press, its front page, with a headline whose color suggested blood, screamed the name and deeds of Hanson. The tight-mouthed editor, through the length of seven unevasive columns, had spoken his innermost meditations concerning Hanson's career and character.

By way of relaxation and recreation, after the *Blade* had been pulled from the press and sent upon its edifying way, Max Bleim, foreman of the plant, who, however, did not scorn to aid his two assistant compositors and operators of the press, strolled slowly along Congress Avenue, in the cool of the afternoon. With inescapable and proper pride he noted here and there little clusters of silent men eagerly reading the front page of the copy of the *Blade* which one of the number held. He and Brant had showed the upstart *Sentinel* what a real paper looks like. Stopping casually with one of these groups, he awaited utterance of some tribute to the *Blade's* latest triumph. But, having perused that newsy front page, the units of the group departed their several ways, with no interchange of comment. The man who owned the copy of the *Blade* that all had read nodded to Bleim to walk with him. Down Congress Avenue the two strolled leisurely, until they came to the Colorado, drawing its saffron length under the rickety wooden bridge. There they stood in tête-à-tête fashion for a time.

The conference ended, Bleim made brisk return to the second-story home of the *Blade*. He found Brant, chin upon palm, sitting at the pine-table editorial desk and looking meditatively out across the Avenue.

"Mr. Brant," he began, "I think we had better prepare for a visit from Ben Hanson. He's out somewhere to-day, but when he gets in he'll find we've had something to say about him again, and he may want some parts of it explained."

The black-eyed Brant turned slowly in the wobbly editorial chair.

"I've thought of that," he said. "We might have to entertain Ben sometime, and this office is hardly suited to social purposes."

His eyes wandered deprecatingly along the garishly papered walls, showing irregular cracks averaging half an inch in width, where Austin's midsummer heat of ten years' time had written its zigzag record. Brant's office had but two apertures—a window, outside which swung by one creaking hinge an iron shutter, and a narrow door leading to the combined composing and press room. These two rooms, with the exception of a deep, dust-laden closet adjoining Brant's office and containing the surplus of too hopeful issues of the *Blade,* constituted the plant.

"Yes," continued Brant repetitiously, "we may have to entertain Ben up here sometime, and we might as well see what our facilities are."

He arose with a yawn, and he and his foreman went into the mechanical room, exchanging ideas of social courtesy the while. Brant opened the door of the musty, inky closet which lay alongside the editorial office, and the two stood for some minutes talking. Then they entered the closet, separated from Brant's office only by a thin partition of uneven boards covered with the untrustworthy, garish wall-paper, through the cracks of which came rays of the setting sun, but insufficient to light the interior when the door was closed. Brant piled the unused copies of the *Blade* far back in the closet—a paper monument to unwarranted optimism—leaving much of the floor clear of obstacles. He and Bleim evidently felt that they had worked out some sort of definite plan of entertainment, for they shortly descended the ramshackle stairway to the street, and bade each other good-night.

Friday at high noon—that parching hour, when the Mexican tamale vendor had passed abruptly to the Castillian heaven of fandangoes and guitars—the perilous stairs leading to the home of the *Blade* creaked ominously with the heavy tread of boot-heels whose spurs tinkled merrily. Already well along with editorial copy for the coming week's issue and absorbedly unmindful of an inner appeal for midday sustenance, Brant sat bowed over his disordered table-desk, writing slowly, as if he were engraving on stone. The spurred boot-heels clinked their deliberate way to the threshold of Brant's office door and paused.

"I believe I have the honor of addressing Mr. Brant?" an even voice interrogated of the editor's unheeding back.

Brant's pen plowed on its ponderous way.

"I am speaking to the editor of the *Blade*, I believe?" came the voice at the threshold, as evenly as before.

Laboriously finishing some sesquipedalian word, Brant laid aside his pen and turned slowly in his chair. He surveyed the wiry figure in the doorway, from slouched gray hat to silver-spurred heels, not failing to note the beadlike eyes, the sunburnt chest, where a tawny flannel shirt was open at the throat, and a yellow leathern belt whose two holsters showed well-notched revolver grips.

"You have that honor, sir," Brant vouchsafed at last.

The visitor shifted his feet self-consciously.

"My name is Hanson—Ben Hanson," he said, as if wishing to emerge from the ruck of a common surname.

"Ah, Mister Hanson!" greeted Brant decorously. "I believe I have never met you before, but I assure you you are not entirely unknown in this office!"

"I believe not," Hanson drawled pleasantly enough. "I think you had a little item about me in yesterday's paper."

"Ah, so you have seen this week's *Blade?* No? Well, you ought to subscribe; only six bits a year. Yes, we had quite a little item about you—quite a little item; in fact, we gave you the entire front page."

Hanson swallowed hard and said:

"That's what I come up to see you about; would you mind givin' me some idee of what you had to say?"

This modest request for enlightenment wrought an instantaneous change in the little man in the chair. His muscles went tense and the jetlike eyes narrowed.

"Yes, I'll tell you what I said, Hanson," he replied, his curling lips revealing his worn-down teeth clenched hard. "I said that you and all your kind are a disgrace to this community. I said that there isn't a hole in hell that your presence wouldn't make more infamous. I said that the man who should put streaks of daylight through your miserable carcass would be the benefactor of society just as if he had killed a rattlesnake. I said—"

Hanson's face was livid, and the quivering muscles of his arms were drawing his hands close to the many-notched revolver grips.

"Hold on!" cried Brant. "There's no hurry, is there? You have the only guns in this room, and my time is at your disposal."

Hanson's arms relaxed, but his face remained livid.

"Let me finish what I have started," Brant continued. "I said that nobody but a wanton dastard would kill a man as you shot that inoffensive greaser. I said that, with all your killing, you have never killed a man in a fair fight. I said that you always wait for the advantage, and then murder your victim in cold blood. But I made one mistake, and I'm glad you have come up here so I can correct it now; I said you are yellow through and through. That's wrong; you are yellow all except your liver, and that's a watery white. You are a contemptible coward, and—"

This time the quivering, flexing muscles had drawn Hanson's twitching fingers very close to the belt line.

"Just wait a minute, and I'll prove all I'm saying to you," urged Brant.

"You came up here to shoot me in cold blood like the others, if you found you could get the drop on me. You've been good enough to defer killing me this long for the same reason a cat plays with the mouse it's going to kill. Well, you're not going to kill me now. And don't try. As you stand there I've got you covered with three double-barreled shot-guns loaded with buckshot. Those guns are cocked, and the men with their itching fingers on the triggers have orders from me to blow your miserable head off your shoulders the instant your hands reach your belt."

As if beholding some grisly scene of the night time, Hanson's beady eyes dilated to the full.

"Look around!" Brant ordered ironically. Hanson's glance took in the scantily furnished editorial office, and wandered along the three cracked walls before him and to the sides of him, and the dingy ceiling overhead—his nervous scrutiny revealing no sign of danger. Upon Brant he bent a gaze of commingled fear and chagrin and rage. Again the twitching fingers rose toward the holsters.

"Don't forget yourself," said Brant solicitously. "From where you are standing your nasty brains will spatter over this clean shirt of mine, if you do." And he fastidiously flicked dust from the shoulder of his glisteningly white shirt—unfailing emblem of a riper civilization.

The vividness of Brant's phrase made Hanson's face grow doughlike, and his knees became unsteady.

"Now maybe I'm just bluffing," Brant continued. "Maybe you could kill me as you killed the Mexican, without any danger; and then, again, maybe you couldn't. But just because you haven't a certainty—that's what you always want, a certainty—you're afraid to try to shoot. I wanted to show you that you are a despicable coward, and I've done it—haven't I?"

Hanson offered no reply, but thrust his rigid fingers as far past his holsters as his arms would permit. Brant looked him over with searing contempt in his eyes.

"If it would not be such a travesty on man's relation to the Deity," Brant said, "I'd make you get down on your knees and pray as you have never prayed before. Instead, I just tell you to get out of here. I want you to back out, too."

With the look of a whipped hound, cowering and yet glad to be alive, Hanson backed through the *Blade's* pressroom, toward the door opening on the stairway to the street, his silver-spurred boot-heels beating out an ignominious retreat.

Having watched the measured recessional of his visitor, Brant arose from his chair and took from a peg in the wall a hat that had once been black but was now a nondescript green.

Opening the door of the musty, dust-laden closet adjoining his office, he said cheerily:

"Come, boys, that's about all for today, I guess. It's grub-time, anyway, and I'm mighty hungry."

And out of the semi-darkness of the closet filed silently Max Bleim and his two grimy, ink-smeared assistants. The three bore tightly-gripped shotguns, the hammers still drawn far back like the ears of a vicious, kicking horse. These they stacked against the rheumatic Washington hand-press.

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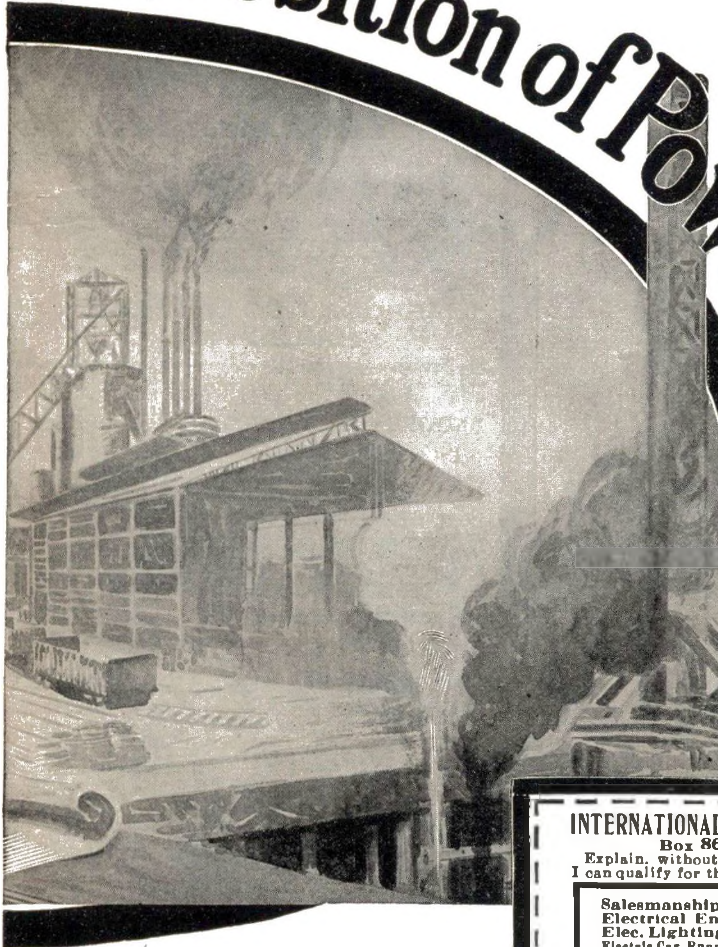

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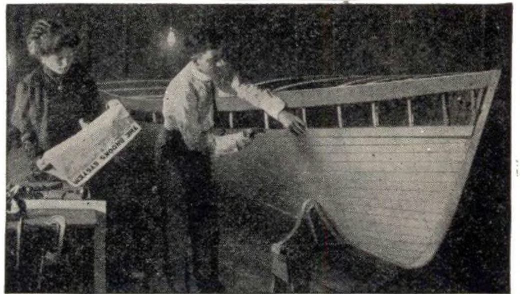

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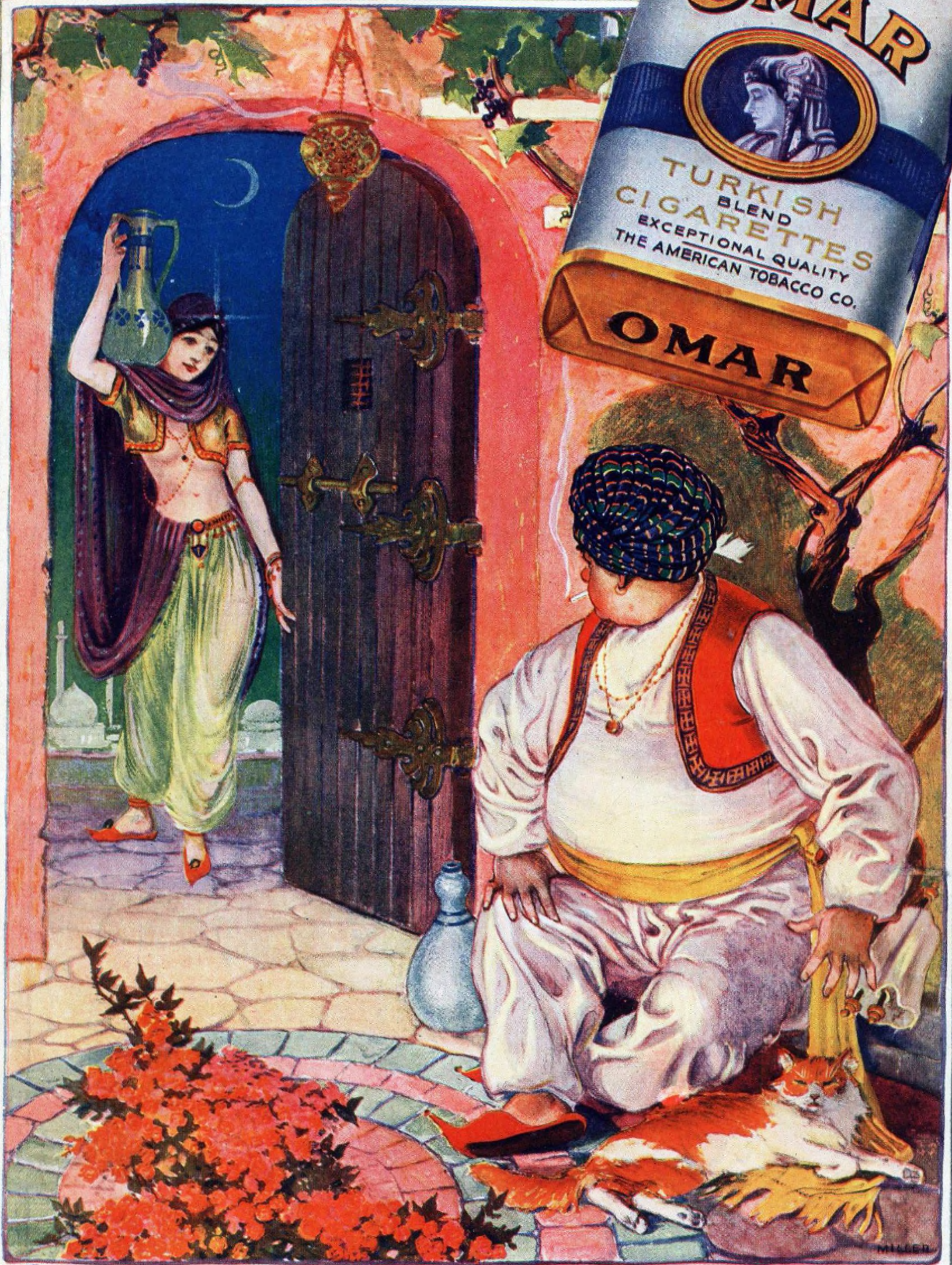
OMAR
TURKISH
BLEND
CIGARETTES
EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY
THE AMERICAN TOBACCO CO.
OMAR
"And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Came shining through the Dusk an Angel Shape"
OMAR

OMAR has revolutionized the cigarette sales of the country in less than 400 days! OMAR is the greatest success in cigarette history.

Two years ago, in the dissolution of the old American Tobacco Company by the U. S. Supreme Court, we lost our established brands of Turkish Blend Cigarettes.

The success of these brands had clearly shown us that the taste of smokers throughout the nation was turning to Turkish Blend.

We immediately set about to produce a NEW and BETTER Turkish Blend Cigarette. Experience had taught us how the Turkish Blend could be IMPROVED. All the knowledge we had gained in 25 YEARS in the making of BILLIONS of cigarettes, was CONCENTRATED on this NEW Turkish Blend.

Our leaf-buyers in Turkey and America were consulted. These men—the greatest leaf-experts in the world—were instructed to select the tobaccos that in their judgment were BEST SUITED to such a blend.

Our blend-experts then took these carefully selected tobaccos and FOR MONTHS experimented with a THOUSAND VARIATIONS of blend.

When OMAR was finally perfected, we KNEW that we had absolutely the FINEST Turkish Blend Cigarette that could be produced.

We were confident that American smokers would CONFIRM our estimation of OMAR—and they HAVE. OMAR is UNQUESTIONABLY the greatest success, in the SHORTEST PERIOD OF TIME, in the history of cigarette making.

The American Tobacco Co.

OMAR Turkish Blend **CIGARETTE**

Package of Twenty
FIFTEEN CENTS

The OMAR Painting (shown on reverse page) in Full Color, 7x10½, on heavy plate paper, without advertising and ready for framing, will be sent to any address in U.S. on receipt of 10c in stamps Add. 111 5th Ave., N. Y.

Jam this news under your hood!

Wise men long ago shed the idea that they couldn't smoke a pipe. They read and believed and struck jimmy pipe joy, speedolike, the first crack out of a tin of

PRINCE ALBERT

the national joy smoke

Chief Joseph
Nez Perce

Coming or going, ***here's tobacco that's got red-blood-man-punch!*** Delicious to the limit in its flavor and fragrance, P. A. injects the spirit of peace and quiet and contentment right into your system.

You argue with yourself that here's honest injun stuff that you can smoke till your smoker is tired! Just isn't a bite or a parch in this Prince Albert tobacco. Because that's cut out by a patented process owned exclusively by the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.

So, when you hear 'em howl and talk-a-few about the "near P. A.s" and the "same-things" and the like, just take a turn in the fresh air and realize that ***no other*** tobacco can be made like Prince Albert!

Why, that's the reason men fondly call P. A. "the national joy smoke!" ***Can you beat it?***

It's your lead.

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R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.

'Frisco men and men from Boston—from up North and down South—all get their Prince Albert just like you do—as fresh and as fragrant and as bully bang-up! Anywhere any man travels — home or abroad—he can get Prince Albert. Toppy red bags, 5c; tidy red tins, 10c; also pound and half-pound humidors.

R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.
Winston-Salem, N. C.

PALL MALL

FAMOUS CIGARETTES

A Shilling in London
A Quarter Here

Pall Mall Series of National Monuments. No. 1 the Sherman Statue, New York.