TWICE-A-MONTH

Complete Story Magazine

Jan. 10, 1925

15 CENTS

A MAGAZINE OF REAL RECREATION

You too, can Earn $200 a Week

J. R. READ
of Kansas, who lives in a small town of 821 people. He has made as high as $69.50 in one day selling Comer All-Weather Topcoats and Raincoats.

E. A. SWEET
an electrical engineer, is making $600 to $1,200 a month and works only about four hours a day.

W. S. COOPER
of Ohio, finds it easy to earn over $300 a month selling Comer All-Weather Topcoats and Raincoats.

I Will Show You How, Without Investment, Experience or Training, You Can Make $800 in 30 Days and Be on the Way to a Big Success

IF you are making less than $100 a week, write to me at once and I will show you how you can more than double your income. You can be your own boss—you can work wherever you please—two hours a day—three hours a day—six hours a day—and make from $4 to $10 for every hour you work.

Inside of thirty days you can own a thriving, prosperous business without investing any money. You can become one of the big money-makers in your community by mailing the coupon below.

Simple as A B C

I am one of the largest manufacturers of high-grade topcoats and raincoats in America. In every community I appoint a representative and this representative has the same opportunity of making money as most merchants, doctors or professional men have. My representative doesn't have to pay rent nor salaries nor take any of the other ordinary business risks and expenses. All the profit he makes he keeps for himself.

People like to buy direct from the factory, for all the money saved by selling this way is passed on to the customer. They know all about Comer All-Weather Topcoats and Raincoats. They know they are big bargains. It is a common thing for one of my representatives to make $20 in a single day, and every dollar they make is net profit. J. C. McCardell of Pennsylvania did. In two days' time Mr. McCardell made $58.20 clear profit for himself. Wm. E. Pyne made $16 in one evening. T. D. Wick cleared $13.60. in two hours.

I want you to act as my representative, and all you need to do is call on my customers and send me their orders. It is the most pleasant, dignified and profitable work that anyone can do.

Build Up a Permanent, Profitable Business for Yourself

I don't want you to think that this is any temporary proposition. You will soon find, after you get started, that your business grows week by week and month by month. Every year's business is bigger than last year's. And when you become known as a Comer representative, business will roll in just for the asking.

How Much Can You Make?

That depends on how much time you devote to this proposition. You can make anywhere from $100 to $200 a week. E. A. Sweet of Michigan made $1,200 for one month's work, and A. B. Spencer earned $625 in one month's spare time. W. J. McCrary jumped his earnings from $2 a day to $16,800 in three years—and I could go on and on telling you about my representatives who have met with equal success. I make it easy for you to make an enormous income. I not only furnish you with all the information you need but I tell you where to go, what to say, and how to make money.

You Get Your Money At Once

If you will mail the coupon at once I will explain how I will arrange things so that you will get your profit the same day you earn it. If you make $30 in one day you will have that $30 in cash in the evening of the same day. You don't have to deliver the coats or collect the money due. I do that. When you drop an order into the mail box you are through, and you have your profits in your pocket.

Don't Send Any Money

You don't have to invest any money and you don't have to put up any capital. Selling experience is not necessary, but if you have it, so much the better. Some of my most successful representatives who are now making from $100 to $200 a week never had any previous experience of this kind. These representatives started in just as I am offering to start you. And they soon discovered that this was the easiest way they ever heard of to make big money.

How to Get Started

Just send me your name and I will tell you how to start on this proposition, even if you can devote only one or two hours a day to it. Later on, when you find out how much money you can make and how delightful the work is, then you will want to put in your full time.

I have paid thousands and thousands of dollars in cash to the readers of this publication who are now my representatives. They realize what a wonderful opportunity it is. As soon as you join our organization you will have an opportunity to become a member of the Comer Thousand A Month Club and will be offered thousands of dollars in cash in addition to your regular income.

Don't Delay—Get Started

Don't wait until someone else gets in ahead of you. Just mail the coupon and I will send you all the details of my offer. I will show you how you can have a permanent, profitable, honorable and pleasant business that will bring you a bigger income than the average merchant, doctor, lawyer or banker. I will show you how you can make $200 a week without working as hard as you are now. Don't miss this chance. Tear out the coupon and mail it to me right away. This is the big money-making opportunity you have been waiting for.

C. E. COMER, The Comer Mfg. Co.
Dept. H-51 Dayton, Ohio

FREE

I am now offering my representatives a Dodge Touring Car as an extra reward in addition to all other profits. If you write at once you will be given the same opportunity.

SPECIAL NOTICE

The Comer Manufacturing Company is the largest business of its kind in the world. Any man who becomes a representative is assured of fair, square, honest treatment, and will be proud of his connection with the company.

JUST MAIL THIS NOW!

THE COMER MANUFACTURING CO.,
Dept. H-51 Dayton, Ohio.

Please send me, without obligation or cost on my part, copy of your booklet and full details of your proposition. Tell me how I can make from $50 to $200 a week.

Name.....

Address.....

Print or write plainly

TWICE-A-MONTH

Complete Story Magazine

With which is combined PEOPLE'S MAGAZINE

Vol. IV **Contents for June 10, 1925** **No. 2**

Publication issued semimonthly by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Desmond G. Smith, President. George C. Smith, Vice President and Treasurer; George C. Smith, Jr., Vice President; Ormond V. Gould, Secretary. Entered as Second-class Matter, June 25th, 1924, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, $3.70. Foreign, $4.20.

WARNING—Do not subscribe through agents unknown to you. Complaints are daily made by persons thus victimized.

IMPORTANT—Authors, agents, and publishers are requested to note that this corporation does not hold itself responsible for loss of unsolicited manuscripts while at this office or in transit; and that it cannot undertake to hold uncalled-for manuscripts for a longer period than six months. If the return of manuscript is expected, postage should be inclosed.

Address all communications to the Street & Smith Corporation

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, $3.00 **SINGLE COPIES, 15 CENTS**

DURHAM-DUPLEX

Handsome *new* Sets

$1.50 Each

Including two packages of 5 Durham-Duplex Blades

THE most durable as well as the most beautiful razor sets ever offered to the Shaving Men of America. A *lifetime* of Good Morning shaves in every one.

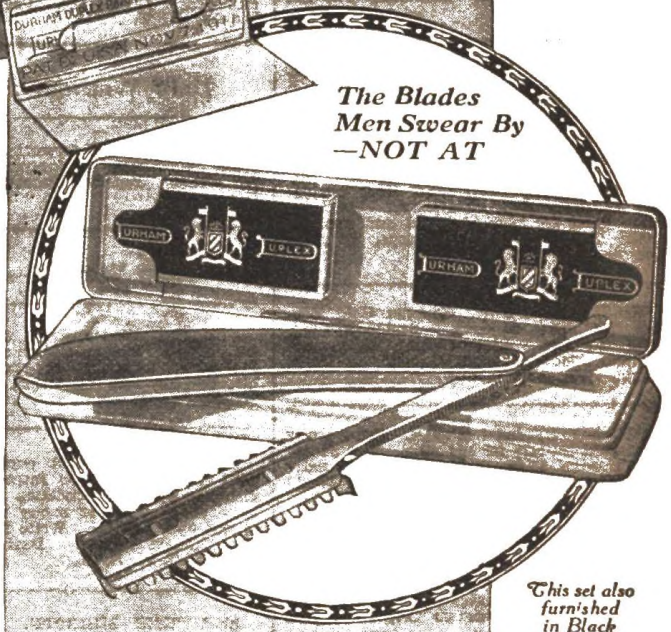
Take your choice—whether you prefer the "Safety" type razor or the long-handled "Safe" style. Ten of the same famous long Durham-Duplex Blades with each set—months of the quickest, smoothest shaving you've ever enjoyed.

Get a Durham-Duplex Demonstrator Razor with one double-edged blade for 25 cents. Either style. A real Razor—not a toy. If your dealer cannot supply you mail the coupon at once.

Interchangeable Blades 50c for package of 5

DURHAM-DUPLEX RAZOR CO., Jersey City, N. J.
Factory—Jersey City, Sheffield, England, Paris, France
For Sale, Etc. Sales Representation in all Countries

The Blades Men Swear By —NOT AT



This set also furnished in Black Leather Kit

Durham-Duplex Razor Co.,
190 Baldwin Ave., Jersey City, N. J.

I enclose 25c for which send me a Durham-Duplex Demonstrator Razor with one detachable, double-edged blade. I prefer the "Safety" Type.....
The Long-handled "Safe" Type..... AP 5

Signed.....

Address.....

City.....

Classified Advertising

Agents and Help Wanted

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, furnishing everything; rent and earnings $30 to $100 weekly, operating our "Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Booklet free. W. Hillyer Ragsdale, Drawer 28, East Orange, N. J.

WE START YOU WITHOUT A DOLLAR. Soaps, Extracts, Perfumes, Toilet Goods. Experience unnecessary. Carnation Co., Dept. 225, St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS—WRITE FOR FREE SAMPLES. Sell Madison "Better-Made" Shirts for large Manufacturer direct to wearer. No capital or experience required. Many earn $100 weekly and bonus. Madison Mfgrs., 503 Broadway, New York.

SELLS LIKE BLAZES! New, instant stain and rust remover. For clothing, table linen, etc. Fine premium with every sale. Big, Quick Profits. Free Outfit. Write today. Christy, 506 Union, Newark, New York.

LIGHTNING STRANGE BATTERY Compound. Charges discharged batteries instantly. Eliminates old method entirely. Gallon free to agents. Lightning Co., St. Paul, Minn.

MAKE $17 DAILY—Finest Extracts, Food Products, Toilet Preparations, Household Necessities, Credit; Sample case Free. Write for amazing offer. Perkins Products, B-22, Hastings, Nebr.

DINING AND SLEEPING CAR conductors (white). Exp. unnecessary. We train you. Send for book of Rules and application. Supt. Railway Exchange, Sta. C, Los Angeles.

$60-$200 A WEEK. Genuine Gold Letters for store windows. Easily applied. Free Samples. Liberal offer to general agents. Metallic Letter Co., 428 B North Clark, Chicago.

BIG MONEY and fast sales. Every owner buys gold initials for his auto. You charge $1.50, make $1.44 profit. 10 orders daily easy. Samples and information free. World Monogram Co., Dept. 12, Newark, N. J.

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. Every owner buys gold initials for his auto. You charge $1.50, make $1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. American Monogram Co., Dept. 170, East Orange, N. J.

AGENTS—200% PROFIT, WONDERFUL Little Article. Something new; sells like wildfire. Carry in pocket. Write at once for free sample. Albert Mills, Manager, 2394 American Building, Cincinnati, Ohio.

EARN $10 DAILY silvering mirrors, plating, refinishing metalware, headlights, chandeliers, bedsteads. Outfits furnished. Deeds Laboratories, 1155 Broadway, New York.

MEN, 18 UP. Railway Postal Clerks, $133 month. Sample coaching free. Write immediately. Franklin Institute, Dept. C2, Rochester, N. Y.

Agents and Help Wanted—*Continued*

AGENTS, our new Household Cleaning Device washes and dries windows, sweeps, cleans walls, scrubs, mops. Costs less than brooms. Over half profit. Write Harper Brush Works, 201 3rd Street, Fairfield, Iowa.

AGENTS: $11.80 daily in advance (send for sworn proof) introducing New Invisible Hosiery. 42 styles, 37 colors, guaranteed seven months. New line now ready. No capital or experience required. You simply take orders. We deliver and collect for you and deliver, suit yourself. Credit given. Pay You Daily, monthly bonus besides. We furnish samples. Spare time will do. Manchester Textile Company, Station 1505, Cincinnati, Ohio.

$20 PROFIT DAILY SELLING SELF-Threading Needles, Needlebooks. Cost 3c-5c. Sell 25c. Three Samples 25c. Catalogue Free. Needlebook Specialty Co., Dept. 6, 661 Broadway, New York.

Business Opportunity

A DIFFERENT BUSINESS, WORTHY, remunerative and interesting, learn privilege trading, small capital $100 or more may be employed. Dept. 113, Paul Kaye, 149 B'dway, N. Y.

Help Wanted—Female

$4-$18 A DOZEN decorating pillow tops at home, experience unnecessary; particulars for stamp. Tapestry Paint Co., 110 LaGrange, Ind.

Help Wanted—Male

ALL Men, Women, Boys, Girls, 17 to 65 willing to accept Government Positions $117-$250, traveling or stationary, write Mr. Ozment, 308, St. Louis, Mo., immediately.

EARN $110 to $250 monthly, expenses paid as Railway Traffic Inspector. Position guaranteed after completion of 3 months' home study course or money refunded. Excellent opportunities. Write for Free Booklet. CM-28 Stand. Business Training Inst., Buffalo, N. Y.

SILVERING MIRRORS. French plate. Easily learned; immense profits. Plans free. Wear Mirror Works, Excelsior Springs, Mo.

ESTABLISH YOURSELF—AT HOME—As a Photographic Expert. Make $75 a week while learning. Write at once for Temporary Offer. International Studios, Dept. 1401, 3601 Michigan Ave., Chicago.

Educational

RAILROAD POSTAL CLERKS start $155 month, railroad pass. Send stamps for questions. Columbus Institute, B-3, Columbus, Ohio.

Detectives Wanted

MEN—Experience unnecessary; travel; make secret investigations; reports; salaries; expenses. Write American Foreign Detective Agency, 114, St. Louis, Mo.

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. Travel. Excellent opportunity. Experience unnecessary. Write, George Wagner, former Government Detective, 1968 Broadway, New York.

Home Weaving

LOOMS ONLY $9.50 and up. Big Money in Weaving Colonial rugs, carpets, etc., from new or waste textile material. Weavers are rushed with order. Send for Free Loom Book, it tells all about Home Weaving and quotes reduced prices and easy terms on our wonderful looms. Union Loom Works, 366 Factory St., Boonville, N. Y.

Patents and Lawyers

PATENTS. Send sketch or model for preliminary examination. Booklet free. Highest references. Best results. Promptness assured. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, 644 G St., Washington, D. C.

INVENTIONS COMMERCIALIZED. Patented or unpatented. Write Adam Fisher Mfg. Co., 223, Enright, St. Louis, Mo.

PATENTS—Write for free Guide Books and "Record of Invention Blank" before disclosing inventions. Send model or sketch of invention for inspection and instructions Free. Terms reasonable. Victor J. Evans Co., 767 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

INVENTORS desiring to secure patents should write for our guide-book, "How To Get Your Patent." Send model or sketch and description of invention for instructions free. Randolph & Co., Dept. 412, Washington, D. C.

Stammering

ST-STU-T-T-TERING And Stammering Cured at Home. Instructive booklet free. Walter McDonnell, 80 Potomac Bank Building, Washington, D. C.

Stamps and Coins

OLD MONEY WANTED. We paid $5,500.00 for one silver dollar to Mr. Manning, of Albany, N. Y. We buy all rare coins and pay highest cash premiums. Send 4c for large Coin Circular. May mean much profit to you. Numismatic Bank, Dept. 440, Ft. Worth, Tex.

Farm Lands

20 ACRES OR MORE OF OUR BEST land in Michigan; $20 per acre; 25c per acre down, balance your own terms. 52-page book free. Swigart Land Company, X1265 First National Bank Building, Chicago.

There He Goes!

And you swing to saddle with him, lost in the thrill of this fine "CH" book.

FOR YOU WHO LOVE ACTION

For you who read for the sheer fun of it—there are the books that bear the famous "C H" brand. Stories of Western life, of love and detectives, chock-full of excitement — every page of them — bound in cloth, with attractive jackets, and published by one of the oldest and best houses in the country, these "C H" books are the sort that keep you on the edge of your chair.

There's "Whispering Canon," by James Roberts, for example. Here's the story of as hard-boiled a bandit as ever stuck up a bank and what happened to him and his gang when he fell afoul of Uncle Matt Simms and Rance Rundel—two men you will be glad to have met up with.

"Whispering Canon" sets the pulse racing, brings the great West to your door and it's only one of a number of titles that you can buy from your bookseller or direct from the publishers for the low price of seventy-five cents.

For men who love action in their reading, there's a thrill in every "C H" book. Remember these are not reprinted editions of old books. None of these stories has ever appeared in book form before.

New Titles:

Unseen Acres
Harry Golden

The Coyote
James Roberts

Rovin' Redden
James Roberts

Jim Curry's Test
David Manning

Bull Hunter's Romance
David Manning

"CH"—The Brand on Good Books

75c CHELSEA HOUSE **75c**

79-89 Seventh Ave. New York City

Summertime

Freckles vanish, skin is made milk white

For 35 years the world has turned to Stillman's Freckle Cream each summer. One jar will delight you by the way it whitens and freshens your complexion. It has a double-action. Freckles are gently dissolved away, and the skin whitened at the same time. Guaranteed to remove freckles or money refunded. At druggists and department stores, 50c and $1.00.

Write for "Beauty Parlor Secrets"

Free booklet tells what your particular type needs to look best. Introduces other Stillman toilet articles to you. If you buy $3 worth (other than Freckle Cream) we give you $1.50 bottle of perfume free. The Stillman Co., 79 Rosemary Lane, Aurora, Ill.

Stillman's Freckle Cream *Double Action*
REMOVES FRECKLES
WHITENS THE SKIN

GET THIN

Free Trial Treatment

Sent on request. Ask for my "pay-when-reduced" offer. I have successfully reduced thousands of persons, often at the rate of a pound a day, without diet or exercise. Let me send you proof at my expense.

DR. R. NEWMAN, Licensed Physician,
State of New York, 286 Fifth Ave., N. Y. Desk C-67

Become an Expert Accountant!

Executive Accountants command big salaries. Thousands of firms need them. Only 6,000 Certified Public Accountants in U.S. Many are earning $3,000 to $10,000 a year. We train you thoroly by mail in spare time for C.P.A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous knowledge of bookkeeping unnecessary. Largest staff of C.P.A.'s in America. Low tuition fee—easy terms. Write now for Free Booklet.

LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 665-H Chicago
The World's Largest Business Training Institution

---

10 DAYS TRIAL

$2 *Brings You this Genuine* **DIAMOND**

Lady's wide top solitaire. **Latest Style** 18 K. white gold hand engraved and pierced ring gives the blue white, perfect cut diamond extra brilliance and large appearance. **Regular price $85--special bargain price only $62.50**

A few cents a day will pay for this handsome ring. **Simply send $2 to us today.** Wear ring for 10 days trial.

Guarantee

Absolute satisfaction; if you don't agree this ring is an **amazing bargain,** we will refund your money. If satisfied, pay balance in **10 equal monthly payments.**

Free Catalog showing bargains in Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry from $10 to $1000. **Cash or liberal credit terms.** Wonderful values. Write Dept. 641

BAER BROS. CO.
6 MAIDEN LANE · NEW YORK

AGENTS NEW SPARK PLUG

Visible Flash

Just Out—Amazing Invention—**Beacon Lite** Spark Plugs. You see the flash of each explosion in the cylinders. Tells which are firing right. Greatest improvement in spark plugs since gas engines were invented. Wonderful gas savers. Agents coining money.

$90 A WEEK

Easy to make with new sure-fire plans. Sells on sight to every auto owner. Phillips, Ont., writes "Sold 2 dozen today, 3 dozen yesterday. Rush 10 dozen." Write for special **Free** Demonstrator Offer and FREE deal to introduce these wonder spark plugs in your territory. Write quick—**today.**

CENTRAL PETROLEUM COMPANY
660 Century Building Cleveland, Ohio

TYPEWRITER PRICES CUT

Your choice of the World's best typewriters—Underwood, Remington, Oliver—full size, late model, completely rebuilt and refinished brand new. Prices smashed down to half. Act quick.

Free Trial

$2 and it's yours

Just send your name and address and we will mail you our complete **FREE CATALOG** prepaid, fully describing and showing actual photographs of each beautiful machine in full colors. Tells every detail of our direct-to-you small-payment plan. Write now for tremendous saving. No obligation whatever. Still time if you act now.

International Typewriter Exchange
186 West Lake Street Department 639 Chicago, Illinois

WANTED

RAILWAY POSTAL CLERKS

$1900 to $2700 Year

(All Postal Pay Just Raised)

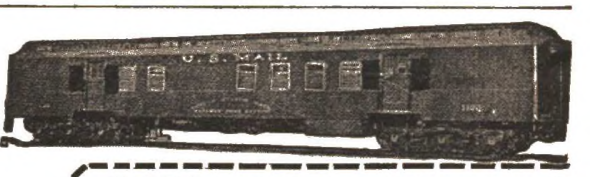
MEN—BOYS 18 UP TRAVEL—SEE YOUR COUNTRY

Many U. S. Government Jobs Open to Women

Steady Work No Layoffs Paid Vacations

Common Education Sufficient

MAIL COUPON TODAY SURE



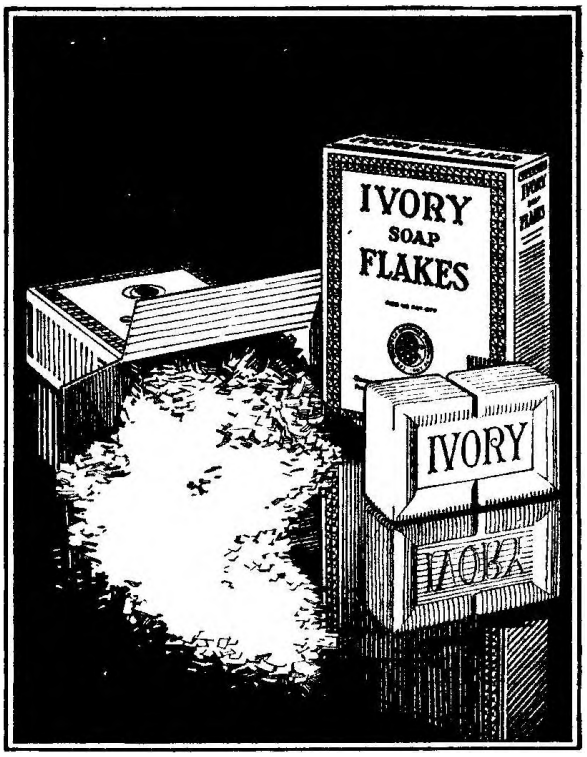
COUPON

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. D280, Rochester, N. Y.

Sirs: Send me without charge, (1) Specimen Railway Postal Clerk Examination questions. (2) Send List of U. S. Government jobs now obtainable. (3) Send free illustrated book, "How to Get Government Jobs." (4) Send free sample coaching.

Name .....

Address .....



Damp towels are dangerous hamper companions *for* chiffon stockings

When delicate silks are put in a hamper with the towels, sheets and colored cottons of the weekly wash, they wear out long before they have given the service you have reason to expect of them.

Why? Because, even though not obviously soiled, they contain perspiration acids from the skin, which are kept moist by the hamper dampness and destroy the silk fibres.

So, to preserve fragile garments and prolong the length of their service, many women have made it a habit to tub them in Ivory suds as soon as possible after they are worn, whether they LOOK *soiled or not.*

In this way acid action and the fading and streaking that come from tossing such garments into stuffy hampers are all prevented. All delicate things reward this simple care with far longer life.

Of course, a soap that is the slightest bit too strong will spoil your whole effort by injuring the fabrics and colors.

Ivory (cake or flakes) is safe. For, as you know, Ivory has for 46 years protected the complexions of millions of women.

The best test we know of for determining the safety of any soap for delicate silks and woolens is this: Ask yourself, "Would I use it on my face?"

How to wash blankets safely

Harsh soap, rubbing and extremes of temperature cause sensitive wool fibres to mat down, shrink and become hard and scratchy.

Keep blankets fluffy by squeezing lukewarm Ivory Suds through the fabric, rinsing in lukewarm water and airing well.

The Ivory suds assures you of beautiful, safe results and absolute cleanliness.

A FREE SAMPLE: A postcard addressed to Section 42-FF, Dept. of Home Economics, Procter & Gamble, Cincinnati, Ohio, will bring you a sample of Ivory Flakes and a booklet on the care of lovely garments, both *free.*

PROCTER & GAMBLE

IVORY

99 44/100% PURE

CAKES *FLAKES*

TWICE-A-MONTH

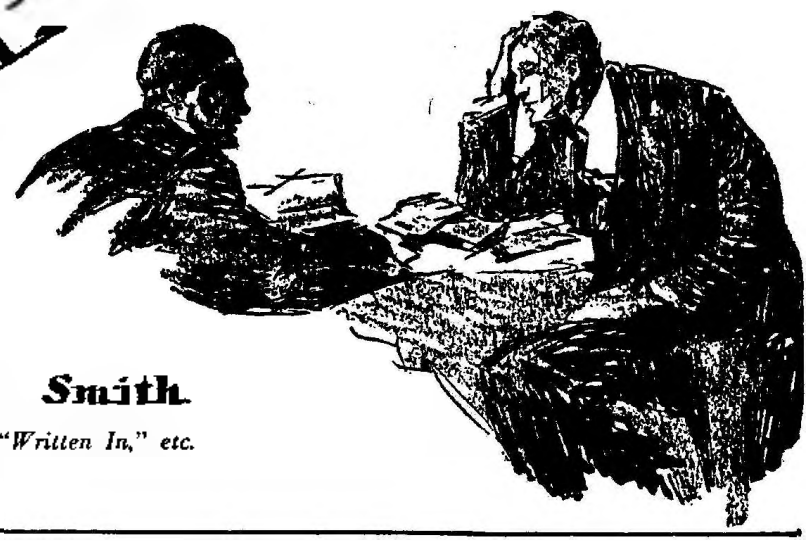
Complete Story Magazine

With which is combined PEOPLE'S MAGAZINE

Vol. IV | June 10, 1925 | No. 2

Uneasy Money

A Complete Novel



By Maxwell Smith

Author of "Folded Up," "Written In," etc.

THE DAY THAT HUGH COLTON AGREED TO SHARE THE EXPENSES OF A RUM-RUNNING EXPEDITION WITH BARR HE STARTED SOMETHING. BUT EVEN WHEN HE HAD TO "BORROW" THE MONEY FROM THE BANK, HE DIDN'T REALIZE THE THINGS WHICH LAY AHEAD. THESE BEGAN TO HAPPEN ONLY AFTER BARR WAS FOUND MURDERED. . . . . .

CHAPTER I.

ON the fourth day of their honeymoon the girl was no longer able to deny Hugh Colton's increasing preoccupation. Almost since the start she had been doing so, telling herself it was all due to her own imagination, but now she had to face the truth. There was something on his mind, worrying him into a state of nervous absent-mindedness.

At times he seemed quite unconscious of her presence in the car beside him. Often when she spoke he did not hear, or answered only with a nod. Further evasion of the fact was impossible. It was making her nervous, too, frightening her. She thought and feared the worst: that he regretted having married her and didn't want her!

They were motoring through the Lake Champlain country on what was to be a fortnight's tour extending into the New England States and back through the Berkshires. But already the savor was gone from this trip for which she had prepared a broad niche wherein to enshrine it in heart and

memory. Her honeymoon! The prospect had given her a thrill of exaltation. The reality did likewise—when she shut her eyes and pretended that the long silences which fell more and more frequently between them were not born of her husband's distraction but on their mutual happiness. It was poor pretense which left only a greater ache when it could not be sustained.

As they rolled through the picturesque Champlain region, the hills ablaze with autumnal tints under a brilliant sun—through this land in which she had visioned such joyous fulfillment of her dream, she strove once more to understand and dissipate the blight, that was unmistakable, encompassing them.

This was the dawn of their lives together yet it was already darkened by clouds and threatened with the black darkness of night. She looked backward, searching bravely for an explanation which again would clear their sky.

Their marriage was almost an elopement. It was so in the sense that they had surprised their friends by simply getting a license and driving round to the parsonage when none expected the wedding to take place for several months. Their engagement had been announced but the ceremony at this time was a matter of impulse arisen from her chance remark that she loved the north country in the fall.

"All right," Colton had said, "we'll go there instead of honeymooning in Bermuda in November. I can get leave from the bank now. We'll start tomorrow."

And so they did.

In comparison with the formal church wedding that was to be theirs, this psuedo-runaway match and a gypsy honeymoon had promised a brighter luster of romance. And it had borne such luster as they motored from their little Jersey town into New York City, and the next day as they went on up the Hudson to Albany. Since then it had dimmed without any reason that she could find for the tarnishing.

That run to Albany, she saw now, had marked the coming of the shadow. It was then that she first noticed his moments of aberration, forerunner of the moodiness that steadily became more pronounced after they left Albany on the third day. The farther they traveled, the deeper he crawled within himself until now as they swung away from Champlain into the Vermont hills she could classify his manner only as brooding. Over what? She wanted to know but was fearful of asking.

Her honeymoon—this! With a husband who most of the time stared fixedly ahead, frowning, silent as if he were alone, both hands gripped tight on the wheel as if he were in dire need of something substantial to hold onto. He clung to it as a drowning man clings to a life belt. Why? What need of a buoy had he?

Yet he tried to be cheerful, she granted, when he thought to be. But when he did, the effort was obvious. He appeared to have to drag himself out of his darkling thoughts by main strength. Then he was like himself, letting the car drift along and freeing a hand from the wheel to caress her. Like himself? Yes, except for a tightness to his smile and a wavering something in his eyes whose smile was even more tense, forced, than that on his lips.

Unable to understand the change in him and, therefore, unable to dispel her own chill dread, she had to speak, to sound him and perchance initiate the step which he would not—toward their separation! If he had made a mistake in marrying her, if he didn't want her as he—and she—had believed he did, then she would give him opportunity to say so. Now was the time to rectify the error. They could not go on like this.

"Hugh!" Her voice was the merest whisper. She no more than formed

his name, but it echoed so in her heart that to herself it seemed almost a shout. When he did not hear she read that as further evidence of indifference. He did not want to hear, but he must.

"Hugh!" She spoke louder, with the tremulous sharpness of angered pride.

Hearing this time, he turned to her with that faulted smile only partly erasing the frown with which he had been staring at the ribbon of road winding beneath them.

"What is it, sweetheart?" His light tone changed to one of concern and his eyes puckered as he noted her paleness and the questioning light in her eyes. "Why, what's wrong, dear? You look tired. Have you had enough of jaunting around? Would you rather stop and rest somewhere for a few days?"

She shook her head.

"No, I'm not tired."

He avoided her eyes, again making the excuse of watching the road. She wasn't tired; he knew that. When he used the word he had known it was not the right one. He should have said she looked worried, fearful. And he knew also the cause of her fear—that he himself had communicated to her the fright that was relentlessly gnawing away his nerve.

He swore to himself, at himself, and made a greater effort to banish the harassment from his countenance. What had he to worry about? What could be gained by worrying? He was only bringing misery to the girl to whom he had promised, and who deserved, nothing but happiness. That was what he had promised—happiness. And yet, even then, he had been aware of the hovering cloud which might so easily obscure it. A cloud of his own making.

"Then what"—he spared a hand from the wheel to draw her to him—"what is sweetheart scowling about? Mad?" he demanded with exaggerated playfulness, squeezing her.

She shook her head again. It was difficult to say what she had made up her mind to say. So long as it remained unsaid she could go on pretending. But should his response be what she dreaded, that would be the end. Her dream would be over. She would not be able even to pretend.

"No," she postponed the issue she desired, shrinking from it, "I'm not—mad."

"What then?" he insisted, slowing the car and meeting her troubled eyes. "Come, no secrets! Tell hubby all about this gloom and he'll go after it with an ax. What's wrong, dear? You are tired," he repeated lamely, "aren't you? We'll stop somewhere."

She leaned close against his shoulder, his arm around her, but there was no yielding to her body. She was rigid, holding her nerves in check, smiling a little, uncertainly, hopefully.

"No," she returned again, "I'm not tired. I don't want to stop anywhere unless——"

She looked away, then back at him as her hand came up impulsively to his.

"Hugh," she asked abruptly, "are you—are you sorry?"

Sorry! The word startled him so that his foot came down on the gas. His attention relaxed from steering, the car lunged off the road. To meet the emergency he had to thrust his wife from him and give both hands to the wheel, but even so, he could not prevent the car from grazing a tree.

Startled in turn, she sat staring in the corner of the seat where he had shoved her. Then, as he brought the car to a stop, she experienced an odd feeling of relief totally unrelated to the mishap that had so nearly engulfed them. She felt that she had magnified her husband's moodiness far out of true proportion—that she had attached to it a significance which could not be.

He was undeniably worried, depressed, but why should she imagine

herself responsible for his depression? Instead of giving way to foolish fears she would do better to keep up her spirits and cheer him, rouse him from this inner concentration that was weighing him down.

It could be nothing really serious, but some petty annoyance that had assumed a plaguish size through dwelling on it overmuch. Perhaps some little thing he had neglected to do at the bank that would irk him. Perhaps any of a score of things, but not herself.

With this brightened outlook she was encouraged to proceed and it was reflected in the modified form of what had been but a moment ago a tragic question.

"You're not sorry, Hugh, are you?"

Half turned from the steering wheel he was staring at her with a mingling of perplexity and perturbation that her first phrasing had created. Reversal of the direct inquiry which had seemed to challenge him to admit that he *was* sorry, into what was evidently a plea for him to assure her that he was *not* sorry, set him mentally on his feet.

He saw that she was referring to something entirely different from what he had inferred. Her expression, as she moved over beside him, gave him the right cue. The road was quiet. Laughing, he opened his arms and she snuggled into them.

"Sorry!" he exclaimed, professing not to understand. "Whatever are you talking about, wife? Why should I be sorry?"

"Because"—her voice came muffled from his shoulder; she had now no dread of the answer but was eager for the tonic of its sweet reassurance—"because you married me. You're not, are you?"

He laughed again, while remorse stabbed him. He was bitten by regret, though not for the reason she meant. But he had to laugh and mock her with raillery.

"What a question to shoot at a man on his honeymoon! Look out or you'll be putting the notion into my head to ask that of you. By George, I will! Tell me, woman, quickly, are you sorry? Tell me!"

The answer was womanlike and, with the accompanying action, quite complete. "Don't be silly."

"That's what I say"—he demonstrated—"don't be silly, sweetheart. But then," he sighed lugubriously, "I suppose I've got myself to blame. It must be all of fifteen minutes since I told you how I adore you and——"

"Hours," she said. "You didn't say a word or even look at me, for ages. You just sat like an image, running the old car as if you were part of it. I don't believe you even remembered I was here.

"And then," she accused, "when I reminded you that I hadn't fallen overboard you let the car run away and tried to kill me against that tree! Can you deny that? If that wasn't enough to make me think you're sorry, well, I don't know what should. You forgot about me, didn't you, and tried to get rid of me?"

"I admit nothing," he grinned, "not a thing. You can't prove anything. You're prejudiced and you haven't any witnesses. I deny everything except that I love you, Evelyn, and——"

There was another demonstration which would have been censored even in the States which permit unlimited footage in kisses. It might have gone for a record had not a passing car hooted derisively.

Evelyn struggled out of the clinch. The world was fair again, only——

"No more trances," she warned, "or you may find I have gone overboard when you come to. And if you try to wreck us again, remember, ours will be the first honeymoon to end right in Reno."

Smiling crookedly, he confessed his fault.

"I have been sort of in the clouds but isn't that to be expected? I can't get over marveling that I've got you——"

"Blarney," she interrupted, pushing away his reaching hands and shaking her hair out of its confusion. "You keep out of the clouds, young man, and look like you're honeymooning and not as if you're at a funeral. You had me worried, Hugh," she added seriously, "and it wasn't pleasant. I thought—well, never mind what I thought but you won't make me think so again, will you?"

He looked down unnecessarily as he shifted the gears to get into motion, then leaned forward to fiddle with the gas pump. She didn't see the drawn expression that came over his face. It was gone when he straightened in his seat.

"Forget it, Evelyn," he said quietly. "Don't let's talk about worry. We—haven't any."

"But you——" She stopped, looking at his knuckles showing white as he gripped the wheel again in that same fashion—the hands of a drowning man clinging to a last support. A foolish simile, disturbing. She hated it. "But you," she went on likely, inviting his confidence, "have been worrying, haven't you? That's what worried me. You've been so silent and frowny."

He admitted it with an appearance of frankness, condemning himself the while for having been so transparent.

"I guess that's true but I didn't realize my thoughts were wandering so noticeably, I have been worrying a little. A business deal," he explained vaguely without explaining anything.

She simply nodded but her surprise was manifest. She never had heard of him having any business affairs outside of the bank, his father's bank, in which he was cashier.

"Yes," he answered her unspoken question with studied casualness, "a little investment out of which I figured on getting enough to buy a whole bundle of things for a certain wife but now"—he shook his head and the frown returned unbidden—"I'm not so sure. It doesn't look so good unfortunately. But never mind," his speech became jerky, nervous, despite his shrug of unconcern, "it's nothing much, nothing important. Nothing worth worrying over."

Without meaning to, she spoke her thought.

"Is it a deal with Howard Barr?"

Giving her a quick glance he started the car.

"Yes, he's in it. Why, dear?"

"Oh, nothing. You've been with him quite a lot recently, that's all. He's a broker, isn't he?"

Colton nodded. That, at least, was what Barr was known as—a stock broker. The trading that he did in stocks, however, was negligible. There are other forms of brokerage giving about as speedy returns as that practiced in Wall Street, and with surer and bigger profit on the outlay.

The girl checked herself on the point of remarking that she didn't care a great deal for Mr. Barr. That would be a gratuitous comment decidedly out of place. He was Hugh's friend and business associate. That being so, she was the more reluctant to criticize since she had no intention of either choosing his friends or interfering with his friendships.

She dropped the subject to speak of the splendors of the woods. There had been enough of serious and semiserious talk. Now that she had stirred Hugh out of his brooding she had to see that he did not have any excuse for backsliding.

But it was uphill work for Colton. His thoughts were back in the home town, Harlington. The picture ever be-

fore him was of the vault in the Harlington Bank. A vision of the discovery which might be made there at any moment.

For the guilt he had left behind he railed at himself impotently. For having married Evelyn Sheridan while that guilt hung over him on a slender thread he despised himself. He damned the weakness that had made him a thief. He twice damned the selfishness, the cowardice, that had led him to bring Evelyn closer within the circle of his disgrace by making her his wife.

CHAPTER II.

The temptation had been great. He hadn't meant to steal—of course not. He smiled sardonically over that. He hadn't meant to steal! A man in his position never does. Seldom, anyhow. He had only borrowed the money. Fifteen thousand dollars!

Just a loan. An informal loan, yes, but good—as good as many others he had seen made. So it had seemed. A loan that would enable him to reap big, quick profits and replace the fifteen thousand. That was how it had looked. And he had fallen. Howard Barr had made the proposition alluring. Easy money.

Under other circumstances Colton could have obtained the money from his father. John Colton was wealthy in a small-town way, a successful small-town banker. He wasn't tight, and his ideas were liberal. He took what enjoyment he could out of life and was tolerant of his son's pleasures.

He believed in relaxation, recreation, as the means of keeping a man tuned up for business. Too much grinding could not but wear out any instrument. Hugh was only twenty-seven years old, a young man still in the spring of life. He could not, his father understood, run with the country-club crowd, maintain an automobile, go into New York occasionally to theater and cabaret, and at the same time save much out of his four thousand a year. Colton, Sr., was an advocate of thrift, naturally, but in a broad way. Those who could afford the little luxuries and frivolities which counteract the daily wear and tear should have them—within reason, of course, and without extreme prodigality.

Hugh could afford them. His career was already carved, his future assured. The bank would some day be his, all but a few shares of stock held by the other officers and directors. Giving him free rein was better than curbing him unduly. His pleasures were moderate, wholesome, when they might otherwise have become sly, vicious. His head was level on his shoulders and he had a good, sound business sense—thus thought his father.

Something his father had said only four days ago came back now to Colton with a pang. That was when Hugh asked for an immediate vacation.

"Well," his father smiled, divining what was afoot, "I thought you were scheduled to go to Bermuda the end of November. How about that if you take a vacation now?"

"We'll talk about that later," said Hugh.

"All right," said his father dryly, "I'll have the deed to that house transferred while you're away and if Evelyn doesn't like the furnishings we put in you can throw them out. And, by the way, Evelyn will probably want a new bonnet or something some day so we'll put you down for a thousand-dollar Christmas bonus and see if we can afford to make your wages five thousand on January first. I don't have to wish you and Evelyn good luck, son, but I'm doing it anyhow. Damn it! Don't stand like a grinning ape! Aren't you going to invite me to my only child's wedding?"

That to a son who was a thief! A thief who, in fact, was running away—a coward who was afraid to remain and

afraid to go alone. A thief whose nerves screamed over his betrayal of trust whenever he entered the bank vault where fifteen thousand dollars that should have been, was not. A coward who, fleeing for relief to other scenes, took with him the girl he loved in the hope that she would help him for the time being to forget and so compose himself against the shock of impending exposure.

Hugh Colton did not spare himself. But the most amazing part was that he had allowed himself to be persuaded by Howard Barr. He, trained in banking and natively possessed of a banker's caution, had been drawn into a get-rich-quick scheme! He had turned thief for that! To participate in a get-rich-quick proposition which was, moreover, illegal!

That was why he had not found it possible to ask his father for the money. Because the use to which it was to be put would not bear inspection in the light of day.

Even if the taint of illegality were removed, John Colton would have frowned on the venture. He had the banker's distrust, hatred for speculation, especially when the bait of vast profits was dangled. And this could only be classed as the sheerest speculation since it was menaced not only by the law but by other forces at odds with the law. Itself outside the law, no appeal could be made for legal protection against those who might seek to overthrow the enterprise to their own benefit.

The fifteen thousand dollars had gone into a pool formed by Howard Barr to run a cargo of liquor!

Why he had been such an awful fool was now beyond Hugh Colton's understanding. He was under no extraordinary demand for money. He knew that a home, furnished completely, was to be his father's wedding gift, and that an increase in salary would come as a matter of course. For any legitimate expense beyond his immediate resources he had only to go to his father. He had all he required and could get anything he wanted within reason by asking for it.

Nevertheless he had succumbed to the lure of easy money. Howard Barr had shown how he could get two dollars for one dollar, and he had bitten like the most avaricious sucker. Worse. He had stolen the money that was to earn his hundred per cent. Fifteen thousand dollars of the bank's money. He counted no more than that but with it was four thousand dollars of his own, obtained by selling the few bonds he had from time to time cautiously laid by.

And then he had run, taking Evelyn with him. Reviling himself, he charged that he had, in reality, hastened their marriage so that he might hide behind her skirts. His father would not have her suffer the disgrace of having her husband branded embezzler. Therefore she could save him.

But this self-made charge was harsher than he merited. It was not true. He had taken her because he wanted her, because he believed her nearness would soothe and bring surcease from his haunting thoughts. With her beside him he believed he could be uplifted to taste the sweet for a while before he must stand drinking the bitterness of shame, a thief, before his father.

Not so. As she had observed, the farther they went, the deeper he became lost in grim introspection. He was again a fool for having imagined he could forget. Not even her presence could blot out for an instant the shameful recollection. The happiness he craved was within his reach but he could not snatch it. The barrier of consciousness of wrong doing would not permit him. He had not only failed to attain his own selfish purpose but he

had abased himself further by failing at her expense.

The knowledge that her husband was a thief would be a more cruel blow than had the revelation come before their marriage. Unattached to him she could have no actual contact with his fall. As his wife she must to great extent share with him the ignominy. Flying to her arms as a refuge, seeking the comfort of her companionship and through that an interlude of peace, he had only increased the jangle and added to his harassment.

The whole matter of this flight was an error, as great as he had made originally in listening to Barr's proposition. While he remained about his duties in the bank he was in a position to see the sword falling. Away from Harlington, out of touch, he had no idea what was happening. For all he knew the theft already had been discovered. He should have stayed, watching, planning to defend himself.

But that was what his nerves could not stand—the watching and waiting for some one to bare the secret. He was so on tiptoe that he could scarcely keep out of the vault. Since the discovery could not forever be delayed, he wanted to be present at the time, to know at once that the crash was upon him. And then, lest his frequent visits to the vault attract attention, he jumped the other way, bolting with some crazy idea that it would be easier to receive the shock at long distance. It was a fallacy disproved within twenty-four hours of his departure from Harlington when his wife first noticed the tarnishing and threatening eclipse of their honeymoon.

Now he was yearning to return and keep watch on the vault and meet the issue standing up. He wanted only to go back but couldn't on account of Evelyn. How could he explain to her the cutting short of the wedding trip which he had already come nigh to wrecking and could save from disaster only by keeping smiling? How could its sudden termination reflect upon Evelyn?

There would be gossip. No; he must go on and keep smiling! That necessity made him smile as might an innocent man who, on the scaffold, found humor in the fact that the wrong man was being hanged! He would finish the honeymoon smiling—unless a summons home or an officer with a warrant should end it untimely.

All in all, he was glad when Evelyn jarred him out of his depression. Thereafter he realized that he must keep his thoughts submerged or reawaken her disheartening fear that he did not love her. Compelled to consider her happiness above all he came nearer to the measure of peace he sought.

There came to him a certain recklessness as the days slipped by. Giving himself up to the moment he reached a state in which he could view the situation coldly, sensibly. The situation was not utterly beyond repair. If he could replace the fifteen thousand dollars—— He could do that only by appealing to his father and confessing his guilt. That would mean crawling, whining.

He'd rather let the affair run its course. If anything, he regretted that there would be no prosecution, that his father would make good. He regretted it not because he was anxious for punishment but because on the face of things he had not even taken the ordinary risks of a thief, but had played safe by, in effect, robbing his own parent. This, also, was not exactly true. He had believed he was playing safe but not in just that way.

Besides—here again he smiled ironically—the string was not yet all run out. There was still a chance, a feeble chance, that his ship would come home. That was literally true about the ship. For, according to Barr, the rum-run-

ning effort had failed them only because the schooner he had chartered and loaded had not reported since leaving the West Indies seven weeks ago.

What had become of her he did not know, but there had been storms and thus a hope remained that she would show up. A hope, but a slender one. The great probability was that the skipper had sold both her and her cargo and was now sitting pretty somewhere with the proceeds, some hundred and fourteen thousand dollars. Or she might have been captured by a rum pirate, in which event she should presently be turned loose to sail into port with empty hold.

Still, there was a chance of her showing up safe and sound—a chance perhaps no better than that of the proverbial snowball but sufficient to sustain Barr's optimism. Revenue craft had been particularly active along the coast, he pointed out, wherefore the schooner might well be sailing around looking at the moon till the dry navy's burst of activity subsided. The main argument against this lay in the fact that search of Rum Row failed to reveal her. Still——

At times Colton felt like charging his plight wholly to Barr, but his sense of justice would not permit. Barr had tempted him, it was true, and had inspired the "borrowing" of the fifteen thousand dollars from the bank, but Barr had not forced him to commit the act. He had done that of his own free will—free, that is, except for the stirring magnet of easy money.

He couldn't blame Barr entirely. He couldn't—although he never would have taken the money if Barr had not provided the blind which reduced danger of discovery to a minimum. Barr had shown him how the cash could be taken and yet apparently never leave the bank vault. That was the deciding factor in obtaining the "loan." A check on the cash in hand would produce a correct total. But an examination of the currency would show fifteen thousand dollars in counterfeit bills!

That, to Colton, was an aggravating feature of his crime. What if the bank should put the counterfeit into circulation? The spurious notes were well executed to get past ordinary observation. Coming fresh from the vault it was not unlikely that they would get past the teller. A veritable flood of them might be issued before any one noticed. There would then be no possibility of hushing up the theft. It was a national bank. The Federal prosecutor would step in.

Colton remembered how amused he had been when Barr handed him the bundle of crisp new notes, five hundred tens and five hundred twenties, and asked if he would give eight hundred dollars for the bunch. Wrapped as they were in lots of a hundred they looked all right and he had no reason for doubting their genuineness. He supposed Barr was joking, showing off.

When Barr added that he had paid only eight hundred for the fifteen thousand, Colton still didn't tumble but inferred that the larger figure represented the return on a lucky investment of eight hundred dollars. Barr laughed over that remark and offered one of the bills for closer inspection.

"All counterfeit," he explained as Colton stared his astonishment. "That's another thing we've got to thank the bootleg business for—a bale of bad money. It was turned out like German marks and put over by the ton, especially on Rum Row, until the fraud got so raw that every bill handed over in the rum business now goes under a microscope and a searchlight. That's how I managed to pick this bundle up cheap."

Such was Barr's feeler, leading up to his confidential admission that he dabbled in the great bootleg industry—and, later, to the substitution of the counterfeit paper for a corresponding

number of ten and twenty-dollar bills from the vault of the Harlington Bank.

In making the substitution Colton felt secure. The currency he took was from the reserve on hand to meet a possible emergency, and to replace badly worn bills, money which was not necessary in conducting the ordinary day's business. For months, for a year even, the same stacks remained unbroken.

To all intents this money was untouched in its corner of the vault. It was tallied each day, but only perfunctorily. It was known to be there and the wrappers testified to the amount. To count it every day would be an absurd waste of time and energy. So long as the wrappers were intact it must be all right. Only when the examiners came——

The examiners! Here was an even greater point of danger than that a stack of the counterfeits should get into circulation. As cashier Colton was able to guard against the latter contingency but he could not guard against the coming of the examiners. The amounts on wrappers meant nothing to them except as figures to be verified by actual count of the cash. The moment they started to count these bogus notes would spell finish!

The inquisition to learn who had made the substitution would be on, with the guilt lying somewhere among five persons: John Colton, Hugh Colton, the teller and the bookkeepers. Colton, Sr., would be automatically eliminated and, though Hugh Colton considered whether responsibility might be directed at one of the others, the thought proved nauseating.

He was a thief but he wasn't down so low as to play the part of a dirty scoundrel. If the guilt was not definitely placed the careers of these three other men would be ruined. He himself could survive. His father would believe him innocent and would say so.

Without feeling heroic he knew he couldn't do that. These men were his friends. He had known them and their people most of his life and had gone to school with them. He couldn't throw on them the stigma of theft which all three would have to bear equally while the crime remained unsolved.

It was really the prospect of a visit from the examiners which caused him to run. There was no way of telling when they would come, but toward the last he expected each minute to see them enter. That and the constant watching to make sure—that none of the counterfeit paper got into the teller's cage and wore him down till he had to get away.

Then Evelyn had expressed her liking for the mountain trails in autumn. Here he was on his travesty of a honeymoon, wearing a mask of a smile to deceive her and wishing himself back in Harlington where he would be in place to witness and meet the blow as it fell.

Strangely enough, the time passed swiftly after that fourth day when his wife broke into his murky contemplation. The suspense became less biting, more bearable. Finally he became resigned. There was nothing he could do to halt the march of events. These days belonged to Evelyn. He gave them to her. There would be enough dark days in the near future.

His nerves were settled when, with three days remaining, he headed the car homeward. This was as he had planned. There never had been an idea of staying away, of becoming a fugitive to be hunted endlessly. All he had wanted was a rest, relief from the racking contact with his crime, the watching and waiting. Her companionship had given him that. He had regained composure to face his ordeal.

The situation, apparently, was unchanged and nothing had been discovered. He prayed that it would remain so until he reached home. What a magnificent homecoming it would be for Evelyn were she to return from her

honeymoon with her husband in handcuffs! It took all his power of self-control to dally through the mountains as she desired. He wanted to speed home and obviate all possibility of her suffering such crowning disgrace.

He wasn't even permitted to do that—to shield her from the shame with which his selfishness threatened her. There was nothing he could do. Nothing—unless his ship came in! Forlorn hope! When he talked with Barr on the phone last night it was still unreported.

CHAPTER III.

Evelyn Colton, also, was glad to be home. Aside from her eagerness to assume her place in the house of which she was mistress—her very own home—to dress it up and know the pride of possession, there was another reason. She was not so thoroughly deceived as Hugh supposed. In that simulation of freedom from care during the latter part of the honeymoon he had not been alone.

On the question of his devotion to her she was fully reassured but in the matter of his transaction with Howard Barr she entertained a vague alarm. Although she tried to put the feeling away, ascribed it to her dislike—also vague—for Barr, it would not depart.

Nor was it quieted any when she learned that Hugh was in communication with Barr during the honeymoon, a fact which came to her accidently one evening when a hotel page announced in her presence that the operator had Barr on long distance. She expected some further word of explanation then from Hugh but he offered none, passing over the incident with only a casual word.

On a subsequent occasion she knew he made another long-distance call and, while no comment was made on either side, she concluded that he again talked with Barr. She was piqued by this refusal to confide in her until she explained it away as due to a natural reluctance to bother her with his business worries at such a time.

Then, spying beneath his resumed cheerfulness, some of her earlier misgiving revived. She knew he was anxious to get home, presumably to be in closer touch with Barr, and several times she almost suggested curtailing their trip. She didn't only because Hugh gave her no opening.

On his account, therefore, she welcomed the return to Harlington and was hopeful of a quick end to his worry—and her own which she so successfully concealed. Whatever it was that he and Barr were engaged upon must come to a head some time. All she asked was that it be closed up soon. Once the outcome was decided it should be off Hugh's mind. Win or lose, he should be able to forget it and the strain would be over.

On the second evening of their homecoming, however, she witnessed something which further perturbed her.

Barr was among several friends who dropped in to extend their felicitations. Within a couple of minutes of his arrival she noticed Hugh motion him into a corner and address him in quick undertone. She saw Barr's rueful smile accompanied by a headshake, followed by a frankly troubled frown from Hugh and a grim tightening of his lips.

Barr raised his voice then with some remark about the house, saying he would like to look over the rest of it. Hugh said he would show him. With their heads together they drifted out of the living room.

It was a stupid pretext, Evelyn thought, knowing it was nothing more by the length of their absence. The closing of the library door gave confirmatory evidence that they had gone into executive session. Chatting on with her friends, she had to fight off a sinking sensation. Seeing Hugh and

Barr together, stealing away into secret conference when other guests were in the house, impressed her as somehow ominous.

This was Colton's first conversation with Barr since his return. The question which Evelyn saw spoken and answered in the negative had to do, of course, with the ship that had not come in. Behind the closed door of the library Barr added to that reply.

"I guess we're stuck," he said bluntly, his optimism at last giving way. "It's nine weeks since she sailed and I can't find word of her anywhere. She's either at the bottom of the Atlantic or else we've been nicely decorated with the double-cross. I'm willing to give up but it hurts damn hard. Twenty-five thousand is what the act stands me. Twenty-five thousand cold cash out of little Howard's bank roll."

"But how about the man you had aboard?" asked Colton with a puzzled frown, referring to their representative who had gone to purchase and load the cargo and to handle the cash when the liquor was sold overside. "You knew him well, didn't you? You've said right along that he could be trusted."

Barr shrugged.

"Sure I know him and if I hadn't figured him on the level I wouldn't have handed him our seventy thousand in cash money. Whitford's all right—or I thought he was, anyhow. But what the hell! You never can tell when a man's going to get too much of somebody else's money in his hands.

"Maybe it was like that with him. A hundred and fourteen thousand isn't a bad stake and there must have been that in the cash register when the last case went overboard. Whitford's done a sneak, I guess, or he's sloshing around the ocean somewhere with his throat cut. It's tough on us either way."

Colton nodded somberly. Tough! That didn't begin to say it! He shivered slightly over that picture of their missing agent and Barr's callous way of putting it.

"I don't see why he should have been killed. It isn't necessary to murder a man to rob him."

"From what I've heard," said Barr dryly, "the rum pirates don't stop to reason why. They just go ahead and do it. If he looked as though he were in the way or they didn't like his looks, that would be enough."

Hugh Colton walked up and down the room, thinking. The last hope appeared to be gone. Now what? Why shouldn't he ask his father for fifteen thousand dollars? He needn't explain what he wanted it for. Simply say he must have it. He could do that—nothing to stop him—but would he get it without giving a good reason?

His father was peculiar in that way. He was generous but he always made sure that his generosity was not wasted. What would he think even if he gave the money? What was he most likely to think? Probably that his son was paying blackmail—buying up some threat that had been precipitated by his marriage! Paying to hush up the disclosure of some scandalous episode, a past love affair!

Colton shook his head. If he got the money from his father without telling its destination it could only be at the cost of a loss of confidence no greater than if he were to confess the embezzlement. He'd rather have his father know him as a thief than imagine that he had entangled himself in the hands of blackmailers. When a man pays blackmail it is because he has to. The paying is in itself an odorous admission.

"Are you sure," he asked an old question, "that Whitford loaded the stuff and sailed?"

"Dead sure," said Barr. "We've checked that up from every angle. He bought sixty thousand dollars' worth of rum. The other ten thousand went for

the schooner and incidentals. There's nothing to it, Hugh. We're stuck," he shrugged again, "and so far as I'm concerned I've pocketed the loss. Twenty-five thousand—bang! That's what I'm hit for."

Colton was irritated suddenly by Barr's reiteration of how much he had contributed. That was Barr's own money. Not borrowed or stolen money.

"You don't have to keep telling me how much you're out. I've heard it often enough. How about me? How about that fifteen thousand that I—we borrowed?"

Barr paused in the lighting of a cigarette.

"We?"

"Yes, we," said Colton angrily. "If you hadn't got that damned counterfeit money I wouldn't be in this deal. You got me in. How about helping me out? That money has got to be replaced quick. How about it?"

Barr made a warning motion.

"Keep your voice down, old man," he advised quietly. "You can't help yourself any by broadcasting that way. I'd help you out in a minute but it can't be done. I sank everything I could lay my hands on in this proposition, except maybe a couple of thousand and if that's any good to you take it and welcome. If my creditors got together tomorrow," he laughed, "they wouldn't find the bones worth picking."

Colton's spasm of anger passed, giving way to exasperation.

"Oh, damn it all, Barr! I'm not blaming you. I'm not welching. I'm just—well—— Oh, hell!"

That summed it up from Barr's viewpoint also. Nodding understandingly, he offered what appeared to be the most feasible idea.

"Why don't you tap the old man?"

"I've thought of that. No."

"He'll have to make good, anyhow."

"That's why I'm going to let him catch me with the goods," said Colton grittily. "When the counterfeit is found I'll own up but not before then. I prefer to have him think I tried to go through with it than that I lost my nerve and begged out. It's crazy, I know, but that's how I feel about it."

Barr moved uncomfortably. He didn't want to be drawn in——

"Then what will you tell him?

"The truth, I suppose. Why not?"

"But, good Lord, Hugh, you wouldn't do that! I mean, what's the sense? That would be telling where you got the queer money. You don't want to do that."

Colton looked at him coldly, finding a certain satisfaction in seeing him squirm. But what was the use if he did tell that Barr had given him the counterfeit notes—which he wouldn't do. Even if the case were to be prosecuted he couldn't prove that Barr knew anything about it.

"No," he said, "I'll blame the good old alibi, Wall Street. That's usually the goat in a case like this, if Broadway doesn't get the medal. Let's get back to the folks."

He started for the door but Barr detained him.

"Listen, Hugh, why don't you go through with it? Sit tight, I mean. I hate to see you take the gaff. You're not the only one who could have switched in that phony money. Well, then, all you've got to do is to sit tight. I'm the only one who knows that you put up in this rum deal. There isn't a chance of that leaking out. All right. When they start looking for the fellow who made the switch, you've got the inside track, haven't you? The old man won't even figure you——"

"That's why I won't sit tight—because I've got the inside track. I've thought all that out, too. Nothing doing. I'll take what's coming and that's going to be worse than jail."

Barr nodded sympathetically, knowing that Colton was thinking of the

shock that his guilt would deal to his father and his bride.

At the same time Barr kept in sight the link which might embroil him.

"Couldn't you take the counterfeit out altogether?" he asked. "It will only complicate your—the explanation, won't it?"

"I may," said Colton. "I'm thinking that over. Let's go back now and look cheerful."

Barr gripped his hand.

"I'm sorry, Hugh," he said earnestly, "honest, I'm sorry. I hadn't an idea anything would go wrong. I'd have bet any amount that money would be back within a month or five weeks at the outside. Everything was arranged up to the point of paying for the stuff and loading it up. I figured thirty thousand anyhow for you——"

"We won't groan any more. Come on."

Barr was sincere as he tried to bolster hope already dead.

"There's a chance yet. The skipper was all right—I'm sure of that—and I can't see Whitford double-crossing us. They may turn up——"

"I guess not," said Colton. "And on the question of their not turning up we'll give them the benefit of the doubt, which means that they're worse off than we are—with their throats cut. That's the rottenest part of it all. Come on."

He ended the conversation by opening the door and stepping out to rejoin the group in the living room.

Observing them, Evelyn noted the tenseness of her husband's face, reminiscent of the opening days of their honeymoon, and found it more than reflected in Barr. Others noticed the same thing—and remembered it. They remembered also that within a few minutes Barr took his departure.

When their visitor were gone Evelyn gave Hugh a lead toward informing her of his talk with Barr.

"I forgot to ask Mr. Barr," she said, "what he thinks of our home. He studied it pretty well," she laughed, "judging by the time it took him. What did he say?"

Colton seated himself on the arm of her chair and hugged her. She was fishing, he saw, but he dodged the hook. From now until the crash he would think neither of Barr nor the spurious paper in the bank vault.

"He says that if ever he finds as lovely a sweetheart as you he'll build an exact copy of our house for her. Which means, certainly, that he'll never do it because where in the world could he find another you?"

That was nothing like what she wanted to hear so she fished again.

"You're good friends, aren't you?"

"Barr and I?" He didn't get her drift.

She nodded.

"Of course we are. Why? What makes you ask that, Evelyn?"

"Oh——" She slipped out of his arms and stood up.

If he didn't want to tell her she wouldn't attempt further to make him. If they were good friends why had he shouted at Barr when they were in the library? Why had Barr been so glum afterwards and in such a hurry to leave the house? If Hugh wouldn't tell her of his own accord, all right.

"Oh, no reason." She yawned. "I'm sleepy."

CHAPTER IV.

And then the ship came in!

Whitford, supercargo of the long-overdue rum-runner, telephoned Barr in Harlington from the Erie Basin, Brooklyn, where he landed from what was left of the schooner by wind and wave.

Driven out to sea by a gale which lasted for days she had been left wallowing, dismasted and with the cylinder head of her auxiliary engine cracked be-

yond repair. Far off the steamship lanes, she had to struggle along entirely on her own without sight of another vessel to lend any assistance.

Having been swept clean, lack of spars made difficult the erection of even the meanest apology for a jury rig, but finally some sort of a makeshift was contrived and she again got painfully under way. Some days she made as much as ten miles! Other days, when she was caught in the Gulf Stream, she again was carried away from land. Another storm drove her to the northward.

With a grumbling crew on short rations the skipper held on then to the westward, making little progress against adverse but moderate winds, but always heading for his station on Rum Row, where lay the nearest land.

And so, after weeks of laboring, she joined the rum fleet off the Jersey coast and there met her first turn of good luck. The revenue fleet being busy elsewhere, business was brisk. On the third day the last of her cargo was sold overside and, once more an innocent craft, she staggered round the Hook to pick up a tug and be led gently through the Narrows to her haven. Her papers said she was from Nassau to Halifax with forty-five hundred cases of liquor. Where was her cargo? Jettisoned under stress of weather, surely! Where otherwise would it be?

The pith of the tale, however, was that, anchored fast to Whitford as he talked on the phone, hung a stout leather bag containing one hundred and fourteen thousand dollars in real money! This was for the pool to divide with all expenses already paid.

"As fast as the traffic cops and the Lord will let you, old man," said Barr fervently. "Get a car—a fast car. No, wait. I'll meet you in New York. No, I won't. Come right on here. I'll meet you on the road. Step, Whitford, step!"

Barr was excited and with reason. He now had in the neighborhood of forty-five thousand dollars instead of being twenty-five thousand out of pocket. Also, and this contributed to his excitement, his friend Colton was out of the hole with about fifteen thousand to boot. And the several other friends he had got to participate in the smuggling venture were similiarly saved from considerable losses and amply repaid.

It was three o'clock on a Saturday afternoon and he was at the Harlington Country Club when Whitford phoned.

Everybody present saw his sudden excitement. It was plain to behold but none would ever have guessed that his emotion denoted rejoicing. The unexpected victory snatched from apparent defeat dazed and dazzled him. His expression could best be described as glaring, wild, and the rush he made from the phone enhanced the idea that he had received some disquieting news. So did the speed at which he whirled away without a word to any one.

He had made one effort to telephone Colton after Whitford rang off, but found the line busy. Unable to contain himself with patience until the line became clear, he covered the mile to Colton's home at breakneck speed to break the tidings.

Hugh and Evelyn were on the veranda with his father and another couple. They stared as Barr brought his car to a jarring stop at the curb and with a shout waved his arms.

"That's Howard Barr, isn't it?" exclaimed John Colton, half doubting his own eyes. "Is he drunk?"

Evelyn's glance darted questioningly to her husband but he had eyes only for Barr. He wondered, too, if Barr were drunk—doubted that there could be any better explanation of his antics. He hurried to find out.

To those looking on it appeared that Barr shook his fist in Colton's face

menacingly while he talked rapidly with bobbing head. It wasn't a threat, though, but a gesture of elation; as when he thumped a fist into his palm and again when he brought it down with a smash on the back of the seat. The pantomime looked threatening and so did the grimaces punctuating his speech.

Colton heightened the belligerent effect by gesticulating while he endeavored to get a word in edgewise. He leaned into the car, reaching out to make Barr wait, as the latter slid away from him into the driver's seat with the obvious intention of starting. He wanted to hear more, all about it, to have the story repeated so he could be sure it was true.

Barr waved him away, being bent now upon scorching over the forty miles between Harlington and New York to meet Whitford. He actually did start while Colton was leaning into the car. He started with a rush which nearly spun Colton off his feet.

"I'll see you later!" he shouted and was gone.

Colton's muscles tightened with the reaction. His fists clenched and drew slightly upward, his head stuck out, as he stared after the speeding car. It seemed as though he were about to run after it.

When he turned back to the house he went slowly, trembling, with sweat beading his forehead. Could he have had his way right then he'd have gone by himself into a corner until he could properly digest this colossal fact of his reprieve and all it meant to him.

But he was not permitted to do that. Evelyn, his father, the others on the veranda, were eager for the cause of Barr's queer behavior—especially Evelyn.

He returned evasive answers, letting stand the inference that Barr had taken a drink too many, but the moment was uncomfortable in spite of the heartening news he had just received. Uncomfortable mainly because Evelyn might unthinkingly make some remark indicating that he and Barr had some business relationship. He didn't want his father to hear of that.

Sensing his desire for silence, Evelyn said nothing; but another worrisome thought was born. It had not occurred to her that there might be something secret about Hugh's affairs. Now it appeared that there was. Why? She thought she saw the reason. Barr, of course, was a broker. This implied that Hugh's business with him had to do with speculation about which Hugh felt it was inadvisable to let his father know. Again—why?

Wasn't it all right, legitimate? An absurd idea. Surely it must be legitimate? But it might be so, and yet a wild flier of which the elder Colton would not approve. Personally she didn't mind. Hugh could do as he pleased with his own money. Only—well, she had understood that he and his father were closer together than that. She hadn't supposed that Hugh would run contrary to his father's more mature judgment and prejudices in matters financial.

John Colton unconsciously struck fire, giving her the first hint of the nature of the venture in which Hugh was associated with Barr. He meant nothing in particular by his remark, although he happened to be looking at Hugh as he made it.

It was just a bit of gossip to round off the comment on Barr's peculiar visit. "I hear Barr has joined the grand army of bootleggers. If it keeps on there'll be nobody left to attend to ordinary business. Everybody will be bootlegging. Bankers and brokers and butchers and bakers—I guess pretty well everybody is in it now."

Hugh's glance jumped to his wife. She stared at him with widening eyes ar instant, then at his father.

"A bootlegger," she exclaimed, only half comprehending. "Do you mean that Mr. Barr sells whisky?"

"Well"—John Colton smiled at her evident astonishment, and joked tolerantly—"I don't suppose he'd sell you a drink or a pint or anything like that. From what I hear he's bigger fry than that in the game of keeping America free by blowing up the Eighteenth Amendment. He probably doesn't ever see any of the liquor he takes his profit from. He's simply an agent—a broker, if you will."

"He saw some of it to-day, I'd say," chuckled Conway, who, with his wife, completed the company. Half in fun and half earnest, but quite without malice, he added: "Barr looked like he was going to beat you up, Hugh. Why don't you pay him for that last couple of cases? A man has to keep on good terms with his bootlegger if he doesn't want to be poisoned. Why don't you pay him for that last couple of cases and make peace?"

Startled by his father's apparent familiarity with Barr's illicit enterprise, and fearful of how far that knowledge might go, Hugh didn't take the jest kindly.

"You seem to know a lot more about Barr's affairs than I do," he said, turning sharply on Conway, "and than he does himself. I don't know of any two cases I ever got from him, paid for or unpaid for, and neither does he. If Barr's peddling rum around here"—he glanced at his father to note the effect of this equivocation—"that's news to me."

"Why——" Conway grinned confusedly, taken aback by the answer.

"Hugh!" Evelyn's tone expressed at once surprise over his outburst and a rebuke. "It did so look like you and Howard Barr were going to have a fight out there. You don't have to get so snappy just because somebody makes a joke about it."

"No, I suppose not," he returned, realizing that he was making a fool of himself, "but——"

"Oh, come, Hugh," his father interrupted, "don't be so touchy just because we've been crude enough to say your friend is tight. And, by the way, while we're on the subject you might tell Barr to stop in and see me."

Hugh Colton went ice cold. His father knew of Barr's rum-running operations, and wanted to see him——

"What about?"

There was a lull, an almost painful silence. Conway shuffled his feet while his wife smiled vacantly, both wondering what this was all about and wishing they were elsewhere. The air seemed suddenly surcharged.

Evelyn Colton also smiled, but hers was a forced smile thinly veiling consternation. Partly understanding as she did, she felt that Hugh and his father were about to clash. Audibly catching her breath, she tried to intervene, but couldn't speak. The situation was too astounding, too impossible. Her hand lifted in an appeal to Hugh which he didn't see.

John Colton looked at his son with mild perplexity which increased as he met harassed, defiant eyes. He couldn't figure what was the matter with the boy. What made him so touchy? But come to think of it, he had seemed sort of queer even before Barr showed up. Perhaps—— The banker glanced at his daughter-in-law, and her manner brought a frown to his face.

He jumped to the conclusion that there had been a quarrel. He'd have to talk to Hugh about that, and to Evelyn. This was pretty early for them to start quarreling.

"Why do you want to see Barr?"

"Why?" John Colton smiled quizzically, absently, with a tinge of sadness. He grieved to think that Hugh and Evelyn weren't pulling together.

"Yes, why?" repeated Hugh

brusquely, impatient for the showdown which he believed imminent and heedless of the presence of outsiders. What did it matter? The story was bound to get out. Conway and his wife might as well be the ones to start it rolling.

Sudden exasperation gripped John Colton. What fools they were, these children of his, quarreling when they should still be honeymooning! Look at Evelyn trying to wear a brave face, while Hugh barked at him over nothing.

"I want to see him, of course," he said with unwonted irritation, "because my cellar is about empty."

"Confound it, dad," flared Hugh, his voice mounting with the sting of this fresh suspense that had come when it seemed that his trial was over, "do you think I'm a bootlegger's runner—or what? You just heard me say I never bought any rum from Barr. I don't know anybody he's sold it to. I don't know that he's got any to sell. You seem to know and Conway seems to know, but I—don't."

His father shook his head, sighed, moved to end the distressing situation. Hugh was mad and not quite responsible. Getting mad at him wouldn't help any. "Well," he smiled, "I don't care where you got it, but if you've a high ball in the house it would be hospitable to offer it. You may have noticed that this aged and otherwise law-abiding citizen always presumes that any trifle of liquid refreshment which comes his way is legally in the possession of the giver. It's only prohibition agents and ultra-antis, I believe, who look a gift horse of this color in the mouth. I'm neither, I may say dryly."

"Of course," said Evelyn quickly. "Let's go inside. Hugh just got some wonderful stuff, if you can take his word for it. Fred, Marge," she motioned for the Conways to enter.

"I guess we'll be going," Conway declined. "Just stopped in for a minute in passing, you know."

But Hugh said no. Undergoing another swift reaction as it appeared that he had been mistaken in attaching any significance to his father's words, he became as pleasant as he had been boorish. A few more hours and he would be out of the mess. Monday morning he would be able to take the counterfeit notes from the bank vault, and replace the genuine currency. And in the meantime, over Sunday, none could discover his larceny. He was safe! Never again! Henceforth he would retain his complete sanity.

"This is your first visit, and you've got to see our house," he declared, hooking Conway's arm. "Evelyn's dying to show it off and I'll bet Marge's just as crazy to see it. You've got to stay a while, Fred. You can stand a ball along with dad. Sure you can."

He prevailed upon them to remain, but when finally they did go they were hardly clear of the house before their discussion of him and Barr's visit began. Hugh's burst of temper had, they were sure, been brought on by Barr. His later gayety, they agreed, was very obviously artificial.

"I'd swear they were as near to beating each other up as they could come without actually doing it," asserted Conway, "especially Barr. If he didn't make a couple of passes at Colton, I'm blind. Didn't it look that way to you, Marge?"

"It certainly did," she nodded. "And Evelyn——"

"And when Barr rushed away, if he wasn't mad enough to eat the shoes off his car I'll eat them. You saw that, didn't you? And you heard what he shouted: 'I'll see you later!' Wasn't that it?"

"Yes. And did you notice Evelyn——"

"Just a minute. 'I'll see you later!' he shouted and shook his fist. Well, if that wasn't both a promise and a threat? What do you say?"

"It certainly was. And"—she ham-

mered in her somewhat imaginative contribution—"did you notice how fidgety Evelyn became while he was talking with Howard Barr? She looked like she expected trouble between them. You don't suppose, do you, that it's over her?"

"Not a chance," he scoffed.

"Why not? Howard Barr was just as crazy about her— —"

"I guess not. He isn't the marrying kind."

"I'm not so sure." Marge hated to see such a morsel escape.

"Oh, don't be foolish," he laughed. "Didn't you get the right angle when the old man said Barr was bootlegging? That's when Hugh really went off the handle, and Evelyn got just as nervous. She knows what the row is, all right, but it isn't over her. Lord, it's funny."

"Funny?" Marge cuddled, seeking enlightenment. "How do you mean, Fred?"

"Don't you see?" Conway nodded sagely. "The way I dope it out, Hugh probably put over a loan for Barr—they've been pretty thick lately—to finance some rum deal that's gone wrong. He's probably yelling for Barr to make good, or maybe Barr is yelling for more money and Colton won't come across. Anyway, they don't love each other any more, that's sure!"

"Who? Hugh and Evelyn——"

"No, no. Colton and Barr. You saw for yourself, didn't you, and I'm telling you the reason."

Reluctantly abandoning the choicer article, she took what was available.

"You mean," she queried with apparent admiration for his grasp of the situation, which was not altogether clear to her, "that Hugh Colton let Howard Barr have money from the bank when he shouldn't?"

"Something like that. Oh, I don't say there's anything really criminal—nothing you could call larceny or fraud or anything like that. Colton's too wise to go that far. When it comes to the pinch"—he expanded, convinced that he had the thing doped out right, and not averse to airing his shrewdness before his wife, "the affair will be written off as the result of bad judgment in granting the loan on poor collateral or insufficient indorsement or something like that.

"If Barr can't or won't make good, and Hugh can't, the old man will. That'll be the end of it. It'll have to be kept dark, of course, so as not to give the bank a black eye. So don't talk too much about it, Marge. Don't say anything, in fact. Keep it to yourself."

"I won't breathe it to a soul," she promised. "I think it's awfully clever of you, Fred, to see through it so quickly. Do you suppose old Mr. Colton knows?"

"That's a question," said Conway judicially. "He may or he may not. It's hard to tell. There's a lot of banks these days making big money out of rum." He retailed this bit of common gabble as something of his own deep knowledge. "The old man may be in it on the quiet. He let Hugh make the loan, I mean, without asking too many questions himself. He winked at it, taking the chance for big profits."

"I see," said Marge, drinking it all in. "And Howard Barr—you say he's one of the big bootleggers?"

As a matter of fact, Conway didn't know absolutely that Barr ever had invested a dollar in liquor for resale, but he couldn't admit that. Nor could he admit that all he knew in general about the contraband rum business was what he had read in the newspapers—which isn't the half of it! Marge was in an adoring mood in which she apparently believed that he knew everything—as she knew how to adore when twisting him round her finger. He wasn't the one to disillusion her.

"Barr's in the ring," he replied,

launching into what he could remember, with some embellishments of his own, regarding that well-known phantom, the "whisky ring," of which the public prosecutors somehow never seem to hear.

"But," he wound up when Marge's questions and his own misinformation were exhausted, "don't go talking about this Colton affair. They don't want it known, you understand?" Perhaps I shouldn't have told you so much——"

"Fred Conway! You say that as though I were going right away to broadcast it by radio. The idea!"

"Well——"

"I won't breathe a single word," she declared, shelving her adoration for indignation, "and you ought to know I won't."

Which, after a fashion, was true. She didn't breathe a single word, but she spoke a considerable number on the subject before the evening was gone. All in strictest confidence, of course.

But—whisper—Hugh Colton had given Howard Barr, oh, goodness knows how much of the bank's money, to put into the whisky ring, and it was all lost and Hugh Colton and Howard Barr nearly had a fight. Maybe they would yet, because when Howard Barr drove away he shook his fist at Hugh Colton and shouted that he would see him later. Hugh Colton was all excited and perfectly furious, and wasn't even civil to his father, and Evelyn knew all about it, and was so frightened she couldn't talk, and looked as if she wanted to cry and so on!

But—whisper—don't breathe a word of this to anybody because it would be bad for the bank because old Mr. Colton knew all about it right along. But he winked at Hugh, giving Howard Barr the money for the whisky ring because they were to make such immense profits out of it!

Not a word to a soul but—whisper—if Howard Barr can't pay back then Hugh Colton will, and if Hugh Colton can't, his father will, and that's what Hugh Colton and Howard Barr were fighting over. Well, not fighting exactly, but Howard Barr tried to strike him and drove away, shaking his fist and shouting threats!

Marge Conway was an efficient, albeit reckless, broadcaster. She did well in the space of time at her disposal.

CHAPTER V.

Leaving his son's house some time after the Conways, John Colton was in the main reassured, though still possessed of a feeling that something somewhere was wrong. So long as it was not a falling out between the couple, however, he could see no real cause for concern. Everything else was minor to such an event, in his estimation. Before all, he wanted his boy, his only child, to be happy. He wanted his new daughter likewise.

That they were so, that there was no direct rift in their lute, he was convinced. When he suggested there was, they had laughed at him so frankly as to dispose of all doubt.

"I know what you're thinking of," said Hugh. "My spasms a while ago. Don't pay any attention to that. I feel sort of off color—a headache, that's all. Conway gets on my nerves at times—and Marge. She reminds me," he laughed, thinking of her propensity for gossip, "of a bird hopping around a lawn looking for worms to devour.

"I was primed, I guess, for something to get snappish over, and found it in Fred Conway's near humor about paying Barr. Then you drew some of my nastiness by fiddling the same string. I'm sorry."

"That's all right, son," said his father, visibly relieved. "I was kind of afraid for a minute——" His gaze went to Evelyn for confirmation that all was well.

"Don't be a goose," she smiled, and what he saw in her eyes as they rested on Hugh did more than their words to allay his fear. "If Hugh ever fights with me," she added with mock ferocity, "all you'll have left will be a daughter-in-law. I'll simply step on him till he isn't present at all. I'd do it now if he wasn't properly ashamed of having made an exhibition of himself and barked at you. You be careful, Mr. Hugh Colton, and don't ever let it happen again."

"I won't," grinned Hugh, grateful for her support and creation of this frivolous diversion. "You see, dad, the iron heel I'm under and how it threatens to blot me out. I have to be good."

The talk went on in lighter vein, but as John Colton was departing he voiced his lingering suspicion.

"Nothing else worrying you, is there, son?"

"No," replied Hugh slowly, and then more briskly: "No. Not a thing."

Their eyes met and he saw again the shadow of harassment in his son's. "You're sure there isn't anything," he persisted quietly, "that I might help you on?"

"Nothing," affirmed Hugh solidly. "I haven't a thing to worry about. If I had, you'd be the first I'd come to with my trouble, dad. You know that."

His father nodded, placing a hand on his shoulder.

"Yes, I know. I hope you'll never have any troubles, son, but if you do I hope you'll always bring them to me?"

"Always." To avoid his father's rather wistfully searching gaze, he turned to his wife. "Trouble isn't going to find any roosting place in this house, though, is it, sweetheart?"

"Never," she smiled, but, as she said it, she could not deny a foreboding that trouble already was hovering there.

"I hope not," repeated John Colton earnestly. "But don't forget, son, that I'm headquarters any time you want advice or anything. You'll be over for dinner to-morrow, won't you? And say"—he paused again on the doorstep—"Evelyn and you didn't have much of a trip—in length of time, I mean. You should have made it longer.

"Why don't you do that and have a second-edition honeymoon? Go ahead," he fastened to the idea. "Take another month, two months, as long as you like. Take a trip around the world. Go ahead. Start to-morrow or start to-night, now! Forget work and enjoy yourselves. We can open for business all right without you Monday," he chuckled; "you're not so darned important."

The son's lips tightened and his hands again grew suddenly clammy. Open for business without him on Monday! They could, yes, and with that fifteen-thousand-dollar shortage waiting to be discovered! Go away again—around the world—and leave that fifteen thousand in counterfeit bills! He laughed almost boisterously, much louder than the occasion could possibly have demanded.

Evelyn's warning glance brought him to his senses, to a realization that his laughter was more than slightly unconfined and out of place. He checked it and covered up.

"Thanks, dad, that's good of you—so good that I couldn't help laughing. If you don't look out I'll decide I've got a doting parent and take advantage. Later on we'll take you up on this proposition, but not now. Why"—he talked on with nervous animation to prevent the subject being pressed—"another holiday right away would ruin me completely. I'm just getting settled down to work again. But a couple of months from now, that'll be different.

"We've thought of trying Florida this winter for a month or so if I could get away. If you'll make a note of that, your generosity now won't be entirely wasted. We'll remind you of it, anyway, won't we, dear?"

"Every day," declared Evelyn, gasping faintly over the news that they had contemplated a trip South. "You old dear," she glowed, distracting attention from Hugh again by hugging her father-in-law, and then straightway admonishing him, "but, as Hugh just said, you'd better be careful or you'll have us spoiled. We must remember that Hugh's a workingman, and doesn't own the bank."

"He will some day."

"But not soon," she said, shaking him. "Not for years and years and years—not ever if we could make it that way."

John Colton wagged his head. He didn't consider himself old, of course, but he recognized that he was getting along in years.

"I'll soon be sixty, my dear, and——"

"Here, here!" broke in Hugh, taking a turn at steering the conversation and steadying it. "That'll be about all of that. You're getting morbid, dad, and that'd be my fault again. I wish you'd forget my crankiness and that idea that everything isn't—as it should be. Please!"

With that John Colton went his way content that his fears were groundless; yet, nevertheless, beset by strange, unanswered doubts. Hugh, he reflected, had not replied in any way to Conway's statement that Barr had seemed about to beat him up. Hugh hadn't even denied that. It had indeed seemed so. Was it so? Then why? What trouble lay between Hugh and Barr? Precisely what had Barr's visit portended? Why had it thrown Hugh into such bad humor? Hugh said he had a headache, but didn't it appear as though Barr had brought it on? And why had Hugh laughed so loudly over the offer of a further vacation when there was really nothing to laugh at?

It was all very puzzling, dimly disturbing, but, so long as Evelyn and Hugh were happy together, what, after all, did anything else matter? He answered himself emphatically: nothing. Then why was he fretting over nothing? He couldn't tell, but somehow he was.

As they were left alone Evelyn Colton dropped rather wearily into a chair. She still had no desire to intrude upon Hugh's business, but, in view of the situation she had just passed through, a clearer conception of this particular transaction seemed to be due her. How could he expect her to play up to such awkward moments, how expect her to avoid showing surprise and concern, while she remained in ignorance of possible cues?

She must be prepared in some measure now that Marge Conway had carried away something to gossip over. That was unfortunate, Marge having witnessed the encounter with Barr. Knowing Marge's capabilities as a broadcaster with a vast contempt for the inflexibility of facts, Evelyn had a good idea of how that ambiguous scene between Hugh and Barr would be related. She could hear the story as narrated by Marge Conway. At best it could be no less than that Hugh and Barr had a fight over whisky—over a transaction in bootlegging.

Evelyn merely wished to be forearmed. For, naturally, the tale would be whispered to her by friends dear and not so dear. She could meet the gossip better if she knew the rights of it.

"Tell me, Hugh," she said, coming straight to the point, "is Howard Barr really a bootlegger? You told your father and Fred Conway that you don't know—told them that in effect. I'm asking you for an outright answer. Is he?"

He hesitated, discarded evasion. Should he fail to answer as she requested, she would know he was lying. She would remember this lie all her days, and her trust in him would perhaps be destroyed forever.

"That's what most folks would call

him, I suppose," he smiled with an effort to take the curse off it, "but he calls himself an investor, a speculator. You see, he doesn't actually handle the stuff —never comes in contact with it at all. He puts up the money and hires others to earn his profits the same as in any other business.

"He—er—that's all there is to it." He halted lamely under her level gaze, which seemed to ask so candidly why he should take such pains to make excuses for this other man and his unlawful operations.

"And you," she smiled in return, "are you also an investor, Hugh?"

"I guess so," he confessed ruefully. "Yes, I put in some money."

She nodded thoughtfully, then said quietly: "I don't like that, Hugh. Please understand that I'm not preaching. I realize that most everybody we know buys liquor—that we ourselves buy it and likely will continue doing so, and that somebody has got to furnish it. But I'd rather have somebody else do the furnishing—not you. You see what I mean, dear? I just don't like the idea of touching even a penny of that kind of money.

"It's stupid of me, probably," she laughed self-consciously, "but I hate to think that some of the liquor you sold might be the cause of—oh, even murder. You wouldn't want to be responsible, ever so distantly, for anything like that, would you, Hugh?"

"I wouldn't—no." He frowned over the thought she had given him. "I never looked at it in that light, Evelyn. That's so. I saw the proposition only from my own angle.

"Apparently there's always going to be a demand for liquor and somebody to supply it. I figured I might as well dip in and get some of the easy money. It never occurred to me to wonder who would drink the stuff which, as you correctly say, I sold. In plain truth, I hardly considered myself as a seller since I've never set eyes on the stuff I bought, and never will.

"I'm not trying to justify myself, but I simply never gave a thought to whether the liquor would go to people like ourselves and our friends, who enjoy a moderate drink or to some rum-guzzling brute who kicks his wife and children around. You believe that, don't you, Evelyn?"

For answer she reached out and pulled him to the arm of her chair.

"I don't believe Howard Barr thinks of that angle, either," she said. "You're all through with the business now, aren't you, Hugh?"

"Through!" he said vigorously. "I'll say I am! I got through an hour ago when I talked with Barr. Through and thankful," he nodded with grim humor, "that's yours truly, your husband."

"Why? Because you quarreled with him?"

He sat up, recollecting that Conway had said something similar to this. Giving thought, he perceived how the notion had originated in Barr's excited gesticulation. His own, too. That gave him a laugh. He and Barr quarreling at this juncture!

"Sweetheart," he assured her, "no two men ever were better friends than Howard Barr and myself at this minute. He didn't come to fight, and, incidentally, he wasn't within miles of being drunk. He came with good news."

She did not probe this apparent reticence. She did not resent it. What he left unsaid seemed plain enough. No need to make him say that Barr had brought word of the successful conclusion of their venture. It would be best all round to forget it.

"There's nothing left to worry about, is there, Hugh?"

He shook his head. There wasn't. The cash was as good as in his hand. Monday morning it would be returned to the bank. Thereafter he would con-

fine himself to banking, and nothing more.

"Sure, Hugh?" she repeated gently.

"Quite sure, dear. You see"—he was impelled to make some explanation—"things didn't go right at the start. We didn't hear from our ship for a long time, and there were other complications. Complications that——"

He stammered, finding it difficult to look into her clear eyes without making full confession. It was on the tip of his tongue to do that when he realized he would only be giving her a needless bitter memory. "I worried," he finished lamely again, "thinking something serious might have happened. Ships get lost and—well, you see."

She let this further reticence pass also. The incident was closed but for one thing.

"And now," she said in sprightlier tone to his profound astonishment, "how much money did you make? Don't gape at me, Hugh. Tell me. How much?"

He was gaping, openly. After the way she had expressed herself on rum selling, the profits constituted the last item in which he had expected her to show interest.

"I don't know."

"About how much?" she pressed, enjoying his astonishment. "Enough for the trip around the world your father suggested?"

"Probably." He smiled dourly, struggling to reconcile this with her statement about not liking "that kind of money." He couldn't. It was incomprehensible that she had not been sincere. "Ten thousand," he said as she insisted, "perhaps more."

"And," she queried deliberately, "how many bricks do you think that will buy for the hospital they're trying to build in town? Quite a few, don't you think? Bricks, dear, which can be credited on the subscription list to that old favorite, Conscience."

He engulfed her then in his arms, making amends for having momentarily doubted her.

Conscience money! That would be as it should. The money wasn't his. No more than if he had stolen it. The bank was the only legal claimant, and the bank could be allowed to know nothing of it to make that claim. Then what, indeed, was this but stolen money? How could it be anything but the fruit of the tree from which it had come? And that was theft.

Conscience money! He owed it.

Toward six o'clock Barr telephoned.

"All serene," he crowed, "and ready to pay dividends. Dash over and rejoice."

"Over where?" asked Colton. "To your house?"

"Uh-huh. I'm at the club. With Webster and the necessary—all complete. Dash over and rejoice."

Repetition of "and rejoice," gave Colton pause. It told him that Barr was now in fact slightly slopped over. It made him balk on the invitation to go to the country club for the conclusion of their business. He wasn't courting publicity.

When Barr got tuned up, as he appeared to be, he was inclined to become boastful and showy. His speculations in rum being something of an open secret, he was more than likely to drop broad hints about having just put over a big deal. He might even parade the wad of money Webster had brought. Hugh preferred not to be so conspicuously identified with him at the moment. Somebody might get the impression that he was sharing in the cash.

"I'd rather not go there," he said. "Where else can I see you?"

"What's the matter with her? Webster and I have one of the little dining rooms—and he brought along a case of good wine. Dash over——"

"I'd rather not. Some other place would——"

"Aw, come on," urged Barr, "what's the difference? Tell you the truth, old man, I couldn't wait to get home. I had to dash into a corner where I could paw over the loot. Absolutely. That's how come I stopped in at the club. Anyhow, I needed a hooker after the shock of this resurrection. I'll say I did! The well-known son coming home to take up the papers and save the well-known homestead never looked better to his well-known old mother than Webster did to me. No, sir! How soon will you be over?"

"I'm not coming," said Colton with finality. "Not there. I'll come to your house. What time?"

"Well, all right," grumbled Barr, "but I thought you were in a rush for the loot. I've phoned Burrows and he's coming after his. And I thought we could have a quiet little party and hear Webster tell what a hell of a trip they had. Aw, come on, Hugh, dash over and celebrate."

"No, not now. What time will you be home?"

"Oh, after a while. Say"—Barr had an inspiration—"your place isn't so far from here. If you won't come, I'll dash over and fix you up and——"

"No," interrupted Colton, glancing across the room at his wife, "no, don't do that. I don't want—— You understand? I'll wait till you get home."

"Oh, all right; but I don't see why you won't come. Webster's got a good story and the wine washes it down nicely. Come on for an hour, Hugh. Oh, all right, I hear you. How about half past seven or eight o'clock?"

"Call it eight," said Colton, "at your house."

Hanging up the phone, he turned to Evelyn with smiling explanation.

"I am going out about eight for a load of bricks. I thought you'd rather not have them delivered here."

She nodded understandingly and met him halfway across the room.

"You're going to Howard Barr's?"

He nodded.

"I'm glad," she said, "that you didn't have him come here. And yet"—her brows wrinkled thoughtfully as she reflected on the tale Marge Conway undoubtedly was spreading with regard to Barr's earlier visit that day—"it might be just as well if he came here. We could have somebody else drop in——"

"But we're going to the Lancasters at nine o'clock," he said, failing to see that she was considering how to spike immediately any talk of trouble between him and Barr.

"Yes, but——" She shrugged and put away the notion. What did it matter? It would be plain soon enough that the gossip was groundless. Besides, she didn't want to meet Barr while she was still angry at him for having drawn Hugh into bootlegging.

So, instead of advancing what was in truth a warning urge, a subconscious prompting, to have Barr come to the house, she asked: "You won't be gone long, will you?"

"Half an hour or so," he replied, uncertain as to what she wished him to do. "If you don't want me to go, dear, of course I won't. I'll have Barr come here. I thought, though——"

"You're right," she said, "but I think it wouldn't do any harm if you make a point of being seen with him soon—tomorrow. You know how Marge Conway can make something out of nothing—and it truly seemed that you and Barr were quarreling this afternoon. I—I thought so myself."

"I'll make a date with him for tomorrow," laughed Hugh, "and hold a public love feast with a band on the steps of the town hall. How's that? Marge's battle of the century will fall apart then, won't it?"

"It should," Evelyn smiled, but a little frown still rode her brows as that inner voice told her not to let the demonstration of amity be deferred. That was

silly, she told herself. Everybody knew how much Marge exaggerated things. Still—— "I'm serious about this, Hugh. You'll make a point of being seen with him to-morrow, won't you?"

"Sure," he grinned, "but wouldn't it be better fun if he and I run together at the club and stage a near fight for the benefit of the chatterers? I'll explain to him?"

"No, don't do that," she spoke quickly. "Don't make fun of this, Hugh. I don't know why, but—well, it seems important."

"All right," he agreed more soberly, but still amused, "we'll keep the spectacle quiet—make just enough of it to muzzle Marge. Right?"

"Yes. And—that's all."

CHAPTER VI.

Harlington is largely a residential community, and consequently covers much more ground than the population of approximately five thousand would ordinarily suggest. Outside of the old village in the heart of the town it was a place of widely spaced homes and broad lawns, with the spacing naturally becoming greater on the outskirts.

Howard Barr's home was well out on the fringe, on the other side of the town and about three miles from Hugh Colton's. It had been a farmhouse which his parents had bought and remodeled for a country home years ago, and finally, with the growing up of the community, had become their year-round home.

Since their deaths Barr had continued to live there alone, because he liked the place and because he knew of nowhere else that he could have such comfort and attention as the elderly housekeeper gave him. The only other member of the household was a male servant who drove the car whenever occasion demanded.

The housekeeper admitted Colton that evening and left him before the log fire in the living room, while she called Barr who had come in only a few minutes previously, and was in his room freshening up. Passing the room door on her return she noticed that Colton had not sat down, but was moving restlessly back and forth.

With the money practically in his hands, he was nervous again. It was a big sum to have in the house over the week-end. What if some thug were to get an inkling that it was there? That was improbable, certainly, but not impossible. Where, then, could he put it for safekeeping?

He might leave it at the bank as he had a key and could stop in without arousing any comment. But would it be any safer there? He couldn't get it into the vault; the time locks prevented. He could only lock it in his desk and that wouldn't be gaining a great deal in the way of security. Not enough, at any rate. It would be just as well in the house. There was no danger. Nobody would know it was there, aside from Evelyn and himself and Barr. There was no sense in fussing. Only—what the devil!

Barr came in, carrying the stout leather bag containing the money. In his other hand he had a bottle of champagne and glasses which he flourished gayly. He was a considerable way from being drunk, but he was noticeably exhilarated, flushed of face and joyously heady.

"Get a look in there," he chortled, dumping the bag on a chair in front of Colton, "while I crack this bottle. It isn't as cold as it might be, but what do we care about a little thing like that. Not to-night we don't, eh, Hugh? Lord, you could have blown me over when Webster phoned this afternoon! Let your eyes bulge, old man, let 'em bulge! Mine are still popping. Damn this cork!"

Colton stared at the bundles of currency in the bag. He stirred them with

his hand. A package of thousand-dollar bills, and thirty or forty of them, he judged. Other packages grading upward in bulk; five hundreds, hundreds, fifties, twenties, and a few tens and fives and ones. Bootlegging has put into circulation more big bills than ever before.

Accustomed as he was to handling stacks of cash this somehow awed him. It was such a reckless way to be carting so much money around. Webster motoring with it from New York. Barr with it here in his house in the country, and no adequate receptacle to place it in. And he himself was to have a goodly chunk of it which he must drive home alone and keep with him for thirty-six hours.

The champagne cork popped and he looked up.

"Where's Webster?"

"At the club," said Barr. "Left him there with Burrows and a couple of fellows telling how the schooner got blown all over hell and cracked up. Some time they had, I'll say, staggering all over the Atlantic Ocean and way stations. You ought to hear it. Come on, dash over——"

"I can't. I'm going out with Evelyn. Listen, Howard, you're taking pretty big chances with all this cash——"

"No. Don't you worry about that. Here, have a drink. It's a nice wine. Hearty!"

Colton sipped, frowning as Barr took a generous swallow.

"You want to go easy," he advised, "till you get the cash off your hands. How much is there?"

"How much do you think?" asked Barr tipsily. "Enough to get us out of hock, anyhow," he winked, without waiting for a guess. "Hundred and fourteen thousand, that's what. Some loot, eh? Hundred and fourteen. Let's see—less eighteen I paid off to Webster and Burrows. How much is that? Ninety-six thousand, correct, with a few dollars odd. Let me put some more bubbles in your glass."

"No more, thanks."

"Sure," insisted Barr. "What's the matter with you? Lord, anybody looking at you would never know you were just stepping out of hock with thirty-two thousand dollars in your pocket. Thirty-two thousand! Get that, old top! Here"—he grabbed up the package of thousand-dollar bills and counted them off—"get a laugh out of this."

Hugh Colton's hand shook as the thirty-two bank notes were placed on his palm. Here was his salvation! The bank's fifteen thousand dollars, and his own four thousand. Thirteen thousand dollars' worth of bricks for the new hospital.

But his fingers seemed numb, and wouldn't close on the money. All except four thousand dollars of it was stolen money—some stolen directly and some indirectly, but all bearing the same taint. Moreover, nearly half of it was the profit from liquor which he had sold, and which, for all he know, would craze some one to commit murder!

From now on when he read of crime committed by some drink-inflamed man he would have to ask himself: "Did the whisky I sold do that?" He would ask himself, but how could he ever know? He hated this money and wanted to fling it from him. But he couldn't do that.

"Feels kind of good, eh?" grinned Barr, misinterpreting his silence. "Takes you a minute or two to realize that the bottom hasn't fallen out of the world, after all, eh?"

Colton smiled wanly, dismissing an impulse to try and make Barr see the business of selling whisky in the light that Evelyn had cast upon it. Barr would only laugh at such preaching and retort that, since the liquor was going to be sold anyway, why shouldn't he be in on the harvest? A fair argument—for any one who didn't care where his money came from.

"That's a fat little stake you've got for the next trip," Barr was saying. "We'll get a bigger boat and then you can watch your pile grow. There isn't any quicker and easier money in the world, and the higher you play the higher you make. Makes a joke of banking, doesn't it?"

"I'll have to be going," said Colton, without committing himself one way or the other regarding future operations. By announcing his withdrawal now he would only start an argument.

In the act of stowing the thousand-dollar bills into his wallet he halted. These wouldn't do for his most pressing need, the replacement of genuine money for the counterfeit.

"I'll have to take smaller bills," he said. "Fifteen thousand in tens, twenties, fifties, a few hundreds. There'd be a splash if a bunch of thousands appeared suddenly in the bank without coming over the counter."

"That's all right," said Barr. "What's the use of counting over a lot of stuff now, when I'm going to deposit the loot on Monday? I'll bring it to your desk and then you can make the switch without anybody knowing how many thousand-dollar notes I brought. That's good enough, isn't it?"

"Well——" Colton was swayed by the fact that he could carry these thirty-two bills constantly with him, whereas with fifteen thousand dollars in the smaller denominations he would have too big a bundle to keep in his pocket without attracting attention. He nodded. "Get around early Monday. I want to get this business all finished up."

"Sure. And that stage money"—Barr winked significantly—"may come in handy some other time. Let me fill your glass."

"No more," Colton again refused. He was leaving when he remembered having promised Evelyn to take steps to offset Marge Conway's gossip.

Barr laughed over that.

"I guess I looked sort of wild when I called on you, and it must have been pie for little Marge. Sure, I'll see you at the club to-morrow afternoon. We'll sit and eat peanuts and give her the laugh. I bet she's clacking away right now to beat the cards."

She was.

"Find your own way out, old man," added Barr, patting the bag which still contained sixty-four thousand dollars, "I'm not moving far away from this, you understand, and there's no sense lugging it to the door. I'm going to tuck it away now and get back to the club."

"You'll leave that money here unguarded?"

"It'll be all right. I've a hole for it. So long."

"Good night," said Colton and found his way from the house.

While his headlights searched among the trees as he backed his car to turn in the driveway, he might have noticed two lurking figures near the house, but he didn't.

CHAPTER VII.

Joe Garner was mate on the schooner which carried the Barr syndicate's cargo to Rum Row. He never had met Barr, but knew that he was the principal backer of the enterprise, and where he lived.

Also, by keenly keeping his ears cocked at an even more acute angle than usual after the schooner's arrival in Brooklyn, he contrived to hear Supercargo Webster tell the skipper that he was taking the proceeds of the trip straight to Barr in Harlington.

By simple arithmetic, having seen the cargo delivered overside for cash, Garner knew, further, that there was appreciably more than a hundred thousand dollars in the bag Webster took ashore. An hour later he, too, went ashore.

One Monty Denman of previous ac-

quaintance, rapidly rediscovered, listened with interest to the tale of the bag.

"This is Saturday, see?" concluded Garner. "This here Barr can't get the jack in the bank before Monday There's a chance he'll keep it home, thinking it'll be all right if he sits on it. Out in this here hick town, Monty, see? What do you say?"

"Let's go," said Monty Denman. "It's worth a flier. Jus' a minute and I'll get the car."

They lost time in a traffic jam at the ferry, but made good going on the open road, and arrived in Harlington soon after six o'clock. Careful inquiry brought them to Barr's house, which they prospected for some time before deciding that he wasn't at home.

"We can lay for him here, all right," said Denman, "but who knows when he'll show up? Let's hop back into the burg and give his place a ring and see do they know where he is."

"We'll wait a while," said Garner. "I don't want to be seen too much. It's all right for you, but I've got to go back to the ship, see? Then when they come snooping round to see if everybody on board is accounted for when this comes off, they might pick me out if I'm seen too much round here. Let's wait. He'll show up."

Monty Denman didn't mind waiting if positive results were in sight, but he hated to waste time fruitlessly, especially as he was now out in what he regarded as a forsaken country.

"You stick around," he said, "and I'll hop into the burg and phone. If he comes while I'm gone we'll know where we're at, anyhow."

It happened, therefore, that only Garner was on watch when Barr got home. Had Denman also been present Barr would not have got into the house. Being without a car in which to get away, Garner let him pass.

A minute behind him Denman drove back without having learned anything from the housekeeper over the phone. But Garner had news enough. Barr was alone and had the bag.

"Easy now," said Monty Denman, "Now we'll let him get located. He's upstairs now"—as a light snapped on in a room—"so we'll wait a while till he settles down."

Several minutes passed.

"Hell!" said Garner. "Here's somebody. We should've got to him——"

"Hush up," said Denman. "Wait'll we see. There's only one guy."

That was Hugh Colton, whose brief visit cost them thirty-two thousand dollars.

"There's only the old dame and the guy in the house," Denman figured as the sound of Colton's speeding motor faded away, "so I guess it's all right for us to visit pretty at the front door. Who let the other bozo in?"

"She did."

"Then the chances are she'll open up for us. Thing to do, Joe, is grab her quick and muzzle her before she yells. Some of them old dames don't see right away that a guy with a gat ain't looking for yells. You button her face and I'll hop on the guy. Let's crash."

With caps pulled down and handkerchiefs tied over the lower parts of their faces they approached the house stealthily. Taking hold of the knob, but scarcely hoping for such luck, Denman found the door unlocked. He was about to push it wide and hurry in when the telephone rang. Holding the door open only a crack he listened to the murmur of Barr answering the call.

Garner nudged him, whispering: "Get him now while he's busy."

Denman shook his head and motioned peremptorily for silence. He knew better than to stick up a man who was talking on the phone—a man who, like some old dames, might be so lacking in proper respect for a gun that he would snap out a cry for help.

Barr's conversation was short. As he

hung up, Garner swung the door open without a creak and closed it as noiselessly behind them.

They were in a hallway leading straight to the rear of the house and narrowing beyond the stairs. Back there they could see a wedge of light from the kitchen where the housekeeper was. To their left was the open door of the living room in which Barr was enjoying another little gloat over the money before locking the bag and hiding it away.

In pantomime Garner queried whether he should go and hold up the housekeeper. Denman signaled no. If they could get by without bothering her, so much the better. Women had no sense. If she were let alone she'd have nothing to yell about. And if Barr put up a fight she'd come running to find out what was going on. Then they could handle her.

Barr heard them as they entered the room. His back was to the door. Confident that he was in no such danger as this, he glanced over his shoulder, expecting to see the housekeeper. Instead, he looked into two guns while Denman, reaching backward, quietly closed the door

Barr wasn't a coward, but Monty Denman had no ground for complaint about his good sense. He kept his mouth shut, and his hands in sight, as he turned slowly to face the robbers.

He was unarmed. There was none he might call upon for help. The housekeeper, he presumed, was already silenced, and, though she was not, what could she do to aid him? The nearest house was some two hundred yards distant, the highway fifty yards. They could shoot him down without anybody even noticing the shot.

Therefore he yielded discreetly for the present, at any rate. They wouldn't wantonly kill him. Why should they injure him at all so long as he didn't resist? Binding and gagging him and the housekeeper should serve their ends perfectly.

Then, when they were gone, he could wriggle over, knock the telephone to the floor, and contrive somehow to make the operator comprehend that help was needed. He assumed correctly that the bandits were from New York, that they had trailed Webster, and were traveling by automobile. If he could make the operator understand without much delay, the roads could quickly be closed to them.

"Just keep your face shut," said Monty Denman, "and everything'll be all jake. Savvy?"

Barr nodded while eying the twain for some characteristics of build or manner which he could register. There was nothing noticeably unusual about either of them, however, except possibly that Denman's nose as outlined under the masking handkerchief appeared to be broad and lopsided.

"Back up," commanded Denman, "away from that bag. And don't forget, guy, we'll plug you fast as hell if you make a break. Keep an eye on him," he told Garner, "while I take a look. Step right up and let him see how big a hole is in the cannon."

Barr retreated docilely as ordered. Garner advanced to within a couple of paces, menacing him with the gun. Denman investigated the bag, clucking with pleasure as he pawed over the money.

"How much do we get?" he inquired amiably.

Barr maintained his poker face, but his lips were dry, his eyes bright with sudden rage which challenged his better judgment. He hated to give up without a fight. That was mostly bunk he was handing himself about effecting the capture of these crooks along the road, wasn't it?

Granting that he got his message to the telephone operator right away, they would have at least an hour start. It would take that long to spread the alarm

along the main highways alone; and they probably would circle over the byways. The cold fact was that once they made off with it he had about one chance in a million of ever seeing this cash again. Forty thousand dollars—his share and practically all he had—lifted right out of his hands.

"How much do we get?" asked Denman again.

"Sixty-four thousand dollars," said Barr, the words leaving a bitter taste and stirring his rage. He wanted to fight——

"Not so loud, you!" snapped Denman. "Pipe down."

Barr's heart thumped with hope as he realized that they were afraid of being overheard. What could this mean other than that they had not yet invaded the rest of the house and didn't know who else was in it? Suppose he put up a battle and shouted?

"Hey?" interjected Garner, forgetting that his was not a speaking part because of the danger of his voice being recognized when the crew of the schooner were questioned, as they surely would be. "That ain't right by a damn sight. Ain't right at all There's twice that——"

"Button your face," said Denman angrily, seeing how Garner was giving himself away.

"There was," said Barr smoothly, seeing the same thing and planning to draw further unguarded speech. "I've paid out about half. Webster got some —you know Webster——"

"You shut up, too," ordered Denman, but he was too late.

The seemingly casual reference to the supercargo, the bold assumption that they were indeed from the schooner, scored a hit. Garner was startled, muttering an oath, frightened. He crouched, hunching his shoulders and pulling in his neck with the idea of making his identification more difficult, but he knew the effort was puerile. His gun prodded forward more threateningly, but the hand that held it shook ever so slightly.

Monty Denman saw it was time to speed up and get out. But there was an obstacle. They had neglected to furnish themselves with the means of tying up Barr.

"What the hell!" he mumbled, looking around the room for something that would do. Feeling the texture of the curtains, he rejected them as too flimsy. There was nothing else.

"Say, you," he demanded of Barr, "I'm asking for your own good, and if you've got a head on you you'll tell me. We got to tie you up. What do we tie you with?"

"I don't know," said Barr solemnly, watching Garner and weighing the chances of scaring them off. If he could make them believe help was at hand—— "You could ask the chauffeur or the gardener for a rope," he said, making twins of his single male servant, who was not in the house. "They're somewhere around—or will be any minute. Or ask the housekeeper——"

"Ask my dead aunt," snapped Denman. "It's up to you, see? What'll you have? Do we crown you or do you help us out? Hurry up. What is it?"

"I'll help you, of course," said Barr quickly, his gaze roving with apparent desire to be as good as his word. "There's a leather chair. How about that? You can cut strips——"

"Good," pronounced Denman. "You got your head on right. Now keep still——"

He turned to the chair to slash its leather into bonds.

Garner glanced after him.

Barr saw his opportunity and lunged, one hand smashing the gun from Garner's hand while the other ripped the handkerchief from his face.

It was a good maneuver well executed and, as he made it, Barr intended to shout for assistance as though it would come instantly. But the curious re-

action, which causes a man to grit his teeth while making violent physical effort, postponed his shout. He had Garner disarmed, unmasked, and was seizing his throat with the intention of interposing him as a shield against Denman's gun, before he remembered the vocal part of his attack. As his mouth opened, Denman's gun smashed into it with teeth-shattering force.

Staggered by the blow, Barr lost his hold on Garner. Gasping, choked by a mouthful of blood and broken teeth, he flung himself at Denman who hesitated to shoot because of the possibility that the servants Barr had mentioned were on the premises. This must be finished quietly and swiftly with a blow.

As Barr came on, Denman landed a hard left fist again on the mouth. Staggered a second time, Barr's head jolted back and his rush was checked.

Denman's gun swung up to crown him but the blow never was delivered.

Garner stepped in. Enraged by Barr's attack and panicky because his face had been seen, he snatched up the champagne bottle from which Barr and Colton had drunk and struck with it!

Barr's knees doubled. He pitched forward with the back of his head caved in!

Ten seconds after he had leaped at Garner he was dead!

Denman kept the body from thumping to the floor, then straightened up to damn Garner.

"You—you dumb-bell!" he sputtered hoarsely and cursed him more adequately. He had no serious objections to killing when necessary. This he regarded as wholly unnecessary. He would merely have laid Barr out.

"Shut up!" snarled Garner, panting and staring. He dropped the bottle on a chair, ripped open a package of cigarettes and lighted one with great pulls. "He seen my face, didn't he? Shut up and come on. Grab the bag and come on."

"And leave your trade mark here," sneered Denman. He set the bottle on end and wiped it clean of finger prints. Garner took up the half-filled glass Colton had left and gulped the wine.

"Damn it all," said Denman, taking the glass and wiping it also, "keep your fool hands off things. What's eating you now?"

Garner shook his right arm, annoyed by a trifle in this moment of crisis!

"The damn bottle wasn't empty. It spilled all over me."

"Yeah!" Denman lifted the bag and tiptoed to the door. "Watch your step —but step!"

Sneaking from the house they skulked across the lawn under cover of trees and shrubs to the car they had parked, with lights extinguished, under the shadow of a clump of woods a few yards beyond the entrance to Barr's house.

Barr's servant, Johnson, returning from the town was fortunate in not arriving half a minute earlier. Murder already having been done, they would have killed again to protect themselves.

As they reached the car they saw him turn in at the driveway. Garner demanded immediate flight at high speed. Denman waited till the door closed on Johnson before starting the car, then crept along with hushed engine on the road away from Harlington.

Twenty minutes later Barr's housekeeper entered the room and found his body.

CHAPTER VIII.

Hugh Colton counted thirteen of the thousand-dollar bills out of his wallet and handed them to his wife.

"For the hospital," he said simply, without regret over her decision to dispose thus of his profits. It was conscience money, he told himself again, and smiled at the queer fantasy that it had almost the odor of blood money!

She asked no questions but studied the bills curiously.

"Thousand-dollar bills!" she said a bit breathlessly. "I never saw one before. Thirteen thousand dollars!" She spread them fanwise with a little laugh. "It hardly seems that much, does it?"

"I wouldn't quarrel with a bale of them," he laughed, "any more than the hospital committee will quarrel with these. How are you going to turn them in, Evelyn? Put a two-cent stamp on and let it go at that?"

"I think so." She stared at them again, nodding, then smiled at him with twinkling eyes. "Some day, Hugh, I'm going to make you give me a thousand-dollar bill for—myself. I never saw one before," she repeated, "and now I want one to play with. I—I hate to give these away. Not really, of course, but you know what I mean."

"I understand." He frowned unwittingly with his thoughts. That was the lure of money that had drawn him into this. She wanted none of this thirteen thousand dollars; no more than he did—now. Yet because it looked big in thousand-dollar bills she hated to part with it. Conscience money this was. Blood money! Damn that foolish idea! There was no blood on it.

He became conscious that she was staring at him with questing, doubting, eyes.

"You're scowling, Hugh. What—over?"

He blinked the smile away, grimaced.

"I didn't mean it. I was—just thinking."

"Of what?"

"Of—oh, everything."

"Are you sorry?" she asked gravely. "Sorry you're not to have this money?"

"Why, no," he said slowly, gravely too, "but I'm sorry I ever handled it. I feel squeamish about it. But there's no use moping over it. What's done is done. Here," he forced a lighter tone as he dipped into his wallet again, "I'm coming across now so you won't peck me to death for that thousand. Your thousand-dollar bill, ma'am, a free gift from friend husband."

"Oh!" She dropped the infamous thirteen which were to be purged of their recent illegitimacy by union with a fund of mercy. "Do you mean it, Hugh? Mine!"

"Yours." Her glee scattered his darksome thoughts.

"But"—she hesitated—"but this isn't—— No, of course is isn't," she answered herself.

"It isn't," he echoed reassuringly. "That's my own money, Evelyn—clean money."

"I know," she said, her smile returning, "but I'm not going to take it. I was only joking, Hugh. Truly."

"Keep it," he insisted crisply, his black imaginings rekindled by what he regarded as her reluctance to touch this money, because of its association with illicit liquor. He loathed all this money, his own as well as that which he had stolen and its gains. Stolen money—his own money—rum money—it was all in the same boat. There was blood on it somewhere!

Because he was scowling again she did not persist in her refusal. It recurred to her that there was really trouble between him and Barr. But only for a moment. Why should she think so when he not only denied this, but had received this money from Barr?

"Well," she compromised, "you keep it for me just now. And this other"—handing him also the thirteen thousand—"keep that, too, until I can mail it tomorrow. Gracious, Hugh, look at the time! We'll have to run to the Lancasters' if we want to hear London."

He put the money away again in his pocket. On Monday he would be rid of it. Meanwhile, why let it make him miserable? He'd worried enough over it.

They walked the short distance to the home of the Lancasters who had promised to bring in London to-night on the radio.

CHAPTER IX.

Police Chief Williams of Harlington reached Barr's house within fifteen minutes of the housekeeper's discovery of the body. She was in hysterics, almost incapable of coherent speech. One thing, however, she did say clearly under persuasion.

"Mr. Colton killed him! O-o-oh! Killed him! O-o-oh, to think he killed him!"

"Colton?" asked the chief who was fairly well posted on the affairs of his town and so knew that Barr and Hugh Colton had been together considerably of late. "Do you mean Hugh Colton? Was he here?"

She nodded, rocking her head in her hands and moaning.

Williams, a retired city detective, turned to Johnson. "What do you know?"

"Only what she says," replied the houseman in jerky sentences. "I came in about half an hour ago—about eight thirty. There was nobody here then. Nobody I saw, anyhow. Mr. Barr was dead then, I guess. He must have been. Nobody went out after I came."

"How do you know that?"

"Well, I stood in the kitchen door chinning with her. I'd have heard anybody coming out of that room. I'd have seen him go out. I could see the front door from where I stood. I didn't hear or see anybody. I didn't see Colton. That is," he tailed off as if he had run down, "not here."

The lead was apparent and the chief pounced on it.

"Where did you see him? When did you?"

"Well," said Johnson hesitantly, "I wouldn't want to say it was him. I thought it was but I'm not sure. It looked like his car——"

"Where?"

"Down the road a ways. When I was coming home. I'd been down to the village. About a quarter mile down the road a car passed me that looked like Colton's. It was going fast, though, and I'm not sure——"

"You're sure enough, aren't you?"

"In a way—yes. But there's other cars like his around. I didn't see who was in it——"

"Never mind about that now," interrupted Williams again. "What time was this?"

"About five minutes or so before I got home. I walked straight along. The parlor door was shut when I came in and I walked straight through to the kitchen. Mrs. Hemming was sitting there and we chinned——"

"You told me that. Did she tell you Colton had been here?"

"No; not then. She said Mr. Barr was feeling good about something. He gave her a fifty-dollar bill. She had an idea he had just made a bunch of money."

"What made her think that?"

"Something he said—I don't know what—about a bag he carried. A traveling bag."

"Where is it?"

Johnson shook his head. "I can't find it. I looked while we were waiting for you. It isn't in the house."

Williams nodded, seeing daylight. He had heard rumors of Barr's rum operations and was aware of how loosely cash was handled in that business. A clear case of murder for robbery. But Hugh Colton—— Williams couldn't see him in it. Colton couldn't be so desperate for money as all that.

"How did you come to find the body?"

"I didn't," said Johnson. "She did. After a while she spoke again about the fifty dollars he had given her.

That's when she said Colton was here. I said he was gone but she said no, Mr. Barr and Colton were in the parlor drinking champagne. I said I thought I met Colton's car on the 'road. She said she hadn't heard it go and wasn't it at the door.

"I said there wasn't any car there—only Mr. Barr's—and she said that was funny and went to look. When she saw it wasn't there she listened at the parlor door. When she didn't hear anything, she knocked. When there wasn't any answer she went in and found him just like he is. Then I shut off her screeching, figuring you wouldn't want anybody tramping around before you got here, and called you up."

"And that's all you know?"

"That's all," said Johnson, "except that after she quieted down some I looked for the bag and couldn't find it."

Chief Williams went into the living room again. He looked doubtfully at the wine bottle standing on a chair. Here, plainly enough, was the weapon. There was no question of that, judging by the expanse of the injury to Barr's head. But only an imbecile would neglect to remove his finger prints from such a receptive surface after using it to commit murder, and a mighty low-grade imbecile at that. He didn't hope for anything from it but he inserted a finger into the neck of the bottle and so lifted it to the table alongside the two glasses.

What else was there? Nothing. Not even a sign of a struggle. Only Barr lying there on his face, dead.

Turning the body over, Williams' face puckered as he saw the result of that other blow, the first, which Monty Denman struck with his pistol. The broken teeth grinning horribly through drawn lips told again of a battering force. It was another injury such as might have been inflicted with a bottle.

The phone rang. Webster, whom Barr had left at the country club, was calling.

"What do you want Barr for?" asked Williams after inquiring Webster's name. He knew no Webster in town and played a hunch that the call had to do with the rum money which he inferred had led to Barr's death.

"What do you ask?" countered Webster. "Is Barr there or is he on the way back?"

"Back where?"

"Look here," said Webster, objecting to being cross-questioned by an unknown, "what's the idea? If Barr's on his way why don't you say so? Who's talking, anyway?"

"The chief of police," said Williams distinctly.

"Hell!" exploded Webster, thinking of the only thing that could have happened to occasion the presence of the police in Barr's house. "You don't mean that—that he's been robbed?"

"He has. Wait!" he stilled the flood of questions. "Do you know how much he had?"

Webster parried, himself seeking information. "Can't he tell you?"

"No."

"Why?"

The chief pondered how much to tell. He didn't want a crowd.

"Barr can't talk."

Webster's long breath came hissing over the wire. "Is he dead?"

"What makes you think that?"

"Damn you, man, tell me!" blared Barr's friend and partner. "Is he?"

"Where are you talking from?"

"The country club. Damn it——"

"He's dead," said Williams, "but keep it to yourself and come here. I want to know——"

The receiver at the other end clicked on the hook. He phoned the club and inquired for Webster, half-prepared to learn that the call had not come from there. He counted himself a step along in the right direction when informed

that Webster had dragged Burrows out of a party only a moment ago and rushed off with him. He had no idea what connection Burrows might have with the case, but Webster evidently knew something.

"What's all the excitement?" his informant asked.

"Oh, nothing much," said Williams and rang off.

But this man he had spoken with was inquisitive. He asked the operator where the call had come from. She told him and added what she had heard Johnson tell the chief a half hour ago—that Barr had been murdered. Thus the chief got the crowd he didn't want and, some of those at the club, taking time to phone friends who weren't there, the news spread rapidly throughout the town.

In the interval before Webster's arrival, the housekeeper recovered sufficient composure to talk connectedly when the necessity was impressed upon her.

Johnson had quoted her substantially but she added some detail. Barr came in about eight o'clock, a minute or two either way, she said, and gave her a fifty-dollar bill "to buy herself a box of candy." He had a black leather bag which he carried upstairs. A few minutes later Colton arrived and she left him in the parlor while she called Barr.

Barr came downstairs with a bottle of champagne. She saw him go into the dining room for glasses and then join Colton. She went into the kitchen—and that was all, she sobbed, until what Johnson said brought about the finding of the body.

"Barr made a remark about the bag, didn't he?" prompted the chief from what Johnson had told him. "Something about money. What was it?"

"He patted the bag," she related, "and said it was Santy Claus and I could thank it for the box of candy. That was when I tried to thank him. He was like that, he was," she sniffled, "free and generous. Oh, have you caught that Colton who killed him?"

"We're getting him," said Williams. "Is that all Barr said to suggest there was money in the bag?"

"No. When I said the fifty dollars was too much he patted the bag again and said the fifty dollars was nothing at all."

"And he took the bag when he went in to Colton?"

"He did. I saw him with my own eyes. Isn't it there? Was it for that——"

"Answer questions, please," said Williams sharply as she started to rock her head and moan some more. "How did Colton look to you when you let him in? Did he seem nervous, quarrelsome?"

"He was nervous," she declared, "fidgety. He couldn't sit down while I was calling Mr. Barr but kept walking around the room—glowering," she added with malice bred of her regard for the man who was dead.

"Did Barr expect him?"

"I don't know, but Mr. Barr, you'll understand, was not a man to quarrel, if that's what you're thinking."

"Did you hear anything of what they said together?"

She bridled. "I did not. I was here in my kitchen."

"How is it that you didn't hear Colton leave? You should have heard his car start."

"Well," she admitted, "maybe I dozed for a minute over my knitting. My eyes are not what they were and maybe I dozed for a minute."

"Did you?"

"It's likely enough I did. But I know there was none but Colton——"

"All right, all right," said Williams hastily, shutting her off. "How long do you suppose you slept?"

"I didn't sleep."

"How long did you doze, then?"

"A minute or maybe two," she said stubbornly.

"Did you hear Johnson come in?"

"I heard him coming through the hall."

"Did you hear him open the door?" Williams pursued patiently.

She hesitated but amended her statement. "I heard him shut the door."

"You're sure of that?"

Williams looked at Johnson who, jaw falling, retreated a step as the possible inference dawned upon him.

"Oh," he stammered, "you're not—not—— You don't think I did it?"

"Quiet!" said Williams. "You're sure you heard him shut the door, Mrs. Hemming?"

"Positive."

"But you didn't hear him open it, did you?"

"He must have opened it before he could shut it," she retorted, convinced that Colton was guilty and therefore resenting this apparent attempt to saddle the crime on Johnson.

"Did you actually hear his key in the lock?"

"I didn't use my key," broke in Johnson. "I——"

"Quiet!"

"I won't be quiet," protested Johnson excitedly. "I didn't kill him. What would I kill him for? I didn't know anything about the money. I didn't even see the bag. All I know about it is what she told me. You don't have to ask her if she heard me open the door. I didn't use my key. I didn't have to. The door wasn't locked."

The chief's brows went up. Here was something new.

"Why haven't you mentioned that before?"

"I didn't think of it," said Johnson. "I didn't think it meant anything. I don't think it does. The door is often left unlocked. I didn't kill him, I tell you, and you can't say I did."

"I'm not saying it," returned Williams quietly. He had, in fact, an inner feeling that Johnson was telling nothing but the truth.

Still, it was almost impossible to picture Hugh Colton as robber and murderer. If anything, it was easier to see him as a slayer. Under certain provocation it was conceivable that he might kill a man, but to think of him as a thief seemed totally absurd. Money couldn't constitute that provocation, not to him. It was common knowledge that he could have anything he desired within his father's means, which were far from meager.

Also, there was his pride. How could anybody believe that he would commit a crime like this, with the evidence pointing directly at him, less than a month after his marriage?

With the evidence pointing directly at him, Williams conceded that it did—circumstantially. But no more than it pointed at Johnson. Not so much. With Johnson, money could be looked upon as motive for murder. As he entered the house he might have seen Barr with the money out of the bag. Yet he could not be such a fool as to believe he could get away with it in the few minutes at his disposal.

He couldn't have had time to hide the bag successfully. A traveling bag couldn't be so readily concealed in a restricted area. If Johnson was the thief the money must be within an extremely narrow radius of the house. The limit of that radius would be established by the limit of time which must be put upon him through checking his departure from the village for home and his arrival there.

Chief Williams, consequently, had two good suspects ready made but admitted frankly that neither looked good to him as such. The game, he believed, was farther afield. When he knew more and definitely about the source of the missing money he would know better how to proceed and where to hunt.

Especially if it were rum money. He would have word on that shortly from Webster.

"I'm not accusing you of anything, Johnson," he said. "I'm looking for your assistance. Can you think of anything more?"

Johnson shook his head sulkily, not greatly reassured. He wished fervently that he had stayed another hour in the village.

"How about you, Mrs. Hemming?" said Williams. "Are you certain you didn't hear anything that passed between Barr and Colton?"

"I've told you I was in my kitchen."

"Yes, but if their voices had been raised you'd have heard, wouldn't you?"

"I might but didn't."

"Not a sound from the time Colton arrived until you heard Johnson come in?"

"Well," she reflected, "it seems to me I might have heard the telephone ring."

"While Colton was here?"

"Yes."

"How do you know he hadn't gone?"

"Because he was here, I'm telling you."

"But you admit you don't know when he left."

"I know when Johnson came in," she said stubbornly, "and he met Colton leaving."

"Then if Colton was here at the time, the phone call must have been several minutes before Johnson came. It took him five minutes to walk from where Colton passed him. Can't you fix the time better? That phone call may be important."

She refused to qualify her statement.

"Just a moment," said Williams, recalling her exact phrasing. "What do you mean when you say you 'might have heard the phone ring?'—that it 'seems' you did? Aren't you sure of that?"

"I'm sure enough," she asserted obstinately.

"Why should there be any doubt?" he pressed. "You heard it or you didn't hear it. Which? Take your time about answering, Mrs. Hemming. Keep in mind that this is a murder case and that a man's life may depend on what you say. Leave your own feelings, what you want to believe, out of it entirely. You think Colton killed Barr. Perhaps he did. If so, it isn't necessary for you to stretch any fact to prove it. You understand?"

She nodded stiffly but was evidently impressed and pondering.

"Now tell me this," he went on. "I've taken it for granted that somebody answered the telephone. That's why you say Colton was still here, isn't it? All right. Now tell me how you know the call was answered? Did you hear the speaker?"

"I've told you I didn't hear anything but the phone."

"Then how do you know it was answered?"

"Because it seems like it only rang once. If nobody'd answered, it would have kept ringing, wouldn't it?"

Williams nodded approval of her observation.

"That's good," he said, "but why do you say 'seems' again? Why 'it seems like it rang only once?' Have you an honest doubt? We can check this up through the operator, of course, as to whether the phone was or was not answered but I'd like your honest opinion first.

"Isn't it possible that the phone had been ringing for some time, before you heard it? While you were asleep. Come, Mrs. Hemming. Were you awake when it rang or did it awaken you?"

"I wasn't asleep," she bristled again. "I was no more than nodding for a minute."

Williams puffed over the quibble but continued in the same patient way. He knew what was best with a recalcitrant

witness of her type. Bullying her would do no good and would only make her close up tight. She must be appealed to, persuaded, gently out-argued.

"Were you nodding when the phone rang or were you wide awake?"

"Well," she admitted finally, "I might have been nodding."

"Do you know what time that was? Did you look at the clock?"

"No."

"Have you any idea how long it was after Colton arrived?"

"Well, it wasn't so long. Ten or fifteen minutes probably."

"Did you look at the clock at all after he arrived?"

"Not that I remember."

"Then how can you say it was only ten or fifteen minutes? How do you know how long you'd been—nodding?"

She couldn't tell but just guessed.

"This isn't a good time for guessing," he warned her quietly. "You were dozing again when Johnson came in, weren't you?"

"In a kind of a way, maybe," she said in a more subdued, less assertive, manner.

"For all you know," said Williams deliberately, taking his vantage as she weakened, "Colton may have left the house the first time you dozed off. Before the phone roused you. Isn't that so?"

"Well," she conceded reluctantly, "he might have but I don't think——"

"Never mind what you think, please. What you know is what we want. And somebody else might have come in while you dozed the first time. Isn't that so, too?"

"I didn't hear anybody——"

"You didn't hear him go, either, remember. Can you tell how long it was after the phone rang before you dozed again?"

"Quite a while. Five or ten minutes probably."

"There's quite a difference between five and ten minutes," he pointed out. "As a matter of fact you don't know, do you?"

"I've just told you."

"As a matter of fact," he emphasized, "were you fully awake at all before the arrival of Johnson? Did you become wide awake when you thought you heard the phone or did you just imagine you woke up?"

She answered with a sniff of indignation. Hadn't she said she was awake?

"Will you swear," said Williams more weightily, "that you actually heard the telephone ring? Will you swear to it?"

"Why—why——" She balked uncertainly under his sharper look and tone. "Why—well—yes. Yes, I will."

He admonished her with a shake of his head.

"You're not being fair, Mrs. Hemming, and in a case like this you've got to be. You'd hang Colton if you could, simply because you believe he's guilty. You'd distort the facts to hang him. You can't do that."

She eyed him sullenly, knowing within herself that he was right in questioning, but nevertheless resenting it.

"What will you say," he shot at her abruptly, "if I tell you nobody used this phone from eight o'clock until Johnson called me up?

"I've talked with the operator," he declared with misleading truth which stifled the woman's protest, "and she knows. And if nobody used the phone during that time you couldn't have heard it ring, could you? If it didn't ring you only dreamed you heard it, eh?"

She couldn't answer, but her eyes told that he was hitting the nail. He had found the shred of doubt that was in her mind. She had no intention of being willfully malicious but, holding Colton guilty, she had automatically swung the balance against him. Why should she give him the benefit of the doubt? That was her attitude.

"That's what you meant, isn't it," said Williams, "when you said it 'seemed like' you 'thought' you heard the phone? It only 'seemed' so and you only 'thought' so because you weren't sure whether you had been dreaming. Isn't that the truth?"

"Well, yes. I thought—I was pretty sure——"

"But now you're not sure?"

"If you say there wasn't any call I must have been dreaming."

"So." Williams listened to an automobile grinding to a rude stop. That would be Webster.

He was through with the housekeeper for the present but he summed up for her on the point on which her loyalty to Barr had made her so dangerously evasive. "Here's what this part of your testimony amounts to: You fell asleep while Colton was here and don't know when he left. You may have heard the phone but you have no idea whether that was before or after he left. You don't know whether it rang once and was answered or a dozen times and wasn't answered.

"You don't know whether this ringing, real or imaginary, was ten minutes or five minutes or only one minute before Johnson came in and you woke up. That's the plain truth, is it not?"

Her counterquestion constituted an affirmative. "Did the phone ring?"

"Probably," said Williams, "and if you can stir up your hazy recollection somehow and fix the time you heard it inside or outside of five minutes before Johnson arrived you'll have something worth saying. We have Johnson's word that when he came in Colton had been gone from the house about five minutes. So if the phone call was made and answered within that period of five minutes, Colton naturally didn't kill Barr.

"Think it over and you may be able to pick some other impression as well as the ringing of the phone out of the time you were half asleep. And remember, if you can, that you're not trying Colton."

He went to the front hall where Webster and Burrows were standing, gaping in at the body of Barr.

Chief Williams believed that he was saving both time and trouble by eliminating Colton at the outset. For this reason he was gratified over having impeached the housekeeper on the matter of Colton's presence when the phone rang—an item which he was inclined to believe would have an outstanding bearing on the case.

Johnson, too, he was ready to dismiss from suspicion with mild reservation based on a thought that the housekeeper might be protecting him. With her collusion he could have had at least fifteen minutes to hide away the money—fifteen minutes during which they claimed they talked together before she discovered the body. This idea, however, was of the most slender proportions.

The woman, despite her indisposition to convict Colton right off, seemed sincere. The man was either guileless or extraordinarily and brazenly guileful. He might, of course, have been tempted by sight of so much money in Barr's hands and figured that suspicion could be thrown upon Colton who had so recently visited Barr.

But, sizing him up, Williams thought not. The risk was too great and, moreover, fifteen minutes was still not sufficient time in which to remove the money to a safe distance from the scene of the crime.

The real lead toward the murderer, Williams expected should come through Webster.

CHAPTER X.

But Webster's information was largely disappointing. It also seemed to center upon Hugh Colton.

"Barr left me and Burrows at the

club about quarter of seven," said Webster, "to come here and meet Colton. Colton made the appointment here. Barr wanted him to come to the club but he wouldn't. I don't know why.

"Barr told us he wouldn't be long—not over forty minutes. That's why I called up after he'd been gone more than an hour. I was worried about whether he'd been held up. And here he was—good Lord! Say, who is this fellow Colton?"

"I've told you," interjected Burrows plaintively, mopping the sweat of horror from his face. "Colton's all right. He didn't do this. It's crazy to think he did!"

"Lots of things happen that seem crazy," said Webster grimly. "Have you talked with Colton yet, chief?"

"Not yet," said Williams. "I've been waiting to hear your end. This ninety-six thousand dollars—where did you say it came from?"

"I brought it."

"Yes, you said that. But why haul all that cash along? Where did you get it? What was Barr to do with it?"

Webster scratched the back of his neck with quick fingers, impatiently, and his capable-looking face took on a puckered smile.

"You can have one guess on that but you needn't ask whether you're right or wrong. All you need to know is that Barr had the money and whoever murdered him has it now. Damn me, I wanted to come with him but he laughed at me! How about going after Colton now?"

"Shortly," said Williams. "I'm waiting on the coroner to leave him in charge here. I'll make that one guess you give me and figuring——"

He broke off with a gesture of annoyance as the uproar of a dozen motors resounded in front of the house with some shouting as their drivers crowded one another. The vanguard of the crowd that was at the door.

He opened it to address them pithily.

"There's none of you coming inside, and nobody inside has any time to talk with you. Barr's dead, if that's what you want to know. He's been murdered. That's all there is to tell. You might as well all go home."

"Who murdered him?" called several voices.

"You tell me!" said the chief and he shut the door.

Webster was standing as he had left him, hard-eyed and calm, but Burrows was in a visibly growing state of nerves. he shifted constantly from one foot to the other and nibbled his nails, the while he stretched his neck repeatedly to peer in at the body although the very thought of it gave him the shakes. Burrows was being dragged two ways. He didn't know whether to talk or keep still. He had heard a snatch of gossip this evening and—— Oh, hell! it was craziness and so was the notion that now grew out of it.

"We didn't bring the crowd," said Webster, reading the chief's frown. "They must have trailed."

"Trailed," nodded Williams as though he found some significance in the word; "yes. I was saying that, figuring my guess as correct, a number of people knew you brought the money here to Barr?"

"You're wrong. Only one man knew where I was bringing it—and I'd trust him with my right eye."

"But others knew you had it, didn't they? Say, for instance, the crew of a ship."

"True," acknowledged Webster, "but that's all they did know—simply that I had it."

"Yes," said Williams dryly, "and don't you think that was plenty? Ninety-six thousand dollars—or was there more than that in the beginning? —is worth trailing a man for."

"Nobody trailed me. I looked out for that. And I took damn good care

nobody knew where I was heading—nobody except the one man I mentioned who, I don't mind saying, is the skipper of a certain vessel. I even drove alone to cut down the last chance of a leak. You're on the wrong tack there, chief."

"And yet," said Williams, "that mob outside trailed you although you hadn't told where you were going."

"Oh, that's easy. It's entirely different. The telephone operator usually spreads the news in a little town like this. That's where they got it."

"Perhaps. But I understand that you and Burrows bolted out of the club in such a rush that you excited curiosity. You made them curious enough to inquire what was going on so they could trail along. And a hundred thousand dollars or so is more likely to make a man curious about another's destination than is a simple evidence of excitement on his part. What do you think?"

"Granting that, I still think you're off the course. Aren't we," he asked bluntly, "wasting time?"

"I don't think so. Where is the ship now?"

"In the Erie Basin, Brooklyn."

"How many are in the crew?"

"Eighteen."

"Quite a ship, isn't she?"

"Not so big. We carried extra men—for reasons."

"Defensive reasons," smiled the chief. "Would you trust them all with your right eye as you would the skipper?"

"No—no. But, damn it, won't you hear when I say nobody followed me? Nobody knew where I was heading. If you want my advice, look up the people on this end who knew the money was coming."

"I will if you'll tell me who they are?"

"Well, there's——"

Burrows coughed loudly and waved an arm in a very patent appeal for silence. Barr had impressed upon him that Hugh Colton was not to be even remotely mentioned in connection with this deal. Knowing Colton's position—but not of the substituted counterfeit money in the bank vault—he understood why.

Webster frowned at him. He certainly could see no good reason why Colton should not be named. Wasn't he already plainly catalogued mighty close to the heart of things? Wasn't he apparently the last person known to have seen Barr alive?

"Colton knew," added Webster, while Burrows made a gurgling sound and threw up his arms. "I told you, didn't I, that Barr wanted Colton to meet us at the club? That was around six o'clock. Colton knew then what Barr wanted to see him about. But, remember, Colton wouldn't go to the club. He made this date for eight o'clock instead. Why? In two hours," he commented sardonically, "I could scheme up six or eight murders if I felt in the mood."

"Don't talk like that, Webster," sweated Burrows. "My heavens, man, you don't know what you're saying! I know Colton—everybody knows him. You——"

Webster interrupted abruptly. "We're not coddling anybody in this act. We're out to get the man who murdered Barr."

Burrows' teeth chattered as he realized the potency of Webster's argument. He wished he hadn't heard that gossip. When once Williams heard it——

"Had Colton an interest in the ninety-six thousand?" asked Williams.

Webster nodded. Burrows hung breathless, biting his nails.

"How much?"

"I don't know," replied Webster. "Barr didn't tell me but from a word he let drop I'd guess about twenty-five thousand.

"Do you know, Burrows?"

"Not a thing!"

"Who else knew of the money?"

"I did, of course." Webster's smile flickered again sourly. "But I'm not counting myself. If I had wanted the cash I could have walked away with it without killing anybody. I'm out. Burrows knew——"

"Not till I met him and you at the club," bleated Burrows, "so help me! I haven't been out of your sight since then—not out of your sight——"

"If you'd let me finish I'd have said that for you. Who else did he tell? How about the other man who put up—what's his name?"

"Connelly," said Burrows. "He didn't know. He's out of town. Listen, Webster," he rallied again to the defense of Colton, heedlessly showering suspicion wherever it might fall in the effort to strangle his own dread that Colton was guilty, "you remember Barr talked in that sort of bragging way he had before the men he invited to have wine with us. Remember? He wanted them to know he'd made a pile of money and they saw the bag——"

"Why pick on them?" said Webster, utilizing Burrow's own claim made on behalf of Colton. "They're friends of yours, aren't they? They've got just as good reputations as Colton, haven't they? If there's any thugs among them why don't you name them? I can't, because I don't know the men.

"You're talking rot, more or less, Webster, and you know it. Barr didn't really say anything to give them the idea that he had a barrel of money with him. I didn't hear him tell any of them he was bringing it here at eight o'clock."

Burrows argued weakly, "Somebody might have trailed him!"

"Rot! See here, Williams, Colton's the man you want to see. He's the only one that I know of outside of Burrows and myself who knew Barr had the cash. He's the one who made the date here with Barr, and which you say he kept. I want to hear what he's got to say."

"As soon as the coroner arrives," Williams was promising when that official pounded on the door.

They didn't start at once, however, but waited while the doctor made a superficial examination of the body and received an outline of the case.

"Colton!" he exclaimed, whistling softly. "That's bad! Haven't you tried to get in touch with him yet?"

"How do you mean 'bad'?"

"Why——"

The doctor's brows furrowed thoughtfully. He knew how much Marge Conway's tales frequently were worth or were not worth. He disliked retailing one of them against Colton, particularly in a situation like this. But there appeared to be no choice. A crime was being investigated and he was an officer necessarily without personal preferences or beliefs in the performance of his duty.

"My wife ran into Conway's wife this afternoon," he frowned, "and of course got a chunk of scandal. It seems—— What's the matter with you, Burrows? Did you hear it, too? Have you told the chief?"

Burrows shook his head, mumbling a manifestly false denial of having heard anything. He knew he was a fool and it came to him suddenly like some ghastly revelation that his lie topping his silence might work only to Colton's disadvantage.

As an associate of Colton and Barr in the rum venture wasn't it to be expected that he would be posted on whether there had been a rift in their relations or not? Wouldn't his concealment of this story of bad blood between the two tend to nullify any denial of its truth which he might offer? If he knew it wasn't true and he would be challenged, why hadn't he told Williams frankly of it and added that it was a lie?

Was it a lie? He didn't know, but deep down he feared that it was not. Colton had been worrying over the apparent loss of his money when the rum schooner became long overdue. Barr had taken the matter in a lighter spirit, looking upon it from the gambler's viewpoint. Their divergent attitudes might had resulted in a quarrel.

"It seems," the doctor continued, "that Barr and Colton had a fuss early this afternoon. According to the Conway gossip they did everything but come to blows. In fact she says Barr tried several times to strike Colton while talking a blue streak at him."

"Where did this happen?" asked Williams, slanting a scowl that made Webster jump.

"In front of Colton's house," said the doctor. "Both the Conways were there on the veranda with Hugh and his wife and his father. Barr drove up in a hurry and shouted for Colton, who went to the curb. This is Marge Conway's story, understand. Barr didn't get out of his car but leaned over, waving his fists and talking like sixty at Hugh.

"Hugh waved his arms too and leaned into the car, apparently hurling some few closing remarks, as Barr got back of his wheel and was about to start. Then Barr started with a rush that almost knocked Colton down and, as he got going, he turned to shake his fist and shout a threat to 'settle this later.' That's the tale the Conway gossip tells."

"Gossips often get hold of the truth," cut in Webster, giving the chief a hard glance which charged tardiness. "Barr doesn't seem to get much of a shake in his home town," he gibed at the others generally.

"Barr gets as fair a shake as anybody," returned the chief. "We're friends of Barr's as much as Colton's, Webster. Is that all, doctor?"

"No. When Hugh went back to the veranda he gave out that Barr was drunk and said they hadn't quarreled. But he was excited and in such a temper he snapped the face off Conway over nothing, and did the same with his father when the old man said he had heard Barr was bootlegging.

"He seemed tender on that subject because, according to Marge Conway, that's what he and Barr were rowing over. Which, unfortunately," he concluded with much seriousness, "from what you tell me, appears as though it might have good foundation in fact."

"You bet it has," said Webster emphatically, "but at this rate by the time anybody goes after Colton he'll be an old man—if he can be found."

"We're going now," said Williams. "What did you say Barr shouted back at Colton from his car? 'I'll settle this later?' Is that right?"

"Yes."

"What did Colton say then?"

"Nothing apparently. He just stood at the curb looking after the car."

"Is that all the Conways heard? Couldn't they make out anything of the real argument?"

"Nothing but the motions."

Williams' gaze spiked Burrows.

"You knew about this, didn't you?"

"No"—Burrows wet his lips—"and it's a damned lie! That Conway woman ought to be muzzled, damn her tongue! You know it's a lie, Williams. You know——"

"For Colton's sake I wish I did know that. And, Burrows, I'm advising you now to dust off your memory because you may find it more useful that way. Did Barr say anything to you, Webster, about having a row with Colton?"

"No. He did say, though, that Colton had been worrying a lot because our proposition was slow in going through. The cash was several weeks behind schedule and I gathered that Colton needed the money."

"Impossible," said the doctor.

"Maybe it is," said Webster. "but

that's the sense I put on it. We most all need money at times."

Williams asked. "When did you let Barr know you were coming?"

"This afternoon about two o'clock. He came to meet me. That's another reason I know I wasn't followed." He insinuated another gentle knock as a hint to get busy. "Barr scouted back along the road behind me on the lookout for a trailer without finding a sign."

"I'm going to Colton's, doctor," said Williams. "You look after things here and don't let in anybody who doesn't belong. One of my men should be along soon, as I left word for him to come. There'll be an officer from the district attorney's office and the district attorney, himself probably will come if he gets home before daylight from wherever he is. Barr's man Johnson will stay inside, and the housekeeper.

"You call the undertaker but don't let him disturb anything he doesn't have to. I'm going to Colton's house. If he isn't there I'll let you know where I'm making for. All right?"

The doctor nodded absently, struggling to comprehend this astonishing position in which Hugh Colton stood. Not the least astonishing part of it was the statement that Hugh was pressed for money. A black item, this, when money was the motive for the murder of Barr.

Going out with Webster and Burrows, Chief Williams found that the crowd, now numbering several hundreds, was spread all over the place. Here was the biggest sensation the community ever had known. Howard Barr murdered, and Hugh Colton implicated! Everybody knew they had fought over some business they had with the whisky ring!

They besieged the chief with a thousand questions, but he went on uncommunicatively to his car. To reach the road past the jam of cars he had to drive over the lawn, among trees, and violently through a hedge but he made no complaint.

Only when a parade of cars started to fall in behind him did he say anything. He was a popular officer, but, for the time being, he accepted unpopularity. He blocked the road with his car and halted the parade.

"I don't want company," he announced, "and I'm not going to have any unless somebody wants to go with me as far as the station. That goes for everybody. I'll lock up anybody that follows."

They followed, of course, but slowly and well to the rear. They knew where he was going, anyhow. To Hugh Colton's house. Where else?

There was only a fragment of conversation in the chief's car during the journey.

"Do you expect to find him home?" queried Webster skeptically.

Williams answered curtly after a short pause, "Yes."

Burrows groaned. He wasn't so sure now.

"Don't you think," he said shakily, "you're taking chances on that man of Barr's? He might——"

"I'd say that, too," contributed Webster, "if I though as much of Colton as you do."

"I guess not," said Williams. "What's the name of your schooner?"

Webster answered freely, having already told enough to make identification of the craft easy.

"The *Salasal*."

"What's the skipper's name?"

"Richie. But I've told you——"

"All right. That's all I want to know."

CHAPTER XI.

Chief Williams showed disappointment upon finding that Colton was not at home. Webster smiled, but less aggressively when the maid added that

Colton and his wife were visiting the Lancasters near by.

"That's good enough," said Williams. "Wait for me a minute, you men. I'm going in to phone."

Webster's brows went up. "To let him know you're coming?"

"He's heard by now," returned Williams tartly. He turned around as the maid claimed his attention. "What did you say?"

"I asked is something wrong?" she inquired, to satisfy a well-fed curiosity. "There's been several phone calls for Mr. Colton in the last few minutes—people who wanted to know where they could reach him—so I wondered. There's the phone again."

"Never mind it," said Williams. "I'll answer. Did you tell where he is?"

"Yes, sir. They seemed so anxious to get him."

"See, Webster? How long did you think it would take for him to get the news in a town this size. Yes," he told the girl, "something is wrong. Howard Barr has been killed—murdered. Now take me to the phone."

He stepped into the house but was halted by the gasp she uttered.

"Well?" he demanded, as she stared at him with rounded eyes and lips in a way that bespoke some sudden horrific knowledge. "Well? Don't stand making faces, girl. Say it. Do you mean that you saw Barr here to-day?"

She nodded.

Webster cut in before she could speak.

"You saw the fight?" he led her on with grim eagerness.

She eyed him a trifle doubtfully and said, "Ye-es."

"There you are!" Webster flung at Williams. "Looks like there's more to it than just gossip, doesn't it? How about stepping on the gas now and getting Colton with the goods? The quicker you get him the nearer you'll be to the cash that'll hang him."

"Let's get this straight first," said Williams, motioning them inside and shutting the door as the vanguard of the crowd came into sight. "What do you mean by 'fight,' girl? You're speaking of Barr and Colton, of course. That's understood. Did they actually strike each other?"

"Oh, no! Not—not quite, I mean. But I thought——"

"We don't care what you thought. What did you see? Where were you when you saw it? What did you hear? That's what we want to know. Keep out of this, Webster, or I'll bar you out. Come on, girl, we're waiting."

Webster growled in his throat but was technically silent because of his desire to hear her version which, he was convinced, would be something like a knockout not only to Colton but also to this officer who so openly championed him.

He resolved to have a heart-to-heart talk with Williams presently in which a spade would be called a spade. Should that prove unproductive, he would hire less partisan detectives, who would give Barr an even break though he were dead. The fact that he was dead and murdered entitled him to still more than an even break, didn't it? Webster was there to see that it was given.

"Well," said the maid slowly, realizing that whatever she might say could be of grave import—a realization which she had sense enough to let curb a natural tendency to exaggerate and gain the spotlight, "well, I happened to look out the window. Mr. Barr was in his car and Mr. Colton standing beside it and they were excited and I thought——"

"Don't *think!*" Williams warned again. "How do you know they were excited?"

"I—— Mr. Barr made a fist at Mr. Colton, and when he moved over on the seat—when Mr. Barr moved over on the seat to start the car, Mr. Colton

leaned into it after him and made a fist at him. Then Mr. Barr started in such a hurry that Mr. Colton nearly fell down because he had a foot on the running board and was leaning into the car when it started. Then Mr. Barr made another fist at him and shouted something——"

"What?"

"I didn't hear what he said. I just saw his fist and Mr. Colton looking after him like he was mad. Did—did Mr. Colton—k-kill him?"

Burrows, in the background, cracked his fingers and sucked in breath noisily. Barr—poor devil! That was bad enough. But Colton, with his bride of barely a month—this was ghastly! It would kill her. Burrows was close to slobbering.

Williams ignored the girl's question and scowled at Webster for answering it with a repeated nod. He was getting sore at Webster, and such soreness was not in harmony with calm investigation. He was sore because he feared this apparent corroboration of what he had chosen to regard, and therefore discount, as an irresponsible piece of chatter typical of Marge Conway, who had circulated it. Fearing this corroboration, he feared also——

"Were you looking out the window when Barr arrived?"

"No," said the maid. "I just glanced out about a minute before he went away. Then what I saw made me watch."

"Did you hear anything that was said after Colton returned to the house? Anything at all."

"No-o. I mean," she fluttered, embarrassed, "not then, I didn't. But later —after everybody had gone—old Mr. Colton and Mr. and Mrs. Conway, I mean—I heard something. I wasn't listening," she excused herself, "I just happened to be passing?"

"All right," said Williams, "let's hear it."

"Well," she related uncomfortably, "Mr. and Mrs. Colton were talking, and she said something about how much was he to get. That was it! She asked: 'How much?'

"He looked kind of queer then, and his voice sounded kind of like he was mad when he said he didn't know. And —truly, I wasn't listening," she protested again, weeping, "I just happened to go into the little room off the living room where they were, and the door was open and—and I wasn't listening."

"We'll take your word for it," said Williams rather heavily. "What more did you hear?"

"N-nothing—only that she asked him again and he said something about ten thousand dollars and—and then I left the little room and didn't hear any more. Truly, I wasn't listening!" she whimpered.

"All right," frowned Williams. "You're positive that's all you heard?"

She nodded tearfully, understanding nothing of the situation save that Barr had been murdered, and that she perhaps was materially aiding in fastening the crime upon Hugh Colton. The thrill of giving possibly momentous information being past, she was afraid and frightened alike by the crime and what she had done.

"That's that!" said Webster forcefully.

Williams turned away, depressed. It began to look very much like that was that in the sense Webster intended. He asked the girl again for the phone.

Webster burst out: "What do you want to phone for? It's all as plain as day, isn't it, that Colton quarreled with Barr over how much he should get out of the deal? What more do you want? That's what they scrapped about out here in front of the house. You don't need a map to see that, do you?

"Barr came here after I phoned him. You can get that much, can't you? He told Colton what his end was, and Col-

ton didn't like it. The girl tells you Colton got mad again when his wife asked how much he was to get. Damn it, man! won't you see things? How much longer are you going to fiddle around and stall trying to cover Colton up?"

The policeman stared at him with an anger that was repressed only because there seemed to be considerable body to the charge just made. While it was not true that he was striving to cover Colton up, it was true that his inquiry thus far had leaned appreciably toward the task of establishing Colton's innocence. He admitted that, but denied that, in taking this course, he was in any way derelict in his duty.

He had not choked off any witness whose testimony might be detrimental to Colton. He was following the trail as it appeared, and as it pointed to Colton. He had tried to eliminate Colton because he believed Colton innocent. Should evidence to the contrary continue to pile up—and he conceded that there already was a serious weight of circumstantial evidence—he wouldn't hesitate about arresting Colton. But he could see no occasion for a hasty arrest.

Perhaps he was showing partiality, but with the case focusing as it was, he preferred to get it as complete as possible before talking with Colton at all. The more he knew of Colton's movements and of his relations with Barr, the better equipped would he be to check Colton's answers. That was the simplest of common sense.

If while pursuing the investigation to its apparently logical end—Colton—he elected to uncover some lead in another direction, there could be no ground for complaint on that score. He would get Colton when he became ready. Meanwhile, he refused to be rushed by Webster. Instead, he struck back at Barr's insistent friend.

"If Barr," he expounded quietly, "told Colton how much he was to get, and so caused a quarrel this afternoon, why do you suppose Colton told his wife subsequently that he didn't know how much he had coming?"

"You ought to be able to figure that, too," said Webster acidly. "If you can't, I'll help you. He told her he didn't know because he thought he didn't know—because he believed he could figure he could hold Barr up for more. That explains why he wouldn't meet Barr at the club, doesn't it? He was out to make a row for more money, but, on account of the kind of money this was, he couldn't row about it in public"

"Did Barr tell you that?"

"No, but I can figure the cards if you can't."

"Probably. Here's something you may know without guessing. Had Colton ten thousand coming to him or more?"

"I don't know."

"Don't or don't want to?"

"I don't. Barr didn't tell me how the deal was to split."

"Do you know, Burrows?"

"Eh?" Collecting enough of his scattered wits to understand the question, Burrows wagged his head.

"What was your share?" asked Williams.

"Eh? Oh, not much. Eight thousand—a little more—eighty-four hundred."

"Did you get it from Barr?"

"Eh? Oh, yes, he paid me at the club."

"You, Webster. How did you make out?"

"Ten thousand."

"Have you been paid off?"

"It's in my pocket now."

"Any others paid?"

Webster's teeth clicked. "Colton!"

"Anybody else?"

They knew of nobody.

"You mentioned Connelly. Is he the only other in the pool?"

They weren't sure, but he was the only other Barr had named.

"Then," the chief calculated, "if Barr carried home ninety-six thousand you must have brought altogether——"

"A hundred and fourteen thousand dollars," snapped Webster. "What of it? What's that got to do with getting a move on after Colton?"

"Not a thing," replied Williams equably. "I'm merely making sure of the ground—to learn if there isn't somebody else we could go after at the same time. Somebody who might have called at Barr's house for his money as Colton did."

"Hell!" flared Webster.

"Wait! When Barr called on Colton this afternoon was he able to say whether Colton had ten thousand coming—or fifty thousand?"

"Huh?" Discerning some real purpose behind the question, Burrows contained himself. "Make that clearer."

"I'm asking," said Williams, "whether Barr really knew then how much Colton was to get?"

"Why shouldn't he have known?"

"Why dodge the point, Webster? Here it is in another form: Did you tell Barr over the phone that you were bringing one hundred and fourteen thousand dollars?"

Webster's brows gathered as he saw what was coming, and as he saw also that he'd brought it upon himself.

"No," he admitted, "I didn't mention the amount."

"I didn't think you had, remembering how careful you were to guard against a leak. Well, could Barr have guessed at the amount within a reasonable margin? Was he well enough acquainted with your cargo and the prices it brought to form a close estimate of the total? Close enough to give out advance information on how it would share up?"

"His estimate must have been high," replied Webster thoughtfully. "We had trouble, as I told you—got battered by storms and pretty well wrecked—so when we got where we were going we cut prices to get rid of our cargo in a hurry. Yes, Barr's estimate would have been high. What are you getting at?"

"I'm just speculating on how Colton could get mad over the amount of money he had coming when Barr couldn't tell him how much he was to get."

"Barr could have told him approximately——"

"But if Barr's estimate was high, as you say it must have been, why Colton's kick?"

"Hell!" said Webster, "I don't know. What's the use of talking here? Get Colton and find out."

"Quite so," nodded Williams. "You don't know. Now listen to me, Webster. Let's understand each other. You and I are shooting in exactly the same direction. We're looking for the man that killed Barr. I'm doing that quietly, in an orderly way. You're excited, vindictive, and all for grabbing Colton.

"I'm not steering away from him. I'm frankly sorry to say that I'm steering straight for him as the situation sizes up right now. I'm sorry for the reason that I still can't believe him guilty. It's more than a hunch: I know the man. And I know what I'm doing. If you don't like the way I'm handling the case what are you going to do about it?

"I'm running police business in this town, and I'm going to keep on running it so long as I hold my job. And if you think Colton has run out, that he isn't visiting the Lancasters, you'll find their house only a block up the street. Burrows will show you where it is. Go ahead. I'll be along in a couple of minutes."

Webster grunted, reviewing. He wasn't vindictive. He was—and, he felt, justly—vengeful. But innately he was fair. After all, Colton also was en-

titled to an even break. Perhaps Williams was justified in going slow.

It did seem improbable, even fanciful, that a man of affairs and intelligence like Colton would commit such a brutal murder for robbery—so completely lose his head in what originally could have been at worst a dispute over a few thousand dollars—when he was certain to be looked upon as the most outstanding suspect.

Barr's man, Johnson, also had a place in the center of the picture. He, too, was a high light. Why pass over him without a thought? Yet Williams himself was doing just that. But Williams might have an object in doing so. He didn't appear to be dumb, and there was nothing of the hick constable about him. He might purposely be giving Johnson rope. Anyhow, if Colton was already in flight, a few more minutes could make no difference.

"I'll wait for you," said Webster, curious now to know where Williams was going to telephone.

When it turned out, however, that the chief was asking New York police headquarters to post an immediate watch on the schooner *Salasal* with particular reference to members of the crew who had been ashore since prior to seven o'clock, Webster's impatience broke out again.

"That means the whole crew," he said derisively. "You'll find a watchman aboard the schooner, and that's all. The skipper probably won't even be aboard. Besides, there's only about half a dozen in the regular crew, which means there's some out of the crowd who'll never go back to her. That's a foolish line, I've told you. None of them knew where I was bringing the money——"

"All right," interrupted Williams, "if nobody shows up, there's no harm done, is there? And if somebody does, why, there'll be no harm either in asking where he's been. Getting right down to facts, Webster, it's merely a case of you and I betting against different horses. You're betting against Colton and I'm betting against somebody aboard the schooner.

"The skipper knew where you were coming. Well? You'd trust him with your right eye, you say. I'd trust Colton with mine. But"—he smiled at Webster's expression of disgust—"since Colton's close at hand and the skipper isn't, we'll talk things over with Colton first.

"Come along, miss," he told the maid, who was drinking in their talk between tears, "we'll have to take you with us till we get your statement written down."

By which he meant that he didn't want her to tell the whole town of Colton's conversation with his wife regarding the sum he was to receive from Barr. For a time, at least, Colton could be protected from this much adverse publicity which, when it did become known, would doubtless go far to mold sentiment against him.

"Muzzle 'em!" said Webster with a mocking grin as it occurred to him that the chief was keeping tight strings on probably the only persons aware of Colton's visit to Barr.

"Sure," said Williams amiably. "Why not? The crowd doesn't have to see them bite—yet."

CHAPTER XII.

The radio broadcast from London, with the hope of hearing which the Lancasters had invited the Coltons and several other guests, had not yet been brought in. Nor was any one in the company trying to get it. Total eclipse was put upon that effort by the more startling broadcast being received from the throng who, for the last several minutes, had been invading the house—friends and strangers, too, all crowding to observe Hugh Colton's reaction.

The most any of them really expected from him was a moment of consterna-

tion when informed that Chief Williams had heard of his "fight" with Barr that afternoon, and was coming for details. None had any honest, rooted idea that Colton was the murderer. This was because they were ignorant of the fact that the two men had again come together during the period between the "fight" and Barr's death.

They were there merely to enjoy the spectacle of Colton recoiling from the shock of their insinuation—which they did not believe to be even dimly true—that he was about to be arrested for murder. They wanted to witness his astonishment and hear his denial of guilt so that they might bask in the reflected light of a big scene while retelling it again and again to those not privileged to be present.

That was all they, at bottom, anticipated—plus, it might be, some expression from Colton concerning the merits of his fight with Barr and the inner workings of the whisky ring, of which, it was understood, he had become a link!

Colton gave them much more. He, himself, furnished their second and even more thrilling climax by giving them the sensational information from which Williams was for the present endeavoring to shield him. He brought to their notice that he was indeed a vulnerable suspect.

"Barr!" he said thickly, confusedly, after a hushed pause. "Barr—m-murdered! Why—I saw him only——"

His hands went to his head as it literally reeled. He swayed on his feet as if under physical impact. The group of eager faces of men and women he knew and others he didn't know, watching him and waiting for his words, seemed to surge in on him like a sea of accusation!

Such, swift through the daze, was his immediate impression. He was being accused of murdering Barr! Else why had all these people run here with the news to stare at him as they told it? They knew that he had been to Barr's house. They were pointing to him because Barr had been killed—when?

When! He realized how vital to himself this point might be. How soon after he had left Barr? What if, within a minute or so of his departure, the killer had sneaked in! Before any one had occasion to note that when he, Colton, departed, Barr was alive!

The ugly prospect thudded in his brain like a drumbeat. It coördinated with another drumming sound which penetrated his senses—the ticking of a clock, inordinately loud. His head turned slowly until his eyes found the clock on the mantel.

Ten o'clock. An hour and a half since he left Barr. Ninety minutes—during one of which Barr was killed! Which? The first of the ninety, the second or the third?

The chill that he had known these past weeks with every thought of the fifteen thousand dollars he had taken from the bank, and of the counterfeit money he had substituted for it—the chill which he had finally shaken off only that same slim ninety minutes ago —enveloped him again.

He knew that soon after his going the murderer's hand had struck Barr down. What other explanation could there be of this crowd's action in searching him out, here in another man's house? He was the one they had come to see. They left no doubt of that with their staring and waiting for him to speak. They knew he had been to Barr's house—and could find none who had seen Barr alive since then!

His hands dropped to his sides, clenched. He wanted to ask how Barr was killed and if his murderer was under arrest.

"When?" was all he could utter, and that in a strangled voice which told how he hung on the answer.

Some one spoke quickly, taking up that sentence Colton had left unfinished.

"You saw him—when?"

"When?" repeated Colton from the maze in which his mind was laboring. "That's what I want to know. When—was he killed?"

Friends told him to the best of their knowledge: "About an hour ago."

He drew a long breath and his head stopped whirling as his wife stepped forward and laid her hand on his arm. The grip of her fingers informed him that his dread had reached her again as it had on these early days of their honeymoon. She knew, of course, that he hadn't killed Barr. But to reassure her he covered her hand with his and gave her the rickety sign of a smile, which was meant to imply that there wasn't the slightest cause for alarm.

And everything was all right, he told himself. From a selfish viewpoint, that was, and without reckoning Barr's death—an attitude which, for the moment, the peculiar circumstances seemed to permit. If the murder was committed only an hour ago, that materially cleared the air. It gave him a margin of half an hour in which somebody must certainly have seen or talked with Barr—somebody, who presently would come forward.

There was no cause for alarm. But hadn't Barr said he was going to return to the club to rejoin Webster and Burrows? Then why had he remained at home another half hour?

The coldness that was creeping out of Colton's veins flowed back. He listened to several voices speaking at once in contradiction of what he had just been told.

"It must have been more than an hour ago," they said. "Williams phoned from Barr's house, didn't he?"

That was pretty near an hour ago—when he phoned for Webster. And he was at Barr's house then, wasn't he? It took him time to get there, didn't it? Sure, it was more than an hour since Barr was killed.

Colton lifted a hand for silence. They quieted at once so that they might learn as much as possible before the chief appeared to chase them out. Colton also wanted to learn something which should determine the gravity of his position.

"Who last saw Barr alive?" he asked weakly. "Who talked with him last?"

The silence continued, everybody looking at everybody else, none knowing the answer.

"How was he killed?"

They couldn't answer that; only that it had occurred in his home.

But one among them ventured to question him again with, now, a rather obvious inference.

"What time did you see him?"

"About eight thirty," he answered without hesitation. "Perhaps a few minutes before that, but not later." Looking them over steadily, almost individually, he added: "Why?"

There was a mumbling and a shuffling of feet, but no clear response.

Evelyn Colton trembled violently as she caught the monstrous imputation, but her eyes flashed fire. She had something to say which should settle these meddling dolts. What business had they accusing Hugh? If any suspicion really attached to him, Chief Williams would be here, wouldn't he?

"It was before half past eight when Hugh left Mr. Barr's," she began scornfully. "I know it was, because——"

"Please, dear," Colton halted her. "There's no need of any explanation just now. If explanation has to be made, I'll make it in the proper place."

"But, Hugh," she insisted, "I can tell——"

"No—please, Evelyn. I'm going to see Chief Williams and get this cleared up. Do any of you know where he is?"

"He's in your house——"

"I'm right here," said Williams from the doorway, "if I can get in. Let's have some room."

As they made way for the officer, Evelyn clung tighter to her husband's arm, locking both hands about it. She stared without acknowledging Williams' friendly nod. All she could think of was the stunning fact that he had come for Hugh!

"Hello, Hugh," said Williams, as casually as the occasion allowed, further indicating his friendliness by easing rather fatuously into the subject, "you heard about Barr?"

Colton nodded with wholly unintentional stiffness. If ever he desired to appear his natural self, now was the time; but he couldn't do it. Like his bride, he was cast down by the coming of Williams for him!

"I just heard of it," he said, mutely cursing the defensive tone which he couldn't help. "I was starting out to look you up."

"I heard you ask for me," said Williams, glancing over the uninvited crowd that was pressing closer into the house. "I guess we'll go some other place, Hugh, and talk."

Colton frowned on the suggestion that was made out of respect for his own feelings. The chill was still in his blood, but paradoxically he was growing hot. The gaping crowd angered him. He was for threshing the matter out right there before them.

"We can talk here," he said shortly. "How was he killed?"

"With a champagne bottle. Did you have wine with him?"

"Yes. He opened a bottle. God!" Colton wet his lips. "Have you got—a line on the murderer?"

"In a sort of way, perhaps," said Williams. "Let's go have a talk, Hugh. We don't need a crowd."

"Why not here?" persisted Colton, breaking things wide open. "I gather there's an idea around that I'm the last man known to have visited Barr—the last, in fact, who is known to have seen him alive. Is that right?"

"We can get out the back door easier," said Williams.

Evelyn Colton spoke up again. "It's ridiculous, chief, ridiculous even to think such a thing. I know that Hugh——"

"Hush, Evelyn," he shut her off again. "Keep out of this, please. It isn't necessary for you to say anything. Listen, chief. I was at Barr's house tonight. I admit that, but what of it? Let's settle this now, or let me see, anyway, where I fit in. What I've got to say can be listened to by anybody. I haven't anything to conceal——"

He broke off abruptly while a flush spread from his temples. Nothing to conceal! What about the rum money in his pocket?

Must he tell anything? Was there any proof that he had received money from Barr? Had Barr recorded the amount? If Barr had made no record of it, which seemed most likely, since this was an illicit transaction, and better unrecorded, why mention the amount? Why admit having got anything from Barr at all?

On the other hand, thousand-dollar bills being in loose circulation almost exclusively in the bootleg business, if thirty-two of them were found in his possession their immediate source would promptly be identified as Barr. The motive for the murder was robbery. Wouldn't it be said, then, that these bills were part of the loot?

Even if he were to volunteer the information that Barr had paid them to him, how far would this be believed? The credence given it would be measured downward by the extent of the other evidence against him. Although the evidence was still insufficient to lock him up, there was the possibility that he might be compelled to deposit the money in escrow pending further investigation.

Pleading innocence, he couldn't well refuse to fall in with such a proposition. If the money was his own he should have no fear of not recovering it. Re-

fusal to place it in the hands of the authorities until the case was cleaned up might even be the thing that would precipitate his arrest.

And should the money be taken from him now, with or without his consent, the goblin that had pursued him for weeks and that he had but a couple of hours ago put behind him for good, it had seemed, would jump again on his back to ride him once more, sickeningly, over quicksand which might at any instant swallow him! The goblin that was the counterfeit money now lying in the place of fifteen thousand good dollars!

A peril no less frightsome than this newer one! More so, in truth, for it was very real and very near, while the hovering threat of a murder charge seemed fantastically unreal, and was in its ultimate conclusion far away.

Between the devil and the sea he stood, his wife heavy on his arm, but holding herself erect, defiant, close to him as though she could impart her courage to sustain his own. Williams gave him time to make decision, and the audience craned forward, avid for the show to go on.

Which way to turn? Declare the thirty-two thousand dollars now or keep silent unless his hand was forced?

The irritating buzz of whispering assailed him. He had a childish inclination to tell them all to go to hell—the damned crows that were tearing him to pieces even before he fell!

"Where are we going?" he asked sharply.

The chief smiled. "To have a talk, I said. It's all right, Hugh. I wouldn't worry."

"I'm not! Have you seen Burrows? Or a man named Webster, a friend of Barr's?"

"Outside in the car waiting for us."

Colton nodded. One of them, he thought, or both, should be able to confirm his receipt of the thirty-two thousand dollars from Barr. That would be a step in the right direction, a mark in his favor.

He was ready to accompany Williams, but before going he wished his status to be made clear.

"Am I under arrest?" he asked baldly.

"You're not."

"Are you taking me to jail?"

"No."

"Are you thinking of arresting me?"

"Well, now——" Williams laughed, but at once returned to the serious. "If it's your rights you're thinking of, Hugh, I give you my word that they'll be protected better than you could do yourself. We want to hear your story and match it up with other things we've heard. If you don't care to do that, I can't make you. But I sort of thought you'd be as anxious as anybody to help us get the man who killed Barr."

It was a dare, and Colton naturally took it.

"I'm willing. Evelyn——"

"I'm going, too," she declared.

"Better not, ma'am," the chief added his voice to Colton's.

"Why not? You'll have to give me a stronger argument than that, Mr. Williams. Why shouldn't I go?"

"Well, you see——"

"I'm going," she declared definitely. And she went, whispering confidently to Hugh and smiling as she promised to explode a bomb under the charge that was building against him.

"No," she refused, when he asked how she purposed doing that. "You wouldn't let me talk when I tried to. Now I won't tell until—— Why, Myrtle," she exclaimed, discovering her maid in the police car, "what on earth are you doing here?"

Myrtle answered with tears.

"I brought her," said Williams, "as a witness. I'll explain as we go along. Webster, will you drive so I can talk with Hugh. You can listen in. I want to go over what the girl says with him and Mrs. Colton."

Colton nodded to Burrows, who wagged his head dolorously and panted like a runner spent after a race.

"You're Webster, aren't you?"

"Yes." Webster stared appraisingly at the man who apparently was the murderer of Barr.

"Sorry I didn't get over to the club to meet you," said Hugh, meeting the stare evenly. "I'm more than sorry, for if I had gone there, Barr might be with us now."

"Maybe so," said Webster. "I'll drive," he said to the chief. The car was inclosed and he would have no trouble hearing what was said if they spoke in ordinary tones, as he would insist. "Where are we going?"

"Barr's house. That's why," he said to Evelyn as she shrank back, "I didn't want you with us. You can stay——"

"I'll go." She bit her lip, smiled shadowily. "This—this is what you call the third degree, isn't it? Taking a—a suspect back to the scene, I mean."

"I don't mean it that way," Williams apologized. "I've got a couple more witnesses there and we're going because it will save time if everybody is on hand when the district attorney or somebody from his office arrives. Sit up front, Burrows, and we'll get moving. Come on."

He placed Evelyn and the maid on the rear seat, and Colton on the right-hand tumble seat, from where his replies would be most audible to Webster. He took the tumble seat himself behind the driver. He didn't bother with the procession of cars in his wake. It didn't matter now that Colton was publicly tagged as a suspect.

"It's being said around town, Hugh," began Williams, "that you had a fight with Barr this afternoon outside your house. What is there to it?"

Hugh and Evelyn exchanged glances, partly amused, partly angry.

"That's Marge Conway's story, of course?"

"Not hers alone. Your girl says so, too."

"I—I——" blubbered the maid, hiding her face, and bemoaning the good job she had talked herself out of.

"The story," added Williams, "in substance is that you and Barr waved your fists in each other's faces, that he shook you off the running board when he started, and that he turned to shake his fist at you and yell: 'We'll settle this later!' What do you say, Hugh?"

"Bunk! Barr and I never were chummier than we were right then. We may have waved our arms some, but we certainly weren't fighting. We were in a deal together, as you've heard, and he came this afternoon to tell me it had come out all right. That's what we waved our arms about—if we did. I don't remember."

Webster threw in a question. "What time was that?"

"Between two and three o'clock. Nearer two, I think. You had just phoned Barr, he said."

"What did Barr tell you?"

"That you were coming from New York—and something about your trip. He was excited, and in a hurry to motor out and meet you. He didn't think that I had a foot on the running board when he started. And"—Hugh shifted from Webster to the chief—"he didn't shout: 'We'll settle this later.' He said: 'I'll see you later'—meaning that I would hear from him again after he saw Webster. Isn't that what he said, Evelyn?"

"It is. Your father should remember, too. And the Conways. And Myrtle, if she claims to know anything about the affair."

"I didn't hear what he said," wailed the maid. "I only saw him drive away."

"I recall now," said Hugh, "Evelyn also thought Barr and I were quarreling. She asked me about it later on. But if it looked like quarreling, chief, it was really rejoicing."

"Did Barr mention money?"

"How do you mean?"

"Did he mention any particular sum?'

"No. He said Webster was bringing money, and that was all."

"Money that you were to share in?"

"Yes."

"Did he say how much you had coming?"

"I just told you no."

"Didn't you ask?"

"I didn't. Under the circumstances I didn't care so long as I got—well, so long as I got my money back I was satisfied."

Williams didn't get that, never having thought of Colton as likely to prove a poor loser, but he let the statement go without comment while using it as a vehicle toward what he wanted to know.

"How much was that, Hugh? How much did you put in?"

Colton pursed his lips. "Is that necessary?"

"It might have some bearing."

"Well—no. When I see that it's necessary, chief, I'll tell you. Meantime I'd rather not—for personal reasons."

"Then how much did you get back?"

"I don't think that's necessary, either," said Colton, and, when not confronted with any figure, he concluded that the amount was not known.

This was as he wished. It was bad enough that he should be associated with a rum-running deal, without having the extent of his plunge made public. Particularly, he did not want his father to know how much he had invested. His father knew that he had not had enough money available to bring a return of thirty-two thousand dollars even with big rum profits added.

Therefore he refused absolutely to reveal his interest, although the sheaf of thousand-dollar bills in his pocket seemed to burn him warningly. Should he be arrested, this money would tell its own story. But, viewing the detail closely, he couldn't see how his possession of this money could actually be used against him. Burrows and Webster would testify that Barr had set out to pay him some considerable sum. Who was there to say that it was not thirty-two thousand dollars?

"You're wrong, Hugh," the chief criticised. "I'm telling you honestly that this is the time for you to be as frank as you know how. You don't want to hold anything back. If you do, you make a bad impression. I can't see, myself, why you don't tell this. It'll come out, somehow."

"If it does, all right."

Evelyn spoke, advising:

"I agree with Mr. Williams, Hugh. Why won't you?"

He was silent, dwelling on the significance of Williams' words—"this is the time for you to be as frank as you know how." Here was a plain hint as to how deeply he was embroiled. Which brought to mind again the question to which he so far had got no definite reply.

"What time was Barr killed?"

Williams purposely gave a thrust to his answer. "His body was found about fifteen minutes after you left."

"That sounds like you think I killed him."

"I don't, but I guess others will. And——"

"Who fixes the time?"

"His man, Johnson."

"Did he see me leaving?"

"You passed him on the road not far from the house. He was walking home from the village."

"I saw him," nodded Colton. "Didn't Barr's housekeeper hear me go? Didn't she see or hear Barr after that? He said he was going out right away—back to the club."

"She was dozing and didn't hear you go. So, you see——" He shrugged. "Well, here's something you can tell us," he went on as Colton fell silent again. "We don't know yet just how much money was stolen from Barr, but when

he went to meet you he had ninety-six thousand dollars. How much had he after paying you?"

Colton saw the little trap and evaded it. "Had he ninety-six thousand?"

"So Webster says. Come, Hugh, talk up. What's the sense in putting yourself in bad? We know you got money from Barr. If you won't tell the amount, folks are going to say it's because you don't dare. Why don't you dare?"

Evelyn again supported him, but Hugh refused stubbornly.

"Then," said she with sudden determination, "if you won't, Hugh, I will. He got thirteen thousand dollars——"

"Thirteen thousand?" queried Williams quickly, uncertain whether to regard this as refutation or substantiation of Webster's theory that Colton had demanded more than Barr purposed giving him. It might mean either thing when viewed alongside the maid's statement.

"Thirteen thousand," repeated Evelyn, without stopping to think that since this was the sum he had agreed to give to the new hospital it must represent only his profit. "And he's going to—— No," she decided not to announce the intended gift to the building fund, "that part doesn't matter."

Hugh frowned mildly on her, but kept his mouth closed. He couldn't chide her for trying to help him. Nor could he contradict her without being specific in his contradiction regarding the amount. As it was, thirteen thousand was a reasonable figure for his father to hear about. Tacitly he let it stand.

Williams had no reason for doubting that this was the total received, but it gave him food for a question.

"That was more than you expected, wasn't it?"

"How do you make that out?"

"You expected ten thousand. I'm told."

"I don't get you," said Colton. "I've told you I didn't know how much I had coming. I didn't."

"But you mentioned ten thousand this afternoon," said Williams, quoting the maid, "when Mrs. Colton asked you."

Colton and his wife looked at the girl, who, rather than meet their gaze, resumed her weeping.

"Our little loud speaker appears to have been on the job," he laughed. "Our next servant, Evelyn, will be stone deaf. Yes, chief, I mentioned ten thousand, but it was only a guess. As our keyhole friend doubtless has told you," he elaborated lightly, "my wife was showing me the error of my ways in going in for this form of investment.

"She didn't like the source of the money, and I didn't like it much myself once I got her angle. She had a suggestion to make on what we should do with whatever I got, and naturally she asked what it would amount to. I guessed ten thousand, and you get it in a garbled way as you got the account of my meeting with Barr. Take your choice."

The conversation halted as they turned in at Barr's house. They had to back out again to let the undertaker's wagon pass bearing the body away for the autopsy.

At sight of it Evelyn shuddered and reached out a hand for comfort. She was afraid, not for Hugh, but of this nearer contact with the tragedy. Passing the death wagon like that, as it proceeded conventionally about its business, was too much like rubbing shoulders with the dead whom she had seen so quick in life only a few hours ago.

Hugh, also, was depressed by the sight—and relieved. He had not fancied the spectacle to which, in spite of the chief's assurance to the contrary, he had believed he was being brought here to undergo the third degree beside the body of his supposed victim. That this was not so gave him confidence. If

there was anything like the real makings of a charge against him, he thought, he wouldn't be treated so considerately.

While appreciating that Williams was his friend, he was sure the chief would not let friendship affect the performance of his duty, especially in a case of murder. He became a trifle contemptuous of his situation. It was unpleasant, of course, and disturbing, but it should soon be over.

CHAPTER XIII.

Joe Garner and Monty Denman were at that time rolling under the North River aboard a tube train. Their car was in a Jersey City garage, temporarily abandoned, lest a watch was being kept on the ferries for the Harlington bandits and murderers.

Denman would send after it in a couple of days, or he might let it rot where it lay. It had cost him nothing except the effort of taking it and the doctoring of serial numbers and appearance. With a fifty-fifty split of sixty-four thousand dollars in his kick, the bus meant nothing to him.

With their arrival in Manhattan, Denman gave over being peeved about the killing. That was all right, now he was in his own jungles. Besides, he reasoned that there was a fair chance of the job being hung on the goof who left the house just before they jumped Barr.

The phone call that had delayed their entrance might queer that possibility somehow, he admitted, but again it might not. Anyhow, they were safely back in town and, so far as he was concerned, some showing would be required to prove he ever had been out of it.

Crossing over to Brooklyn in a taxi, they got out at Borough Hall.

"Where you going now?" asked Denman, intimating that here was their parting place.

"Back to the ship," said Garner, whose nerves had grown steadily more unsettled during the trip back, "but now I want some drinks. And say, listen, Monty, we've got to fix it up so I was with you in town all day, see? I've got to have somewhere to get off when they come messing around."

"You're a sap to go back to the boat right away," declared Denman. "You don't have to, do you? Then what the hell do you want to go for? Take a couple days and then you can say you've been on a bat. I'll fix that for you."

But Garner thought his was the wiser course.

"I'm not giving them any reason for going looking for me," he argued. "If I'm on deck, that shows I'm not worrying, don't it? If I stay away, they might get the idea I'm hiding out. Nothing doing on that."

"Oh, all right," shrugged Denman, "but I ain't seen you to-day—not for a minute. You and me don't know each other, see? But I'll dig up a couple of eggs you can slip a century apiece and they'll say they've been playing round with you for a year if you like. Say, where you going to park your jack?"

"I've got a place," said Garner cautiously.

"All right," nodded Denman. "Let's hop a cab and I'll fix you up. Just a minute till I grab some cigars."

Garner went into the cigar store with him and bought cigarettes, although he already had two packs only half emptied. He stayed close because he wasn't sure that Denman wouldn't run out on him.

Denman had no thought of doing that, however. He carried out his promise by providing two able perjurers who would swear they had entertained Garner at a drinking party since afternoon. It was none of Denman's concern that they would from time to time demand a further retainer.

An hour later, close on midnight, the mate of the rum-runner *Salasal* weaved aboard wearing a mild list to starboard.

which suggested intoxication. He reeked like a distillery and a bottle of liquor protruded carelessly from his coat pocket.

He expected to find none but a watchman on board, but as that member came forward with a lantern, two others rose out of the shadows.

"Hello," they greeted him, "here's somebody at last. Kind of happy tonight, aren't you, brother?"

"Sure," nodded Garner, fishing the bottle from his pocket. "Sure. Have a drink?"

"If it's any good," said one of them, taking the bottle critically. "Where's all the folks, brother?"

"Getting lit up like me if they've any sense," said Garner, reaching for a stay to steady himself.

For a moment he required something to hold onto. They didn't have to tell him they were detectives, but though their presence thus early—waiting for him!—was a shock, it also caused him to applaud his good judgment in not remaining away. They weren't waiting for him, of course, he told himself quickly, but to question any one of the crew who might show up.

That was all right with him. He had been to a party, hadn't he? And his loot, neatly and innocently parceled, was in the safe of a middle-rate hotel at which he had registered.

"Out getting drunk," he went on garrulously, "that's where everybody is, and it was coming to us, believe me, after the trip we had. Say, you ought've been there with us," he laughed, "all over the damn Atlantic ocean with the sticks blown out of her so we had to pretty near oar her in! Say——"

"All right, you can tell us later. What's your job aboard here?"

"Who? Me?" He became dignified. "I'm the mate, I am. Say, what you fellows doing aboard? What——"

When they told him, he closed up owlishly, accusing them of spinning a yarn to draw from him evidence against the schooner.

"Sure, I know Webster," he said, "but I don't know anything about him having any money. I know what you think"—he winked—"you think we sold our cargo of rum, but you've only got to look at the way we got battered, haven't you, to see we had to jettison the stuff. Yes, sir. You wait and see the skipper. He'll tell you the whole thing. I'm going to bed."

They questioned him about where he had spent his time since going ashore, and let him go to bed. That was in line with their instructions, which were to question and detain all of the crew who appeared until their stories could be verified.

One of them went to report by telephone the arrival of Joe Garner, mate, drunk.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I'm going to hold you, Colton," said the district attorney, concluding a two-hour grilling at one o'clock in the morning, "without bail. There's a lot I don't like about this. For one thing, you told Williams you got thirteen thousand dollars from Barr, and when asked to produce it you finally but accidentally let us see you've got much more—thirty-two thousand-dollar bills, as you admitted under pressure. Now——"

"I didn't say I only got thirteen thousand," said Colton spiritlessly. What use in arguing further? He was weary, twice snagged as he was in murder and the shortage at the bank, which he was now prevented from making good.

In a way, of course, he had brought it all upon himself, but—well, being dragged into the depths again and unjustly after having just arisen, was a decidedly mean buffet to bear. "I didn't say thirteen thousand," he repeated. "I didn't name any figure."

"You let your wife say it without

correcting her. You told her thirteen thousand, and let her tell Williams that was the amount. Which amounts to the same thing as if you said it to him. Furthermore," he added meaningly, "it may or may not seem curious to you that thirty-two thousand is just one third of what Webster turned over to Barr—one third of the money known to have been in Barr's possession when he went to meet you. Well?"

Colton gestured futilely and tried to smile at Evelyn, who sat across the room staring with dry, unblinking eyes, numbed by the fact that he was to be locked up on a charge of murder. The bomb she had been so confident would dissipate all possibility of such a charge had missfired dismally. Instead of making a loudly decisive report on Hugh's behalf, it had been made to flare back against him.

The district attorney took that up in his summary.

"Your wife says she talked with Barr on the phone after you left him. The phone operator remembers a call from your house to Barr's about twenty minutes past eight. Your wife says Barr told her you were gone. We have only her word for that, but"—he clicked out each syllable deliberately—"if that is the true substance of what Barr said, why did she wait so long before relating it? Why didn't she tell this when Williams first informed you that you were under suspicion? Why didn't you yourself tell it then?"

"I've told you I didn't know——"

"I started to tell," whispered Evelyn again. "Mr. Williams knows I did. Others heard me——"

"That's right," said Williams. But he already had been brushed aside in the investigation, and in addition rebuked for his rather flagrant partiality toward Colton.

He drew upon himself again the ire of the district attorney, an aggressive official who belonged in another town, and never before had met Hugh Colton. He knew who Colton was, of course, but he also knew that he had here the biggest case of his career, and that it was circumstantially close around Colton.

"How do you know what she started to say?" he flung at Williams. "She was going to say something about the phone call—granted. But what? Why didn't Colton let her finish? Why did he shut her off? I'm asking you that, Colton. Why? Was it because you were with Barr when she phoned? Was that it?

"Did you shut her off until you could get a chance to coach her to say you were gone? Williams gave you that chance, didn't he, when he let you and your wife talk together before getting into the car to come here. You admit you didn't leave Barr any earlier than eight twenty. We have Johnson's statement that you didn't, and that he met you a quarter mile from the house between eight twenty-five and eight thirty.

"The phone operator says it was eight twenty when your wife phoned. Barr's housekeeper heard the phone about then. Well?"

"The operator has no definite record," broke in Williams. "She remembers a call at 'about' eight twenty, that's all. The housekeeper doesn't know when she heard the phone."

"You're obstructing again, Williams," came the further reprimand. "Let's have no more of it. We're playing no favorites here, although, as a matter of fact, I'm doing Colton a favor letting him where he stands. More than that, I'm giving him the benefit of the doubt as far as I can, by holding him only on suspicion of homicide. The charge isn't murder—not yet. Now keep still.

"That makes my attitude clear, doesn't it, Colton?" he went on. "And here's the rest of what I've got to say: There is the testimony of disinterested

parties that you quarreled with Barr today, presumably about how much you should get out of this rum deal. Your own wife, you admit, thought you were quarreling, although she now refuses to say so. Never mind that for the present.

"We'll take the point that you wouldn't meet Barr at the club, but made a date with him here for some two hours later. Your explanation is that you didn't want to conduct your business with him in such a public place as the club. If you were on good terms with him, and your business relations were friendly, why not?"

Colton said nothing. He wasn't listening, but was thinking of the scene with his father which had yet to come —and the confession it meant. He would have to tell his father of the counterfeit bills in the bank vault. This was now inescapable.

He would have to call his father back from Washington, where he had gone over the week-end, to tell him this! There was no other way. The bogus money must be removed, replaced with genuine bills as he had planned to replace it Monday. The need was more imperative than ever. With himself absent from the bank the danger of the counterfeit getting into circulation would again become acute; more unbearably so than when, hopeless of making good the shortage, he had married Evelyn and gone away in search of some brief happiness before the crash and disgrace should overtake him.

Now, he dared not let even a hint of his peculation become known—not while he was being accused of having killed Barr for money. For money to cover his theft, they would say, triumphantly establishing a positive motive for the murder. At all costs he must avert that —even at the cost of losing his father's and Evelyn's confidence by confessing himself a thief.

The telephone rang in the room across the hall, where so soon after their parting a few hours ago Barr had met death.

"That's for me, I guess," said Williams, going to receive the report of the arrival aboard the schooner *Salasal* of Joe Garner, mate, drunk. The New York police added that they were checking up his alibi, and that he, meanwhile, had retired to his berth.

The district attorney boomed on: "You made a date for two hours later, Colton, with Barr. What did you do during these two hours? You stayed home, you say. But did you talk with anybody outside? Communicate with anybody? With, for instance, some two persons who now have between them sixty-four thousand dollars! The other two thirds, I mean, of the ninety-six thousand Barr had when he came home to meet you! Well?"

That got through Colton's grim detachment. He laughed, harshly but with mirth. The insinuation, previously only hinted at by the prosecutor, appealed to him as amazingly droll. He couldn't resist answering it.

"I keep a gang of thugs on hand!" he declared ironically, "to do little odd jobs like this! Sure! Will two be enough for you? Why not ask for a dozen? I've got them in bunches and by the gross! Why call for only two?"

Without responding to the gibe, the district attorney loosed his remaining shaft from the bow of theory.

"We'll allow, temporarily, that you left Barr alive—but if you did you also left his front door unlocked! Why?"

"What do you want me to say?" asked Colton, still ironic. "That I left the door open so my thugs could get in? Of course! Sorry, though, I'll have to disoblige because I can't truthfully say that. Incidentally, I'll mention again that I haven't the slightest idea whether the door was locked or unlocked. I didn't try the knob after I got outside."

"The housekeeper says it should have been locked."

"Naturally," said Colton dryly, "it should have been, but she doesn't swear that it was. If I remember correctly, she says it not infrequently is left unlocked. Johnson says the same, which is why he wasn't surprised upon finding it that way to-night. However"—he gestured again wearily—"why argue the point further now? You've decided to lock me up, so what's the use of talking?"

Clearing his throat as an evident preliminary to speech, Webster came out of the corner from which he had been observing both Hugh and Evelyn Colton during the long interrogation. A hard-headed man, forthright in his opinions and convictions, he was by reason of that forthrightness disposed to revise his preconceived estimate of Colton.

Putting it broadly, he would have said Colton "didn't look like a murderer," and laughed at himself for the inanity of the remark. Also, now that he had met the man and understood his position, he, like Chief Williams, found it difficult to believe that Colton would have killed Barr when his guilt might so easily and unquestionably have been established ten seconds later if the housekeeper had chanced to enter the room.

Without executing a complete reversal, Webster felt vastly more tolerant of the man whose arrest he had in the beginning clamored for. His changed attitude was in fact partly due to the district attorney himself through the latter's advancement of the alternative theory that Colton had not killed Barr, but had left the door open so that others could enter and kill him.

"I think you're wrong, Colton, in not arguing," began Webster abruptly. "You're taking this sitting down when you ought to be on your hind legs. Don't you take it seriously—or what?"

The interruption was equally astounding to Colton and the district attorney. When last he had spoken, early in the examination when he had put several pointed questions in the effort to make Colton detail his financial relations with Barr, there had been no room for doubting that he was hostile. Now, despite its crispness, his voice was almost friendly and he was urging fight!

"Just what do you mean?" asked Colton, regarding him speculatively.

"This," said Webster, advancing to within a pace of the principals in the scene, accused and accuser: "You're sitting still and letting folks stir their brains, doping out what looks like a case against you. Doping is right. That's all it is so far—dope.

"What I mean to say is that if you can bust this dope it's up to you to do it right here and now. I'm putting it to you squarely, Colton. I'm neither against you nor for you. I'm neutral. But I want to see the man who killed Barr get what's coming to him. You understand?"

"I think I do," nodded Colton gravely. "You're admiting, aren't you, that while we're sitting here, the man you want is getting farther away?"

"I'll admit that's possible—yes. Come on now, loosen up. Have you an ace in the hole that's going to get you out of this? Let's see it."

"The only ace I'm banking on is that the murderer will be caught," replied Colton wryly, "and at the rate things are going now it doesn't look like much."

The district attorney cut in, frowning suspiciously.

"You've changed your pace considerably, Webster. What's the idea?"

"This," said Webster, facing him sharply: "Looking the whole thing over, I think there's too much digging going on in one hole. When you get right down to the bottom, the housekeeper's statement doesn't amount to anything. Williams says she wouldn't even swear she heard the phone ring, but was convinced by him that she only dreamed she heard it.

"Yet now she's willing not only to swear she did hear it, but also that, to the best of her belief, Colton was here at the time. The best of her belief in this case, I'll say frankly, can't feature itself with me. She was asleep, or half asleep anyhow, and doesn't know anything."

"Nobody's asking you to pass on that——"

"I'm asking myself because I don't believe the case should come to a standstill with the arrest of Colton. Without pointing anywhere in particular"—nevertheless he jerked a thumb toward the kitchen where Johnson and the housekeeper were—"there's another man who on his own say-so wasn't very far from the house when the killing was done. Why pass him up so completely?"

"Johnson?" The district attorney shrugged. "The housekeeper heard him come in. Colton saw him along the road a couple of minutes before that."

"Did she hear him come in? Or later? I don't know. You don't know. And I don't believe she knows herself. Wait a minute! You might as well hear me now, for I'm going to say it, anyhow. Even counting this man Johnson out of it, there's another angle you raised yourself which should be followed up—with speed. How about the thugs you just suggested Colton got to do the job? If you think anything of that idea, why don't you do something about it?"

Colton stared, flabbergasted by such militant aid from such an unexpected quarter. His wife sat straighter, scarce believing her ears, but enlivened by the fact that he was being championed by the man who had seemed so bitterly bent upon his arrest.

Webster didn't notice them. He wasn't looking for applause, gratitude. He was simply playing fair as he knew fairness—and at the same time coppering his original bet against Colton to make doubly sure that the murderer of Barr would pay. Personally he took no stock in the proposition that Colton had hired the actual slayer. No more than, in Williams' belief, that the murderer had trailed from New York. As he saw it, Colton himself killed Barr—or did not. One way or the other with no middle road.

The district attorney was obviously riled. He regretted his injection of the hired-bandit theory, although still rather proud of it as a deduction from Colton's possession of an exact third of Barr's ninety-six thousand dollars. Clever, he thought, and so he had presented it with the hope of startling Colton into some revealing expression, the net result being a jeer from Colton and an attack by Webster.

And now he saw that propagation of the idea might seriously damage his case. It was a good idea, but what if these supposed bandits never were caught? How could he ever convict Colton without their assistance if once he conceded that Colton was not in the house when the crime was committed? What if they wouldn't squeal on Colton? Why provide Colton with such a loophole? There was a circumstantial case well worth prosecuting. He acted on the principle of a bird in the hand.

"I didn't say Colton had accomplices," he snapped at Webster. "I merely raised the question."

"Then you're going to sit quiet as you are, without chasing up the thought?"

"If you'll show me how and where to look for men I don't know exist," the prosecutor evaded angrily, "I'll do it. And that'll be all I've got to say to-night. Where's Williams?"

He started for the door to call the chief, who had not returned from answering the phone.

"Listen, you"—Webster blocked his way, quietly belligerent—"I'm going to tell you now what I told Williams a while ago, and that is that I don't like the way this job is being handled. Barr

was my friend, understand, and I'm going to see it's handled right. I want to see some of your Jersey justice pulled quick on the man that got him, but wait a minute! Williams didn't go at it strong enough to suit me.

"But now I'll be damned if I don't think you're going too strong along one track. The way it looks from the side lines, mister, you're out to make Colton the goat. That's how it looks. You've got him mixed in so it looks like he's *it*, and that's good enough for you. Trouble is, when you come to look good, tagging him is too damn easy. I couldn't figure out in a year how he could be such a sucker as you'd make him out."

Attracted by the low rumble of Webster's voice, Chief Williams entered the room. He had something new to add to the total—a new question to ask, at least—but the spectacle upon which he came caused him to stand back, waiting to get a line on the storm which so evidently had broken.

Astonishment overcame him upon finding the district attorney and Webster at loggerheads. There was no mistaking that. The district attorney was choleric, sputtering, puffing. Webster, also red in the face, but with temper repressed, was planted before him on outspread feet—as he might have braced himself on the deck of the rum-runner *Salasal* on the tempestuous voyage from which sprang the murder of Barr.

Williams couldn't understand. These two held his eye. When he last had seen them only a few minutes ago they had, he believed, but a single purpose—to pin the murder on Colton. Now——

He blinked rapidly, as his gaze shifted, to discover Evelyn Colton, flushed and eager, standing beside Hugh whose face a tense smile transformed from the apathy that had marked him.

Webster gave Williams the key to the situation before the district attorney could control his anger to speak.

"There's one item I haven't heard you mention, although it strikes me as good enough for a word or two. I'm talking about the wine bottle that Barr was killed with, and the glasses he and Colton drank out of. Williams says there are no finger marks on the bottle and one of the glasses. The other glass shows Barr's finger prints. Now how do you figure that?"

"Colton," stormed the district attorney, "cleaned the bottle, of course. And the glass he used."

"Why the glass?" queried Webster, and Williams chuckled quietly over a point well taken and to which he himself had been giving a puzzled thought. "Why the glass? He never denied having the drink with Barr. Then why would he remove evidence of an act he doesn't deny? Think it over—as I've been doing.

"He says he left the glass half full of wine. All right! Then suppose somebody came in who, besides smashing Barr on the head with the bottle, also drank that half glass of wine! Suppose that, will you? That somebody would be likely to wipe *his* finger prints off the bottle—and off the glass, wouldn't he?"

"And Colton," said the district attorney, reassembling himself, "was probably too excited to think straight when he cleaned the glass as well as the bottle. His only idea was to wipe out his finger prints, and wiping the bottle suggested wiping the glass also.

"Afterward, when he had time to think, he realized that he should have let the glass alone—and then he tried to cover the slip by saying he didn't empty his glass. Who's going to drink stale wine?"

"Wine doesn't grow stale in a minute," said Webster, "and the chances are we've got to figure pretty close in minutes before we get this cleaned up right. Say, Colton"—he wheeled suddenly—"will you tell me something strictly between ourselves? If the answer is right

I'll—yes, damn it—I'll say you're right and stand by you until it's proved beyond all dispute that you're wrong and should be hanged! Will you?"

Colton hesitated. There was only one thing he hadn't told, and that was how much he had invested in the *Salasal's* rum cargo. What did that matter now? Why shouldn't he tell—or perversely—why should he? To his father he would tell, but not this prosecutor who, as Webster aptly put it, seemed ready to grab the handiest goat. Let him find out if he could.

Webster? Perhaps. Webster offered to help him and already had done so to the best of his ability. But what actually had Webster accomplished by tilting with the district attorney? Had he really broken in any place the circumstantial net? It didn't seem that he had. No real break was visible. His effort, then, no matter how well-intentioned, had done nothing but increase the district attorney's smug hostility.

Evelyn Colton spoke softly, prompting.

"Answer Mr. Webster, Hugh—anything he wants to know."

Colton nodded and moved to one side with Webster.

The district attorney went hastily after them, refusing to permit a private conversation.

"You're under arrest, Colton, and not talking to anybody right now. And you"—he jabbed a finger at Webster—"you're a witness for the people and aren't holding any conferences with the prisoner."

"Fair enough," said Webster, pleasantly nasty, "but wrong. Just step back a minute——"

"Williams!" Mentally cursing the two detectives on his staff for not yet having shown up, the district attorney called for help! "Williams, take Colton——"

"Oh, shush," interrupted Webster, "that won't keep me from talking with him. Why, say," he grinned in his antagonist's face, "I'm his lawyer!"

Evelyn Colton giggled hysterically, categorying the prosecutor from his appearance, then as a comic thundercloud which somehow couldn't thunder!

"I'd forgotten about it," nodded Webster, "but I was admitted to the bar about twenty years ago, and never have been disbarred. That makes me a lawyer, doesn't it? Now let me alone. I want to consult my client—or he wants to consult me. Whichever is the way it's usually done!"

The district attorney saw that he was being made ridiculous, and even Williams was grinning. If Webster was a lawyer he couldn't be kept from Colton. For the moment, maybe, but not after the prisoner was locked up.

"Go ahead," he glowered, withdrawing, "and since you think this investigation should be spread out some more, I'll promise now that it will be—to take in your connection with the case."

Webster laughed.

"Include the King of Siam," he suggested, "and do a good job."

Their heads together, he whispered his question to Colton.

"You say you got thirty-two thousand from Barr. I know what percentage the deal paid. I know how much you should have put into get back thirty-two thousand. If you give me the right figure you'll go a long way toward convincing me finally that our deductive friend over there has got you wrong. What do you say?"

Deciding that Webster's good will was worth having, even though his support carried no material benefit, Colton answered, "Nineteen thousand."

"Right!" Webster turned to the district attorney. "I'm for Colton," he announced, "until you can show a better case than you've got now. Your idea of a three-way cut on Barr's roll is wind so far as Colton is concerned. The thirty-two thousand he has on him tallies

all right at the rate Barr was paying off. And, anyhow, when you get right down to it, wouldn't he be worse than a sucker for having the cash on him if he'd had to slug Barr to get it? That being that, I'm going to hire somebody who knows something about crime investigation."

"Yes," said the district attorney sarcastically, "and while you're thinking so hard, think also what a sucker he would be if he hadn't this thirty-two thousand with him now you've so suddenly remembered it's just what belongs to him! Think what a sucker he'd be to have more or less than that, will you?

"And think also that a man doesn't usually cart thirty-two thousand around with him in these days of wholesale holdups. Now that he's got a safe place to put it, he doesn't—and Colton could easily have locked it up in his bank. While you're figuring that out, Webster, we'll move along. Come on Colton. Williams, take him."

Webster opened his mouth to retort but closed it without speaking, stalled by the plain implication that the money in Colton's pocket was a calculated and ostentatious gesture of innocence. It might be.

Colton laid a hand on his arm.

"You see," remarked Hugh quietly, "there's no use arguing now. I'm grateful for what you've done, and I'll be more grateful if you do as you said a minute ago and put detectives to work. Do this and I'll pay the bill. All right, chief, I'm ready. You don't mind, do you," he smiled tensely, taking Evelyn's hand but afraid to look at her gathering tears, "if my wife sees me to my cell?"

"You're not going to be locked up here," said the district attorney. "You're going to the county jail."

"What's the hurry?" demanded Williams. "I'll bring him over in the morning."

"You'll bring him now, so I'll know where he is, and who talks with him."

Williams shook his head angrily.

"Then you'll have to take him yourself. I've work to do here." His next words seemed wildly irrelevant, "You smoke cigarettes, don't you, Hugh?"

Colton stared, nodded.

"Did you smoke while you were with Barr to-night?"

"I don't remember. Probably."

"Can you remember whether you opened a fresh pack while you were with him?"

"I didn't. I buy them by the hundred and carry a case. Why?"

The district attorney also wanted to know why. "What are you driving at, Williams? What have you got?"

"I don't know yet," replied the chief shortly. "Perhaps nothing. Hugh, can you remember whether Barr opened a pack of cigarettes?"

"I'm sure he didn't. He smoked cigars."

"Why?" interjected Webster, observing a new glint in the chief's eye.

"Why?" asked the district attorney again.

"Stick around," Williams answered him, "and you may save yourself the trouble of riding Colton to jail and home again. It's a thousand-to-one shot but somebody opened a pack of cigarettes in that room to-night. If we can find him——"

"Bah!" the prosecutor hooted, labeling this as a fake designed to delay the locking up of Colton. "How did you make this marvelous discovery?"

"I've got part of the package."

"When did you get it?"

"A couple of minutes ago. After I got through on the phone I took another look around——"

"And cleverly discovered part of a cigarette package," jeered the district attorney, "It was an educated package which at once informed you that it was recently opened! You searched the room before, didn't you? Why didn't you see this gem then?"

"Well," admitted Williams calmly, "I just didn't. It was in the corner of a chair—an upholstered chair—and I didn't see it, that's all."

"And now, besides telling you its life history, it's going to tell you also the name and address of the man who had it! Without mincing words I'll say that you're deliberately trying to fog the case and keep Colton out of jail. That's going too far, Williams.

"You'll need more than a talking cigarette package to do that! Why, man, show some sense, or credit me with some, anyway. If you're not pulling an outright fake, if you did find this bit of paper or whatever it is, there have been people enough in that room since the murder who might have dropped it."

"Not so many," said Williams. "You can count them on one hand. Yourself, myself, the coroner, the undertaker and his assistant, and Johnson. You didn't open a cigarette package in there, did you?"

"I did not!"

Williams smiled. "I didn't, either. The coroner didn't. The undertaker and his man didn't. I had them on the phone. Johnson didn't. Barr didn't. Colton didn't. Now who do you figure did?"

The district attorney wasn't figuring on any such rubbish.

"Colton *says!*" he scoffed. "I'm not good at riddles, Williams."

"I'll say not!" exclaimed Webster with fervor.

Colton grinned genuinely, relaxing, his tenseness gone. So too was Evelyn. They had a peculiar feeling that they were far removed from all this. It was the feeling of mere spectators and not to persons most vitally concerned. They had orchestra seats at a show now approaching the denouement. Williams was about to furnish the final curtain with his talking about a cigarette package! They had no doubt of this, so they smiled and waited with patient impatience.

"That was New York calling," said Williams at a tangent, halting the exchange of pleasantries.

"Let's hear about the cigarette box," said Webster.

"You are right about the crew," said Williams. "There's only one man aboard—the mate. He showed up at midnight."

"What's this now?" the district attorney frowned. "What are you holding out, Williams?"

"Give us your thousand-to-one shot," said Webster, testily. "I told you you'd get nothing at the boat. Let's get started on this cigarette-box stuff if there's anything to start on."

"My idea precisely," said the district attorney, smiling with the belief that he had called the turn on a piece of bunk and that Williams was wriggling from under. "By the way, Williams, has it occurred to you that this remarkable clew—if any!—may have been in the chair where you found it—if you did!—since long before to-night?"

"It wasn't. The housekeeper cleaned that room this afternoon and used a vacuum cleaner on the furniture. Hugh Colton was first to enter it after that, and then Barr."

He paused again, taking an envelope from his pocket.

"For Heaven's sake, get the nonsense over with!" snapped the prosecutor irritably. "Where is this fool thing you're talking about? Let's see it. Let's hear how you think it's going to help anywhere."

Opening the envelope deliberately, Williams shook into his palm a scrap of blue paper, roughly an inch by half an inch, and ragged on its two longer sides.

They looked at it—blankly as it was blank!

"Well?" snorted the district attorney. "Well? What is it?"

"Proof," said Williams, "that somebody who smoked cigarettes was in the room after Colton left. I'm guessing he opened a fresh pack because——"

"I see!" ejaculated Webster. "Part of the revenue stamp, isn't it? Fine—fine—but——" His enthusiasm waned abruptly. The revenue stamp from a cigarette package—not even the whole stamp—what could it lead to?

Colton's face fell. Evelyn uttered a little sob. Their thoughts were like Webster's. And they had expected so much more.

"Fine!" echoed the district attorney, jeering. "Did you say a thousand to one, Williams? You're tight as a pool room with a ten-to-one limit! I'll give a million to nothing——"

"I wouldn't," said Williams, turning over the bit of stamp. "There's the real color of the horse now. Don't you think any better of it?"

"I don't."

"You, Webster?"

"Well—no."

"Hugh, what do you say?"

Colton shook his head glumly.

"The—the number on it," said Evelyn faintly, clinging to this hope the chief had raised. "Does that mean anything?"

Williams smiled at her and nodded.

They looked more closely at the paper—at the figures "12" in bold type with, to the left of them, a "C" in smaller type lying on its back and to the right an "S" lying on its face, and beneath it the forehead and shaggy hair of De Witt Clinton!

"Twelve," said Williams, "that's what we've got to work on. I'm a cigarette smoker myself and so I'm pretty well acquainted with the different brands. There are only two I know of that wear stamps like this—Little Corporals and Royal Bonanzas they are. When we——"

"Wonderful!" laughed the district attorney. "My offer of a million to one still goes. Probably three times that number smoke these cigarettes. They're advertised enough! A narrow field you've picked, Williams, isn't it? But you can't get away with it—not with a plant so raw as this. You admit you didn't see this paper when you first searched the room. I didn't see it when I searched. Nobody else saw it. Because it wasn't there! This is a plant of yours to keep Colton out——"

"Keep still!" barked Webster. "Let him finish."

"When we sort over everybody," resumed Williams, "who might have known Barr had this money and we find somebody, who smokes Little Corporals or Royal Bonanzas, I've an idea we'll have our man. It isn't such a wide field—no. There can't be many who were in position to know——"

"I follow you so far," nodded Webster, "but I don't get your identification of the stamp as belonging only to these cigarettes. I know a man who smokes Royal Bonanzas——" He stopped with mouth open and eyes wide. Then his chin set hard and his eyes narrowed. "One man," he said, almost to himself, "the only man I ever particularly noticed smoking them. But—— Are you sure, Williams? Aren't the stamps alike on all cigarettes?"

"They're alike but the numbers on them differ, because they tell how many cigarettes are in the pack. I say this stamp came off Little Corporals or Royal Bonanzas because I know of no other cigarettes that come in twelves. I smoked Royals for a while and I know these small packs. They have a type of wrapping all their own. They're not done up simply in tinfoil with a paper wrapper like the packs of twenty of the same and other brands. They're not like this." He exhibited a pack from his pocket. "The twelves come in light cardboard boxes that push out. They have a sort of drawer like a match box."

They nodded. Even the district attorney was quiet if not entirely respectful.

"With a pack like this here," Williams went on, watching Webster and practically directing the explanation to him, "a paper pack, you only have to tear the stamp in one place when opening it. See!"—he demonstrated—"but with the small packs you have to tear the stamp in two places because it's pasted on the end of the drawer and folded over on each side of the pack. You understand me?"

"I understand," said Webster grimly as though the others didn't matter. "Go on."

"I remember," said Williams, still eying him, "that the stamp often isn't glued very tight to these little packs—to the end of the drawer, that is. I guess maybe they stand them on end when the stamps are being put on and the drawer drops down some so that the stamp doesn't get much hold on it.

"Sometimes it isn't sticking to the drawer at all and when you tear the stamp at both sides, as you're in the habit of doing, a piece of it—like we have here—falls off."

Evelyn Colton sobbed softly, happily! Hugh's arm slipped around her. He did it as much to steady himself as to comfort her. He felt dizzy, afraid to believe that this tiny scrap of paper might—would—be the means of saving him. It seemed so implausible—so much to build on the area of a postage stamp, on the number "12," and the picture of a man's forehead and hair!

The district attorney frowned skeptically but said nothing. He was sufficiently impressed to wait and hear Williams out.

There was only a sentence to come.

"There can't be very many," repeated Williams, "who could have known Barr had this money. Webster assures us of that. We'll comb the list of possibles and if we're quick," he smiled, "we may do better than just pick out a suspect. We might find the pack in his pocket with the rest of this revenue stamp pasted on it. There's a chance, slim but—— Did you say you know somebody, Webster?"

Webster smiled back at him, a bleak smile with thinned lips and bunching muscles in his cheeks.

"I know somebody. Did you say the mate was the only man on the schooner? That he got back at midnight? Joe Garner?"

"Joe Garner," said Williams.

"He smokes Royal Bonanzas," said Webster, "in the small packs. You notice things like that when you're cooped up with a man as I was with him on the schooner. You get to see into a man pretty well. Garner might have managed to overhear the skipper and men talking—to hear enough to locate Barr and know that I was bringing the cash here, Williams. I wouldn't have believed it but when I size him up again—little things he said and did—I get the picture. Can he get away?"

"Not with two New York detectives sitting on him—as they almost are. He went aboard apparently drunk and went to bed."

"Well?" said the district attorney.

"Uh-huh," said Williams. "Are you going to lock Hugh Colton up?"

"Well"—he looked uncomfortable—"what are you going to do now?"

"I'm going to New York as fast as I can burn up the roads. Want to go along?"

"Well"—he resisted, voicing the suggestion that Colton perhaps had conspired with Garner—"yes, I guess I'll go."

Williams grinned. "We're starting now. What'll you do with Colton?"

The district attorney treated his prisoner to a deprecatory smile and made as good a face of it as he could.

"I'll make a concession, Colton. I'll leave you in custody of one of Williams'

men in your own home and the rest will depend on what we turn up in New York."

"Thanks," said Hugh dryly. "And thanks to you, chief," he said sincerely, gripping Williams' hand. "We'll have a talk later. I'd like to go with you now and see this through, but of course I can't. And Webster, I hope we'll meet again under different conditions——"

"We will," said Webster, taking his hand. "I'll be around plenty while things are being fixed to hang the man who killed Howard Barr. Let's go, chief."

Williams, now in the saddle, hinted pointedly to the prosecutor. "You've some money of Colton's. He might as well look after it himself."

The response embodied virtual abandonment of suspicion against Colton.

"True—yes. Sure, here it is."

The thousand-dollar bills once more tingled Hugh Colton's fingers and sent his blood coursing more swiftly. Blood money! Conscience money! Uneasy money! Yes, but money which was to bring him peace of mind again and leave upon him the lasting memory of a hard-learned lesson.

"I'll drop you and Mrs. Colton at your door, Hugh," said Williams, "and"—he winked privately—"order an officer over to keep you company. He won't bother you any."

How could he when he wouldn't be there?

Evelyn Colton started to tell Williams something of what was in her heart but only made a gulping sound and then, with the mists which had shrouded her and hers cleared, she let loose the tears that had been so bravely pent. But a sunshower is a gentle rain and refreshing.

Monty Denman had a hunch that Joe Garner's end of the loot was going to be wasted. He wished he had cracked Garner on the head and thrown him off the dock—with empty pockets. Might as well. The mug had no judgment. Look how he'd bumped the guy when there wasn't any call for it. Barr was quiet enough at the time. Wasn't he busy chewing up half his own teeth?

It sure was a crime to let Garner go with all that jack. He was a damn fool, anyhow, going back to the boat. Chances were he'd made a bum out of himself right away. If he didn't get hijacked he'd get pinched. Most likely pinched.

Monty Denman took another drink thoughtfully. Then Garner would pig—squeal that the other feller did the killing. Yeah.

Wherefore Monty Denman promptly and quietly faded out with his thirty-two thousand dollars, lamenting eloquently but silently that he hadn't doubled his roll and saved himself worry by dumping Garner off the dock. He'd have been in the clear then. But having neglected opportunity he followed his hunch and without saying whither or a good-by, headed for points south or west or north. All three perhaps—or east. Who knows?

Joe Garner, mate of the rum-runner *Salasal*, lay in his bunk thumbing his nose at the detectives on deck above him. Thirty-two thousand bucks! Jake! But, hell, it could be better. Webster had carried ashore better than a hundred thousand. Too bad he had such a start!

Too damn bad they hadn't connected with him or Barr sooner, before half the jack got scattered. Still, thirty grand was nothing to sneeze at! It wasn't bad pay. But Monty Denman shouldn't have got an even slice. What the hell did he do for it? Crabbed mostly because Barr got bumped. What the hell else was there to do with Barr after he'd seen a man's face? Monty Denman shouldn't but he had, damn him, anyhow!

Barr—— Garner wet his lips, forgetting for a moment to thumb his nose at the detectives. He wished for a drink but had left the bottle on deck with apparently drunken generosity. Just as well that he had, maybe. He had got past the cops but there would be more questioning in the morning. When he sobered up he chuckled. He'd be sober all right. He didn't want any drink now.

A smoke would do instead. He dropped the dead cigar he had come aboard chewing in his drunken makeup. Three cigarette packs met his hand in his coat pocket. By squeezing them he elected the one nearest empty. It held a lone cigarette. Lighting that he threw the pack on the floor.

This was the pack he had torn open after striking down Barr. The pack bearing the two parts of a revenue stamp which would join to make a whole with the part Williams, almost at this very moment, was plucking from the corner of the chair into which it had fallen. An insignificant-looking fragment of paper, which was to send Garner to the electric chair.

Naturally, Garner had no idea of that. Nor, while again thumbing his nose and planning what a gigantic bust he should have, did he think of the champagne that had spilled when he crashed the bottle on Barr's head. There was a stain on his shirt sleeve and the sleeve lining of his coat, which analysis would prove to be a wine stain. That also was to help him into the electric death harness.

The Hoodoo Tarantula

by Kenneth Gilbert

THE SUPERINTENDENT DID NOT BELIEVE THE WORN OUT "HOODOO TARANTULA" COULD MAKE A RECORD RUN AND SAVE BIG MONEY FOR THE COMPANY. DANNY M'GOWAN AND TIM BRADY, WHO HAD WORKED WITH THE ENGINE FOR MANY YEARS, HAD GREAT FAITH IN IT. THE TWO MEN AND THE ENGINE SHOWED THAT THERE WAS AT LEAST ONE MORE GOOD FIGHT IN THEM. . . . . .

SUPERINTENDENT BENNETT read the message and frowned. He was a small man, prematurely grayed, for the job of keeping traffic moving over the Overland's Cascade Division had weakened stronger men. Floods, blizzards, rock and landslides, and caving tunnels—all the deviltries that an unkind fate can unload on a mountain division—these broke men quickly at Valhalla, and Bennett had been there four years.

In answer to the persistent jabbing of a push button, Fenwick, the trainmaster, entered. "Jim," said the superintendent, "they've handed us a package this time, and no mistake."

"Silk?" hazarded Fenwick.

"Aye, and on top of it we've got to put the train over the division an hour and twenty minutes faster than we've been able to do before. New contract coming up, I guess. The Transcontinental is going to beat us if they can. What engine and crew will you put on?"

Fenwick laughed mirthlessly.

"You bit into the meat of the cocoanut that time, boss," he said. "We haven't an engine."

"What?" Bennett leaped from his chair and bent forward, gripping the edge of the desk. "How——"

"Fact," went on Fenwick. "We're clean as a hound's tooth, when it comes to power. We've got exactly six engines in the shops at this minute, and the boys are falling all over themselves trying to get the 1066 ready for No. 1 to-morrow morning. That last extra west cleaned us of freight 'hogs.' I presume this silk train will hit us about midnight. They usually do. They'll have to send the same engine over the Cascade Division. That's going to be risky, because you know in what condition an engine is after making the run here from the coast. I've never seen one yet that wasn't fit for the shop."

Bennett groaned.

"You're as comforting as a hair shirt!" he said testily. "Having summed it up and found it impossible, suppose that you figure out a way to put that train over this division in record time.

"Do you realize what failure means? It means that the Overland loses the contract, and that very shortly thereafter Valhalla is going to see a new superintendent and trainmaster. Maybe a new chief dispatcher," he added, as big Jack Elliott, who controlled the movement of trains on these tortuous mountain grades, entered the room.

"Worse than that is the stigma of not having made good. We've never fallen down yet on the Cascade Division, and, by gosh, we're not going to fall down now! That silk train is going over on time, even if I have to tow it with hand cars."

Jack Elliott forced an uneasy smile. Like all on the Cascade Division, he was loyally devoted to the jumpy little superintendent who carried a huge load of responsibility on his two shoulders, and he realized that his superior spoke wisdom. Let the Cascade Division fail to meet the test, and headquarters would act first and think about it afterward.

"I presume, then, that my little speech will make me about as popular as a wet dog at a picnic," he said. "Nevertheless, here goes. Pacific Division reports that the 2042, pulling the silk train, is leaking like a sieve, and it will be only the best of luck if she can reach Valhalla. They want to know if we can't have an engine ready to pick up the train down the line, probably at Brynner, in case the 2042 goes dead entirely. We can't use the 2042 on the run over our division, that's a cinch."

Bennett glared at his chief dispatcher as though the latter was the cause of this grief.

"Well, what can *you* suggest?" demanded the superintendent, with heavy sarcasm. "We've got a trainload of silk worth millions of dollars that we've got to put over in record time. Yet we have no engine——"

"There's the Tarantula," ventured the dispatcher hopefully. Fenwick laughed scornfully.

"Old Danny McGowan and his teakettle hoodoo?" The trainmaster turned to the superintendent. "Jack must be going crazy."

But the superintendent's eyes shone with sudden determination.

"Call McGowan!" he ordered. "By gosh, it's a hunch! Give old Mac anything he wants. He'll need a couple of husky young firemen, for one thing. Old Tim Brady could never steam her with this silk 'drag' behind.

"Anything he wants, I said!" His voice rose shrilly, for Bennett's nerves had long been rasped until they were raw. "Get busy! Do something!" Fenwick and Elliott fled.

Two old men sat in the living room of the snug little cottage tucked away at the foot of where old Mount Shukshan rose steep and forbidding against the sky line. The smoky railroad town that was Valhalla lodged on a shoulder of the giant. To-night it was blowing gusty rain squalls on the heights, but in the bachelors' cottage, before the stove, it was dry and warm.

"'Tis gettin' old ye are, Tim," said grizzled Danny McGowan, as in one move he took three of his opponent's checkers, and landed in the king row. "'Tis no pleasure to play wid ye, and yere thoughts woolgatherin' like that."

"Old yerself!" grunted Tim, as he bent to the task of reconstructing his campaign. "I was but afther thinkin' it's forty-nine years to-day since I went railroadin', and on the High Line Route at that."

Danny was silent, for he knew the tragedy of his friend's life. Once a crack passenger engineer, but with no luck. The big wreck was no fault of his, but he was blamed. Discharged, and only through the kind-heartedness of an official, now long dead, was he permitted to return. But not as an engineer.

He became Danny McGowan's fire-

man, shoveling coal into the hungry maw of the ancient 222, the "Tooty-two," the "Hoodoo Tarantula," as she was better known. At seven o'clock every morning Danny McGowan and Tim Brady took the Tarantula and her drag of boxes and flats and the single day coach from Valhalla to Startup. At five o'clock every afternoon they were back home, providing——

Therein lay the secret of why Tim Brady held a short-run, daylight-firing job, held it even in the days when other firemen, long since engineers, were his seniors in point of service. And why Danny McGowan, deemed physically unfit to pilot a fast, luxurious flyer, as his seniority right entitled him, drove the Tarantula when in fact he should have been retired. No other engine crew on the division would handle the cranky little teapot, because she was, as her name implied, accursed from the day of completion.

In the forty-three miles between Valhalla and Startup, there were no less than twenty-eight bridges and thirty-six sharp curves, to say nothing of three exceedingly steep grades. The branch lines brought little revenue to the High Line Route's coffers, hence the board of directors never could see the wisdom of expending much money on that particular piece of track. The roadbed was poorly ballasted, the bridges were shaky, and the curves poorly banked.

Only an engine the size of the Hoodoo, which in itself was of a vintage when all such rolling stock was given a name, could have kept upright on the rails. Frequently, she did not. In her long but inglorious career on the branch line, she had left the track more times than Danny McGowan could remember. Usually she dragged her string with her. Men riding in the day coach had been killed, others had been injured, but through some miracle of chance the little Hoodoo had never rolled upon the two old men who cared for her.

When in motion, her leaky valves made her buzz like some huge beehive; she was continually dying on the road, and her tubes were a trial and tribulation to the shop crew at Valhalla. All except Danny McGowan and Tim Brady looked forward to the day when the Hoodoo would collapse like the famed "One Hoss Shay," but she managed to hang together. It was through the loving attention of Danny and Tim that she did so. When she passed on, so did her engine crew, so far as railroading was concerned. There was no place for them on the important, responsible runs.

So at seven o'clock the Hoodoo and her ancient crew left Valhalla; and at five o'clock she was back home, if in the meantime, she had not taken it into her head to balk on the road or roll down an embankment.

"I'll be afther askin' the roundhouse boys to overhaul her brake riggin'," remarked Danny thoughtfully, as he moved another checker into Brady's king row. "It needs truin' and tightenin'."

"She's gettin' so she steams hard," commented Tim. "I used nearly an extra ton of coal to-day. She doesn't run so smooth as she used to, seems to me."

"No?" came back Danny quickly, rallying to the defense of his pet. "And who the divil told ye that ye knew anything about her? I drove her ten years before ye came——"

"Pay attention to the game, man!" exclaimed Brady. "I've got ye! One more false move, and I'll clean the board."

Instantly, the Tarantula forgotten, both old men became absorbed in their pastime. This was as much part of their daily life as piloting the Hoodoo. Tim Brady was indeed making an unexpected rally, and, with each player down to two kings, it was nip and tuck, and exciting.

A rap came at the door. Fenwick, the trainmaster, stood there.

"I came over myself, rather than send the call boy," he explained. "Put up your checks, and get ready. The Tarantula's got to be ready within an hour. Silk train coming through, and we've got to set new running time for it, or lose a big contract. I'm willing to bet the superintendent that the Hoodoo can't pull the train out of the yard. But it's the only chance we have."

Danny McGowan was on his feet, bristling.

"The divil she can't!" he exclaimed. "I'll show ye, Fenwick. She's a better engine that half of the hogs ye've got on the main line. She's got speed. All the old engines had it. She's——"

Fenwick laughed, and turned to Brady, who had started to slip on the greasy overalls he used on the road.

"Won't need you, Tim," said the trainmaster. "I'll get a couple of young huskies to fire for Danny. The Hoodoo isn't going to burn coal to-night. She's going to eat it!"

Fenwick went out.

Danny looked commiseratingly at Tim Brady, who stood with jaw agape, as though he had not heard. McGowan could scarcely conceal his own jubilance at the thought that he was to be trusted with an important duty, but his triumph turned to ashes in his mouth at the misery of his old friend.

"Did ye hear what he said, Tim?" asked the old engineer. "'Tis the Hoodoo Tarantula they'll be afther puttin' on the run to-night. Not for forty years has she had her foot on the main line. Together, we've been goin' up and down, up and down, around curves and over bridges, on that divil's own rust streak to Startup. But now she's to have her chance, Tim. Me and the Hoodoo'll have our chance."

Brady forced a grin, and held out his hand. He had tossed his overalls aside, finding they would not be needed.

"Luck to ye, Danny," he said. "And may ye work the tails off'n the young upstarts who'll be firin' for ye."

Danny returned the clasp and slapped Tim on the back. His eyes were misty.

"And did ye think I'd quit ye, like this?" he asked reproachfully. "'Tis Danny McGowan who'll run the Tarantula to-night, and it's Tim Brady who'll be firin' for him. I'll have no upstarts pokin' the insides of the Tarantula. Get on yer duds!"

At the head of the passing track stood the Hoodoo Tarantula, steam wreathing about her. It seemed that she panted and quivered with excitement at the prospect of the great trust placed in her this night. After all these ignominious years of duty on the Startup branch she had been called forth to save the honor of the division.

Now and then her pop valve spoke deafeningly, as though the old engine could not contain herself with joy. Two burly young firemen alternately sprayed her roaring insides with coal, and swore at the amazing way she consumed it.

A mellow, long-drawn whistle sounded in the west, and on the heels of it came the blinding beam of a headlight, growing in size as the silk train came slowly through the yards and stopped in front of the depot. Clearly, her engine was in bad shape. Water and steam poured from it as a crowd gathered around.

"Run her to the pit and draw her fires!" ordered the roundhouse foreman. "She's nearly dry." Superintendent Bennett turned to his trainmaster.

"No chance to use her to finish the run," he said. "It's the Hoodoo or nothing. Is McGowan ready?"

He got his answer in the sudden activity of the Hoodoo. The other engine went limping away to the roundhouse, and with a hiss and clatter of loose pistons and leaking valves, the

ancient pet of Danny McGowan clicked over the switch, and then backed onto the silk train. Came a pause, and then brakes beneath the train sighed as though in relief as the air was tested.

A lantern waved from the rear—"highball." The shrill whistle of the Hoodoo answered twice, and then the silk train began to move, very slowly at first, for the drag on the little engine was heavy, yet like the goat that she was, she dug her heels, and strained. Only Danny McGowan, with a skilled left hand at the throttle, knew how to make her pull that way. As she gathered momentum, a dark figure which had been skulking in the shadow of a tie pile sprang for her gangway.

In the right-hand seat of the Hoodoo, Danny McGowan, his grizzled whiskers fairly bristling with curbed excitement, sat tense. As he saw the "highball," he eased steam into the Hoodoo's cylinders, and then his eyes turned to the tie pile. Hissing and clattering, the Hoodoo Tarantula came opposite the place, and then up the gangway came old Tim Brady, clutching a heavy wrench. He charged at the astonished firemen.

"Overboard wid ye!" he yelled, swinging the wrench aloft. To the surprise of the two shovelers, Danny McGowan, instead of grappling with the attacker, stepped down from his seat and seized a short iron bar.

"Overboard it is!" he declared. "Tim Brady fires the Hoodoo to-night!" The two husky firemen, deciding that both old men had suddenly gone crazy, leaped to the ground. The task of firing the Hoodoo Tarantula was not to their liking anyway. Certainly they would not fight a pair of lunatics for it. They went back to the roundhouse to report.

Eagerly Tim Brady seized the scoop and threw open the fire-box door. He ripped out an oath as he saw the fire—not the way the Hoodoo liked to be fed coal at all. She was different, was the Hoodoo. The upstarts were used to firing the big, new engines. Dropping the scoop, he seized a slice bar, and began cutting the fire until he had it just the way he wanted. Danny McGowan looked at him across the maze of gauges and valves, and nodded approval. "She's pickin' up already, Tim," he shouted encouragingly. "We'll need it, too, on the Wild Horse Canon hill." Tim Brady began to work.

Rattlety-bang went the Hoodoo Tarantula along the rails, picking up speed at an astonishing rate over the level country. For Danny McGowan, despite his boasting, was not so certain that the little engine could snake the heavily laden cars over the summit of the steep rise to the canon without a running start. Danny patted the throttle affectionately.

"She's runnin' away wid 'em, Tim!" he called over to his fireman.

Brady was breaking coal finely and spraying it deftly in the red-hot maw of the fire box, and as he did so he kept a watchful eye on the steam gauge. Slowly but surely the needle swung over, and now the speed of the train slowed a little as they began the climb to the canon where the Wild Horse River debouches from a rocky defile. It was stiff going all the way to the top now—a task that a bigger engine might have found taxing, but the speed of the Hoodoo held. "I knew she'd do ut!" said Danny to himself.

But it seemed that his triumph was to be short lived. The train swung around a jutting shoulder, so that by hanging out of the cab Danny McGowan might have dropped his cap into the boiling, milky-white waters of the Wild Horse two hundred feet below—and the speed of the train diminished rapidly.

"More steam!" he yelled at old Tim. The latter, sweat pouring from him, shook his head. Danny set the throttle and slid down to the deck. He seized

a maul and began cracking the big lumps of coal into a peanut size that would burn like tinder.

Encouraged, Tim Brady strove harder. Scarcely would he close the fire-box door before he would open it again and shoot another scoop of fine coal into the roaring inferno. The steam-gauge needle held, but the train went slower and slower. Almost it seemed that a sturdy, long-legged man could have walked and kept up with it.

"More steam!" yelled Danny, and fell to on the coal again. Tim responded. Now the gauge needle began to mount. Never had the straining, rickety old Hoodoo Tarantula been called upon for a task such as this—not even in the days when she was fresh from the shops that made her. But it seemed that she had become a living, breathing thing that fought, even as these two old men who had cared for her so long were fighting. She wanted to make good.

Danny McGowan dropped his maul and leaped for his seat.

"Hurroo!" he yelled. "We're over!"

Magically, the train gathered speed. Now began the downward slide. "I'm goin' to slam her along, Tim!" roared Danny, face alight with triumph.

Forty, fifty, sixty miles an hour she was traveling, weaving, swaying around curves as though drunk with excitement, her flanges screaming and spitting sparks. There was no need to feed her steam now, for she coasted with her own momentum and that of the cars behind her. Her strained boiler found relief in the continuous, deafening bellow of her pop valve.

Tim Brady continued to feed her coal, for she would need steam at the bottom of the hill. Eyes following his scoop, he swung back and forth between the coal pile and the fire-box door. Almost it seemed that he was afraid to look up, afraid to see how fast they were going.

Once he laughed grimly as he thought of the terror of those two young firemen if they had stayed. As for himself, he had no fear. What suited Danny McGowan, suited Tim Brady. "Av course, he might, at that, snap off a car or two on a curve," thought the fireman, stealing one glance at the rigid, set face of the engineer. But he said nothing out loud.

Danny glanced at his watch.

"We're doin' ut, Tim!" he exclaimed. "We lost time on that hill, but we're makin' it up now." The train struck level track again, and Danny opened the throttle.

Minutes passed, and then Danny shouted to his fireman:

"We'll be comin' to Valley Junction now. May the good luck av the Hoodoo kape the crossin' open fer us! D'ye mind that the towerman is paid by the Overland? If he gets a chance, he'll lay us out."

Tim grunted, and kept on shoveling.

Now, at Valley Junction, the main line of the High Line Route and the Overland—rival railroads since the day steel was pushed through the wilderness to the coast—cross, and thereafter do not come together until the great midwestern terminus is reached. If the towerman at Valley Junction, who was, as Danny had said, an Overland employee, although serving both roads, so desired, he might set his switches so as to delay the High Line's silk train. It has been done.

"Red board!" yelled Tim Brady, who looked up from his work at Danny's words, and peered ahead just as the flying silk train rounded a curve. Danny let out a profane howl, and shut off steam, applying the air brakes gently. At the same time his hand jerked the whistle cord, and the Hoodoo's shrill voice spoke in commanding, short notes to the distant towerman.

It had no effect, however. The red danger signal, showing that the tracks

were barred to the High Line Route and open to the Overland, continued to glow balefully. Groaning, shrieking, the silk train slid to a noisy stop within a few feet of the open derail switch. Swearing fearfully, Danny swung out of the cab, a short wrench in his hand, and, followed by Tim Brady, set off at a run for the tower.

The towerman looked up from his desk, and regarded coolly the two old men who flung open the door.

"What d'ye mean by layin' me out?" yelled Danny, brandishing the wrench. "There's nothin' in sight on the Overland tracks. We've got the right av way, and——"

"Orders," replied the towerman rather insolently, as he fished out a cigarette, and lighted it. "Got to keep the Overland line open for fifteen minutes. Special due."

He came to his feet as Danny took a step forward and swung back the wrench.

"Damn ye're orders!" thundered the old engineer. "There's no special due. Ye're tryin' to lay out our silk train. Line up the switches for us. Grab him, Tim!"

The old fireman, however, needed no such adjuration. As the towerman jerked open the drawer of his desk, and half drew a wicked-looking automatic pistol, he found himself in the iron grip of Brady. "Tie him up, Tim!" ordered Danny, himself throwing the switches that lined up the main track of the high Line Route. "Not too tight. Just enough to let us get past the place. Then let him untie himself.

"All set? Good! We're on our way!"

Clickety-click went the wheels of the silk train over the switches, and soon it was roaring away again at top speed.

"More steam!" yelled Danny McGowan. "We've got ten minutes more to make up now. Bad luck to that divil in the tower!"

Into the east went the struggling, straining Hoodoo Tarantula and her ancient crew, on the most glorious adventure of her existence. Only one brief stop they had made since leaving the tower, and that to refill the tender with water. Now they were rushing straight into the face of a new day. A hundred and twenty miles they had gone since leaving Valhalla, and victory was just in sight.

They swung around a curve at fearful speed, and far in the distance they could see the smoke of Osseo, the division point and the end of the run. There a big, new engine, fresh groomed from the roundhouse, would take the silk train and hurry it on toward the eastern market. All that would be necessary would be to maintain the speed record set on the coast and Cascade Divisions. The Hoodoo Tarantula had carried on.

Now they were passing the yard-limit sign, and Danny McGowan pulled out his watch, and grinned, as he shut off steam.

"We've made ut, Tim!" he yelled. "Faster time than the flyers make ut, countin' their shtops. Who said the old Hoodoo Tarantula wasn't as fast on her feet as she's lucky? Who——"

Brady cried out. At the same instant Danny McGowan felt the engine leave the rails, and go rolling down a short, but steep, embankment. He was whirled crazily round and round, but, strangely enough, he had no fear. His only thought was: What made the Hoodoo jump the track? There came a shock, and blackness enveloped him like a cloak.

Danny opened his eyes to see bending over him the jubilant face of Superintendent Bennett, for that official had determined to see the silk train over his division, and had been riding in the single coach at the rear of the string.

Danny sat up dizzily. A short dis-

tance away he could see what was left of the Hoodoo Tarantula, a mass of twisted, steaming iron. She had taken her last plunge.

Tim Brady, coal-smutted face split in a wide grin, stood in the circle gathered around the engineer. With a piece of waste Tim dabbed at a cut on his forehead, but otherwise he seemed to be unhurt.

"You made it, Danny, old boy," said Bennett. "You, and Tim, and the little old Hoodoo Tarantula made it." There was an odd note of huskiness in his voice.

"The Hoodoo jumped the track, but she was kind enough not to pull the silk cars with her. The whole train, pulled by a new engine, left Osseo five minutes ago.

"The Hoodoo is gone, but there'll be a fine, new engine on the Startup run to-morrow for you and Tim. The Cascade Division made good, and we want to show appreciation to the two men who put it over for us."

Danny was silent. Then he raised his eyes to those of his old fireman. What he saw there gave him reassurance. He shook his head.

"Not for us," he said. "The Hoodoo is through, and so are Tim and me. 'Twas the Hoodoo's way of callin' it quits—bringin' the train here and then bustin' herself to smithereens for no reason at all. We're old enough to take a hint. Tim and I have a bit saved up. 'Twill kape us.

"Our thanks to you, sor, but we're goin' back to our checkers."

The Green-Eyed Monster

By C. S. Callahan

Author of "He Who Got Slammed," "An Acrobatic Feat," etc.

DORA MOON ANTICIPATED TROUBLE WHEN JOHNNY STARR, HER PARTNER IN THE TEAM OF MOON AND STARR, GOT THEM MIXED UP IN A VAUDEVILLE BILL THAT WAS TO STAY INTACT FOR FORTY WEEKS. BUT SHE DIDN'T ANTICIPATE THAT THE JAPANESE ACT WOULD HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT. . . .

"YOU fathead!"

Miss Dora Moon made the statement with the air of one who is absolutely certain that she is correct. Then she threw herself on the bed and glared.

As far as living conditions were concerned, Miss Moon certainly had no reason to feel peevish. Her room was the best that one of New York's up-to-datest hotels could supply. Scattered around were furs, hats, dresses and other feminine furbelows. On the dresser was a gold-backed toilet set, several diamond rings, a diamond pendant and a platinum wrist watch.

There was an aura of ready money about the whole layout.

Miss Moon herself was very easy to look at. She was slender and shapely, and her boyishly bobbed, blond hair formed an admirable setting for the big, blue eyes, the saucy little tip-tilted nose and the Cupid's-bow lips. Her complexion was quite good enough without any adventitious aid from art.

She moved with the unstudied grace of a practiced dancer. And when it came to the terpsichorean art, it was acknowledged throughout the length and breadth of theaterdom that Miss Moon possessed just about the hottest pair of "hot dogs" that ever tapped the boards.

You can lay a little bet that Solomon in all his glory never had a filly in his stable that could come within half a mile of her in a sartorial contest. When she swung down Broadway of an afternoon, all lit up in her glad rags, business ceased while she passed, and murmurs of "some baby" floated on the ambient atmosphere.

The gentleman to whom Miss Moon applied the rather opprobrious epithet did not stagger and clap a hand to his heart. He received the thrust quite

peacefully, as though he was accustomed to it—which, as a matter of fact, he was.

Mr. Johnny Starr might have informed her that he had been often "bawled out" by people with much superior vituperative powers, but he didn't.

Having listened to Miss Moon for five years, he was well aware that, when thoroughly wound up, she was capable of carrying on a conversation with the steadiness and persistence of an eight-day clock.

You couldn't help liking Johnny Starr, because he had an engaging grin for everybody. He was tall and loose-jointed and carried himself with the same ease which characterized Miss Moon. He naturally would, for Johnny was also a distinguished "hoofer."

On the stage and off, Johnny bore the reputation of being a "nifty dresser." His light-brown suit, slashed with green and red stripes, fitted him to perfection. His shirt and tie were silk, and Fifth Avenue.

Moon and Starr were a standard team in vaudeville. They always played the "big time" and held down a favored spot on the bill. They received four hundred a week, and got it forty weeks a year.

Don't be confused by the fact that Dora Moon's name was hitched to a "Miss." It is simply a custom in the world of make-believe, much as they always open an Irish debate with a brick. Parenthetically it might be remarked that many a miss on the stage can look back on a long line of husbands.

So let's get it over with and say that Moon and Starr were as much one as a two-dollar license and ten dollars' worth of preacher could make them.

For an old trouper, Bill Shakespeare certainly made a bad break when he manufactured that wheeze about a rose being just as big a hit under another title. Show folks know better, which is the reason you discover plenty of Rabinowitzes, Rosinskys, and Rosenblooms entering the stage door, but by the time they reach the footlights they have all been changed into Roses.

Moon and Starr signed their checks under a different name, but let 'em keep their heavenly monikers.

After Miss Moon made her remark about the amount of adipose tissue contained in Mr. Starr's brain box, there was a lengthy silence. Mr. Starr lit a cigarette, scratched his ear, crossed his legs, uncrossed them, ho-hummed, sighed and then simply sat.

Miss Moon stood it as long as she could, then sat up on the bed and burst.

"You big hunk of tripe, what did you do it for?" she demanded. "Why don't you say something?"

"Now, honey bunch, clam yourself," expostulated Johnny. "Use a little judgment."

"If I'd used any judgment, I never would have married you," stated Dora. "You're always pulling a boner."

"This is no boner," said the victim. "It's a wise move."

"How come?"

"Well, for one thing, we've been doing our act for five years, and the audiences know it as well as we do," said Johnny.

"Even if we have, it makes good, doesn't it?" said Dora. "MacIntyre and Heath's been playing the Ham Tree since Jackson was president, but nobody shoots at 'em. You'll have to think up another one."

"No matter what you say, it's a good idea," persisted Johnny. "We don't have to pay any agent's commission, no railroad fare or baggage bills. Why, honey, it's seventy-five a week in our pockets."

"Forty weeks with one troupe, and I'll be where people don't wear pockets," prophesied Dora. "You've got me so up

in the air, I'm not sure whether we're going with a tribe of Indians or a den of wolves. What's it all about anyway?"

"Sweet lamb, here's the how of it," explained Johnny. "You know this Sternberg circuit has houses from coast to coast. They've always played legit shows, but there's been so many flops this season that their houses have been closed half the time. So now they're trying vaudeville. The only difference is they are going to have each bill stay together for the entire season. It saves 'em money. I think they're smart."

"Naturally you would," said Dora with a malevolent laugh. "There's nothing in your attic but dust. You know darned well that no eight vaudeville acts on earth could be together for forty weeks without sixteen murders and fifty riots. Look at that season we put in with 'The Parisian Girl.' Wasn't it worse than the Custer massacre? Fights all the time. All right. You signed the contract and got us into this mess. Who's to be in the troupe? Who do I have to battle with?"

"They've got some kind of a Jap acrobatic turn to open the show."

"They're all right. They never bother anybody and know what soap and water is for," commented Dora.

"Jess Simmons is going."

"That's the black-face monologue man, ain't it?" inquired Dora. "He wouldn't be so bad if he ever washed his neck."

"You don't have to look at his neck," said Johnny. "There's a European musical act—I don't know their names—and the Delmotte Sisters."

"Those Delmottes were in the business when Joe Jefferson wore knee pants," said Dora. "It's a cinch they won't steal anybody's husband. Who's going to be featured?"

"Maybelle Larkelle."

"She's the one that's been with a lot of Broadway musical shows, isn't she? What's she going into vaudeville for?" Dora wanted to know. "I suppose her pipes are cracked, or something. She'll be the one to start the trouble. All swelled up like a balloon, and high-hatting everybody. If she mixes with me, I'll stick a pin in her. Do you know of anybody else?"

"Yep," admitted Johnny. "Madame Loretta and her pets."

"That settles it! I knew there was a catch somewhere," squealed Dora. "You may take my dead body with that outfit, but I'll never go alive. You know very well I had hysterics in Buffalo, that week she was on the bill with us. Didn't I come into the dressing room and find one of her snakes sitting on my trunk? The darned thing was ten feet long. I like Loretta all right—she's a good old scout, even if she does look like Eddie Foy in skirts. But I'm not going to troupe with anybody that carries rats and snakes in her pocket, and that's flat."

"Have your own way, sweet mamma. We'll get out of it somehow," soothed Johnny. "I'm going to take a stroll along Broadway and listen to the wise-crackers running the show business. You doll up, and I'll be back around six. I'll take you over to Moore's, and we'll inhale a ham-and-cabbage feed. It wouldn't be a bad idea to go to the House and see that new English turn."

"Once in a while you think up something sensible," agreed his spouse. "We'll go to Moore's and then to the House."

Dora doted on ham and cabbage, and also liked to see other vaudevillians work, so she was in a more amicable frame of mind when her hubby returned.

Mr. Starr knew that it was a week before their engagement opened and reasoned his wife would resign herself to the situation before that period had elapsed.

He proved to be correct in his judg-

ment. When the day of their departure for the opening of the tour came around, Miss Moon was the gayest of the gay. She sailed into the Pennsylvania waiting room and greeted the fellow members of her aggregation with dash and aplomb.

Every masculine neck in the vicinity revolved to the tune of Dora's rapid movements. Miss Moon was just about three weeks ahead of the latest hint from Paris. From the top of her toque to the tips of her patent leathers, she radiated class, and well she knew it.

Miss Larkelle, the headliner of the company, observed the gyrations of Miss Moon with a petulant frown, which she instantly erased when Dora was introduced to her by Madame Loretta.

"I'm suah we ah goin' to have a pleasant season," averred Miss Larkelle.

"I just know it'll be delightful," affirmed Miss Moon.

And to herself Miss Moon said, "One of those up-stage legits. She looks like a hungry eel that's been dipped in a bucket of whitewash."

While Miss Larkelle's interior comment was, "How fearfully common these vaudeville persons are. This one imagines she's Cleopatra or the Queen of Sheba."

Miss Larkelle was a dumb dora, but she labored under the delusion that she was frightfully intellectual. She always carried Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius around with her. When anybody was looking, she buried her nose in the contents. What it was all about she had as much idea as Zip the What-Is-It has of the Einstein theory.

Miss Larkelle was tall. Some people called her "a long drink of water." She reddened her lips, whitened her face and made up her eyes. Her hats were floppy and her clothes tight-fitting. Miss Moon's simile was not inappropriate.

Before the train had departed for Pittsburgh, the opening point for the company, Dora had exacted a promise from Madame Loretta.

"Now, Loretta, old dear," she said, "I do hope you're going to keep your wild animals chained up when they're not working. You remember that snake of yours nearly scared me to death in Buffalo."

"Well, land of Goshen!" exclaimed the madame. "That was Henry. He was harmless as a kitten. A child could play with him. However, you'll not have to worry about snakes. I ain't carrying any this season. I've got a rat-and-cat act, and if I do say it myself, it's a humdinger."

"Please don't let any rats loose around me," pleaded Dora, "or I'll have fits."

"I won't. I wouldn't take five hundred apiece for my rats. All you'll have to look out for are the human ones. They're a blamed sight worse than the four-legged rats."

The initial performance in Pittsburgh was a grand success. The theater had been newly decorated, and a high-class audience jammed it to the doors.

The Japanese acrobats were really wonderful. They called themselves "The Imperial Matsudis." Four men of India rubber and whalebone, who became pin wheels, pretzels and other curious conformations at a second's notice.

Madame Loretta's rats and cats consorted together in an amicable manner and performed various parlor tricks with neatness and dispatch.

Jess Simmons, the black-face comedian, had purchased ten dollars' worth of new jokes during the summer and garnered his share of the laughs.

Then Moon and Starr came on—neat, natty, good-looking. Their wardrobe, their songs, their dances were right up to the minute. The audience howled for more, and for an encore they gave 'em the Charleston. Oh, man! How

those babies did strut their stuff. A panic! A wow! A knock-out!

It was a lucky thing for Maybelle Larkelle that there was an intermission before she had to appear.

Miss Larkelle's offering was exceedingly high-brow. She warbled something in Dutch or Chinese that nobody understood, and the icicles commenced to gather on the proscenium arch. But fortunately she gave an imitation of a well-known actress singing "My Man." That's the French song about the young lady who loved an Apache. The Apache walloped her about sixteen times a day, and the more he socked her, the better she liked him. It's a very touching ballad and never fails to bring down the house. With its aid, Miss Larkelle managed to squeeze out an encore.

"If they're really paying her a thousand a week, she's no bargain," commented Miss Moon.

"As long as we knock 'em for a goal," stated Mr. Starr, "it ain't up to us to worry about another performer."

"She needs somebody to tell her something about vaudeville," said Dora. "Her voice is all right, but her songs are very much Oshkosh."

"Lay off," advised Johnny. "You open your pan, and the war is on."

The week passed rapidly and pleasantly. The theater was full at every performance, and press and public expressed their appreciation by good notices and plaudits.

On the train of a Sunday afternoon, as they journeyed to Cleveland, Johnny said:

"I've a hunch that this is going to be a great season. There's a fine bunch with the show."

"Huh! They always behave the first couple of weeks," declared his partner. "Mark my words, before we're out a month, half the gang won't be speaking to the other half. Actors can't get along together. Never did and never will."

In the daytime, Johnny and Dora usually went their own separate ways, which is not a bad rule for married couples. Too much of each other is always more than sufficient.

So after the Monday matinée, Dora removed her make-up, donned her street apparel and sallied out on a window-shopping expedition. She strolled along Euclid Avenue, contemplating the displays of furs, fats, furniture, fixtures, fruits, fromage and flowers behind the panes, and also had an eye for the frumps and frivolous on the sidewalk. Of a sudden she stiffened like a pointer. That was surely her man ahead of her, and he was with Miss Larkelle. They seemed to be enjoying themselves.

How sharper than a razor blade 'tis to have a gallivanting husband!

Miss Moon sleuthed along in the rear. She saw the pair go into a drug store and seat themselves at the soda fountain.

Dora was liberal in her views and did not regard the purchase of a soda water as a major crime, but——

She returned to the hotel pondering. This Larkelle party looked like a vamp. However, she made up her mind that her cue would be watchful waiting. If the meeting had been merely a casual one, Johnny would be sure to mention it.

In the dressing room that night, while they were applying the war paint, Dora put out a little feeler.

"I was on Euclid Avenue this afternoon," she said. "I was surprised—some of the stores are just as good as any on Fifth Avenue."

"So was I," Johnny promptly responded. "I met Larkelle and bought her a soda."

"Pork and beans would do her more good," said Dora. "She needs filling."

But Dora felt vastly relieved. Johnny was innocent, or he would not have told about the soda incident. Still, it was

possible he might have seen her. You never can tell about men. No! She wouldn't believe that. Go chase yourself, Satan.

The Cleveland week was just as successful as the Pittsburgh engagement. Cincinnati followed. Cincinnati does business in a hollow surrounded by hills, and the soot falls continuously on the just and the anti-Prohibitionist, but it's a good old town nevertheless.

They were in the dressing room after the Monday-night show.

"There's a big social session at the Elks to-night," said Johnny. "You don't mind if I run over for a while, do you? I'll take you down to the hotel first."

"Oh, skip along," said Dora. "I guess nobody'll steal me going to the hotel. It's only a block. But if you get corned up, don't wake me when you come in."

So Dora toddled home alone. Johnny was a great Elk, and it was nothing unusual for him to attend one of their shindigs.

Miss Moon went to her room, but did not remain there. She wasn't the least bit sleepy and felt as though a walk would do her good. So she meandered down Walnut and turned west on Fourth. Fourth is not a lively thoroughfare at night, but Dora wandered along for a number of blocks. Then she crossed the street and retraced her steps.

At Vine Street is the city's leading hotel. A cabaret is there, and the gay blasts of a jazz orchestra floated out. Dora's tootsies subconsciously kept time to the music. As she passed, she peeped inside. Couples were footing it merrily. Other couples were eating.

The curtains prevented the insiders from looking out, but to the outsider looking in it was as clear as a scene on the stage. At a table, so close that she could have touched them but for the interfering glass, sat her husband and Miss Larkelle. Miss Larkelle was toying with a peach Melba.

Had it been a cheese sandwich, it would have been bad enough, but to see another female dallying with a peach Melba at her husband's expense is enough to make any woman red-headed. For peach Melbas come as high as one-fifty per throw. The thought that her Johnny was buying one-fifty desserts for this whitewashed yardstick just about turned Miss Moon into a Bolshevik.

Her eyes roamed up and down the street. What she hoped to see was a large and luscious brick, but fortunately not a missile raised its head. She tapped her feet on the sidewalk and debated with herself. To march in, or not to march in—that was the question. Finally she decided to go home and think it over, but vengeance she was going to have, and nothing else but.

She was awake when her husband returned. It was after two o'clock.

"How was the social session?" she asked.

"Fine," responded Johnny absently.

"Ha, ha! I'll bet it was," she snapped. And then she buried her head under the covers.

The next day Dora sought Madame Loretta.

"I want to see you after the matinée," she said. "Where are you living?"

"Down at Hester's, on Fifth near Elm," said the madame. "It's a madhouse, full of burlesquers, but the rooms are clean, and it's only seven a week." She smiled.

Dora went to the hotel and laid the case before Loretta.

"I ought to crack her on the jaw," she stormed.

"If you want my advice, go slow," counseled the madame. "I've handled all kinds of wild animals in my time, including three husbands. You can generally figure out what an animal is going to do, but husbands, never. The

critters are born contrary, and when you try to lead 'em, they balk. The first man I married was years ago when I was with Lord George Sanger's circus in England. He was a lion tamer by the name of Maloney—Señor Moreno on the bills.

"Well, a better-hearted fellow never lived, but he would drink too much. I was young then and didn't have much patience, so I used to raise Cain every time he got squiffy. He got into the habit of crawling into the lions' cage when he was tanked. He knew I couldn't get at him there. One night he had more than usual, and by mistake went to bed with the leopards. I've always blamed myself for what happened. People should bear and forbear."

"I don't care. I'll get even," said Dora. "No woman is going to eat peach Melbas on my husband and get away with it."

"Appearances are deceptive," said the madame sagely. "Sometimes circumstances alter cases."

"I'd like to alter her map," shouted Dora. "There's no excuse. I saw it with my own eyes."

"I heard about this Larkelle before we started out," said Loretta. "Everybody tells me she's a meal hound. She likes to eat, but she's closer than the stamp on a letter and doesn't want to spend her own money. She'll vamp anybody that she thinks will feed her. But as far as I know, she's never had any serious love affairs." Her tone was cynical.

"She'll wish she'd bought her own grub before I get through with her," muttered Dora.

"Why not be practical?" inquired Loretta. "Give Johnny a dose of his own medicine. I'll bet he'd be as mad as a hornet if he saw you with another man."

"He never has yet," said Dora. "And as far as vamping's concerned, I don't know any more about it than a six-year-old kid."

"Well, for crying out loud!" exclaimed Loretta. "All a girl with your looks would have to do is to wink at any man, and he'd flop at your feet."

"I couldn't. I don't want to," said Dora tearfully. "I'm afraid to bat an eyelash in a hotel lobby for fear one of those fresh drummers will fall on my neck. I never flirted in my life. I can't."

"That's a lot of apple sauce," stated Loretta. "If you want to get even with Johnny, you've got to do something."

"I want to make him sorry," wailed Dora, "but I don't know how."

"Jolly along somebody with the show," suggested Loretta.

"I'd like to know who," sniffed Dora. "Johnny's the only decent-looking man with the outfit. Swartz, the musical director, must be seventy, Simmons, the black-face man, never washes, and, besides those two, there's only that big, fat Dutchman that plays the xylophone with his wife."

"I guess you're forgetting the Japs," said Loretta. "That tallest one is a handsome fellow."

"He *is* good-looking," admitted Dora. "But I'd be afraid to flirt with a Jap. He might hara-kiri me, or something." She shuddered.

"You give me a pain," said Loretta. "You don't have to elope with him or bite your initials in his neck. Just talk a little. Give him a grin, and Johnny will be flying around like a hen on a hot griddle."

"Hot griddle! Hot dog!" cried Dora. "I'm scared to, but I'll do it just for spite."

"Atta baby," approved Loretta. "Go to it."

The next day the Japanese was arranging some of his paraphernalia at the back of the stage, when Dora approached him.

"Oh, Mr. Matsudi," she said, "I think

your act is wonderful. I don't see how you do some of those stunts."

"Yes-s-s," hissed the Jap. "Very much oblige. Me Nogi. Matsudi name of act. You very nice to say we are good. You very much good, too."

Mr. Nogi did not approve of Caucasian females, but he was too polite to let even a hint of it flit across his impassive countenance.

"I'm glad you like me," continued Dora. "I wish you would show me something about jujutsu."

"Jujutsu very much too rough for lady," stated Nogi. "Some time maybe, yes, I show you. Now I got go."

Mr. Nogi fled as hurriedly as he could, and Dora wended her way to the dressing room.

Johnny glared at her when she entered.

"What's the big idea?" he demanded. "What are you hanging around that Jap for?"

"What do you care?" said Dora. "There's no ropes on me, are there?"

"Something must have bit you," concluded the perplexed Johnny. "I never saw you act this way before."

Dora burst into tears.

"Just mind your own business," she snapped.

"He's as mad as a hatter," she confided to Loretta.

"Keep up the good work," advised that lady. "You'll tame him."

After she finished her performance that night, Dora again sought Mr. Nogi. He was unaware of her coming until it was too late for him to escape, so he resigned himself to the inevitable.

"Oh, Mr. Nogi," she cooed. "Won't you please show me just one little jujutsu hold?"

Mr. Nogi had no desire to demonstrate jujutsu. He wished Miss Dora was in Halifax, but above all else he was courteous. Since the lady insisted, he would teach her a simple trick, and then maybe she would leave him in peace.

"All right," he said. "I put arm around waist. So! Then other arm she go up to neck. So!"

What the next move was to be Dora never learned, for Johnny burst on the scene.

"Hugging my wife!" shouted Johnny. "That for you!"

"That" was a punch aimed at Mr. Nogi's jaw. Johnny might as well have assaulted a battleship, for the Jap was as hard as steel.

But if Mr. Nogi was unhurt physically, his feelings were deeply lacerated. Here he was going along, minding his own business, when a female persisted in annoying him. Then, to cap the climax, the female's husband soaked him in the jaw. Too much is sufficient.

Mr. Nogi calmly and methodically tied Johnny up into a series of knots and ended by throwing him through a piece of scenery.

Then did Dora realize how much she loved her Johnny.

"You brute! You coward!" she shrieked. "How dare you hurt my husband?"

Mr. Nogi fled before the storm, emitting a series of hisses like a wounded soda fountain.

Dora dragged Johnny from the scenery's embrace.

"Oh, speak to me," she moaned. "Don't say you're dead."

Johnny struggled to a sitting position and dazedly rubbed his forehead.

"You bet I'll speak to you," he uttered thickly. "And when I do, I'm going to say something, you string bean, you. What do you mean letting a Jap hug you?"

Then Dora flared up.

"He wasn't. He was showing me a trick. Besides, I've as good a right to have men hug me as you have to buy peach Melbas for Larkelle."

"Didn't," said Johnny.

"Don't you dare lie. You did. I saw you."

"I say I didn't," maintained Johnny. "I don't care what you saw. She paid for it herself. I might as well tell you the whole thing. Larkelle knows her act isn't right, and she asked me to come with her after the show and suggest what it needs to make it go. I told her some songs to get and gave her a few ideas, so she insisted on paying for the supper. I didn't want her to, but she would do it. She doesn't wish anybody to know I was helping her, so that's why I said nothing to you about it. I haven't any use for her, but I thought it would help the show. I hope you're satisfied now. Look at the bumps on my head."

"Oh, Johnny, I was jealous and wanted to get even," sobbed Dora. "That's the reason I jollied the Jap."

Miss Larkelle came whirling around the wings. Her face was like a thundercloud.

"What are you people making all that racket for when I'm on the stage?" she demanded. "Are you trying to crab my act?"

"Oh, go sit on a tack," advised Dora. "You haven't any act."

A Flyer in Grain

by Carrington Phelps

Author of "Bread Upon the Waters," "The Price of a Pearl," etc.

MR. SERRANO, WITH THE FAITHFUL MR. GEORGE, FALLS IN WITH CONFIDENCE MEN AND A FEDERAL AGENT, BUT HIS RELATIONS, RESPECTIVELY, TO THESE PEOPLE IS TRULY A STRANGE ONE. IT GROWS MORE STRANGE AS HE PLUNGES ON, UNTIL IT THREATENS TO GET OUT OF HAND AND ENDANGER THE HEALTH OF "SILK" AND HIS SECRETARY. . . . . .

MR. SERRANO, rousing from a momentary drowsiness, requested Mr. George to repeat his question, heard indistinctly from a half dream.

"I was asking if we'd best go straight to Chicago, and chance running into the police," said Mr. George.

Mr. Serrano hitched himself forward on the cushions and glanced through the window at the fleeting, snow-laden landscape. A steady whispering of storm-blown flakes came from without, above the roar of the train.

"I have been thinking of precisely the same thing," Mr. Serrano replied, with a casually cautious glance around. Save for two young men a few seats ahead and several slumbering women, they were the sole occupants of the coach, most of its remaining male passengers being occupied in the smoking room behind them.

Mr. Serrano's gaze came languidly back to the face of his companion, whose bulky form was huddled back in the corner, relaxed after the substantial lunch of half an hour before. A devoted ally, thought Mr. Serrano, if prone to heedless and impulsive violence now and then. He was, perhaps, a lucky man to have him at his command.

"I believe," continued Mr. Serrano, "that we have pretty effectually dropped from sight. And yet one can never tell. One cannot know from one minute to the other when the long arm of the law may reach out and clutch one."

He thoughtfully touched a newly healed scar on his cheek, where a certain bullet had left its mark not long before. "All of which, my dear boy, is the price we pay for following a career of crime, instead of that of the humble haberdasher, say, or the real-estate salesman, or the motorman. Quite so. I have often reflected that such are preferable, though lacking in the variety which spices our lives so decidedly."

Mr. George, listening intently, nodded. "That's all very well. But we'll be in Chicago in about five hours, and if we're going to drop off beforehand, we'd better begin planning."

Mr. Serrano contemplated Mr. George with an approving smile. "Excellent reasoning. I have already consulted the time-table and have selected a small town some miles this side of our objective. I think we had best get off there and enter the big place unobtrusively, say in an electric car. Perhaps it is a needless precaution."

He gave himself over to a meditation upon this subject, while Mr. George, as one recognizing the subject closed, resumed the perusal of his newspaper. Now that they were embarking upon the third phase of their undertaking, it seemed to Mr. Serrano they should employ a greater care to guard themselves against such catastrophes as had hitherto well-nigh undone them. True, it had not been their fault so much as, he thought, a relentless fate.

Why, thought Mr. Serrano, had they ever come to the States in the first place? This talk about there being plenty of money, easily arrived at, was only half true. There was money enough, but it was closely guarded. They had, of course, been unfortunate in their New York experience. If only he had kept away from old Krouse, internationally notorious fence though he was, all might have been well.

Krouse had been a fine old murderer for you, sending three gunmen to take by force the smuggled jewels, instead of endeavoring to dispose of them through less dramatic channels. That two of his beauties had been summarily destroyed did not help greatly to sell the stuff. The chief result, thought Mr. Serrano, had been to send Mr. George and himself running for cover, out of the city, with the third member of the Krouse gang, if he had not mistaken him, following them.

Then there had been that amiable, restful little period of recuperation at the old farmhouse, whose owner Mr. Serrano had aided in his financial trouble so expeditiously, and whose creditor, once paid, had been so swiftly deprived of the money by the faithful George. Luck had played its hand there, if you please, but in their favor, granting them a sight of Mr. Krouse's henchman pursuing them with his trusty aids. Luck had been kind for once, letting them slip from the town, with five minutes' grace.

What, he wondered, would Mr. "Satchel" Kelly, the leader of that notable cutthroat gang, think when he found himself arrested for the robbery that Mr. George had not half an hour before perpetrated upon the person of Moses Snaith, juggler of loans and real estate? Would that leader suspect that one Mr. Serrano had had a hand in his incarceration? Very likely. He had encountered him before, on the occasion of the attempted jewel robbery, and he had at that time expressed his appreciation of "Silk" Serrano's resourcefulness.

Indubitably, decided Mr. Serrano, Mr. Kelly would not rest easily until he had squared accounts. Had he not had two of his friends killed? Had not he and his associates been shamefully arrested for robbing an aged real-estate operator they had never even seen? Furthermore, what of the vengeful pursuit of Mr. Moses Snaith himself? He couldn't swear who had robbed him, because it had been dark when Mr. George had entered his office.

Would he swear the excellent Kelly had accomplished the deed? Would Mr. Kelly be convicted? Probably not. Probably he would beat the accusation, even if Mr. Snaith were inclined to a too sanguine identification. In any case Mr. Kelly would omit no effort to square accounts between himself and one Silk Serrano.

In short, Kelly would hunt them for the killing of his two friends and for getting him accused of the Snaith business. Ultimately he'd know who was his accuser, when the police told him of the mysterious telephone message. Also, there was Krouse, who must be chagrined to know that his plans had fallen out so completely.

Also, there was that little affair of the café in New York, where Mr. George, following his propensity for aggressive action, had unforgivably broken a man's skull. Lastly there was the little matter of smuggling in a couple of hundred thousand dollars' worth of ex-crown jewels, and the accompanying evasion of even a penny of duty. Clearly, thought Mr. Serrano, their lives had not been without high lights, and, unless every precaution were taken, would continue so.

He leaned his head back against the cushion and permitted his eyes to sweep slowly up and down the narrow vista of the car's interior. Here were travelers, simple, unexpectant, placidly unworried. Here, for the moment at least, was security, unless, as was not probable, the police were to telegraph descriptions ahead and search all trains. Nothing so forthright had as yet happened, and it was good logic, he judged, to assume now that it would never happen.

They would avoid by a move, ancient and circuitous, Chicago's waiting officials. They would live with circumspection in Chicago until they had sold at least part of the gems, perhaps to some wealthy pork packer, after which they would journey on to the coast and thence across to the Orient and its brooding mystery, its freedom and protection.

Mr. Serrano's optimistic dreams were interrupted by the sound of a hearty voice in his ear and the weight of a friendly hand on his shoulder.

"Why don't you come in and have a smoke with us, instead of moping here alone?" inquired the voice.

Mr. Serrano raised a mild and amiable eye to that of the heavy-set, prosperous-looking gentleman who had introduced himself as a Mr. Blodgett that morning, and who had shared with them his breakfast table. A robust, immensely self-assured, obviously successful gentleman, Mr. Serrano had decided, waxing more robust and self-assured on the business of grain brokerage, from which he had proudly boasted an income of a hundred thousand a year. Mr. Serrano murmured something about loafing and thinking, and Mr. George laid aside his newspaper.

Mr. Blodgett was insistent. He had just opened a box of excellent cigars, and he wanted his friends to sample them. "Had 'em made specially to order. Chap I know caters only to exclusive trade, understand? Exclusive trade."

Mr. Serrano gestured to the seat beside Mr. George, inviting the other to sit and chat here instead of in the stuffy smoker. "I hate crowds, Mr. Blodgett —even the crowds of a little smoking place. Besides, I've smoked too much already for one day. It fatigues me." He coughed gently from behind a deprecatory, slender hand, smiled, and touched in a mechanical, slightly embarrassed gesture his chin. "Fatigues me," he repeated vaguely, and, as Mr. Blodgett sank heavily into the seat, "That's better. Now we can talk in peace and quiet."

He proceeded, through Mr. Blodgett's blustering aggressiveness, to guide that gentleman's conversation to the realms of business, without too great difficulty, and presently had him fairly embarked upon a long discussion of wheat, markets, profits, agriculture, banking, and a dozen other economic factors, all making, it appeared, for the increased bank accounts of Mr. Blodgett.

Mr. George, as befitted a private secretary, for such was the rôle he now occupied, gazed abstractedly out the window, sitting as one apart, contributing nothing to the conversation. He had, he thought, done his bit that morning, when, in the brief moment following Mr. Serrano's departure from the table, he had confided to Mr. Blodgett the fact his employer was an extremely wealthy Englishman, traveling in search of pleasure, for the most part, and of any profitable investment he might encounter in this land of promise.

Mr. Blodgett had seemed unimpressed at the moment, carelessly turning to pay his check, but Mr. George had noted an added respect in his attitude toward Mr. Serrano when they had met later in the smoker, preceding their present interchange. Mr. Serrano hadn't cared greatly for Mr. George's playful little whimsy and had cautioned him henceforth to remain dumb. Mr. George was obeying at this moment, literally. But during the steady flow of Mr. Blodgett's animated peroration Mr. George was thinking steadily and without variation, "How can we get his cash?"

"There's nothing like wheat, gentlemen, for quick money," Mr. Blodgett was saying. "Of course, you've got to know your market; got to study it for years before you're ready to invest. Folks talk about the gamble of it, the risk. Will you believe me when I tell you there's hundreds of men coining money out of it the same as me? Fact, gentlemen, fact."

His emphatic eye swerved inclusively to Mr. George, found him evidently disinterested, and swung back to Mr. Serrano. He was in full stride now, somewhat less aggressive in attitude, talking convincingly because more quietly, in response to the sympathetic queries Mr. Serrano put to him from time to time.

After half an hour of this, Mr. Blodgett swung into a discussion of the English and their mehods of business, averring them too cautious ever to make quick, big money, and instancing several cases in point that had come to his notice.

Mr. Serrano countered gently, as befitted a successful Englishman, citing examples in his turn of almost headlong investments, with which he was somewhat sympathetic, having made a few of the sort himself without regret. The discussion was prolific of monotony to Mr. George, plodding about in a circle on the tail of his ceaseless query. Presently, to his relief, it terminated with Mr. Blodgett's departure to smoke another of his exclusive cigars.

Mr. Serrano gazed for a moment out the window before venturing to wonder if all Chicago business men were of this type. "If so, they are peculiar, to say the least," thought he.

Mr. George now expressed his query aloud, but Mr. Serrano frowned on it. It was not, he explained, the sort of job for them, at least at present. They had other more important work to do before engaging themselves in other diversions. "However, I approve your enthusiasm," he added. "It shows your mind is functioning properly."

And yet Mr. Serrano was not quite convinced in his own mind concerning Mr. Blodgett. The man was possible, but improbable. Was it, he reflected, because he had never before met exactly his type? He thought not. He'd met them in Sydney, Capetown, London—pompous, blustering with newly acquired power and wealth, deflating like balloons when you pricked their factitious dignity and self-importance. They were weaklings under their skin, if one but knew it, bolstering themselves up with something they might be convinced of, but which wasn't exactly the stuff to uphold them long in face of the peculiar and unhesitating methods Mr. Serrano had employed on more than one occasion.

What was it about this fellow which aroused his suspicion? Nothing he could put his finger on, yet none the less definitely persistent. Some warning instinct, doubtless, which had usually served him honestly, was at work.

Mr. Blodgett returned after a time to his seat, half the length of the coach ahead, and became absorbed in a magazine. Three seats behind and across from him sat a woman, simply dressed, alone. Her eyes followed the retreating form of Mr. Blodgett, and they continued now to rest on him with a quality of studied absorption that indicated to Mr. Serrano a more-than-ordinary interest. His position was strategic in that he could observe her by a mere shift of his eyes, while to discover his surveillance she must needs half turn her head.

Presently, with a casual ease which did not deceive him, she turned a little and permitted her glance to hesitate an instant in its artful travel to the rear. She turned again to the front, without having caught Mr. Serrano, who had evaded her by the simple expedient of closing his eyes as if dozing. She was not, however, satisfied, for she soon repeated her maneuver, with less success.

Reassured, she again gave herself over to a scrutiny of the unconscious Mr. Blodgett. There was a furtiveness in this, guarded and secretive, which roused Mr. Serrano's curiosity. Had she been disingenuous in her observation of the grain broker, he would have given it no second thought, but this alert defensiveness was not natural. He began to study her and was rewarded by an appreciation he hadn't before enjoyed.

She was, he realized, strikingly beautiful, with a beauty nullified and cloaked by the severity of her almost dowdy dress. Even her hair was aggressively repellent, gathered in a tight knot at the back of her shapely head, but with small, alluring curls escaping about the nape of her neck.

An excellent neck, reflected Mr. Serrano—of a piece with her fine brows, her delicate nose, her deep and limpid eyes, and her softly curving cheeks. Yet she must be a fool to conceal so stupidly her charms behind so dull and drab an effect. But there was little of the fool in her face. It was the face, he thought, of a clever, astute woman of perhaps twenty-six or seven.

His glance dropped to a dainty foot and ankle, lilting restlessly up and down, extending a little into the aisle. It was clad in a surprisingly small black shoe, a stocking of sheer and shimmering silk, sole contrast to an otherwise rigidly Puritanical exterior.

There was not the faintest hint of coquetry in her attentiveness to Mr. Blodgett. This was evident to Mr. Serrano in the level disinterest with which she viewed the landscape on Mr. Serrano's side when the grain broker passed and repassed during the next few hours. Mr. Serrano's curiosity remained unabated, nor was it destined to be satisfied before he and Mr. George reached the station of their departure.

Mr. Blodgett seemed to rise from beside them as they were gathering together such belongings as hats and overcoats—their recent flight had afforded them scant time for packing—and expressed his regret they were leaving. He had, he said, hoped to see them again in Chicago and show them "a live town."

Mr. Serrano replied that they would probably arrive in that city within the week, after they had completed their visit to some old friends they had not seen in many years. He spoke with deliberation, but his mind was actively engaged in observing the mysterious Puritan, who was now half turned and who, he could have sworn, was concentrating her every faculty on endeavoring to hear what they were saying.

Mr. Serrano fixed her profile in his mind with a single swift glance, and turned to go. Mr. Blodgett was thrusting into his hand a card and insisting he call on him when he came to town. Mr. Serrano, followed by the faithful George, descended and walked purposefully up a well-nigh deserted platform to the nearest taxicab. Mr. George paused at the door inquisitively.

"Oh," said Mr. Serrano. "Of course. Tell him to drive us to the nearest drug store." He winked largely. "We can telephone our friends from there."

For several days following their arrival in Chicago, the twain kept somewhat closely to the rooms they had taken in a small but select hotel, thoroughly acquainting themselves by aid of maps and guide books with the town.

Their first concern was the procurance of a complete wardrobe, together with an imposing assortment of luggage since, save for tooth brushes and a safety razor, they had fled with only the clothes they stood in. Next they planned their campaign, which, Mr. Serrano promised himself, would be an intensive one, and abbreviated. His first move, he reflected, would be to get in touch with certain agents who might be expected to aid him in the disposal of the gems.

These agents ranged from the keeper of a flower shop to the vice president of a lumber company, and were supposed to be trustworthy. Mr. Serrano, however, since his experience with the duplex Krouse, was disposed to wariness and to a preliminary survey of reputations and practice before entrusting his confidence to any of these gentlemen.

To this end he occupied himself for the next several days, drifting about in a somewhat aimless fashion, endeavoring to hit upon some person who might form the keystone to an arch of general acquaintance. He began with the night clerk of the hotel, to whom he announced an interest in real estate, and who recommended several firms. Mr. Serrano dropped in casually on the latter, where he was received with enthusiasm and was referred, incidentally, to various banks for proof of financial stability and business reputation.

The banks were also cordial, particularly one in which Mr. Serrano deposited, without difficult formalities, what remained of his twenty-four-hundred-dollar working capital. With this bank as a reference, he went to another, where he rented a safe-deposit box and, with a sigh of relief, placed therein the precious wallet of jewels.

He next established modest credit accounts in several shops, by merely referring to his bank, and purchased such items as clothing, books, shirts, and so on. These operations took up the better part of two days, but they yielded, indirectly, a considerable amount of valuable information.

It was so simple to direct the conversation to trade, investments, clubs, and society; so simple to shift from this to individuals, and eventually to achieve from many opinions a composite picture of those individuals from standpoints of business and of ethics. Three men survived this scrutiny—one who dealt in antiques, another whose chief occupation seemed that of yachting, and a third who owned and operated a little flower shop.

Mr. Serrano was on the point of approaching directly one of these, when there occurred the incident that was destined to postpone such closer acquaintance and to involve him in complications dangerous beyond imagination.

It had been the fault of Mr. George. Tiring of the solitude of the hotel, he had, in a moment of heedless impulse, telephoned Mr. Blodgett, whose card Mr. Serrano had thoughtlessly left ly-

ing on his dresser. Mr. Blodgett had not been in, but a young woman had taken Mr. George's name and hotel and had assured him she would convey the fact of his call to Mr. Blodgett when he returned.

Mr. Blodgett had not replied to the message until late that afternoon, when he called up and got the astonished Mr. Serrano on the telephone. He asked if he would not, with his secretary, be his guest for the evening. Mr. Serrano pleaded a previous engagement, and Mr. Blodgett said he would call in person the next day. He wanted, he explained, to show them Chicago. Mr. Serrano, overwhelmed by the torrent of Mr. Blodgett's volubility, had been unable to extricate himself before the gentleman had hung up. He expressed himself more fully to the sheepish Mr. George.

Mr. Blodgett, true to his word, appeared in the morning as the two were finishing breakfast. He was, if anything, more imposing than ever in a fur-lined overcoat, a smart gray hat, and gloves, and he referred casually to his car, which was awaiting them without. He would listen to none of the excuses Mr. Serrano managed to offer, insisting that they come with him and at once.

If they had any business calls to make, his man could take them around after the drive. He, Blodgett, had nothing to do until afternoon, and they could see the city in three hours, have lunch with him, and still have half a day for their own affairs. That was the way they did things in *this* town.

It was soothing to sit in the great car and go bowling through the big city with its parks, its broad lake front, its boulevards, but it was also somewhat tiring for Mr. Serrano to be compelled to listen to the flow of Mr. Blodgett's endless conversation. On his return to the hotel he found himself not a little exhausted, which the prospect of a visit on the morrow to the Exchange did not lessen.

Mr. Blodgett was determined that they should appreciate his city to the utmost. He always made it a point, he explained, to spare no effort in exhibiting its splendors to strangers, especially those resident in foreign parts. It was good propaganda, he said, as well as a matter of civic pride with him.

Mr. Serrano, viewing the feverish activities of the Exchange, found them only a little less wearying than the sight-seeing expedition of the day before. Returning, he meditated escape, secretly and at night. Even the police were less obnoxious than these American products known as "boosters."

Presently a thin, small finger of light intruded itself on what he now appreciated to have been a condition of impenetrable stupidity. Mr. Blodgett telephoned him the following day and informed him he was in a position to do him a great favor. He would just run over to the hotel for a minute and acquaint him with it. Mr. Serrano, who had thus far observed Mr. Blodgett with a mixture of amusement and patient fortitude, speculated shrewdly, if vainly, during the interim, as to the precise nature of the "favor."

Mr. Blodgett, on his arrival, came to the point hurriedly, glancing at his watch. He had had a tip, he said, on the market. If Mr. Serrano wanted to get aboard, he'd guarantee he'd clean up. Never mind the details. He hadn't time to explain them at this minute, but a favored few were going to make a killing that morning.

Mr. Serrano, sparring instinctively for time, said he could not put his hand on ready cash, and Mr. Blodgett interrupted him. "I tell you what I'll do, Serrano. I'll just lay down a couple of hundred for you, anyway. This thing is too good to lose. Incidentally, it'll show you the possibilities in this

little town for making big money. See you later." He turned and vanished.

Mr. Serrano gazed at Mr. George. "Can it be possible?" he inquired cryptically. Mr. George stared. "Can I have been mistaken all this time in my estimate of the worthy Blodgett as a stodgy, simple soul? If so, there's no doubt I'm growing stale, because his offer just now is the first move in the same old game which has been worked, in one form or another, for the past three centuries."

Mr. George became vocal, asking if he meant to say Blodgett was trying to work a game. Mr. Serrano said he did not know—would not know until Mr. Blodgett's next move.

"I can't be sure, but it looks very queer." He sighed gently. "Life is strange," he said. "If Mr. Blodgett, now, proves himself a designing scoundrel, he will be fetching coals to Newcastle, so to speak, in endeavoring to make us his victims. That would be amusing."

"What chance has he?" inquired Mr. George.

"Not too great a one. You may rest assured of that. And yet, now that I think of it, I felt there was something peculiar about him—something I could not analyze, could not grasp. Do such men radiate evil intentions? I wonder."

Mr. George asked sharply: "Can we pluck him? I've been itching to ever since we met him."

"I know you have," said Mr. Serrano. "And if he contemplates plucking us, you may be sure we will pluck him—provided we have a fighting chance." His eye followed Mr. George, embarked on a restless pacing of the room. "I should not become unduly excited, however, over the prospect, if I were you, until we were positive. After all, he may not prove to be merely the simpleton we thought, you know."

Their continued speculations were interrupted, an hour later, by the entrance of Mr. Blodgett, laughingly exultant. He explained that he had made a neat little clean-up, "the best I've had in weeks. Only a few of us in on it, as usual, but we did the trick." He produced a package of currency and handed it to Mr. Serrano.

"There you are, my dear sir. Five hundred and twenty dollars, less the two hundred I loaned you and invested for you. Your profits, Mr. Serrano.

"How's that for easy money, hey? Got the average business proposition licked to a frazzle, ain't it? Talk about finding money! Why, in fifteen minutes I cleaned up over eight thousand dollars. Well!" He slapped Mr. Serrano jovially on the shoulder. "Got to run back now and watch things. Just jumped up here to give you your end of it. See you to-night. Blow you to dinner and a show if you say so. So long."

Once again they witnessed his plunging exit. A sudden and curiously contrasting quiet pervaded the room.

Mr. Serrano began a deliberate count of the money, placing it in a little pile on the table between them.

Mr. George said, "Well?"

Mr. Serrano nodded. "Five hundred and twenty dollars—in legal tender, and not counterfeit." He uttered his little sigh of whimsical deprecation. "I am afraid my later estimate of Mr. Blodgett is the correct one."

"You're *afraid?*" echoed Mr. George.

"Yes," said Mr. Serrano. "It always hurts me to find my trust in humanity has been misplaced."

Toward evening Mr. Blodgett returned, bringing with him one whom he introduced as Mr. Green, his partner. Mr. Green was another such type, reflected Mr. Serrano, as Mr. Blodgett, save that he was less oratorical. Mr. Green was wont to await Mr. Blodgett's remarks and neatly confirm them, sometimes with merely a gesture, but usually

with a brief phrase, usually including a provable fact, and the whole calculated to stimulate faith in the infallibility of Mr. Blodgett.

That evening was replete with amusement for Mr. Serrano, playing his new rôle of the naïve innocent, the timorous lamb, ripe for the shearing. He permitted himself now and then a faint boast concerning his business acumen, mindful always to laud Mr. Blodgett's, which had just been so perfectly demonstrated.

Mr. Serrano's fun began at dinner, subtly, through a discussion between Mr. Blodgett and his partner of certain coups they intended accomplishing the following week. It was astonishing how casually they discussed operations involving fortunes, as if they were child's play.

Ultimately, and on the way to the theater, Mr. Blodgett suggested to Mr. Serrano that he remain in Chicago indefinitely. What better opening was there than that afforded by the wheat pit? He, Blodgett, would gladly give him the benefit of his experience and advice. Mr. Serrano thanked him and said he'd consider it.

It was also astonishing the number of important personages seated throughout the theater who were known to Mr. Blodgett by their first names, evidently his intimates. He was continually calling Mr. Green's attention to this one and to that, and Mr. Green was continually explaining to Mr. Serrano, sotto voce, the might and riches and dignity attending these personages. The gentleman Mr. Blodgett had referred to as "Tom" was none other than Thomas Winkle, the chewing-gum king. "There's Arthur," from Mr. Blogett, meant Arthur Howard Schultz, leader of the Chicago packers, while "old man Henry" was the dean of bankers.

And so on and so on, while Mr. Serrano listened, wide eyed and open mouthed, staring at each celebrity in turn, asking with bated breath a stupid question or two, to maintain convincingly the farce and his own straight face. Mr. George, to whom names meant little, maintained his customary stolid composure, studying his program, joining rarely in the general talk.

The finish of the musical comedy saw the quartet gathered at a cabaret, where liquor flowed without stint, and where Mr. Blodgett flung money about with the carelessness of a spendthrift millionaire. He drank little, like Mr. Green, and Mr. George drank not at all, explaining he was a teetotaler. Mr. Seranno made up for him, negotiating drink after drink, growing a little garrulous presently and boasting openly now of his English estates, his income, his remarkable financial acumen.

The evening wore eventually to a close. Mr. Serrano and Mr. George were dropped at their door by their hosts, who rolled away in their long, black car, waving a cordial adieu. Once in their room, Mr. Serrano threw himself into a chair and wiped his forehead. Mr. George regarded him anxiously. "You're not going to be ill, are you?" he inquired.

Mr. Serrano shook his head. "I was only thinking I wouldn't go through that again for anything less than ten thousand dollars." He shivered. "That whisky!" he pronounced weakly. He roused and began removing his collar. "At that, it will cost them ten thousand, if anything."

Mr. George wanted to know if he thought the other two had really been hooked.

Mr. Serrano dropped his collar on the table and heaved a long breath. "If the situation were reversed, I might be able to answer you. Never having played the dupe before, I cannot say. Judging abstractly, I should think we had deceived them."

He arose and began loosening his shirt. "I am wondering precisely what

their next move will be. Something startling, no doubt. Keep in your mind the fact I am timid—a shy and retiring wildflower. They may eventually approach you with the idea of influencing me to give them money for some purpose or other. I will hesitate, of course. You might delicately urge me to accede."

He gave Mr. George a humorous smile. "I said delicately, dear fellow. Just to show them you are quite of their opinion, whatever it may be." He went to the closet and hung therein carefully his coat and waistcoat. "It is confusing not to know the method by which you intend fleecing your fellow man. However, let us be patient. Eventually, perhaps, our friends will give us a hint on which to work." He glanced approvingly toward Mr. George, occupied with swift disrobing. "By the way, you are doing famously as a secretary. Remember not to talk much. It is, I am told, the secret of all good secretaries."

"What I want," said Mr. George impetuously, "is to get my hands on Blodgett's bank roll." He moved the palms of his hands in a meditative fashion against his thighs, as if he were drying them.

Mr. Serrano knew that gesture, preparatory to and eloquent of action on Mr. George's part, happily existent now only in Mr. George's mind.

"I was watching you," said Mr. Serrano. "You looked hungry. Never give yourself away like that again. Because you may, I suspect, see much money displayed before we are through with these two gentlemen of fortune. If it hurts you to regard temptation, don't look at it. Look at me," he added dryly, "because you can't very well make off with me in your pocket without trouble."

Mr. George turned from this trivial suggestion and went without reply into his own room. Mr. Serrano observed his departure with an amused smile. A good sort, George, he reflected, if devoid of humor. Mr. Serrano moved to the mirror, inspected his nicely modeled and somewhat poetic features, grimaced, turned off the light and climbed thoughtfully into bed.

Mr. George had a mysterious communication for him when Mr. Serrano returned the next afternoon. A woman had telephoned, asking for Mr. Serrano, stating it was important she see him immediately. Mr. George had, on general principles, informed her he was out of town and was not expected back until that evening or possibly the next day. The woman had refused her name and had said she would call again later. Mr. Serrano was somewhat puzzled to know the identity of the unknown. Few men, and certainly no women, were acquainted with him, and no one knew his address save his bankers and certain tradesmen.

Following this complicated interlude, Mr. George announced that Mr. Blodgett had also called and left word he would drop in next day for a little chat about something he believed would be of great interest to Mr. Serrano. This action on Mr. Blodgett's part was, Mr. Serrano reflected, to be expected. More, too, was brooding in that quarter, if he knew his man.

At a little after nine that evening the telephone bell rang again, and Mr. Serrano, with a premonition of impending trouble, lifted the receiver. A woman's voice, impersonal and clear, asked if Mr. Serrano had returned. He replied that he had and boldly announced himself. The voice informed him its owner was below and, if he were at leisure, would appreciate a few words with him, which would perhaps be to his advantage. Mr. Serrano, with the hesitation natural to one of his conventionality, replied he would be down in a few moments. He considered thoughtfully a moment.

"I don't know what this means," he

said, "but if anything happens, you'd better get away."

Mr. George wanted to know if he should follow him.

"I think so. Go down by the stairs. Put on your overcoat and hat, keep an eye on things, and, if they turn out badly, go out the side door." He glanced about the room. "I think that is all."

The little lobby was almost deserted as Mr. Serrano stepped from the elevator, and his swift glance about disclosed only two men talking on a near-by lounge. He walked slowly toward the door and had almost gained it when he was aware of a woman sitting within the shadow of a pillar. He had time to note that she was young and richly dressed, wearing dark furs, before she arose and came toward him with a confident smile. He paused and, as she spoke his name, lifted his hat.

"You must forgive me, Mr. Serrano," she said. "But this matter wouldn't wait." She darted a look about. "Let us sit over in that corner, where we can talk without interruption." She led the way to a nook flanking the doorway, seated herself in a big chair, and smilingly waited while he occupied the one at her side.

"You are an Englishman, I believe?"

Mr. Serrano acknowledged the false assumption with a slight nod. She wore a rakishly tilted hat, concealing part of her face, but there was, in the soft, fawnlike eyes and the half-glimpsed round of her cheek, something hauntingly familiar. His eyes dropped to the floor, where a delicate foot lilted steadily up and down in its trig shoe, balancing a slender ankle, clad in thinnest silk. Suddenly he remembered. This was the woman who occupied the coach with them on their journey to Chicago, the woman whose covert espionage of the man Blodgett had so roused his curiosity and so baffled it.

She was saying something about his being a business man, "visiting this country with an idea of possible investments?"

He met her eyes again, confirming, with a lift of satisfaction, his identification. She was more beautiful than he had thought, and only his keen memory for faces had made possible his recognition of this now charmingly metamorphosed creature. "Why, yes," he said. "I have thought of investing, provided I might find something I judged sufficiently safe. But would it be incurious of me to ask why I am —er——" He permitted his voice to trail into a pause.

She nodded, with a note of quick laughter. "Not at all. I was waiting for you to ask that. It's quite natural, of course. And while we don't know very much about you, Mr. Serrano, we've decided it's perfectly safe to take you into our confidence. You see, we've been keeping pretty close watch on you since your arrival. One of our men even followed you to that cabaret the other night, when you went with this man Blodgett and the other."

She had been manipulating something at her bosom, and she now extended her hand, disclosing a shining object that Mr. Serrano's premonitory sense told him to be a badge of authority even before he received and scrutinized it. He handed it back with a slight smile.

"Government service, eh? Very interesting, I'm sure. But I don't yet see——" He glanced casually about, perceiving in the far corner, near the desk, the figure of Mr. George, smoking, with an air of complete vacuity, a cigarette. Mr. Serrano lifted his hand to his head in the habitual gesture of one smoothing his hair, and Mr. George instantly touched his cheek, as if to brush something away.

In the several seconds during which this byplay occurred, Mr. Serrano's mind had flashed with a dozen thoughts,

had selected a course of action. Here, he realized, sat the strong arm of the law, with Heaven knew how many aids within sound of her call. They had him, for that matter of smuggling jewels, perhaps for the killing of Krouse's henchmen, perhaps also for Mr. George's robbery of the aged and Machiavellian Snaith.

If they closed in on him, there was little chance of resistance or escape. They would be guarding the other exit, but Mr. George might yet get through them and away. He had received warning of danger, was waiting for it and prepared, at the first overt move, to make a dash. Mr. George might escape. Money and luck and lawyers would effect his own eventual freedom, particularly if his ally were not also caught. Everything depended on him —everything.

The lady at his side was returning her badge to its resting place, was smiling at him, almost jocularly. One might fancy they were having tea together. "I wonder if you remember me," she was saying, "because I remember you perfectly, from the moment Blodgett first spoke to you."

Mr. Serrano blinked at her, speculating between the devil of flattering her by the truth, and the deep sea of admitting a suspiciously close observation. He decided to trust in the general feminine, and he said: "Now that I look at you, I remember you perfectly. I did not at first recognize you because, you see, you are now wearing a hat. Furthermore, you are"—he affected a hesitant gesture, a smile—"well, you are so different. You are so—as you should be. I remember thinking at the time you should be whipped for not making better use of the advantages Heaven gave you." He gave her a dry nod. "Pardon my frankness, but you have invited it."

He was rewarded by the faint color that came into her cheek, and by her little note of pleasure. "You are flattering, Mr. Serrano. I didn't expect you'd remember me, in that awful get-up. It's part of my job, however, and it is very practical for my purposes. I had been following that man Blodgett for five hundred miles, more or less. It was the first time I'd ever seen him. I was sort of sitting in, taking the place of a man who fell ill. Blodgett is a dangerous character, Mr. Serrano, and the sort of man you should be careful of associating with."

Mr. Serrano, restraining an exclamation of relief, said, "Indeed?" quietly. "And how is that?"

The lady smoothed with a white hand her fur, saying, "You, being an Englishman, and not accustomed to the methods of our crooks, naturally would not suspect him. As a matter of fact, Mr. Serrano, he is the head of a very clever gang of confidence men. But our interest lies in the fact that he is also active in drug smuggling and peddling. I work with the narcotic squad, you see."

Mr. Serrano received this with an air of pained astonishment. "Extraordinary!" he pronounced. "Why, he seemed the most innocent, the most genuine sort. And to think he is a criminal! I am very much shocked, Miss——" Again he executed his delicate gesture of bewilderment.

"My name is Prescott," she interjected.

"Miss Prescott. He told me he was a successful grain broker. He seemed to know everybody of importance. Extraordinary!"

She shook her head reprovingly at him. "You must be more careful in making acquaintances on trains, Mr. Serrano. Blodgett has done time, twice. He's a very difficult bird to catch, but eventually we'll land him."

"Why," continued Mr. Serrano, "he even invested some money for me, and he fetched me the profits, amounting to

over five hundred dollars. Why would he do that? I don't understand."

She made a little clicking noise of deprecation. "That is only the beginning, Mr. Serrano. Presently he will ask you to invest a larger sum, and, in the end, you may find yourself out thousands of dollars. If I were you, I should have nothing more to do with him. Drop him, flat. Like that." Her hand flipped sidewise and back.

Mr. Serrano considered this solemnly. "I shall take your advice, Miss Prescott. And I do not know how to express my gratitude to you for warning me."

She said it was nothing worth mentioning. "It's part of our business—preventing people getting their fingers burned. You're lucky nothing has happened yet." She sat up, gathering herself for her departure. "But I would drop him, as I say, if I were you."

A thought had slipped into Mr. Serrano's mind, bearing a potential defensiveness, provocative of expression. "It would be of no value to you if I pretended to fall in with this fellow's schemes, would it?"

She uttered an indecisive, prolonged murmur, ending with: "No. Not for us, though the local authorities might be interested. They're working on the other end—the confidence-game end, I mean. I'll tell them you are leading Blodgett on, if you wish. Do you think you can do it without getting stung? He's dangerous, don't forget."

Mr. Serrano slapped his knee. "I'll do it. It would be a splendid joke on Blodgett now, wouldn't it? Yes, I'll do it. As for danger"—he raised his eyebrows—"I've encountered it before."

She glanced at the tiny watch upon her wrist. "I've an appointment presently, and I'll have to leave, I'm afraid." She arose and held out her hand. "I hope you don't mind my having been so frank with you."

He assured her it had been a pleasure. "Shall I see you again?" he asked. "Something might come up, you know. One never can tell."

They were walking toward the door. "Why——" She seemed to hesitate, then drew hurriedly from her purse a card and extended it to him. "You can find me there, unless I am working. Usually evenings."

He went with her out the door and to the waiting taxicab. Their parting words were conventional and somewhat more than cordial. Impulsively he reached through the window and again shook her hand. The cab shot forward and away. Mr. Serrano turned back into the hotel, a dry smile hovering about his handsome features.

Luck, the capricious, had once more smiled upon him.

Mr. Blodgett did not appear the following day, as he had promised, and this slight omission served to suggest to Mr. Serrano that he had possibly taken fright at something. Either that, he thought, or he was biding his time, preparing his coup to the last fine detail before attempting it.

Light was thrown on this by a brief note from Mr. Blodgett, expressing his regret that he had been unable to appear and explaining that pressure of business alone had prevented him. The matter he had spoken of had not yet developed, but would, he believed, be ripe within ten hours, when he would drop in without fail.

"I am glad to hear it," said Mr. Serrano. "That means the climax is approaching. I wonder what it will be. Interesting, in any event, and eventually distressing, I trust, to Mr. Blodgett."

Mr. Serrano's uncertainty was cleared away with the early arrival next morning of Mr. Blodgett, accompanied by his partner, Mr. Green. As ever, Mr. Blodgett was in great haste, briskly coming to the matter which was so greatly to interest Mr. Serrano. Briefly,

it was another killing in the market. It had been rigged, he said, by a certain powerful clique, and he, with several friends, had got the tip straight from the office of one of the biggest operators in the West.

"It's the biggest clean-up I ever struck," he went on hurriedly. "It's the chance of a lifetime, Mr. Serrano, and, as I told Green, here, when it came I was going to hand the tip along to you. It's been brewing for several days, but this morning it's going to be pulled off Friendship is friendship. What's the matter with your putting that five hundred I made for you the other day into this thing? I like to see my pals clean up."

He glanced at his watch nervously. He was always, thought Mr. Serrano, glancing at that watch. It was a part of his stock in trade.

Mr. Serrano, thumbs in waistcoat pockets, deliberated. "H'm, yes," he said ponderously. "I might do that, provided this is a sure thing, Mr. Blodgett. I am opposed to gambling, on principle, but this is an investment, isn't it?"

"Why, of course," replied Mr. Blodgett eagerly. "Certainly, Mr. Serrano. Why, I wouldn't gamble on the surest thing in the world. Don't like it. My old father told me once never to gamble. 'Leave it alone, my boy,' was what he said. 'Fools and their money are soon parted.' And I've never forgot that advice, bless him. No, sir. This is a sound, sane, sure investment. You'll realize it when you see the profits you take down in a few hours from now."

Mr. Serrano said he trusted so, and went into the other room, where he counted out five hundred dollars, and returned. Mr. Blodgett received it carelessly. "You won't regret this," he said. "I'll enter the purchase in your name, so there'll be no slip-up or mistake. And I'll be back here inside of, say, three hours." He turned to the door, held open by Mr. Green, and backed through it. "And I'll bring home the bacon." He disappeared, and the door closed with a slam behind them.

Mr. Serrano bent his head to listen to their footsteps, retreating down the hallway and around the corner to the elevator. He came to the table, lighted a cigarette, and dropped his gaze on Mr. George, seated near the window. The latter had been absent-mindedly perusing the morning paper during this brief scene.

"Something," said Mr. Serrano softly, "is about to happen. Have you any idea what?"

Mr. George crumpled up his paper and threw it to the floor. "All this about business is always hard for me to understand, chief. You know that. I like something I can get my fingers into, and my teeth—something I can get *hold* of."

"Yes," said Mr. Serrano, "I have observed that characteristic. At the same time, it is an aid to one's imagination to consult with one's fellow man on occasion. Thus, I have decided, since asking you that question, that we are about to become involved in skyrocket finance. Not only that, but we are about to engage in a hazardous undertaking which may place us in considerable peril. I do not know how it will culminate, but coupling what I have observed with what the charming Miss Prescott told me leads me to the conviction events are approaching a climax. All of which should console you."

Mr. George, smoothing his hands, expressed himself as gratified. "The sooner, the better, I say. This sitting about and doing nothing makes me nervous. Blodgett makes me nervous." He arose and took from a bag on the table a napoleon, which he proceeded to swallow ravenously. "You know what idleness does for me, chief. That

little farm we were on, that was capital. One could get out and smash things." He gulped the last of the sweet.

"Wood! One could smash up firewood with an ax. This"—his inclusive gesture was scornful—"this would drive a man insane. Being quiet all day and night, thinking and smoking and thinking. It was that way in New York, too." He raised his arms impulsively above his head and dropped them slowly. "I'll break out some time, chief, unless something happens."

"Be calm," said Mr. Serrano. "Be patient." His eye was amused. "One never accomplishes things well if one hurries. Remember I am not my brother's keeper. We can only wait, and watch, and hope. When the time comes"—he brought his hand down sharply in a brief, swordlike motion—"we act.

"Meanwhile"—he lifted his eyebrows—"we are two trustful, not too intelligent, faintly unscrupulous business men, accepting without question the financial advice of a superior mind. And so promising is that advice, so rosy the prospect, that I have given over all thought of disposing of the jewels until this more pressing and more remunerative affair is terminated."

"Remunerative!" sniffed Mr. George, attacking another napoleon. "Seems to me you're pretty cocksure. Seems to me you're taking too much for granted, though it isn't for me to complain, seeing as you have the brains. Only I wish you'd hurry things," he added peevishly. "I hate this quiet."

"You are so impetuous," said Mr. Serrano reprovingly, "so impetuous." He settled himself comfortably in an armchair and began reading a magazine. Mr. George smoked, wandered restlessly through the rooms, and stared out the window during the hour preceding the return of Mr. Blodgett.

He entered without his usual vociferous manner, but grinning suggestively, as one who bears mysterious good tidings. He had cleaned up, he said, but not so much as he had expected. The big coup which had been arranged had failed to materialize completely. "They stepped on it just as things were getting lively. However, your share of the profits comes to six thousand dollars."

Mr. Serrano exclaimed amazedly.

Mr. Blodgett waved a disparaging hand. "That's nothing, Mr. Serrano. Not a drop in the bucket to what we'd have made if things hadn't been nipped in the bud. There was a leak somewhere, or you'd have cleaned up five times that amount." He dropped into a chair, drew forth a wallet, and counted out six one-thousand-dollar bills. "There you are." Mr. Serrano received the money, still apparently speechless with wonder. Mr. George came forward, peered over Mr. Serrano's shoulder at the six bills, and nodded, with the effect of a hungry cat observing a dish of cream.

"It makes me sick!" exploded Mr. Blodgett. "Here's a simply beautiful chance comes along, and it's all spoiled. What's a measly twenty thousand dollars, compared to a hundred thousand?" He dropped his chin dejectedly into the collar of his overcoat. "After a man works as hard as I did to engineer this thing, and then to have it break at the last two minutes!"

Mr. Serrano ventured the thought that, under the circumstances, he had done astonishingly well. "Why, Mr. Blodgett, this is more than I ever made in my life in so short a time. I congratulate you." He tucked the bills in his inner coat pocket. "And now what can I do to show my appreciation of this enormous kindness?"

Mr. Blodgett laughed derisively. "That wasn't a kindness. It might have been if I'd made you thirty thousand. I'd make you blow me to dinner, or something. As it is, it's a fizzle, that's

what it is—a miserable fizzle!" He snapped out a violent expletive and struck his knee with his clenched fist.

"Never mind! We'll get those smart Alecks yet. They stopped us this time, but when we start this again we'll have *them*. We'll make 'em squeal like pigs under a gate. We'll milk 'em dry of what they stopped us getting to-day, and then some." He arose and took several paces up the length of the room. "We'll tear things loose in less than a week, and then we'll see what kind of a tune they sing."

He paused, took off his hat, and wiped his face. "You'll have to excuse me, Mr. Serrano, but this thing has got my goat. It makes a man tired, though, to see victory snatched from his grasp at the last second."

Mr. Serrano's soothing assurances were interrupted by a knock at the door, and Mr. Green entered, obviously worried, carrying in his hand a folded paper. He went direct to Mr. Blodgett and handed it to him with the remark, "It's from Stetson."

Mr. Blodgett opened it frowningly, glanced at it, and pursed his lips. "That's bad," he said. "Still—I wonder if it really means trouble. Old Stetson, he's a good sort. And you know how he stands with *us*."

"Better see him right off, anyway," said Mr. Green.

"Guess you're right." Mr. Blodgett turned and handed the letter to Mr. Serrano. "This is a note from Stetson, secretary of the Exchange. He wants to see me and you at his office right off, Mr. Serrano. I guess I know what he wants. You see, I entered your bids in your name, so that the other crowd wouldn't know who was buying.

"Nobody is supposed to bid unless they're a member of the Exchange. You won't get in trouble in this case, but I may, seeing as I was the one who did it. We'll just drop over and have a chat with Stetson. All he'll probably do will be to give me a scolding. We stand in pretty well with him. In fact, he's of great help to us in deals like the one we almost put across this morning. His office isn't far."

Mr. Serrano nodded. He could not fathom what lay in this obvious prearrangement, but, after all, he had nothing to lose. Thus far he had not contributed a penny to the alluring speculations of the genial Blodgett. And he had on his person only a few dollars. Manifestly the risk was slight. He went to the closet and donned his overcoat. "I won't need you, I imagine, for anything," he said to Mr. George, and went out with the two. Mr. George, with catlike swiftness, snatched at his hat and coat and, after a peering observation through the chink of the door, slipped out and hurried to the stairway.

Mr. Serrano, walking through the crowded streets between the conspirators, speculated upon the hazards of his position. Mr. Blodgett kept up a running fire of small talk, to which Mr. Serrano made conventional answers. Mr. Green, as was his custom, said little.

Where, wondered Mr. Serrano, were they taking him? And for what purpose? Certainly an ulterior one—not innocent. Yet the letter at which he had had a glimpse was evidently bona fide. He recalled the address at its top, printed in bold, convincing type, and he noted that they were now upon the street indicated. There was no danger, he thought, and, if by chance it materialized, he knew Mr. George was not far distant.

They entered an imposing office building, were whisked upward in an elevator, and were presently entering a door whose opaque glass bore the name, "D. I. Stetson, Secretary." Mr. Blodgett walked over to a table behind which sat a sallow-faced youth at a telephone switchboard. He announced

himself in low tones. The youth manipulated the board, repeated his words, and nodded. Mr. Blodgett jerked his head to the others, who followed him across the room and through the door marked, "Private."

A lean, loose-jointed man with a cadaverous face occupied a big mahogany desk and dictated swiftly to a stenographer. He did not look up as the trio appeared, but continued a moment, ending with a brief, "That's all." The girl departed and the cadaverous man raised a piercing, stern eye.

"Well, Blodgett?" he inquired.

Mr. Blodgett, removing his hat, gestured toward Mr. Serrano. "Mr. Serrano, Mr. Stetson, secretary of the Exchange."

Mr. Stetson nodded and indicated chairs. "Glad to meet you, Mr. Serrano. Been a slight irregularity in this morning's transactions that has to be straightened out, and at once." He transferred his frowning gaze to Mr. Blodgett. "Mr. Serrano is not a member of the Exchange, and yet——"

Mr. Blodgett raised his hand. "I know what you are going to say, Mr. Secretary, and I want to tell you it's all my fault. Mr. Serrano is entirely innocent. I shouldn't have placed those bids in his name, and I know it."

"Of course you shouldn't," said Mr. Stetson bitingly. "Here you've taken out"—he consulted a penciled memorandum before him—"six thousand dollars in profits, evidently going to Mr. Serrano. But suppose"—his glance came back to Mr. Serrano—"suppose you had lost, Mr. Serrano. What guarantee did I have that you would be able to pay? All members of the exchange are, of course, bonded, and that protects us. But here are you, or rather I should say here is your name, with nothing, so far as we know, to back it up."

Mr. Blodgett again interrupted. "But Mr. Serrano isn't to blame," he said.

"That's not the point, Mr. Blodgett." The secretary rapped emphatically on the desk with his knuckles. "Not the point at all. This sort of thing isn't tolerated, and you knew it when you did it. Of course I know *why* you did it. But we won't go into that. The question now is what is going to be done to rectify matters. Mr. Serrano's profits will, of course, have to be returned. As a concession, and because he is a friend of yours, I will permit him to claim them, provided he is willing to put up an equal amount to show he could have covered his losses, if they had occurred."

There was a pause—eloquent, suspended, for a space of seconds. Mr. Serrano employed that time in swift deliberation. Evidently the secretary was genuine, and perhaps he had, after all, misjudged a little this man Blodgett. They wanted, in any case, six thousand dollars. And he was on the point of approaching, although tentatively and with a view to a further scrutiny of its genuineness, the situation, when Mr. Blodgett spoke.

"I got Mr. Serrano into this mix-up," he said heartily. "It's up to me to get him out of it." He reached into his pocket and drew out a check book. "I'll write a check for that amount, and you can send it over to the bank and have the cash here in fifteen minutes." He produced a fountain pen and began hurriedly writing.

"That will be satisfactory," said Mr. Stetson, evidently mollified. "Although action on the matter is out of my hands, it will come up before the board of governors next Monday. Merely a matter of form, Mr. Blodgett, and your cash confirmation of the bidding made in Mr. Serrano's name will show your good faith." He took the check from Mr. Blodgett's outstretched hand, blotted it carefully, and laid it on the desk. He turned to Mr. Serrano. "I will have to have your six-thousand-dollar

profits, until Monday." Mr. Serrano promptly handed over the bills.

Mr. Blodgett arose. "Then that is settled."

Mr. Stetson also arose, with a slight smile. "Settled, I believe." His frown returned. "But let this be a warning to you, Mr. Blodgett. So far, there has never been anything of a doubtful nature against your name. Another such slip and things will go seriously with you."

"There won't be any more slips," said Mr. Blodgett.

"See that there are not," returned Mr. Stetson gravely.

It was all rather puzzling to Mr. Serrano, contemplating the affair in retrospect. Was it possible that his fair friend of the government service had been mistaken in Mr. Blodgett? Had the identity of some arch crook been confused with that of the genial grain broker? Stranger things had happened. Apparently the secretary had been genuine, if Blodgett was not. Blodgett had been generous in offering to guarantee with cash the six-thousand-dollar profits. But there had been a slight pause preceding that offer, as if Mr. Blodgett were waiting until the last second before presenting his magnificent gesture.

A besetting curiosity settled itself upon Mr. Serrano, and it was with the thought of definitely satisfying it, as well as the warm hope of again seeing her, that he telephoned Miss Prescott that night. Miss Prescott replied she would meet him an hour later and named a tea room as their meeting place. It was quiet there, she explained, and desirably secluded.

Mr. Serrano was waiting when Miss Prescott appeared. She greeted him cordially, shook his hand, and led the way to a recess far at the rear. They gave their order, and she settled herself with a little exclamation of satisfaction and beamed on him with something, he thought, of amusement. She wanted to know what, if anything, had been happening to him, and he recounted the second phase of his financial transactions with Messrs. Blodgett and Green.

She heard him through without comment, peeling slowly the gloves from her slender hands and watching his face with grave concentration.

"And so," he finished, "it occurs to me my Blodgett and yours may possibly be two different people. But the whole affair is a trifle paradoxical, and I thought I would come to you for help."

"I am very glad you did so, Mr. Serrano." She stooped forward to slip out of her coat. "Very glad. As to Blodgett, I've made no mistake. You may be quite sure of that. Why, he's been followed every step he took since arriving here. I've his rogue's-gallery picture at home. I wish I'd brought it. And Stetson's, too. He is no more secretary of the Exchange than you are. They took an office only a few days ago, and everything and everybody in it is faked. You might have discovered Stetson was a fraud if you'd looked up the real secretary of the Exchange."

"I thought of that," said Mr. Serrano. "But I preferred coming to headquarters for my information. Then, too, I wanted to ask your advice. I cannot for the life of me figure what they are planning next. You asked me to drop Mr. Blodgett, but, frankly, I find the game worth the candle, and I shall go through to the finish, whatever it may be." He had a moment of crystalline candor. "I have always cared more for danger, for risks, than anything else in life. I shall always pursue them, even if I have to go out of my way——"

She moved her head in a leisurely affirmative. "Yes. I've thought that of you—for all your pretended, solemn-

faced dignity." She gave him a merry chuckle and poured tea sedately. "Tell me——" she said, with a quick turn of her head. "A very personal question to——"

He expressed a proper eagerness and wondered what was coming.

"That little mark on your cheek, Mr. Serrano—I've thought about it since the first time I saw you. It might almost have been made by a bullet—in one of these experiences you love so."

Mr. Serrano lifted his cup and sipped. "It was," he replied. "Fortunately the gentleman's aim was poor."

She dropped a lump of sugar in her cup and stirred it with absorbed care. "And was your aim also poor, Mr. Serrano?"

He considered her smooth young cheek and the long lashes, drooping in contemplation. It was not possible, he thought, she could know. "My aim was adequate, I believe," he parried.

"And your companion's? Or isn't he an expert shot?"

He glanced casually across the room, terminating the scrutiny he felt her to be aware of. "Mr. George is too peaceful a sort ever to indulge in dangers. He is an admirable secretary, but books are his greatest vice."

She shifted from this sinister persiflage. "Tell me, do you like England?" she asked. "I lived there twenty years."

His gaze came back to hers and found a twinkle, mischievous but purposeful. He hesitated, because, except for a hurried week or two, he knew little of England. He answered with a careless generality. She pressed him. He felt a flush creeping into his cheeks and coughed to justify it. She asked him if he did not find the place warm, "after the outdoor air."

"Oh, warm," he said, "but not oppressively so, as yet."

There was a double meaning in the apparently innocent question, emphasized by the quizzical amusement at the corners of her mouth. How much, he asked himself, did she know? How far, if any, could he trust her? He decided to take the offensive, which, if she knew nothing, would convey to her nothing.

"What is in the back of your mind," he inquired, "that you ask these double-edged questions? What is it you are trying to find out? Because, if I can do it without too much stupid risk, I will tell you frankly whatever you wish to know."

She looked away quickly, and he knew she had been taken off her guard. His worst suspicions were correct. She knew something. And he doubted if she could hedge convincingly enough to deceive him. She did not hedge, however. "I think that is a sporting offer, Mr. Serrano. And I'd like to ask you some pertinent questions. Of course, you don't have to answer them." She produced a cigarette, and he held the match for her. "Is that fair?"

"That is fair, I think," he said. "Especially if you bear in mind the fact that I am participating in the discussion chiefly because of gratitude for your kindness in warning me against Mr. Blodgett"

She acknowledged this with a return of her smile. "Well then," she said, "I should like to know, first of all, why you left New York so suddenly."

It was become now a question with him not of whether she knew, but of how much she knew. She was evidently aware of his and Mr. George's flight, and she had also indicated subtly a knowledge of the fatal affair that had so immediately preceded that flight. The bullet scar on his cheek had introduced this hazardous subject. Did she know he had killed the man who had made it? Did she know he had smuggled a fortune in jewels into the country?

It was vital that he probe her knowl-

edge to the bottom. And the sole method of doing this was by a delicate oral balancing, like a tight-rope walker over an abyss.

"I, or rather we, left New York for our health's sake, I fancy, as much as anything," he answered slowly.

"The danger you love so became too threatening?" She blew smoke upward in a misty cloud.

"Precisely, Miss Prescott." He leaned back and folded his arms, awaiting her further questions with his eyes fixed on hers. Tacitly the attitude placed her at a disadvantage. Furthermore, he again reflected, she was beautiful.

"And so you came to Chicago to accomplish what you failed to do in New York?" She tapped the ash from her cigarette.

"Partly, Miss Prescott, and partly for the climate, which is invigorating, I find, at moments such as this."

She laughed briefly. "I should like to ask one more question, and then I'm finished. I should like to ask you if you are in the slightest degree mixed up with Mr. Blodgett. In other words, I should like to know if you have deceived me, even by a word, in what you've told me about him—even by suggestion, even by innuendo."

She did not know so much as he had feared, he judged. "I have deceived you by suggestion and innuendo and by what I have told you."

He saw a shadowy gleam in her eyes as she watched him. "I deceived you in this way: When you came to me and warned me against him, I pretended it was a revelation to me, whereas I had already judged him for what he is. I had already determined that if any one was to be marked for slaughter it would be Mr. Blodgett and not Mr. Serrano. Our aims and ambitions and sympathies are divergent as the poles. Does that answer your question?"

She continued to observe him with unwinking scrutiny an instant before she said: "I think it does. And something tells me—something which is only intuition, because I have no business believing your word, Mr. Serrano—that you are speaking the truth. And in return for what may be only a piece of pretty imagination on my part, I'm going to tell you something. Get out of this town, as you got out of New York, for your health's sake."

He returned her steady glance of serene composure. A volume of unuttered thoughts passed, he thought, in this interchange, which would forever remain unspoken. Here was his enemy, warning him with a chivalrous disregard for her own welfare, casting herself not a little upon his mercy, his understanding.

"Thank you," he said. "That is the second time you have stopped to help a lame dog over a stile. I shall never forget it. I shall always be in your debt."

There was a silence between them for an instant, while she played with her cup and he stared down the room at nothing. He stole a glance at her. A beautiful, alluring thing, he thought. He sat back with a start. No woman had any place in a life such as his.

"You asked me what you should do about Blodgett," she was saying, "and all I can say is to drop him, as I told you before." She looked up, a touch of supplication in her eyes, and pride and defiance.

"I shall leave the city," he said, "very soon. As to Blodgett——" He held out his hand in a gesture of inquiry and appeal, then dropped it limply. "It has gone too far. One of us goes under. I am not aware that it is important which. Matters are coming to a head. It will soon be over."

She leaned forward, forefinger poised arrestingly upon the table. "You spoke of a debt. Will you pay it? Will you go away, for me, at once?"

He felt the sorcery of her eyes as the philosophy of half a lifetime struggled against her. Twice she won, and he opened his lips to tell her, and twice the ancient instincts arose ascendant. He shook his head.

"One of us goes under, dear lady," he said. "It is too late for me." A queer, rebellious fury surged within him. "I tell you it is too late."

She relaxed again with a look of smiling cynicism. "Very well," she said. "Let us go now."

He helped her into the taxicab, but she refused to let him take her home. She sat erect, and once again they silently exchanged with each other unutterable things. "Good night," he said. He leaned slowly toward her, and she did not draw back. "Good-by." He dropped his head and kissed her, and felt the caress returned. He closed the door. She did not look back as the cab drew away in the darkness.

On the morning of the following Monday a dapper young man appeared at Mr. Serrano's hotel, bearing a heavy sealed envelope. Mr. Serrano opened it and found therein six one-thousand-dollar bills and a receipt, which he signed.

Half an hour later Mr. Blodgett tapped at the door and entered, jovial, benignant, portentous. He had, he said, telephoned to Mr. Stetson the night before at his club, and Mr. Stetson had assured him Mr. Serrano's six thousand would be returned to him in the morning and immediately following the board meeting. Had Mr. Stetson sent the money, or would he, Mr. Blodgett, have to go and get it?

Mr. Serrano assured him the money had arrived but a few moments before.

"Well, I'm glad that's cleared up," said Mr. Blodgett. "I came here for that and another reason. I spent all day yesterday and Saturday going over plans with three of the biggest men in the business for a raid on the market this morning." He spoke slowly, with impressive emphasis. "This deal is going to make us rich men. I don't know how you feel about it, but I'm perfectly willing to let you sit in on it, as a sort of recompense for not having cleaned up properly for you the last time.

"I'm a man of my word, Mr. Serrano, and when I say I'll make you a fortune I mean it. My father brought me up never to tell a falsehood and never to break my word. Consequence is it's good as my bond. I don't want to urge you to participate in this morning's deal, but if you wish—well, you only have to say the word.

"The situation indicates a profit of ten to one, but it is entirely safe to figure on at least five to one. That will mean a profit to you of thirty thousand dollars." He puffed thoughtfully at his cigar. "Yes, five to one, at least. Why, even if it was a profit of only a hundred per cent, you couldn't be a loser, because this six thousand is all velvet, all profit, as it stands."

Mr. Serrano, lounging on a corner of the table, stroked his chin in a manner of deep cogitation. "I think I can trust to your judgment, Mr. Blodgett," he said finally. "It has been correct thus far. Let us hope it will be correct once more." He drew forth the bills, still in their envelope, counted them, and gave them to Mr. Blodgett.

"You will never regret this as long as you live," pronounced Mr. Blodgett oracularly. He opened the door and hesitated an instant. "I will return to this room within two hours, bringing with me the foundations of your future fortune."

Mr. Serrano, lilting on his heels, continued to eye the door for a moment before turning to Mr. George.

"Pack up," he pronounced succinctly. "Every blessed thing we own. Work fast. This stuff must be out of here and on its way to the railway-station

check room within fifteen minutes. The break is coming this morning. I am positive of it. We leave this hotel in any case. If there is serious trouble, we will let the luggage remain at the station forever."

Mr. George, a light of anticipation illumining his face, obeyed without comment. In ten minutes their possessions were packed and gone. Mr. Serrano descended, paid their bill, and returned.

He glanced about the little reception room, which lay between their bedrooms, with a critical eye. The space was perhaps twelve by eighteen feet, with the entrance at one end and a bay window at the front. A lounge occupied one side wall, several chairs the other, and a table stood in the center.

"That window," said Mr. Serrano, "is the strategic point. The light is at one's back and in the eyes of those facing." He gave Mr. George, who was observing his maneuvers with silent absorption, a bright smile. "You will occupy the strategic position, my dear fellow."

"It is my theory that we will be on the defensive. Join forces with me if trouble begins. You will be seated in that very chair, perhaps a bit nearer the window, and the table will be moved a few feet farther from the entrance. I presume both bedroom doors into the hall are locked, and the keys in your pocket."

Mr. George arose to confirm this, returning with a nod of assurance.

"Excellent," said Mr. Serrano. "We will not be outflanked in that case. I shall do the talking, if I may be permitted. You will be reading that silly paper. Act perfectly natural. Follow my lead, and my cues, if I give you any. Do not get excited, and, above all things, do not begin cutting unless it comes to a matter of self-defense. Follow me in that, too."

He began walking leisurely up and down. At intervals he paused to place a chair more advantageously, and once he went to the window and raised the shades to throw a stronger light into the place. Time seemed to hesitate, to pause sluggishly in the silence of the room. Mr. George pored over the comics and the classified advertisements steadily and with mechanical repetition.

Mr. Serrano smoked cigarette after cigarette, lighting fresh ones from the glowing stubs, which he tossed into a receiver upon the table. An hour passed. Mr. George yawned, dropped his paper into his lap, and dozed a little, waking at the sound of his own gentle snore, only to fall again into brief unconsciousness. Mr. Serrano's leisurely promenade had become automatic now. Seven steps to the window, turn, seven steps to the rear, turn, seven to the window——

A little wind arose, with a dust of snow from the ledges above, murmuring in faint dolor, rising, falling, passing again into the spaces of its creation. Mr. George, cramped, arose, stretched, and sat again, reverting to his painful examination of the comics.

Another hour passed. Then Mr. Serrano, whirling toward the door, whispered, "They're coming," and reached swiftly to light a fresh cigarette. The hurrying tread of two men came to the door, it was thrown open, and Mr. Blodgett rushed in, shouting with incoherent exultation, waving his arms above his head, turning twice in a clumsy pirouette.

"We did it, we did it, we did it!" he cried hoarsely. "We cleaned 'em of a fortune." He pounded the table, crimson faced, his hat tipped on the back of his head, his hair disheveled. "A hundred and fourteen thousand cold bucks between us. What a killing! *What* a killing!" He turned to Mr. Green, standing laughingly within the closed door. "Didn't we kill 'em,

'Greeny,' old boy? Didn't we kill 'em? I'll say we did! Wait!" he cried to Mr. Serrano. "Wait till I show you! Wait till you see how much money you made to-day!"

He began hauling out bank notes. "This!" He dashed a bundle down in front of Mr. Serrano. "And this!" Another bundle. "And this!" The third bundle, smaller than the others, was faced with a thousand-dollar bill. "There you are, sir! Thirty thousand dollars, and all yours. I had it counted out for you before I left. Thirty thousand dollars. Count 'em! Count 'em!" He performed with his two hands a curious evolution, as though shoving something before him. "Count 'em."

Mr. Serrano touched in a dazed fashion the nearest bundle, raised an awed face, and whispered, "It can't be possible!"

"Can't be?" echoed Mr. Blodgett loudly. "But it *is*. Count 'em, I tell you. Count 'em."

Mr. Serrano ripped off the paper binders, gathered the three bundles into a single packet, and ran the edges through his fingers as he might a pack of cards. He looked up into the grinning features of Mr. Blodgett with a smile of childlike wonder. "I fancy it——" He paused and swallowed. "I fancy it is all there right enough. But I cannot seem to realize it, Mr. Blodgett. I cannot. I cannot," he ended weakly and gazed at the packet in a species of silent stupefaction.

"You *bet* it's all there," boomed Mr. Blodgett. "To the last penny. And maybe you think I didn't take chances with that man Stetson. For I had to bid in your name again. We couldn't let the other fellows know one or two men were doing all the buying. But we're safe now—safe as the Bank of England, Mr. Serrano.

"Look at this!" He reached down to the inner pocket of his overcoat, pulled strenuously, and brought forth a bulky object wrapped in newspaper. "Here's our share of it." He unrolled the paper, disclosing a tightly tied array of apparently new bills, with a thousand-dollar note at the top. "Eighty-four thousand dollars, Mr. Serrano. Pretty soft for one morning's work, eh?"

Mr. Serrano turned to Mr. George, who had dropped his newspaper and was gazing at the scene in emulative admiration. "Think of it, Mr. George! It is almost unbelievable, is it not? And to think Mr. Blodgett has made thirty thousand dollars for us!" He moved the bills up and down, weighing them thoughtfully. "Would you like to hold thirty thousand dollars in your hand, just once, Mr. George, to see how it feels?" He stepped slowly toward Mr. George, fingering the money lovingly.

Mr. George received it with an exclamation, and it was at this pertinent juncture that a sharp rap came at the door, repeated twice.

Mr. Serrano raised a mildly inquiring face. "Come in," he said.

The door was hurled back, and Mr. Stetson stepped in and slammed the door behind him. His voice trembled with an apparent paroxysm of rage as he pointed an accusing arm at Mr. Blodgett.

"You couldn't be satisfied, could you? You wouldn't be warned by a friend, would you? You had to try that trick once more, didn't you? Well, let me tell you this time it won't be tolerated. Not for one holy minute. I'm going to see to it that you're expelled from the Exchange, and I'm going to see that criminal action is taken against you for fraud. And against your friend Serrano as well. What kind of a skin game is this you two are working, anyhow?"

Mr. Blodgett cried out: "Just a moment, Mr. Secretary. As a member of the Exchange, I will personally guaran-

tee this confirmation. I've done wrong. I admit it. And I'm ready to stand the consequences. But it's not fair to prosecute Mr. Serrano, here, who hadn't any more to do with this transaction than he had with the other one."

"You bet you'll guarantee the confirmation," snapped Mr. Stetson. "And I guess your bondsmen will have something to say when they hear of it."

"For Heaven's sake, don't do that!" cried Mr. Blodgett, wiping his face furiously with his handkerchief. "Don't do that, Mr. Stetson. If they hear of this, they'll break me in a minute. I'll be a ruined man if you do."

"Why didn't you think of that before?" said Mr. Stetson harshly. "No, sir! I'm going to take action against both of you."

"But you'll have your confirmation," pleaded Mr. Blodgett. "At least you'll have mine. I've not enough money in the bank to confirm Mr. Serrano's profits, too. For Heaven's sake, Mr. Stetson, give me a chance. Just give me a chance. I've never done this before. And I've a wife and a widowed mother to support. I'll promise you before Heaven this will never happen again. I must have lost my head, Mr. Stetson. You know how a man goes half crazy when things begin like that. Give me a chance—just one more chance." He wrung his hands in a paroxysm of entreaty.

Mr. Stetson seemed moved, and his expression of stern indignation relented a little.

"You promised once before it would never happen again," he growled. "Why, this sort of thing is nothing short of highway robbery. It's got to stop. First of all, you two have got to place in my hands the money you made to-day. Blodgett, your share is eighty-four thousand dollars. Mr. Serrano's is thirty thousand dollars. I realize Mr. Serrano has been made a sort of a scapegoat in this matter. And if he will produce thirty thousand dollars by a week from to-day, to prove he could have stood his losses if the market went against him, I will return to him his profits.

"Your position is more serious, Mr. Blodgett. I shall give it careful thought. In any case, you will have to produce eighty-four thousand dollars to cover your bids and profits in to-day's transactions. I am inclined to recommend that you be not allowed these profits, as a disciplinary measure. And now I'll trouble you for your profits, please." He held out his hand.

Mr. Blodgett, who had continued to clutch the bundle in the newspaper, now extended it to Mr. Stetson, who received it and tucked it under his arm.

"I'm perfectly willing to abide by your decision, Mr. Secretary," said Mr. Blodgett humbly.

"Thanks," replied Mr. Stetson. "This money will be held on receipt and bill, and, in the meantime, the bill may be used as credit on the floor." His glance traveled to Mr. Serrano, standing like a graven and not particularly intelligent image, watching the proceedings. "I shall have to ask you to return that money, Mr. Serrano—until next Monday, when you will receive it back on showing an equal amount in cash."

At last! thought Mr. Serrano. And as when he had first confronted that smiling and beautiful lady of the Federal service, his mind was shot, so to speak, with a series of flashing thoughts. This trap was built, from the ground up, to insure the payment of thirty thousand dollars. Thirty thousand dollars of his own money! The three were standing beyond the table in the full light, Blodgett to the left, Stetson to the right, Green behind them. Three of them, with the door closed and Mr. George alert and waiting.

Mr. Serrano stepped back two paces.

"I don't quite understand," he said in a low voice.

Mr. Stetson, whipping himself into fury again, explained, tersely, with an oath. Mr. Blodgett employed his left hand in a gesture of supplication to Mr. Serrano. Mr. Green, not an actor, evidently, stood expectantly, crouching with lowered head, a rear guard for emergency. Mr. Green was the one to watch. Mr. Stetson had finished his explanation with an impatient snap of his finger.

Mr. Serrano, smiling now, shook his head. "This money was invested by Mr. Blodgett for me, gentlemen. It belongs to me now, and I do not intend to part with it."

It was as if a thin layer, an outer veneer, had slipped from the faces of the three watching him—Mr. Stetson, with one side of his mouth pulled upward in a fantastically forced smile; Mr. Blodgett, with angry, staring suspicion; and Mr. Green, with his head slightly aside now, his eyes fixed obliquely.

There was silence, while Mr. Serrano drew from the breast pocket of his coat a handkerchief and touched delicately his lips. His hand lingered near his throat, as if brought to pause by Mr. Stetson's words. Behind him he heard the creak of upholstery as Mr. George arose.

"Oh," said Mr. Stetson, "you don't intend to part with it? Well, let me tell you, Mr. Serrano, you are going to part with it, here and now, whether you want to or not. So the quicker you hand it over, the better. Business is business, and you can't monkey with the Exchange or with me."

Too much bluster, thought Mr. Serrano. *Watch Mr. Green.*

"Don't talk nonsense," said Mr. Serrano.

Mr. Stetson glanced behind him. Reassured, he advanced and paused beside the table, resting his right hand upon it, glowering. "Will you hand over that money, or have we got to take it by force?"

"'We?'" mocked Mr. Serrano. "What have these other two to do with your problems?"

Mr. Stetson uttered another oath, and, with his next step, Mr. Serrano was aware of the others closing softly, stealthily in. Mr. Serrano did not move from his tracks, but his hand stole with its handkerchief inside the lapel of his coat, as if to replace it there.

Mr. Serrano heard Mr. Blodgett say, "The other one's got it," and Mr. Serrano's hand emerged from beneath the lapel and dropped to the level of his waist. Mr. Stetson caught the ominous flash of the blued steel and hesitated. Mr. Blodgett, from the immediate left, peered down at the weapon pointing at Mr. Stetson's stomach. Mr. Green, unaware of a crisis, continued noiselessly to advance until he had achieved the edge of this compact small tableau, where he, too, came to pause, with a hand reaching slowly back to his hip.

"Put up your hands, Mr. Stetson." The voice had shifted from its habitual smooth drawl to a quality of iciness. Mr. Stetson raised his arms to the level of his shoulders.

"Don't pull that gun, Mr. Green," said the icy voice, and Mr. Green became motionless. "Because if you do, I will drill a hole through your secretary of the Exchange. Turn your back to me, Mr. Stetson, and raise your hands higher."

Mr. Stetson, white to the lips with rage, whispered, "You damned skunk!" and obeyed.

Mr. Green's hand slipped under Mr. Stetson's arm, holding a pistol which leveled itself at Mr. Serrano. Mr. Blodgett began edging closer.

"Put down that gun," said Mr. Green harshly. *"Quick!* Or I'll croak you."

In the next two seconds several things happened, correlated and practically synchronous. Mr. Stetson, suddenly cognizant he was being made the terminal of two opposing lines of fire, turned his head fearfully and sidled crabwise to the right. This left Mr. Green and Mr. Serrano facing each other, not six feet apart. A hurtling chair, achieving miraculously its position midway between them, served to becloud their vision, and with the explosion of Mr. Green's weapon, impinged directly upon that worthy's breast. Mr. Green staggered back under the force of the blow, striving to readjust his balance.

Mr. Blodgett, attacking, encountered the catapult advance of Mr. George, and raised his arm protectingly, but not before the knife had flashed across his face, leaving him blinded with crimson tears. Mr. Green had by now fetched up heavily against the wall, with the small, black mouth of Mr. Serrano's weapon resting against his breast.

At Mr. Serrano's command, he now relinquished his pistol, which dropped to the floor. He raised his hands, once more obedient, and faced the wall.

Mr. Serrano picked up the pistol and pocketed it. From behind him came rabbitlike sounds of grief where Mr. Blodgett was stanching the blood streaming from his face. Mr. Stetson, white with fear now, stood like a statue with raised hands before the figure of Mr. George, who indicated eagerly with the point of his rose-tinted knife Mr. Stetson's throat.

"Stand him over here," said Mr. Serrano, "beside Mr. Green. If they try to get away, let them have it."

He turned his attention to Mr. Blodgett, futilely dabbing at his face with a soaking pocket handkerchief, proclaiming aloud his expectation of impending death. Mr. Serrano brushed aside his hands and lifted his chin. "Be quiet," he said, examining the cut, which extended in a ragged line from Mr. Blodgett's left eyelid down across his cheek and mouth to the opposite jaw. "You may count yourself fortunate he didn't rip you from beneath, Mr. Blodgett. I've seen him do worse than this. Stand there a moment."

He returned with a bath towel, blotting up the steady flow until a semblance of the former man was restored. "You had best get yourself to a hospital, I believe, and at once. You'd best say you slipped on something, unless you wish to get into worse trouble."

He crossed the room to the others and felt deftly over their bodies. Then he stooped and picked up the newspaper bundle, winnings of the recently exultant Blodgett. With a sweep of his arm, he flung the open package, its contents falling upon the table—blank sheets of green paper, cut to the size of currency.

Mr. Serrano laughed. "Observe, Mr. George, fifty-four thousand dollars," he said dryly. "Turn them around." He glanced at Mr. Blodgett. "This way, please, Mr. Blodgett. Stand there by the secretary." Mr. Blodgett obeyed, whimpering, and the other two stared at his ravaged countenance.

"Thank you." Mr. Serrano leaned back against the table, confronting the trio. "I trust," said Mr. Serrano, "you gentlemen will consider this little episode ended. It has cost you only a beggarly thirty thousand, but it will cost you much more if you decide to push matters. Mr. Blodgett there has got himself marked for life. Very unfortunate. Mr. Green, you were the one who really deserved it most. Sorry. Mr. George's mistake."

Mr. Green's jaws shut with a snap. "D'you think you can get away with this, Serrano, or whoever the hell you are?"

"I believe so," said Mr. Serrano. "Because, for one thing, I have had the

advantage of you gentlemen from the beginning. I continue to hold that advantage, whose points I withhold for the present." He stepped back, placing the table between them and himself, balancing his pistol meditatively. "You two gentlemen may lower your hands if it will make you any the more comfortable."

Mr. Stetson, reassured, found his voice. "I always knew there was something phony about you. You think you're a smart guy, don't you? But don't kid yourself, just because you got the drop on us, we won't get you before we're through."

"I'll get him," said Mr. Green. "Leave it to me. I'll get him."

"Yes, you poor sap," retorted Mr. Stetson acridly. "Why didn't you get him when it would do some good? This is a hell of a time to talk." He turned his attention to Mr. Blodgett, moaning softly, like a stricken ox, and holding the towel tenderly to his face. "And you! Didn't I tell you to watch out for 'em? Oh, no! You knew it all, didn't you? You said it was a cinch, didn't you? Well, you got yours, and that's some satisfaction." He eyed Mr. Serrano up and down with venomous contempt. "English sucker, you said he was. English gun, that's what he is."

"I perceive," said Mr. Serrano, "you are not inclined to call it quits. I should not, however, advise you to carry the matter further. The last two gentlemen who attempted extreme methods got themselves killed. Furthermore"—he cast a rueful eye about the room—"there is need of straightening things here a bit. The carpet is ruined, and Mr. Green has put a nasty bullet hole through the upholstery of that chair. I shall have to send you gentlemen the bills, I am afraid." He laughed dryly. "Have you that little item of thirty thousand, Mr. George?"

Mr. George tapped his breast.

"In that case, we will leave you to your own devices, gentlemen. You might disconnect that telephone, Mr. George."

Mr. George, with a heave, tore the instrument from the wall and dropped it to the floor.

"I am going to lock you in. I dare say you will soon be able to make your escape. It has been a pleasant episode and I bid you good day." He stepped through the door, followed by Mr. George, inserted the key, and closed and locked it behind him. They went hurriedly down the hall and disappeared through the entrance of the stairway leading to the street.

Speed for Sally

by William Freeman Hough

SALLY SEEMED TO CRAVE SPEED FROM HER SWAINS, AND SHE WAS NOT GETTING IT FROM DERK WALTERS. THIS BECAME MORE OBVIOUS WHEN CHARLEY BOWERS APPEARED WITH HIS FIRE-SPITTING DEVIL. DERK HAD AN 'ALLY, HOWEVER, WHO LIKED HIM AND WHO HATED ANYTHING DRIVEN BY MOTOR.

CAPTAIN CALEB POWERS, ancient and retired mariner, found the village of Stanhope, on the east shore of Lake Tanwiddie, a sufficiently quiet harbor in which to anchor his sea-battered hulk.

Here was peace and such measure of happiness as one born and bred of the sea could expect anywhere inland. With his cabin, his pipe and his catboat, he was content to dream away the few remaining years of his life in this spot that seemed, at least, to be immune from the roar and bustle of more mercenary centers. Apprentice, seaman and officer of sailing vessels all his life, the captain hated anything that had for its motive power anything but the elements.

Lake Tanwiddie's waters were fresh, of course. The stiff breeze that now and then ruffled its surface carried no tang of salt air. But at least it was water and would float a boat—one with sails, and all in all the captain was satisfied.

He sat, late one fall afternoon, in front of Berger's store and gazed with squinting eyes off across the lake. The sun was low enough to cast a golden path from the far distant shore straight across the waters to the little wharf at the end of the street. It covered the varnished spars of his trim little catboat with a coating of scintillating gold as she tossed restlessly at her moorings.

As the captain pulled wheezingly at his pipe and spat over the edge of the sidewalk, the door of Berger's store opened, and a tall, lanky youth with flour-covered overalls stepped out.

"Howdy, Captain Caleb?"

"Howdy, Derk?"

"Freshenin' any?"

Captain Powers shook his grizzled head. "Calmin' down, if anything. Goin' to be a prize night, son—moon, too."

The lanky youth flushed. "I'm mighty much obliged to you for the lend of that catboat, Captain Caleb. A fellow don't have much to entertain a girl with in these parts."

"Plannin' on it big, is she?"

"You bet! She's going to bring lunch and a thermos bottle full of coffee. Sally's a good cook."

"Humph," grunted the old mariner. "You'd better be lookin' out, Derk Walters, or you'll be gettin' capsized in the sea of matrimony."

"If it's Sally, I won't be able to swim an inch. But I think I'll be able to handle the catboat all right."

"I reckon, but remember you can't tack with one hand, and keep that pretty head of Sally's down when the boom swings over or you'll be short a girl."

"I'll watch Captain—— Holy smoke, what's this?"

With an ear-splitting roar and a cloud of blue smoke, a motor cycle came dashing up the otherwise quiet street. It's rider was bent low over the handle bars like a racer. The attached side car bounced crazily at the terrific speed. Nearly abreast of the store, the rider straightened up and swerving abruptly brought the machine to a sudden, brake-protesting stop in front of Captain Caleb and Derk Walters. Removing his goggles, the dust-covered rider dismounted and advanced on the pair.

"Hello, Cap Powers. Howdy, Derk? Well, I'm home again. Back to the sleepy village once more."

"Charley Bowers, as I live," exclaimed Captain Caleb. "Where'd you come from an' where did you get that red devil you just rid up on?"

"One and the same place, cap'n—Detroit. A beauty, ain't she? And speed—wow! I can knock off sixty with the side car attached. I'll make some of these old side-wheeler's here in Stanhope look like thirty cents. Dad didn't want me to bring it, but I told him this old dump needed waking up."

Captain Caleb Powers grunted skeptically and wrinkled his weather-beaten nose at the odor that still came from the warm motor.

"Them things don't belong here in Stanhope," he said shortly. "This is a peace-lovin' community, and them things are children of the devil."

"Well, you might as well get used to it, Cap'n Caleb, for I'm home to stay." Then, turning to Derk Waters, "Still working in the old store I see. S'pose you'll be there the rest of your life."

"Maybe," agreed Derk. "I'm doing pretty well."

"You'll never get anywhere in a place like Stanhope. Better get out and see some of the world. Great stuff." Charley Bowers assumed an air of great experience. "I'll take you for a ride some day—tell you all about Detroit. It's a fast dump, that town. Lots of cars, too."

Derk inclined his head slightly but said nothing. He resented the superior attitude that Charley Bowers was using toward him. After a few more remarks, intended to be snappy, the newcomer mounted his machine and, racing the motor in approved fashion, presently sped off down the street in a cloud of dust.

"Up jumped the devil," muttered Captain Caleb. "I s'pose since his father is mayor, that young whippersnapper'll be allowed to keep that stinkin' cart in town. Tarnation, how I hate 'em!"

Derk Walters nodded agreement, but his thoughts were not so much on the motor cycle as they were on its rider. He had a distinct recollection that prior to Charley Bower's departure for the city two years before, he had been keeping company with Sally Harris. There was nothing unusual about that, of course. Charley's folks had plenty of money, and, being the only son, he was somewhat pampered.

A mere grocery clerk like Derk hadn't much chance in those days. But after Charley's departure, things were different. Plodding steadily away at his store job, Derk had at last been made welcome in the Harris household, and,

though his progress had been slow, it was nevertheless sure.

Now Charley Bowers was back again, and as Derk watched the dust slowly settling in the street, he was wondering just what effect the return would have upon Sally. Not that she was fickle—he hastily assured himself of that—but of late he had noticed in her a tendency to restlessness.

"Why can't we do something different, Derk?" she had asked just a few nights before. "This mooning around on the porch is getting so monotonous."

Derk Walters was more than satisfied to moon around on the porch with Sally, but he was still more anxious to please her. An appeal to his friend, Captain Caleb, netted the loan of the captain's trim catboat. Plans had immediately been made, and to-night he was to take her for a sail on the lake—in the moonlight. The return of Sally's former steady reenforced a half-formed plan in Derk's head that the sail upon the lake should terminate his term of courtship. He'd ask her to marry him.

"You'll find some new cork floats under the seat by the tiller, and there's a good anchor and plenty of line in the bow. I s'pose you'll want to tie up in the lee of the island. Not much wind there and fairly shallow." Captain Caleb relighted his pipe and stared quizzically at Derk. The shrewd old mariner could easily guess what was passing through his friend's mind.

"Yes, we'll probably tie up at the island," said Derk a trifle absently. Then he turned into the store to finish his job of sweeping up.

An extra hard tussle with a new tie made Derk fifteen minutes late in arriving at the Harris home. Striding swiftly up the walk to the house, he found Mrs. Harris putting the final touches on a huge basket of lunch.

"Good evening, Derk," she said as he lifted his hat. "Sally has enough lunch here to feed an army. I don't know what the child was thinking of."

Derk grinned and looked around. "Where is she?"

"She went with Charley Bowers for a short ride in his new motor cycle. He got home this afternoon, you know. Quite a surprise."

Derk gulped a couple of times and finally managed to swallow the fiery ball of resentment that had suddenly boiled into his throat. Charley Bowers already! But Sally must surely have told him that she had a date with Derk. He suspicioned that it would have made little difference with the mayor's son. He was in the habit of doing as he pleased, and if he thought he could humiliate Derk, whom he had always held in contempt, nothing would stop him from making the attempt, at least.

Derk sat down on the steps to wait, and as he sat, he tried to think of some appropriate remark to greet the pair with when they returned. He waited half an hour while the sun made its final dip from sight. He had wanted to get started by daylight, not knowing the boat very well.

At the end of an hour, Mrs. Harris returned to the porch.

"My goodness!" she exclaimed, "aren't those folks back yet?"

Slow to anger, Derk was furious by this time. Muttering something from between clenched teeth, he strode off down the walk. Meeting Charley Bowers at that moment, he could have torn him to pieces. He was scarcely less angry with Sally. Fickle she was—he admitted it now. Well, she could keep right on riding with Charley Bowers. He was through.

He found Caleb at the dock. The captain, noticing that his boat was still tied up, had come down to investigate. Derk, his voice choking with rage, told him what had happened.

"Sho—now, that's too bad. Just like that young pirate to run off with your

gal. But never mind, there's plenty of reefs for him to run that stink wagon onto. Sally'll be hollerin' for a life line before the season's over."

"She'll never get it from me," Derk ground out.

"We'll see, we'll see," said his friend. "Come up to the cabin a minute. I've a bit of something there that'll make things look a bit brighter."

The gods of the game were still playing with Derk Walters when, the next day, by mere chance, he whirled his light delivery truck away from the sidewalk squarely in front of Charley Bowers and his red motor cycle. Charley was traveling at his usual fast pace. The distance was all too short to make a stop. In order to prevent a smash-up, he was forced to turn sharply to his left and dive ignominiously into a pile of empty chicken crates stacked on the sidewalk in front of Berger's store.

He emerged from the mess, little the worse for wear, but minus all semblance of temper. Hot words were followed by hotter fists, and, in a remarkably short time, both men were rolling about in the street, clawing and maulding each other like a pair of wild cats. The undignified battle was halted as abruptly as it had begun. Berger, the storekeeper, yanked them both to their feet with a heave of his burly arms.

"If you vant to fight like dogs, vy dondt you gedt oudt of sighdt. Righdt in frondt of a store iss bad business." He turned to Charley Bowers. "Chicken goops aindt meandt to be busted, either. I vant you to quidt it. Now go long undt behave."

Still casting baleful glares, the pair mounted their respective vehicles and drove off.

During the remainder of the day, Derk had plenty of time to reflect on the recent events. Although he had fully decided to leave Sally and her craving for speed to the mercies of Charley Bowers and his motor cycle, he was secretly worried as to what her attitude might be when she learned of the brawl. Of course Charley would see her, and she would learn his side of it at once. Why did that fool have to come home and spoil everything?"

Meeting him two days later on the street, Sally offered but a cool, scant nod, thereby confirming his suspicions. Derk was at once cast still further into the depths, and even the sage advice of Captain Caleb failed to rouse him.

Week after week, until the first fall of snow, Charley Bowers continued to hold the stage with his motor cycle. Derk had to content himself with long sails in the catboat, which, under the careful teaching of the captain, he learned to handle with considerable skill.

But after the heavy fall of snow that came in late November, the motor cycle was stored away. With its disappearance, Captain Caleb began to do a deal of thinking and mysterious planning. On the night of the cold snap, he called Derk Walters to his cabin. For an hour he talked earnestly, explaining in detail his scheme.

"And if its speed she wants," he finished, "you can give her plenty of it. That ice boat will make any motor cycle look like it was tied down."

Derk's eyes were glittering with excitement and anticipation. He was for starting the work of building at once.

"We'll start all right," agreed the captain, "but we must keep it quiet. No use lettin' Bowers know what we're up to. Spring it as a surprise an' take 'em off their feet, that's my idea. When Sally sees you zippin' around, she'll want a ride right away."

"Well, she won't get it," said Derk.

"Not by a jugful. You can aggravate her to death by not payin' any attention to her. An' if there's any other girl in town that will go, why take her." Caleb chuckled at the thought.

"I don't know about that." Derk hesitated.

"Suit yourself, of course. It's just an idea."

For the next two weeks Caleb labored industriously in the little shop back of his cabin. Derk helped him evenings, and the pair often worked far into the night. The captain had been a boat builder in his early days, and his eyes had not lost their appreciation of lines. This would not be an ordinary ice boat, but, as he expressed it, "a thing of beauty and a joy forever."

Upon a stanch oak keel they built a small but snug hull. This they braced in two places against the crossbar outrigger. In the bow, center, they stepped the mast from the captain's catboat, but added a much larger sail. The three runners were tapered to fine, square edges and tempered to the sharpness of a razor. Just forward of the tiller, the captain rigged a spike brake, which is not usual in an ice boat. But, as he maintained, it would later prove of good use.

At last the boat was finished, and one bright, crisp Sunday afternoon they tried her out. It was an unusual and thrilling experience for them both to go skimming along like a bird, and as swift. Their craft handled perfectly, responding to the helm far quicker than did the catboat. In a half dozen graceful tacks, they traversed the entire length of the lake and on the return, running before the wind, the speed attained was startling.

"And there you are," cried Captain Caleb, climbing stiffly out of the boat after a cleverly executed stop. "The rest is up to you. If you can't set your haughty Sally by the ears with this craft, then I'll miss my guess. Now go to it."

"Never fear. I've a plan in mind," answered Derk, wiping away the tears caused by the stinging wind.

And Derk did go to it. Every moment of his spare time was spent on the lake with the ice boat. While the town was practically snow-bound to traffic, he continued to joy-ride over the frozen bosom of the lake. He could have made a small fortune had he chosen to have gone into the taxi business. Enthusiasm for ice-boating began to grow, but very few had any success in building their own boats. None of them had the lines or the size of Derk's speedster.

With one exception, however, Derk always rode alone. Late one bleak afternoon, just at store's closing time, Stanhope's local physician hurried in.

"It's a matter of life and death, Mr. Walters," he said. "I've wired for a specialist from the city, but I'm afraid he'll arrive too late. He is coming on the late evening train and what I had in mind was that you might meet him at Kerriston on the other side of the lake and bring him straight across on your ice boat. You could beat the train by at least an hour and a half."

Derk agreed, and in a short time was sweeping westward in the chilly dusk. He had come to know the eastern half of the lake fairly well, but the town of Kerriston was upon the southwest shore. Part of his trip would have to be made in unknown territory, and in the dark. In anything but an iceboat it wouldn't have been dangerous, but having but the one large sail, his speed was tempered to the wind, which was actually strong at that time of year.

Luck was with him and he arrived safely. He found the specialist waiting impatiently at the depot. The medico had left the warm train against his better judgment, but the telegram was imperative. Derk picked up his case and led him stumbling through the darkness to the place where he had left the boat. Tucking the doctor in the bow with the advice that he keep his head down, Derk shoved the speedster away from the shore and then hoisted the sail.

"Do you expect to reach Stanhope before morning in this contraption," queried the doctor gruffly.

"Yes," said Derk calmly, "I do."

"Humph. The man's dying, you know."

"I'm sorry. I'll do the best I can."

At that precise moment a gust of cold northwest wind filled the sail. With a tremendous lurch the boat heeled to starboard, the keen steel edges of the runners sung as they bit into the ice—they were off.

Unheeding an incoherent cry from the doctor, Derk shoved the tiller over and brought the wind more onto his quarter. In less than two minutes the specialist was taking the fastest ride of his life, in a strange vehicle and in absolute darkness.

Derk tacked but three times in the entire trip. He had planned to keep to the south of the island that stood almost in the center of the lake. But after running for some time without picking up the distant lights of Stanhope, he resolved that he was behind the island. Then suddenly a darker blotch loomed up in the night—it could be but one thing. With a desperate shove he forced the helm over as far as it would go. The sail shrank and quivered. Then, swinging over, it caught the wind again and tightened with a sharp crack. The boat missed the island by yards.

The narrowness of the escape left Derk's heart beating furiously. Had they struck the rocks that rimmed the island, going at such terrific speed, there could have been but one answer.

Derk shook the water from his eyes and strained to pick up the lights. In a minute they were sparkling not more than a point to port—he was headed practically dead on. With a swiftness that was amazing, the lights grew and sped toward him. Their rapid advance in the darkness was confusing, and when at last Derk decided to slack the sheet, he barely had time enough to grab the spike-shod brake and throw his weight against it.

With numb fingers he assisted the half-frozen doctor from the boat and up to the street. Here they were met by the local physician who bustled his friend from the city into a horse-drawn hack. Derk returned to his boat and made all safe and fast before going to the captain's cabin to tell of his experience.

It was nearly a week after his night trip that Derk happened to meet Sally Harris on the street near the post office. He would have passed by, but she called to him.

"Oh, Derk—Derk! Please, please let me thank you for what you did for father. We were all frightened nearly to death, and the specialist from the city said he surely would have died in another hour. I think it was perfectly wonderful of you."

"No trouble at all," said Derk. "I'm kind of afraid the doctor got cold, though. We came pretty fast."

"That's what he said. He'd never had such a thrilling ride in his life. He was still shaking long after he'd been warmed through."

Derk grinned.

"And Derk," she went on, "I've decided I'd like to take a ride with you. When can we go?"

"Too swift and dangerous for a girl," Derk said, frowning abruptly.

"But I'm not afraid," she protested. "And besides, you're so clever in handling the ice boat. Oh, yes, you are. I've been watching you."

He shook his head. "Sorry, but I'm afraid it's too risky. Spring is only about four months away, and then you'll be able to get out in the motor cycle again."

"Oh, Derk. That isn't kind."

"Perhaps not, but it's safer," he replied, purposely misunderstanding her. If there was anything in the world Derk

Walters wanted to do, it was to take Sally for a ride in his ice boat. But he had certain plans to follow, and a ride for her at this time didn't coincide with them.

He left her with more than the usual pretty pout on her mouth, but he was glad that he hadn't weakened. He assured himself over and over again that it was just what she had coming to her. He'd have to tell the captain.

The captain, however, had something to tell him. He was waiting in the store for Derk to return with the noon mail. About the old mariner was an air of suppressed excitement. His chin whiskers were bobbing and as he stood waiting, he cracked the knuckles of first one hand and then the other.

"Well, he's swallowed it—hook, line, sinker an' all."

"Who's swallowed what?" said Derk, laying the mail upon the worn counter.

"Charley Bowers. He's havin' that motor cycle of hisn fixed up with some special wheels, down at Zoover's blacksmith shop. Goin' to fasten some iron lugs on 'em so's they'll stick to the ice."

For a moment Derk's heart sank. "So they'll stick to the ice?" he repeated.

"Yep. Says he's goin' to race you an' see if that ice boat of yourn is as fast as you claim it is. Oh, he's talkin' big aroun' town as how he'll show you up. What he's afraid of is that you'll turn aroun' an' grab Sally away from him. He's got to do somethin' to keep his hold."

"I saw her to-day," said Derk, "and she wanted a ride."

"You didn't promise t' take her, didja?" asked Caleb anxiously.

"No, but I pretty near wish now that I had."

"What?" snorted Caleb. "You ain't skeered of that scallawag an' his talk, are you?"

"No-o, but do you really think the boat can hold her own with a motor cycle?"

"Great guns, son, that stink wagon ain't got no more chanst with that boat than a Chinaman on a cannibal island. Why you'll run the wheels offn it. I'm goin' up to the blacksmith shop an' make a few cracks about things m'self. I'll act for you, an' when he challenges for a race, I'll take him up. Goin' to bet a bit of change on it, too, by cracky." Caleb hopped up and down on one foot in his excitement.

An ice boat against a motor cycle! Derk had never ridden upon the latter, but he had seen them go. Yet when he thought of the boat's speed, he was comforted. But a race—it might all depend upon the wind, and if he should lose——

In an hour Captain Caleb was back. Derk could tell by his very attitude that the race was on, and a sense of misgiving surged over him.

"It's all settled," Caleb announced. "He'll be ready any day after to-morrow, so I set it for Saturday afternoon. Out aroun' the island and back," he chuckled. "I bet him a hundred dollars you'd win, an' before I left, money was changin' hands awful fast. Seems as how they's differences in opinions on all sides. They's fellows bettin' good money that's never bet before in their lives. Even old man Green, in town with his chicken money, bet every penny of it."

"Supposing there's no wind?"

"No wind? This time of year? Son, you're a-gettin' cold feet. Buck up now, or I'll sail her m'self. O' course you'll have to saddle the wind goin' out—it'll probably be from the nor'west—but comin' back hell an' a black cat couldn't catch you."

It began to dawn on Derk Walters that there was a strain of vindictiveness in Captain Caleb's make-up. Knowing how he despised motor vehicles, Derk began to suspicion that the captain had

a double purpose in building the boat. Ostensibly to help Derk, the plan of a race had no doubt lurked in the back of his old head from the very start. Well, Derk would do his best, for both of them.

Saturday dawned cold and clear, with scarcely a breath of wind. Derk sought the captain with an expression of deep worry on his face. The captain cocked an eye skyward for a moment and then predicted plenty of rough weather by noon.

He was right. Before ten o'clock, heavy, snow-laden clouds, propelled by a twenty-mile breeze, were scudding in from the northwest. By noon the wind had swung two points to the west and had increased to nearly thirty miles an hour. Down on the lake, Derk was touching up his already keen runners with a file. Caleb stood nearby, cracking his mittened knuckles and giving final bits of advice.

"It's eight miles to the island, son, and you'd better try to make it in three tacks. The more you tack, the more time you lose. He'll probably run away from you at the start and will no doubt round the island ahead. But that's to be expected. After swingin' into the wind, you'll run away from him. Cut the island wide so's the wind won't pile you up."

"I believe it's blowing harder than ever," said Derk, rising from his knees.

"Sure it is," agreed Caleb. "You're goin' to have your hands full when you get out into it. Dressed plenty warm?"

Derk nodded and pointed at a pile of blankets tucked in the bow.

Presently a sleigh drove down to the edge of the lake, and a crowd of men and boys unloaded Charley Bower's motor cycle. It's wheels had been equipped with stout leather bands which were studded with short, sharp spikes. As the cycle was pushed onto the ice, Derk noted that the spikes bit deep and firmly.

Other sleighs began to arrive. In one of them sat Sally Harris and Charley Bowers. He assisted her to alight with a flourish and then, tucking her hand under his arm, walked toward his waiting machine. At the pompous show of proprietorship Derk's face grew hard. It was evident that Charley Bowers was playing to the grand stand. Well, let him, for after the race it was going to be a different story. Derk turned to his boat, more than ever determined to win.

Answering the beckoning hand of the referee, he and Caleb shoved the ice boat up abreast of the motor cycle. Charley Bowers greeted them by a roar of his motor and a derisive grin. Derk made no sign of recognition, but shook loose the sail and made ready to hoist it at the signal. He planned to head off to the southwest so as to get as much out of the wind as possible for a start.

At the word "Go," Charley let in his clutch and sped away in a cloud of blue smoke. Derk yanked the sail up the mast and with a parting shove from Caleb was off on his first tack. Away from the sheltering shore, the full force of the wind filled his bellying sail. It tipped the boat sharply against the port runner and then, as Derk eased off on the tiller, his craft righted and began to pick up speed. Derk knew that he was off on a wide tangent, but the force of the wind left him no other choice.

Presently he assayed a tack. The boom swung over his lowered head with a vicious swish, and the wind, catching the sail once more, nearly yanked the rear runner off of the ice. Steel against ice began to sing as his speed increased. Almost dead ahead he could see a dark spot moving over the lake, and the wind brought to his ears the faint hum of a motor. Charley Bowers had acquired a good lead.

After five minutes fast running Derk again tacked to port. He held this course as long as he dared and then

swung again to starboard on the last tack out. Bearing down on the island he was just in time to see the motor cycle swing in to go around. Derk judged that he was at least three quarters of a mile behind.

But he wasn't worrying about that. In fact he was in a better position than he expected to be. To play safe, he kept on past the rocks for a hundred yards. Then, shoving over the helm, he brought the sheet across on the first tack home. Past the southwest point of the island, the wind was a veritable hurricane, and the big sail caught the full force of it. The whole boat seemed to lift from the ice, and Derk was forced to throw his body astern to keep the tiller sled on the ice.

Accustomed as he had become to the speed of the boat, the pace attained in the next few moments left Derk gasping for breath. For one panic-stricken moment he was about to lower the sail. Then, setting his teeth, he decided to take what came.

Bowers, having rounded the island, now had the wind at his back. He had opened his throttle to the limit and was speeding straight for home. His steel-shod wheels were buzzing wickedly over the frozen surface, but fast as he was going, it was as nothing to the speed of the ice boat. Derk's eyes were dripping from the cold wind in his face, and yet the gale was full astern. The steel runners under him were singing like a band saw cutting into a huge log.

His first tack nearly capsized him, for as the boom swung over it lifted the starboard runner clear of the ice. The brace stays creaked alarmingly, but, thanks to Captain Caleb's skill, they held. The boat squared away with scarcely a slackening of its speed. Over his shoulder Derk caught sight of the motor cycle, its rider thrown flat over the handle bars. Although the wheels were a speedy blur, the machine seemed to Derk to be standing still.

Still quartering into the wind, he held the boat, crossing in front of the roaring machine by three hundred yards. At last he judged it was time to make the final tack—the tack that would throw him back into the full force of the wind and carry him straight back to the starting point. With a quick breath he threw the tiller over and ducked the wicked swing of the boom.

Then for a moment he thought he was flying, no sound of runners on ice reached his ears, nothing but an icy blast in his face. With a sharp thud the boat settled back to the ice. Derk breathed a short prayer of thankfulness and risked a backward glance. Charley Bowers was now dropping rapidly behind.

When he had made his last tack, the shore ahead had been a thin line. Now, from a blur, it was rapidly resolving into a distinct picture. Presently he could make out the crowd that stood waiting the finish. A feeling of exultation warmed his chilled body. Sally was waiting there, waiting for the winner, and it would be he, the grocer's boy. He didn't dwell on her possible welcome. He had plans of his own, and, providing he wasn't smashed to bits on the shore, he intended to carry them out.

At what he judged was the proper moment, he cast loose the sheet. Then with all his strength he pulled against the spike brake. A shower of fine ice rose behind him and fell tinkling in the wake of the boat. Gradually the speed slackened, and, with a last tug at the brake, he brought the boat to a stop a few yards from the waiting crowd.

Instantly he was surrounded by a milling, jabbering mob. With difficulty he made his way through them to where Sally stood beside her sleigh. He walked straight to her without a word. It was his time to play to the grand stand now.

"Oh, Derk," she exclaimed, "I'm

really glad that it's you. I'm truly happy that you won."

"Thanks," said he briefly. Then, holding out his hand, "Care to take a ride?"

"May I?" she asked eagerly. "I'd love to. It's so thrilling."

With calm self-assurance, he led her to the boat. The crowd gave way as he placed her in the bow and wrapped her with blankets. "Keep your head down," he cautioned, "and lay absolutely still." Then, turning to Caleb, who was steadying the boat, "I'll see you later, captain. Give Mr. Bowers my regrets."

The wind caught the raised sail and moved them away from the shore, just as Charley Bowers brought his machine to a sputtering stop. Derk lifted his cap as the defeated racer gazed after them, and a tiny gloved hand waved good-by from the bow.

Once more the ice boat headed for the island, this time in long, graceful swoops, and though the steering wasn't difficult, Derk kept his eyes ahead and on the sail. Sally was watching him, he knew, but not once did he return a glance.

As they drew past the island, he didn't turn, but kept straight on, beating it into the wind. Mile after mile he continued, until the island lay far behind. Then, suddenly, he threw the helm over and took the wind full astern. Once more the ice boat leaped ahead like a living thing. Derk tacked sharply, and the biting runners showered them with thin flakes of ice.

Scarcely had they squared to the new course when he tacked again. The boat swerved dangerously and the stay braces shuddered.

"Derk! Please!" The words held a distinct plea.

"Great, ain't it?" he yelled uncomfortingly. "Some speed!"

For the first time he looked directly into the bow. But Sally had hid her head in the blankets. A twinge of compassion moved him, and his hand reached for the rope to lower the sail. Catching himself in time, he tacked once more, heading directly south across the lake. As he held to the course, his speed increased, and in a few moments he was nearing the shore.

The grinding of the brake brought Sally's head from the blankets. She looked wonderingly at the unfamiliar shore line, and then her gaze sought Derk's face.

"Here we are," he announced shortly.

"But—but this isn't Stanhope."

"No, it's Kerriston, on the south side of the lake. Come, we're going to make a little visit." Stooping, he lifted her chilled body from the boat and walked toward the shore.

"Derk!" she cried, "Where are you going?"

"To call on a nice, kindly justice of the peace who lives here." For an instant she struggled in his arms.

"Put me down, please." Derk set her on her feet. "Do you think this is an honest, manly way to act?" she demanded.

"I don't know," he replied. "But you like speed, or at least I've been led to believe that you do, and—well, this is speed." He put an arm about her waist and drew her to him. "Speed gets 'em, don't it, Sally?"

"Y-yes," came a muffled voice from under his shoulder.

"All right, then, let's go."

And then she voiced, not very earnestly, the only protest left her.

"But Derk, dear. I'm not dressed for the pace."

Peter Plays the Game

By Charles V. Brereton

Author of "Claw and Fang," "Woodland Justice," etc.

JIM DRESSLER, CAUGHT ON THE MOUNTAIN WITH A BROKEN LEG, WAS STALKED BY A COUGAR. BUT WHEN HIS PET BUCK SAW HIM THINGS BEGAN TO LOOK BRIGHTER. . . . . .

WHEN Jim Dressler, on his way down from the ditch head, found the spotted fawn bleating pathetically by the mangled body of a doe and carried the hungry little fellow down to his cabin at Oak Bar it was to face a barrage of dire prophecies from old cronies. They, like himself, still clung to the worked-out camp as much for sentimental association as for the few ounces of gold dust they were able to clean up in the spring. "Pop" Goslin, who was Dressler's best friend and therefore his most bitter antagonist in an argument, opined that no good ever came of trying to make a pet out of a fawn, especially a buck fawn.

"When that danged thing grows up," he declared, "he's only goin' to be good for making trouble and mebbe even he'll hurt somebody when his horns grow." Then Pop went on to recount innumerable incidents where buck deer had done harrowing things.

But big-hearted Jim Dressler merely grinned as he purchased a baby's bottle at Mrs. Johnson's general store and ordered an extra quart of milk from the Ramus boy. As for Peter, which was the name Jim bestowed on his protégé, the transition from the misery his baby heart must have endured during the long hours he had spent beside his lifeless mother to the loving-kindness lavished on him by his new master bound the waif for life to that master with a love that was undying.

It may be that he remembered the racking hours of hunger and thirst as he nuzzled at the mother who would never nurse him again until this big man had gently carried him to this place of comfort and warmth and safety. Who can tell what thoughts ran through his keen little brain? At any rate, there was no question about Peter's affection for his human protector.

That autumn and winter Peter grew as none of his wild cousins, shiveringly cropping the scanty forage along the river cliffs, could have grown. At first, the helpless little fellow lived entirely within Dressler's snug cabin, his bed a pile of sacks in the warmest corner. But soon unwonted food and warmth speeded his growth.

As a means of sustenance, Peter had

long forgone the use of the milk bottles, but in its place had developed a dietary that was a never-ending wonder to the denizens of Oak Bar. Of course, he had easy access to the tender buds and shoots that were springing everywhere along the river as well as to an acre or more of lush grass under Dressler's apple trees, relics of the days when Oak Bar was a booming mining town.

Peter craved variety, and early in his wanderings around town he discovered there was endless variety to be had in the boxes and bins behind the counter in Mrs. Johnson's store. Beans, or corn, or the barrel of rolled oats, he passed up as plebeian provender that could be ecured almost anywhere. But anything else, from dried prunes to salt codfish, was promptly sampled.

Only once—the first time—did the wrathy storekeeper succeed in inflicting damage on Peter as he shot through the doorway. Other times hurtling cans of fruit or sticks from the wood box only accelerated his departure. For Peter saw to it that the estimable lady was busy with a customer or in her kitchen at the rear of the store before he poked his inquiring muzzle within the forbidden portals.

For an hour, perhaps, Peter would linger in the street, nonchalantly picking up stray grains of corn that had dropped from freight wagons and paying no attention to the grinning porch loungers who nudged each other at the little buck's pronounced air of innocence. Peter seemed to know that his daily battle with the merchant gave the ancients on the porch the utmost enjoyment.

He was aware, too, that his method of escape was so well known that there would be no one in his way as he came out. No old mountaineer will willingly take chances on being butted amidships by a hundred pounds of young buck who is going some place in a hurry.

Occasionally, however, some of Peter's raids verged on the serious. Once, when he dodged a battered can of pears the lady kept for that identical purpose, the missile crashed into a shelf full of preserves in glass. Whether it was the exasperated burst of language that followed him out the door or whether Peter sensed that this was beyond a joke can not be told. But just the same he stayed away from that part of the village for several days.

Dressler grinned as he paid for the damaged groceries and swept up the mess himself, thereby once more restoring peace. Peter might have repeated his joke with some degree of success had he not made the unfortunate mistake of nibbling gently at Pop Goslin's gray whiskers while that ancient one, his chair tipped against the wall, snored comfortably.

The resulting uproar, together with a whizzing shower of rocks, sent Peter flying for the sanctuary of the Dressler orchard this time. And, though he strolled back up the street a time or two, the malevolent look in Pop's eyes precluded him from attempting another raid on the store while Pop was in sight.

That sport was getting old, anyhow. In common with other hamlets of its kind, Oak Bar maintained a sizable collection of dogs, mostly hounds or part hound. These dogs, in accord with the never-broken community law, were not used in hunting deer but nearly all had, at some time in their lives, treed a bear or a cougar. Consequently, they paid no more attention to Peter than they did to the pigs that grunted around the warehouse. But as the nippy air of Peter's second autumn began to dress the hillsides in gold and scarlet the buck began to develop an arrogant attitude toward the sleepy hounds.

One afternoon, the porch loungers, waiting idly as they waited every dry season for the first rains to fill the mine reservoirs, looked on with mild interest

at Peter's antics. He would dance stiff-legged toward the dogs, making imaginary vicious thrusts with the antlers that now adorned his head, then springing away as though avoiding a charge.

For a time the hounds merely snarled sleepily when the buck came too close, but as Peter continued his antics, one of the younger hounds, with something approaching a twinkle in his eyes, suddenly charged.

Immediately Peter was in full flight, antlered head erect, white flag waving defiance and hard hoofs hammering the ground at the end of each magnificent leap—exactly as a wild buck would have fled from a deer hound he held in supreme contempt. As the pack, in full cry, joined the chase, some one called harshly to the dogs, but Dressler intervened.

"That fool buck is just playing," he said. "He's got some idea of getting exercise or trying out his speed, I guess."

It was as Dressler said. They heard the noise of the chase as the buck led straight away up the cañon for a mile, then the louder bugling of the dogs as Peter turned, swung toward the river and back toward town.

"I'll bet he's taken to the water to throw the dogs off the track," Dressler declared. And it seemed so, for twenty minutes later Peter appeared, loped easily down the street and jumped the fence into the orchard. The watchers waited impatiently for another quarter of an hour before the bedraggled and panting dogs appeared.

As they passed the orchard they peered through the palings and sniffed disgustedly, but it was apparent that they held no rancor. They had accepted this chase as some sort of game which they were willing to play but not again to-day. They, too, welcomed the exercise, but enough was enough and too much was plenty, according to their way of thinking.

Day after day this same performance was repeated until no one in town gave the chase more than a casual glance. And, queer though it may seem to those who do not know the arduous training that the western "varmint" hound is obliged to go through, while the dogs apparently did everything in their power to catch Peter, they never once made any attempt to trail any of the wild deer that roamed the brushy hillsides near town.

Peter was their playmate, that was all, and though there was much ferocious baying and bawling during the chase, not a dog so much as cocked an ear at Peter until he showed by his dancing and bristling that it was time for the afternoon run.

As autumn passed, Peter's red summer coat gave place to the sleek, blue-gray of the Klamath buck, his silky hide rippling with the play of the marvelous muscles beneath. The stormy days of winter began and the dogs, snoozing by warm firesides, became less anxious for their daily game while Peter took to wandering farther afield, consorting with those of his own kind who had come down from the snow-whitened summits to the winter range along the river.

Noting this, Dressler placed a light collar and bell around the neck of his pet so that some meat-hungry prospector might not kill Peter by mistake. At times, far on the mountain, Dressler or some of the other miners heard the silvery tinkle of the little bell that was Peter's protection in his wanderings.

At times the buck would come charging into town and stand gazing back up the mountain, nostrils quivering and ears pricked forward in evident fear. It was plain that whenever anything frightened Peter out on the mountain he at once fled to the protection of his human friends.

Not every day now, but often, Peter was seen feeding in the Dressler orchard

or nibbling at the wasted grain in front of the warehouse. He was as tame as ever if approached quietly, but he seemed clothed with a new dignity. The playful antics of his younger days had slipped from him since his association with the wild deer who crowded the winter range along the river.

The winter drew on, its deep, white blanket covering all but the lower slopes of Hamburg Mountain. The mines, fed by the melting drifts, began to work again. The ancients who had dozed on the porch and cackled at Peter's forays, now stood, wet and begrimed, at the giant hydraulic nozzles that tore away the gravel and sent it in a swirling yellow flood through the sluices where the precious grains of metal were caught by the bottom riffles. Water was all important and they must work without ceasing while water was still available.

Dressler had little time for Peter now, but he never forgot a handful of dainty greens or a piece of bread whenever the buck came to the cabin. Peter ate slowly, standing in dreamy content as his master playfully rubbed his sensitive ears.

Then, one morning, when Dressler went down the slippery trail to the claim he worked alone, he found the huge pipe empty. The giant nozzle swung idly, useless. Somewhere up the mountain there was a break in the flume, wasting the water that he needed to work the monitor.

Fuming inwardly at the delay that meant a loss of time and money, Dressler clambered back up the four hundred feet of huge pipe that gave him the pressure for the monitor and to the ditch that ran for miles around the mountainside to Muk-Luk Creek, the stream that fed it. The miner walked hurriedly, anxious to get the monitor working again for at least part of the day. Once he thought he heard the tinkle of Peter's bell, but, busy with plans for the work ahead of him, paid it no attention.

Above the head of the ditch, in the creek itself, Dressler found the trouble. A snowslide, starting far up on the precipitous walls of Muk-Luk, had poured into the cañon, bringing down boulders and trees in a snow-and-mud-cemented mass that had dammed the cañon and diverted the stream from the ditch. It would take hours of work to again get water by cutting a channel through that inextricably tangled mass, and Dressler saw the slide was yet dangerous. The slightest touch to that sliding, sloppy mass might start it moving again.

Dressler gazed up at the towering cliffs on either side of the narrow cañon where deep drifts still hung precariously. The miner knew the danger of starting another slide, but the work must be done. He must have water, and to get water he must clear away part of the debris in that cañon.

For an hour he labored at the grinding boulders and entwined tree trunks, diverting the roily water so it would aid him in cutting a new channel. For a time it seemed he would succeed. So intent was he on his work that he gave no thought to the danger above him until a boulder the size of his head bounded from the cliff and struck in the water beside him.

One glance upward and Dressler started to run. The noise of the rushing current had prevented his hearing the rumble of this new avalanche, but the small stone had given him at least a moment's warning. Fifty yards away an overhanging cliff meant safety. Could he make it? Leaping frantically with stiffened limbs chilled by his long immersion in the icy current he won his way from the first rush of snow-incrusted mud and rock. He felt for a moment that he would come clear—another leap and he would gain the cliff's protection.

And then his feet were swept from beneath him by some stunning force. He felt himself falling toward jagged slide rock just at the edge of safety. Involuntarily, he put out his hands to break the force of the fall. His brain reeled with shock—oblivion descended.

When Dressler came to his senses the exquisite pain that shot through his right leg as he moved it told him the worst. The bones were broken below the knee. The end of the sapling that had swept him from his feet still protruded from the mass of debris that filled the gulch. His hands and face were bruised and cut from his fall into the rock pile and every muscle was on fire as he attempted to shift his position.

As the miner took stock of his situation he noted that Muk-Luk canon was now in shadow. That meant afternoon. He must get out of that gulch before night or the exposure would kill him, Dressler knew that.

Dressler knew, too, that his absence from his own claim would not be noted until night, and then only by some chance. Every one at Oak Bar was working during the day and most were too tired to leave their own cabins during the evening. He must at least crawl close enough to town so that his calls for help would stand a chance of being heard before his friends went to bed.

Gritting his teeth with the fearful pain, the man began his tortuous journey. Sometimes the leg throbbed so that it seemed he must scream aloud in agony. Once he fell and knew that an anguished cry was wrung from his bleeding lips. And as he crept along it seemed that his cry had been answered by a fainter one somewhere on the mountain above him.

Inch by inch and foot by agonized foot, the man worked his way over the sharp-edged rocks and to the path that ran alongside the outer edge of the ditch. Here the way was at least smoother, but Dressler, faint from pain, knew it would be many hours at the best before he could ever get back to camp.

The sun was getting low, too. It would be night before he could get close enough to the Bar to make himself heard. As the man lay prone, easing his pain as best he could, a rock dislodged by some prowler, made a faint noise on the hillside above. Dressler, gazing with dull eyes, thought he discerned a dun gray shape flit swiftly behind the shelter of a clump of young spruce and surmised that perhaps an alarmed deer had fled at his approach.

Again as he resumed his wearisome journey the faint noise attracted him and a quick glance disclosed the gaunt form of a cougar watching him from the shadow of the spruce. Starved out of the higher ranges by the heavy snowfall, the beast, as his kind always did, had followed the deer in their migration to the lower levels.

As the crippled man crawled on it became apparent that the cougar was stalking him. Often before the great cats had done that during the night, but never before had Dressler seen one have the courage to stalk a man during the day.

A qualm of uneasiness shot through him as he eyed the prominent ribs and gaunt flanks of the slinking beast and saw it gloating over the bloody marks his lacerated hands had made on the frozen ground. It crept closer as he dropped prone again to rest his anguished muscles and Dressler saw that the unwinking yellow eyes were gazing steadily at him in cruel speculation.

Yellow Eyes had sensed the man's helplessness, that was evident. If he could once overcome his long ingrained fear of humans he would attack, Dressler was sure. At any rate the beast would surely attack after night or when the man fainted from exhaustion and

exposure as he was certain to do long before he could crawl to safety.

Dressler summoned all his will power to overcome his pain and sat up. A small stone he heaved at the crouching beast only made the cougar snarl angrily as it dodged the missile. It was almost in the notion of attacking now, the miner saw that. The sweat of fear burst from the man's forehead and rolled down his face, mingling with the red trickles that dimmed his gaze.

He was afraid to turn his back to the brute again. Dressler edged along the ground until he could get his back against a tree and leaned against it, fixing his gaze on the cruel orbs that glared into his while he attempted a mental solution of the situation.

As he half sat, half lay there, gripping the tree with trembling fingers and facing his adversary, he again heard the tinkle of Peter's little bell. The buck bounded into sight in the cleared space along the ditch and stood a moment eying the cougar in amazement that was somehow akin to contempt. An idea flashed through the man's brain.

"Peter," Dressler called softly. "Come here, Peter, old boy." But Peter stamped on the frozen ground and snorted. The cougar had turned his attention to the buck and was now crouching for his spring but Peter moved swiftly and the tinkle of his bell alarmed the cat. It jumped away in great leaps, snarling.

Again the man called imploringly to his pet but Peter had seen enough. He whirled away down the ditch line, each magnificent leap covering a rod or more of ground. Dressler groaned as he began again his vigil against the cougar. He knew that safety was only assured until darkness fell. After that—— He tried not to think.

Down at Oak Bar, old Pop Goslin, cussing mines in general and that particular deposit of cement gravel in his own with artistic detail, was just coming out of the store, a half dozen sticks of giant powder grasped in his gnarled fist, when Peter bounded down the street and skidded to a halt in front of the building. A couple of the dogs, in shivery anticipation of supper time and warm fires to curl up by, were trying to extract what comfort they could from the wintry rays that yet silvered the porch.

Pop looked on in amazement as Peter, neck hair bristling, charged up the steps in the old invitation to play. The dogs were reluctant, cranky. A young hound snarled and moved away, but Peter persisted in his attempts to start a chase. The next bound carried him onto the porch and one front foot, lightning swift, tapped the pup none too gently. The dog lost his temper completely and this time he was not fooling when he leaped at Peter's throat. But the buck had hopped nimbly to the ground, snorting his derision.

The pup was mad, no doubt of that. At his wailing bawl, a dozen front gates erupted dogs and the chase was on. As Mrs. Johnson ran to the door at sound of the uproar Pop shook his head.

"That'll be the end of Jim's deer this time," he mourned. "Likewise, a bunch of good varmint dogs is goin' to be spoiled and made into deer chasers. Them pups is fightin' mad this time and they've forgot all about playin'."

The old man watched the turn in the road where the chase had gone out of sight as he listened intently.

"Fool buck is taking up the mountain toward Muk-Luk," he declared. "He ain't got a chance of getting away from that pack now. Besides, they's a coupla dogs in that pack what ain't been in town long enough to know anything about that play chasin' business. When Peter gets tired and turns at bay they'll tear him to pieces."

Fainter and fainter the sound of the dogs came back and at last old Pop,

still dolefully shaking his head, plodded down to his delayed work. Once he half turned toward Dressler's claim with the intent of telling him his fears for Peter's safety, but the thought of the cement bank that needed blasting and the realization that Dressler could do no more than he changed him. He worked on until supper time.

Up on the mountain, Dressler, his face white with the pain of his hurts, bit his tortured lips as he forced himself to face his enemy. The man kept his head erect and his eyes on the glowering beast only by the exercise of all the will he possessed. If he dropped in a faint, the cougar would instantly spring, Dressler knew that. He had thrown rocks and sticks at the watching beast until his strength had failed him and at each effort Yellow Eyes had sprung away, only to crawl closer a moment later.

The brute was starving, that much was evident. Equally was it evident that this particular cougar had been a habitant of some isolated cañon where he had not often, if ever, come in contact with human beings, and so had no fear of them other than the inherited cowardice of his breed. Familiarity with this crippled, sick thing that could not crawl away from him was breeding contempt momentarily, and soon he would possess courage to kill. Shouting no longer frightened him. He answered the man's voice with snarls.

At last the beast evidently decided to temporize no more. He crouched, ears flattened and head sunk below shoulder level as he began to walk steadily toward his destined prey, his sinuous tail flicking up little spurts of snow as it snapped back and forth. Dressler could see the cruel, yellow eyes flicker with scarlet flames of the blood lust, could see the terrible scythes that armed those hind feet searching for the grip that would propel them in that lethal leap. He kept his eyes fixed on those of the cougar, but involuntarily his hands were raised in feeble self-protection when it seemed that a thunderbolt had burst into the little clearing.

Running as Dressler had never seen even him run before, silvery bell tinkling, Peter came bounding down the ditch straight toward his beloved master. And almost at his heels, their voices bespeaking their rage, came two of the dogs who had so often chased Peter in play. The cougar had been so intent on the thing he meant to do that his senses had been deaf to all else. Now, as the buck bounded past him, he sprang wildly aside and almost on top of the lead dog while Peter, flanks heaving and tongue lolling from the terrific exertion, stopped astride Dressler's helpless legs, and stood there, quivering.

The man's voice rose in a scream of joy as he clasped both hands firmly into Peter's collar. And his next yell was one of encouragement to the raging young hound who had instantly charged the great cat. This was quarry that the dog had all his life been trained to attack. There was no hesitancy whatever in his approach, and the cougar was in full flight down the mountain before the rest of the pack that straggled behind the leader emerged into the clearing.

Silent now, Dressler rubbed Peter's ears gently as the baying dogs, sensing the new tone in their leader's voice, raged after their prey. The man knew that it would be only a matter of moments until the cougar would seek safety in a tree, and he knew, also, that there were dogs in the pack who would rage around the base of the tree for days if necessary, never leaving until their masters' came. The chase had led down the mountain toward the Bar, and some one would surely go to the help of the dogs.

But although the immediate fear of death was over, Dressler's troubles were not yet done with. He could write a note and tie it to Peter's collar, but how could he be sure that the buck would go back to the Bar? The deer seemed to be content as he was now. Dreamily closing his eyes as his master rubbed his ears, Peter nuzzled at Dressler's shoulder. From experience, the miner knew that his pet might feed around without sight or sound of him for hours.

Still holding to Peter's collar with one hand, the man drew a handkerchief from his pocket and sopped the white cloth in the blood that trickled from his cut hands and face until no one could mistake the color for what it was. Then he tied the bloody rag to Peter's collar. The next thing was more important and Dressler felt a strange qualm at what he meant to do.

"I hate to do this, old boy," he murmured, "but it won't really hurt you, and it is life or death with me now. It's the only way to be sure that you'll go straight to the Bar."

Wincing with the pain his effort cost him, Dressler loosened the heavy lace from the boot on his uninjured foot and tore at the sleeve of his Mackinaw shirt until the cloth parted and he had a rectangle of gayly-colored weave in his hand.

He remembered that always, Peter had come bounding into town whenever something on the mountain had scared him badly and always, as well, had promptly sought the protection of his human friends. So, Dressler tied the cloth tightly to the boot lace and then, making a slip noose in the other end of the thong, fastened it tight to Peter's tail before the surprised buck could spring away.

For a moment Peter stood snorting with horror at the red and green rag that dangled at his heels. At his first leap the terrible thing struck against him, seemed to be pursuing him, and he fled in fear that was not assumed, straight down the trail toward town. With eyes dimmed by thankful tears, Dressler watched Peter until the forest hid him and then everything became a blank. Late that night he awoke in his own bunk to gaze up into Pop Goslin's grinning countenance.

"Say," old Pop cackled, "you'd orter seen us fellers tryin' to catch that tarnation buck so's we could git them rags offen him and find out whut the matter was. I guess we'd never made it before dark if one o' them cow-punchers from up river hadn't happened along and lassoed him for us. At that, two or three of the boys had to set on him until I got things untied. I know'd dang well whut you wanted soon's I seen the blood on that handkerchief. And I knowed the only place you could be was up on the ditch. After we brung you in, coupla fellers went back and killed that cougar the dogs treed. 'S funny, them dogs leavin' the deer and treein' the cat that a way."

Dressler didn't answer. He felt sleepy and very tired. The story could wait the telling until morning.

The Lion's Mouth

by Thomas A. Curry

Author of "The House That Jake Built," "'Horse' Eagen's Partner," etc.

SHE LOVED BRAVE MEN, AND "TEEHEE" LONGED FOR A CHANCE TO BE BRAVE IN HER EYES, BUT THE FIRST ONE CAME SO FAST HE DIDN'T QUITE KNOW WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT. THEN HE WENT TO WORK AND MADE ANOTHER CHANCE FOR HIMSELF, BUT THE GIRL BEGAN ACTING UP AT THAT POINT.

AT the county fair we saw a gentleman who had such great confidence in the knife-throwing proclivities of another that he stood against a board and let his friend paint his profile with sharp knives. It was a thrilling performance, but when we were outside, Steve Dallam sniffed deprecatingly at my comment.

"'Tain't so much," he said, lighting a horrible green cigar, which he had won by expert shooting in the gallery to the right.

"I wouldn't like to be the man who stood up against the wall," I said. "What if his pal should unexpectedly slip?"

"He'd just get hisself cut up some, that's all," said Steve. "Why, I seen a feller——" He paused suddenly and gagged—not from the cigar, however. He had remembered too late my insatiable curiosity. The look of a hunted animal, which knows it is of no use to dodge and attempt evasion, came into his eyes. I said nothing. I did not need to. Steve learned his lesson long ago.

We were seated on his porch, across from the general store. For perhaps ten minutes I watched the bluish smoke of the weed rising into the hot Texas air. Then, just as I opened my mouth to demand my due, he raised his hand.

"One more puff," he pleaded. "Then I'll tell you."

He sighed, and presently settled down to the story I had sensed was there.

Maybe you have seen fellers who had such vivid imaginations they acted like cowards. Their minds get 'em into trouble. Not likin' to admit they're afraid, they will step into all sorts of foolish situations to prove they ain't. Anybody who could figger things out for hisself would back out of such a situation, if he was silly enough to put his head into the lion's mouth in the first place.

Young T. E. Taylor, sometimes called "Teehee," was a tenderfoot who come out here to live the wild, clean life on the prairie—incidentally workin' with steers, rollin' in the dust and sleepin' in the same clothes day in, day out. He

was a slim, handsome young feller, the younger brother of two orphans.

His older brother, John Taylor—he was to get all of their Uncle Jack's money, as Teehee had dark hair and eyes, and was considered the black sheep of the family. He had made his uncle mad by gettin' into several scrapes, and the old gent had disowned him. At least, that was how he told it to me, we bein' sort of friendly, workin' together on K-H Ranch.

The boys deviled him a right lot, and made life generally miserable for him, 'cause he was sort of a sensitive young feller. But, follerin' my advice, he took it all without yellin' or kickin' up dust, and purty soon the boys got tired of teasin' him and let him be, havin' found some new object for their affections.

"Steve," says Teehee, one day after he had been with us a few months, "my uncle died last month, and left all his cash to my brother, John. I got five hundred dollars, and that's all."

"That's enough," says I, never havin' seen more'n fifty all together up to that time.

"'Tain't enough," says he, "to do anything with."

"It'll buy four thousand drinks," says I, softlike.

So, takin' the hint, he invites me to saddle up and visit town with him to spend some of his cash. Teehee seemed sort of moody, 'count of his relative's death, and I did my best to cheer him up. However, he stayed right gloomy till we reached town—which wasn't very big then—and when I see the tents of a small circus down the road, I thought maybe it'd cheer him up to go to it.

So we went in and found seats. There was a clown and a bareback rider, and all the usual paraphernalia, and also a big, black-haired feller who could shoot the ears off'n a mosquito That man aroused even my admiration, the way he could shoot.

We was passin' out into the open again, when Teehee grabs my arm nervouslike, and says:

"Hey!"

I turn and see the object of his emotions is a small, well-formed blond gal, with blue eyes and pretty hair, who is standin' near by.

"My, ain't she beautiful?" gasps my companion, his eyes openin' wide. "Steve, my heart's gone right there. How'll I meet her. I got to know her."

I kidded him some 'bout it, but he was very much in earnest. He insisted on stayin' in town and watchin' at the one and only hotel for the gal to come in.

"You'll lose your job," I tells him.

"I got enough money to last me a while," says he. "Ride in to-morrer, will you, and bring my duds. I got to meet this lady."

Well, next evenin' I come in, bringin' his few belongin's. At the hotel I find Teehee conversin' with a tall, thin feller with a sort of crooked face I didn't like much, but Teehee interduces him as his cousin, Dave Morris.

"Dave is out here, travelin' round with this here circus," says Teehee, "and knowin' I was near by, he wanted to say howdy. I just happened to bump into him in the saloon last night."

"Well, Ted," says Morris, who was some ten years older'n Teehee, "you sure have chosen a wild part of the country to live in. I thought maybe I'd find you here at the saloon, but if I hadn't, I'd sure have rode out to your ranch to see you."

Well, we talked a while, and then who should come in but the blond girl who had so impressed Teehee the day before? She takes a chair right near by, and I see Teehee's blood pressure had increased several pounds. I caught her lookin' our way and winked, but she turned away.

"You see that gal," whispers Teehee to his cousin. "Ain't she beautiful?"

"She is nice lookin'," says Morris, squintin' at her. "Wait a minute."

Before the horrified Teehee could stop him, Morris stepped up to the lady and took off his hat, sayin': "Excuse me, ma'am, but didn't we meet somewhere before?"

Teehee was pale, and his breath was comin' hard, and I guess he would have mixed things right there, but the gal smiles and says politely maybe she had. They chatted a few minutes, and then they come over to where we were. Morris interduces her as Miss Daisy Jackson, of New York.

"I just love the cowboys," says she, when we asked her how she liked the country. "I think they're such brave men."

She had a smile that thrilled you through and through, and I found myself gettin' sort of soft round the gizzard when she looked at me with her big blue eyes. She went on to tell us how much she admired bravery, and when I told her how I had oncet shot an outlaw with one hand, she was much impressed, and Teehee turned green with envy.

A few minutes before I was gettin' ready to start back to the ranch alone, the big, black-haired man we had seen in the circus doin' such wonderful shootin' comes in. He was lookin' mighty wicked, and he was drunk—at least, so it seemed—and he scowled at us purty hard.

He sat down near us and kept lookin' our way. He was heeled, all right, with two big Colts on him, and I was watchin' him out of the corner of my eye in case he started anything. I thought I seen Morris look at him significantlike, but maybe I was mistaken. Anyways, purty soon he gets up and comes over to where we were.

"Damn it," says he in an ugly voice to Teehee, "what you mean by lookin' at me that a way, you young whippersnapper."

Teehee just sat there frozen, taken by surprise and not knowin' what to do.

"Here, here," says Morris, "don't use such language round a lady."

The big feller scowls at him. "Listen, Morris," says he, "I am 'Tennessee' Lamont, and I can lick any man in the world."

Before he could draw, however, I had jumped him, and Dave Morris helpin', we subdued him. The gal looked on, and Teehee did likewise. He didn't even move. We took the feller's guns and escorted him upstairs, where we locked him in his room. He went to sleep quiet enough.

When we come down, the gal was very effusive in her thanks to me and Morris, 'specially to Morris, but she didn't notice Teehee at all.

"How'd he know your name?" I asks Morris.

"Oh, I am his manager with the circus," says he, carelesslike. "He'll be sorry for his foolishness to-morrer."

Purty soon I ride home. When I took a couple of days off the next week and rode to town again, Teehee was gone, but he left a note for me sayin' he had follered the gal, and she was in the next town, where the circus was goin' to play. Why the gal went on, I didn't know, but I wanted to see the boy and find out how he was gettin' on, so I went, too.

I located him easy enough. He was at the same hotel as the gal and Morris and Lamont—it bein' the only one in town.

"Steve," says he, "I'm very miserable. Daisy seems to think my cousin, Morris is the guy who invented bravery, just 'cause he helped subdue that rough, black-headed sharpshooter, Lamont. Lamont come over the next mornin' and apologized to me 'n' Daisy, and now Dave Morris and she are travelin' together. I am cut out, and all I can do is to sigh, unhappylike."

He obliged me with a sigh then, and it sure was doleful. By and by, in comes Dave Morris with Tennessee La-

mont at his heels. We all stood up at the bar and had drinks. Presently Teehee says:

"Steve, that gal admires brave men. Wisht I could do something to impress her with my courage."

"Why don't you go into the ring with a couple of them man-eatin' tigers," says I, jokin'like.

"Well," says Dave Morris at this point, "I'm goin' out and meet Daisy. See you later, boys."

We watched him go, Teehee gnashin' his teeth with jealousy, and me laughin' at him. I didn't care much for Dave Morris, but, after all, it wasn't the boy's fault his cousin was a louse. I guess, at the moment, he felt the way I did about Dave.

"Taylor," says Tennessee Lamont, in his gruff voice, "I am sure sorry to hear you are havin' bad luck with that little lady. I'd like to help you out of your trouble, 'cause I feel like it was me put you into it."

"That's mighty good of you," says Teehee, sort of stiff.

"I been sort of thinkin' things over," goes on Tennessee, raisin' his glass and wavin' it till it spilled over, "that maybe I could stage a good act with you, to prove your courage to this here damsel. You know I am the best shot in the world."

"So it says on the posters," says I.

Lamont gives me a frown and then goes on.

"I never miss. But the public likes to have novelty in the circus acts, and here's one I have thought up. I want a feller to stand in front of a target and let me plug around him with bullets. I can do it easy enough. You've seen it done with knives, maybe, but not with real bullets and a chanct of death.

"If that don't prove your courage to Daisy Jackson, nothin' ever will. It beats anything these here cursed cowboys," says he, lookin' my way, "who ride round the country shootin' mother-eaten outlaws and pickin' on gentlemen who have just had a drink or two, ever do."

I was feelin' good-natured and didn't start a fight. I looked at Teehee. The thought of standin' up in front of a target and havin' bullets scrapin' his epidermis, didn't appeal to him much.

"There ain't any danger, much," says Tennessee. "Just looks like it, that's all. Your low-brow friend here can bring the lady to the show, and I will vouch for it that she'll be so thrilled she'll throw her arms round your neck and say you're the bravest man in the world."

Teehee hesitated a moment, even over this allurin' pitcher, but just then he sees the gal pass by the window in the company of Dave Morris.

"I'll do it," says he.

I didn't want him to. I tried to talk him out of it, but no—he would go ahead with it. He was so much in love with that gal he would've jumped over the moon without a cow to guide him.

"Well," says Tennessee, "you come here to-morrer at six o'clock, and we'll arrange the details. I'll fix the paper, ready for you to sign——"

"What paper?" asks Teehee.

"Why, just a paper sayin' you are doin' this of your own free will and releasin' me from responsibility, in case anything happens. It's just sort of a technicality—don't really mean anything, but in case you get hurt, I don't want to be arrested for murder. Savvy?"

Teehee turns green, but he has gone too far to back down now.

"You just sign the paper, you see, for my sake. Don't be scairt, for you won't be hurt."

Well, I left 'em talkin' the thing over, and went into the next room. I see the gal sittin' with Dave Morris. They was chattin' away like old pals, Morris oglin' the gal, and she lookin' right back at him. I managed, with some difficulty, to get the gal aside and ask her if she'd

attend the circus with me the next evenin'.

"Oh," says she, "I've been there many times. I don't know whether I want to go again or not. Mr. Morris takes me whenever I wish."

"This is something special," I tells her. "There's a big act goin' on, and you must come."

She looks at me sort of funny, as though to ask: "What the hell's the matter with you?"

Purty soon, after much pleadin' on my part, she consents to accompany me next evenin'. I hung round with Teehee, tryin' to talk him out of his foolishness and tryin' to cheer him up, for he was scairt to death. But he kept sayin:

"I got to prove to her I ain't a coward. I got to make her see I ain't afraid. I'm goin' to do it, Steve."

We went to bed early, and I slept hearty, in spite of Teehee's moans and tossin's. He looked haggard and worn in the mornin', but we went downstairs to meet Tennessee Lamont. There was a performance in the afternoon, but Teehee wasn't to appear till evenin'.

"You're sure she'll be there to-night," Teehee asks me a thousand times. I told him I'd have Daisy there if I had to drag her by her purty blond hair. I was gettin' sort of wrought up at all this foolishness, but I couldn't desert the boy.

We watched the expert shootin' of Tennessee Lamont, the "Man Who Couldn't Miss." In the evenin', Teehee signs a paper sayin' he was willin' to take his chances with Tennessee's skill. Teehee's cousin, Dave Morris, wasn't supposed to know anything 'bout the business.

Well, I managed to get some supper into Teehee by holdin' his mouth open and pourin' food in. He was scairt to death, almost. Then I turned him over to Tennessee Lamont and went to look for Daisy.

She was waitin' for me at the hotel, Dave Morris hangin' round her. She smiled at me when I approached, and after we had walked up and down the road a while, it was time to go to the circus.

"I can't understand why you want me to go to-night," says she. "Why don't we just go out for a ride in the moonlight, Mr. Dallam."

"Well, ma'am," says I, shakin' my head—though I'd have liked to go ridin' with her—"I got to take you to the circus. Don't ask me why. You'll see when we get there."

At last we were seated near the ring where Tennessee Lamont did his act, and after half an hour of ridin' and clownin' the ringmaster calls out to the big crowd:

"Lad-ies and gents. We are now interducin' Tennessee Lamont, the man with the unerrin' eye. To-night we are givin' for the first time in the history of the show business a special thrill in the form of a life-and-death shootin' exhibition. Mr. Lamont will endeavor to prove he ain't no four-flusher by shootin' at a target against which stands a livin', breathin' man."

I looked at the gal. Her little white forehead was puckered up, and she murmurs: "This is something new."

"Yes," says I, bound to do my best for young Teehee, "this is why I brung you to-night. He is doin' it all for you, Miss Daisy, to prove to you he ain't a coward. He loves you. Why ain't you nicer to him?"

"Who, Tennessee Lamont?" says she, evidently unable to understand what I was talkin' about.

"No ma'am," says I.

I didn't enlighten her, as I wanted her to have the thrill of seein' the boy up there on the platform, standin' stanch and true, while the lead whizzed round him.

Tennessee was bowin' and scrapin' before the crowd, his long, dark hair

brushed and shinin' in the light of the big lamps, his rifles on a movable rack at his side.

On the platform at the other end of the tent, where there were no people, was a thick, high screen, with heavy spars behind it to catch the bullets. There was a white sheet stretched across the screen, and up against this, clothed all in black, steps young Teehee Taylor, lookin' so white he made the sheet seem dirty.

"Oh, my God," says Daisy, or something like that. Anyway, she gasped so hard I thought she was goin' to pass out. I was right pleased—not 'cause she was goin' to faint, but 'cause I knowed if young Teehee had heard her and seen how affected she was he would have felt better.

Tennessee had stepped back to the end of the tent and was makin' ready to throw a few pounds of lead in Teehee's direction. The audience was very still and much thrilled, and I felt sort of exhilarated myself, though I didn't figger there was much danger, seein' how skillful Lamont was.

"Why didn't you tell me this before?" says the gal, in such a queer voice I looked away from the ring and stared at her.

Tennessee had raised his rifle to his shoulder and was takin' aim. The gal reaches inside her coat, pulls a small, nickel-plated revolver, and without more ado begins to shoot. The second one got Lamont, and he dropped his rifle and, forgettin' the crowd, he begun to rub his arm and cuss something turrible. It was worth the price of admission just to hear him. I sat there spellbound, not only by Tennessee's remarks, which was remarkable even for a circus man, but also by the actions of the gal Daisy.

She had took a jump that landed her on the necks of the people in front of us, then another and so on, till she reached the dirt ring, where she runs as fast as her little legs will carry her over to where Tennessee Lamont is jumpin' about like a beheaded chicken.

"I arrest you, William Lamont," says she, in loud, clear tones, "for attempted murder."

I purty near laughed aloud. She laid her hand on Tennessee's wounded arm, and he howled so loud I thought the tent was goin' to fall in.

I made my way to her side, where a crowd had gathered, all talkin' at once. In the fore was Teehee, tryin' to tell her it was all right.

"I'll give him permission to shoot at me," he was sayin', when I got there. "It's part of the act. There ain't any danger. Tennessee is too expert a shot."

She give him a look that would have discouraged a truck hoss, and Teehee sort of fades into the background.

"Sheriff," says the gal, to that personage, who had been tryin' to arrest her, "here's my credentials."

The sheriff he takes 'em, and bein' sort of slow at readin', he says the words aloud to give 'em a chance to sink in.

"Miss Daisy Jackson," he reads, "detective in the employ of the City of New York."

"Here's warrants for the arrest of Lamont and of one Dave Morris. See if you can find him. They killed this lad's brother near New York, but I didn't have the goods on 'em then, the way I have now. However, when I take 'em back, there'll be some new evidence."

Old Sheriff Sanders had sifted out of the crowd and was off after Dave Morris.

I sure was stumped—couldn't make out what it was all about. But young Teehee, happy as a kid, explained it to me next mornin'.

It seems this Dave Morris was the next heir after Teehee. He and Tennessee Lamont, with whom Morris had been associated for a long time, finished off Teehee's brother, Jack. Then they had lit out for Texas to get Teehee be-

fore he could learn of his brother's death.

The trick they had worked on the older brother was different, but the trick they was workin' on Teehee would have been just as efficient if the little lady, who was hot on their trails, hadn't horned in and spoiled their game. They caught Dave Morris a hundred miles away, and the two of 'em were shipped back to New York.

"My, my, my," I said, drawing a deep breath when Steve had finished, "but that was a narrow escape! What happened to young Teehee after that?"

"Oh," said Steve, "the gal Daisy was right nice to him, and let him know she had only took up with his cousin so's to keep an eye on him and find out all she could, that she knowed Teehee was brave, and that he needn't have been such a damn fool. They went back East together, and after a while I got a letter from Teehee, tellin' me how he was rich and was in an ecstasy of bliss, as Daisy had promised to be his wife."

"He should have been happy," I said.

"I don't know," said Steve. "Maybe it would have been just as well if Tennessee had plugged him."

"Why," I asked, forgetting Steve's tendency toward misogyny, "Teehee escaped death."

"Yep," said Steve, "but he got married, didn't he? Some say it's worse."

Let's Talk It Over

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER

THE interest shown in the recent production of "Othello" in New York is another proof that the theater-going public welcomes the return of the jealousy plot to the stage. Jealousy is the motive of a large proportion of our modern dramas, not only in the theater, but in real life. This, of course, accounts for its perpetual success as a plot device, for the theater is, or should be, in serious drama, the reflection of the life we live or the life which others have lived. And the difference between our lives and the lives of others is purely a matter of personal environment.

We meet "the green-eyed monster" every day. If we travel in the subway, we feel its slight influence upon us when we hang onto our straps and glance longingly at a more fortunate individual who is comfortably ensconced in a seat. If our children are of necessity deprived of luxuries which the children of more opulent parents enjoy, the green-eyed monster gets in its work, and if its influence goes no farther than causing us to crave the same comforts for our offspring, we are lucky, indeed. Such craving has led to dramatic situations in real life which are no less vital than the machinations of *Iago* against *Othello*. And there is usually a *Desdemona* who pays for our folly if we let it get the better of our sound judgment.

In business, too, the green-eyed monster seizes the golden opportunity to stir up strife. The favor of the boss, expressed in salary advances to fellow employees, furnishes fertile soil for discord. Professional jealousy among artists has led to the subtle defamation of character and even to murder. The triumph of the green-eyed monster would be complete if the truly worth-while man or woman were not quick to recognize its corrupting presence and spurn it as he or she would the devil. And is there any worse devil than the green-eyed monster?

But there are too many honest men —men of sterling character—even in this harsh old world of ours to permit the green-eyed monster to crush ability. Ability must triumph in nine cases out of ten. Just because now and then the green-eyed monster wins a startling victory in office, home, or nation, it is no sign that true ability has met with crushing defeat. It is a sign which we should herald as a reminder that we ourselves should not be caught napping when the green-eyed monster stalks among us. And the hardest punch we can administer to that imp of jealousy is to clothe ourselves in the armor of character. For character begets ability —ability that results from developing our talents to the utmost as a trust vested in us by a Power against which the machinations of the green-eyed monster are futile.

The Get-Together Club

RECENTLY we had a letter from one of our readers in Limerick, Ireland, which we printed in COMPLETE STORY for April 25th last.

The letter was on the subject of larks. Commenting on a passage in a story in a previous number of the magazine to the effect that "a lark, frightened from a bough overhead, flew to another tree and sang as though its breast would burst," our correspondent said: "I never heard of larks alighting on trees and certainly not of their singing while perched in one. Their vocal efforts are left for the blue overhead."

Another of our readers sends us a communication which apparently vindicates the author of the story without controverting the statement contained in the criticism of it.

He points out the fact that, although the bird almost universally recognized as the lark is the skylark, as our Limerick friend contends, yet in America we have a bird which is called the lark, rather loosely because it really "belongs to the blackbird family."

The author of the story "May the Best Man Win" undoubtedly had in mind this "Western Meadow Lark" which Ernest Seton Thompson says "equals or excels both wood thrush and nightingale and in beauty of articulation has no superior." And this meadow lark will sing from the lofty boughs of trees.

We offer this bit of ornithology without any apology for it.

The following letter is a particularly welcome one partly because it strikes a responsive chord in the breast of the editor and partly because it recognizes the presence, in the pages of COMPLETE STORY MAGAZINE, of good-fellowship and sportsmanship—perhaps they are synonymous terms—two things that we have honestly tried to foster.

When we read this letter we imagined that we could see a certain similarity between our job as a magazine editor and that of the telephone operator. And really it isn't so imaginary; as a matter of fact, if the telephone operator has to work "hard to please all subscribers," doesn't the editor also have to work "hard to please all subscribers?"

The editor, to be sure, has one more or less substantial advantage—his subscribers can't talk directly at him, they have to content themselves with writing letters that the post-office authorities will not censor; oral communications to telephone operators are not censorable, so far as we know.

Let us say that we wish to keep Mr.

Bryson's good opinion, not only because of sympathy and understanding, but because COMPLETE STORY MAGAZINE brings him entertainment. We want him—and everybody else—to feel that he is getting his money's worth.

OTTAWA, April 27, 1925,
254 Cooper Street, Apt. 14A.

Editor, C. S. M.

DEAR MR. EDITOR: Again a word from your telephone critic in Canada.

Now, as I told you in my other letter, that one's nerve is forced at some time. Well, I am again forced to write you.

No doubt your story "Wrong Number," by Miles Overholt, moved me considerable, as well as other people, as I received two letters from an American sister in Texas and an American brother in New York, who were very glad that I stand out so well for telephone operators who work so hard to please all subscribers. Now, some people will not think so, but my suggestion to them is to visit a telephone exchange or central and watch the operator for about ten minutes, and if they think I am wrong, my hat comes off.

In my other letter I hope no one took any offense, for there was none meant. I was so glad I wrote you, because the good-fellowship I presumed was in COMPLETE STORY MAGAZINE and its goodly editor was verified. I can see, and I am sure others see also, that you and your magazine are out for more than revenue. Between the lines you can read real sportsmanship, which is nourishment for us all. I could keep saying a lot about COMPLETE STORY MAGAZINE, not to forget its editor, but the last I will say is that COMPLETE STORY MAGAZINE *is* the best, as I pass it along to friends who did not know there was such a magazine published, they are all well pleased and ask for more.

While you publish COMPLETE STORY MAGAZINE, I am, yours, J. W. BRYSON.

We agree perfectly with the writer of the following letter that "no one ought to ask for all Western stories." We are inclined to agree with her, too, in her suggestion about "mystery" stories. Whether or not we could make up tables of contents of the magazine on the basis of percentages of Western mystery and miscellaneous stories, we don't know, because the supply of different types of tales for a magazine like COMPLETE STORY is a difficult thing to regulate.

One thing, at least, seems to have been pretty well established and that is that no great amount of clamor has been raised in behalf of the Western story.

See how you like the stories that appear in these pages for the next few months.

INGLEWOOD, CALIF., 1005 66th,
April 22, 1925.

Editor, COMPLETE STORY MAGAZINE,
New York City.

DEAR SIR: In a recent issue you invite your readers to tell you what their preference is regarding stories of the Western type.

Personally, while I enjoy short, amusing Western stories, I dislike the long-winded Western yarn about cattle rustlers, Mexican bandits, et cetera, and have already regretfully dropped two magazines because they show too great a fondness for that type of literature.

You say that over a given period you have published seven long Western tales and seven of some other type. Fifty per cent Western stories seems entirely too much to me. Why not one third or one fourth Western tales, one third or one fourth mystery tales, and the rest miscellaneous? Personally, I should prefer all the long stories mystery tales, and do not have nearly enough as it is; but, no doubt, other readers have other preferences. However, no one ought to ask for all Western stories. I am sure lots of people don't care for them, as I have seen letters from people who didn't. The long story takes up over a third of the magazine; so if it is always or most of the time something one doesn't care for, there isn't much left to read.

Sincerely, GRACE E. GAY.

We would gladly answer the questions propounded in the following letter if they dealt with matters that concerned us alone. Obviously, however, they involve questions that concern the personal business affairs of authors and, for all we know to the contrary, the authors may object to a discussion of them. We can, nevertheless, say that it is the practice nowadays for authors to reserve motion-picture rights to stories that they sell for serial use in magazines.

As to another story by the author of "High Speed" we regret very much to be obliged to say that it is out of the question, because, by a curious freak of fate, Mr. Stagg lost his life some time ago in an automobile accident.

NEW YORK, May 1, 1925.

STREET & SMITH,
79 Seventh Avenue, New York.

GENTLEMEN:

From being passionately fond of reading, my thoughts normally turn to writing, therefore these few lines. I clung to PEOPLE'S MAGAZINE from the times before Packard's "Jimmy Dale" series, and I remember well a story about the old man who always rewarded virtue and punished crime. I regret the absence of such really good stories as "High Speed," and now come to the core of the matter.

Many of your stories possess in themselves the making of a motion picture, if not of the length of a feature, at least a "two-reeler." Enough, what with a comedy, a news reel, and an educational film or a travelogue, to pass a pleasant two or three hours in a neighborhood show. Do the authors of your stories reserve these rights to themselves, or are they acquired by you with the story? Furthermore, do authors receive a royalty on every copy of their story sold, is it bought outright, or are they paid so much per word? While these questions seem impertinent, all apologies are herewith rendered for the unintentionable rudeness or curiosity, no answer need be printed if same, in your opinion, is not merited. If possible, get the author of "High Speed" to write another one just as interesting and thrilling as his first; for variety's sake let him use an airship instead of an auto about which to spin his yarn. Let this be enough for this letter. Yours very truly,

F. STRAUSS.

BUFFALO, N. Y., April 27, 1925.

MY DEAR MR. SESSIONS: I note my letter of March 17th in COMPLETE STORY April 25th, and am surely pleased with your sympathetic comment.

Here is something for your *personal* attention and consideration. I have had it in mind for some time.

On the cover of COMPLETE STORY MAGAZINE we read "A Magazine of Real Recreation," and, do you know, I think you are stressing the applicability of that last word.

Why not have it: A Magazine of Real *Entertainment?*

I'll keep right on and buy COMPLETE STORY MAGAZINE, and I write this letter only because I like it and you. Cordially,

HENRY GUIMOND.

One Dollar

You can still make "money talk."

Turn a dollar into a Topkis Union Suit at your dealer's. You'll say any dollar that buys such underwear value is a loud speaker.

Here's fabric otherwise found in only high-price makes. Here's comfort-fit that comes from liberal cut. Here's careful tailoring. In every detail there's workmanship far beyond the commonplace!

You'll marvel that such underwear can be yours for a dollar. Look for the Topkis label.

Men's Union Suits, $1.00; Shirts and Drawers, 75c each; Boys' Union, 75c; Girls' Bloomer Union, 75c; Children's Waist Union Suits, 75c; Men's Suits, $1.50 in Canada.

Write for free illustrated booklet

TOPKIS BROTHERS COMPANY, Wilmington, Del.

General Sales Offices:
93 Worth St., at Broadway, New York

It pays to buy Topkis by the box. Six union suits for $6. The more suits in service, the better each one wears.

TOPKIS

Athletic Underwear

Adventures in Health

Letters typical of thousands telling of the amazing power of one simple fresh food

NOT a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense—Fleischmann's Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food.

The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion—clear the skin—banish the poisons of constipation. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active. And day by day it releases new stores of energy.

Eat two or three cakes a day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices or milk—or just plain. *For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) night and morning.* Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Start eating it today!

And let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Health Research Dept. Z-17, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.

THERE *are many delicious ways of eating yeast —dissolved in water, fruit juices or milk, spread on crackers, or eaten plain.*

"IN MARCH, 1923, I had what I supposed was a nervous breakdown. I was restless and irritable. I had headaches and dizzy spells. I began to use Fleischmann's Yeast. Gradually my ills disappeared—I became regular, and discontinued the use of cathartics. My energy returned—and in four or five months I was my former self. Not only have I regained my health, but my color and my general appearance have been improved."

MRS. MARGARET ADE SWEENEY, Roxbury, Mass.

"I AM A HOSTESS at a hotel and not a day passes that someone doesn't ask me how I manage to be up late at night and out in the sun every day and still keep my skin so clear and fair and my eyes so bright. My answer is Fleischmann's Yeast. Years of intestinal indigestion had brought me to the point where I determined I'd stick at it until I got relief. Three cakes of yeast dissolved in water became a daily rite. In three months I had the results I wanted—relief from indigestion, gas and chronic constipation." MRS. GERTRUDE W. HOOD, Mount Lowe, Calif.

Your lifeline tells how long you'll live. That's how long Kum-a-part Kuff Buttons are guaranteed to last-for Life!

Lifetime Wear Guaranteed!

—but only if you see the name **KUM-A-PART** on it. Many separable cuff buttons look like **KUM-A-PARTS** but in no other can you be sure of lifetime wear.

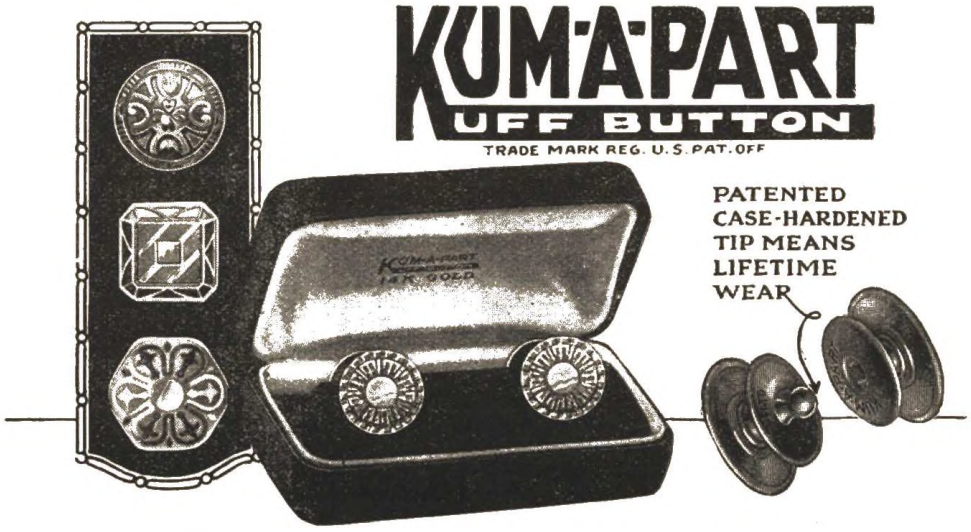
And their simplicity! Click open snap shut that's all—efficiency without fuss. The modern man unsnaps his cuff—he doesn't force his hand thru.

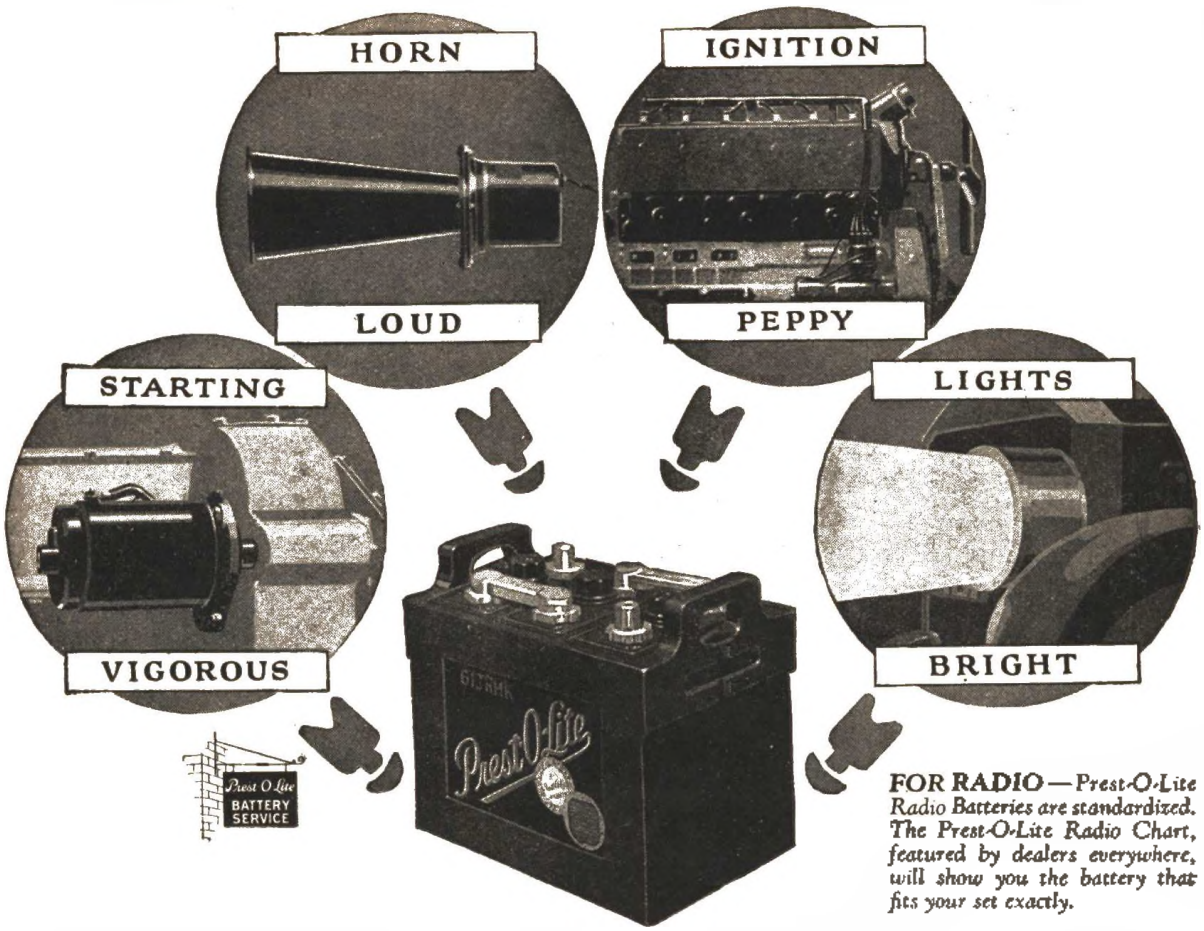
And how rarely is utility combined with such good looks. **KUM-A-PARTS** are beauty-spots in your cuffs. Their smart designs are the quiet signs which distinguish the exceptional from the merely good.

And **KUM-A-PARTS** cost no more than ordinary cuff buttons—$1.50 to $25 for the finer grades at Jewelers—50c and $1.00 for popular priced ones at **Men's Shops**

Write for Correct Dress Chart "H"

THE BAER & WILDE COMPANY, ATTLEBORO, MASS.





FOR RADIO—*Prest-O-Lite Radio Batteries are standardized. The Prest-O-Lite Radio Chart, featured by dealers everywhere, will show you the battery that fits your set exactly.*

Quick, lively action—at battery prices that save you money

EAGER, active, alert—a Prest-O-Lite powered electric system warms the heart of every motorist! No finer battery performance is possible. Quick starting—sure firing—bright lighting! Dependable for a long, repair-free life!

At prices as remarkable as the service itself! Think of it—standard Prest-O-Lite Batteries for only $15.50 and up! Surely, these are the most attractive values offered to motorists!

Here is a reasonably priced battery that you can buy with confidence—a battery that is initial equipment on an ever-growing list of America's most famous cars—serviced by one of the oldest organizations known to motorists—and endorsed by the world's largest electro-chemical battery research laboratories!

Take advantage of Prest-O-Lite "Friendly Service" now. Just drive into the nearest Prest-O-Lite Station for courteous, economical service. Ask to see the new Super-Service Battery.

THE PREST-O-LITE CO., INC., INDIANAPOLIS, IND.
New York San Francisco
In Canada: Prest-O-Lite Company of Canada, Ltd., Toronto, Ont.

Prest-O-Lite

CHRISTIANITY ON BROADWAY

Excerpts from editorial in The Daily Reporter, White Plains, N.Y. By W. Livingston Larned

AN UNUSUAL project has been set in motion in New York. A "Business Building" is to rise on Broadway, at 173rd Street, dedicated to Christianity. To be known as the "Broadway Temple," it will contain a church, offices, auditoriums, schools, hotel accommodations, cafeterias, etc. And to a large extent, it will be erected by popular subscription. Individuals buy bonds, representing a 5 per cent investment and the total cost will be approximately $4,000,000.

It is the first undertaking of its kind, and has so many amazing features that we will do well to observe some of these innovations. For this is a combination of church and skyscraper. Business and Christianity will be housed under one roof.

This Broadway Temple is, in a sense, a gigantic symbol of the uncontrovertible fact that Godliness can and should be continuous.

Broadway will be the better for a substantial reminder of this Holy Presence. From every vantage point, on sunny days, or nights filled with the sinister menace of storm, a high-flung cross of unquenchable light will be visible, glittering against the heavens. And he will murmur to himself, reverently, "The Holy Spirit bides with me, wherever I may be, walking or sleeping."

Broadway Temple will cover 26,000 square feet of foundation space, facing a whole block on Broadway. It will have a beautiful tower, 24 stories high; six million people will see a revolving cross of light, 34 feet high, on its topmost pinnacle. The church auditorium will seat 2200; there will be Sunday school rooms, a social hall and every modern convenience for religious and community work. An apartment hotel in the tower is to contain 644 rooms, public offices and dining halls. Apartments for housekeeping in the two wings will accommodate 500 persons. And there are stores fronting on Broadway.

In exploiting this magnificent and ambitious plan, its sponsors say: "A 5 per cent investment in your Fellow Man's Salvation, Broadway Temple is to be a combination of Church and Skyscraper, Religion and Revenue, Salvation and 5 per cent—and the 5 per cent is based on ethical Christian grounds."

Broadway Temple is more than a revolutionary idea, more than a sound investment, more than an architectural wonder of the age; it represents a spiritual stepping-stone in man's climb upward to the Cross.

"Buy These Bonds and Let God Come to Broadway"

Religion and Revenue

Glorified by a Wonderful Ideal

The Directors who will conduct this business enterprise, the men with whom you, as an investor, will be associated, are some of the keenest and best-known business men in New York. They are

President: Ellis L. Phillips,
Pres. Long Island Lighting Co.
Arthur J. Baldwin, Vice-President
McGraw-Hill Publishing Co.
Carl H. Fowler, Vice-President,
Fowler & Holloway.
Samuel McRoberts, Treasurer,
Chatham & Phoenix Nat'l Bank & Trust Co.
W. R. Comfort, President,
Reid Ice Cream Co.
Charles A. Frueauff,
Frueauff, Robinson & Sloan.
Frank De K. Huyler,
President of Huyler's.
E. V. P. Ritter,
Formerly Pres. Grand Central Palace.
M. G. Collins, Vice-President, Broker
Watson S. Moore, Vice-President,
Formerly V.P. U. S. Grain Corp.
Frederick Kraft, Secretary,
Kraft Cheese Co.
Hon. Royal S. Copeland,
U. S. Senator.
Lamar Hardy,
Former Corporation Counsel.
Robert H. Montgomery,
Lybrand, Ross Bros. & Montgomery.
W. P. Tanner,
W. P. Tanner-Gross Co.

BROADWAY TEMPLE
A Twentieth Century Cathedral, Church, Hotel, Stores, Apartment House; Self-Supporting, Community-Serving

Why this is a SAFE Investment

Merely as an investment the Bonds of the Broadway Temple are inviting as a business proposition. Ewing, Bacon & Henry, real estate experts in a letter to Donn Barber, the architect, set forth the following conservative estimate of income:

Rental from stores	$27,500
Income from two apartment houses	166,290
Income from apartment hotel	402,300
Total annual income	$596,090
Total expenses and interest and taxes	470,500

Leaving a net surplus for the bond holders of $125,590 annually.

GEN. SAMUEL MCROBERTS, Treas.
Chatham & Phoenix National Bank & Trust Co.
149 Broadway, New York City

I hereby subscribe to $..... in Broadway Temple Second Mortgage GOLD BONDS, income bearing at the rate of 5% per year. I agree to make payments as follows: 10% of total amount when my subscription is accepted, and 10% every sixty days thereafter until paid in full.

IF YOU WANT DETAILS ONLY, SEND COUPON BELOW

—Before I send in my subscription please send complete details showing how I may make this investment with safety of principal and interest at 5%.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

Missing Page

Missing Page

Missing Page

Inside back cover

Missing Page

Back cover