ST IN FICTION—THREE SERIALS, A NOVEL, SEVEN STORIES

Everybody's MAGAZINE

NUARY
1923
25¢

"FAST" by Will Levington Comfo

If You Were Dying To-night

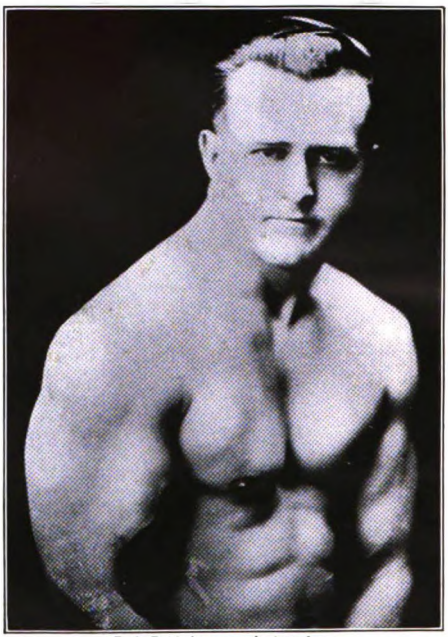
and I offered you something that would give you ten years more to live, would you take it? You'd grab it. Well fellows, I've got it, but don't wait till you're dying or it won't do you a bit of good. It will then be too late. Right now is the time. To-morrow or any day, some disease will get you and if you have not equipped yourself to fight it off, you're gone. I don't claim to cure disease. I am not a medical doctor, but I'll put you in such condition that the doctor will starve to death waiting for you to take sick. Can you imagine a mosquito trying to bite a brick wall? A fine chance.

A Re-built Man

I like to get the weak ones. I delight in getting hold of a man who has been turned down as hopeless by others. It's easy enough to finish a task that's more than half done. But give me the weak, sickly chap and watch him grow stronger. That's what I like. It's fun to me because I know I can do it and I like to give the other fellow the laugh. I don't just give you a veneer of muscle that looks good to others. I work on you both inside and out. I not only put big, massive arms and legs on you, but I build up those inner muscles that surround your vital organs. The kind that give you real pep and energy, the kind that fire you with ambition and the courage to tackle anything set before you.

All I Ask Is Ninety Days

Who says it takes years to get in shape? Show me the man who makes any such claims and I'll make him eat his words. I'll put one full inch on your arm in just 30 days. Yes, and two full inches on your chest in the same length of time. Meanwhile, I'm putting life and pep into your old back-bone. And from then on, just watch 'em grow. At the end of thirty days you won't know yourself. Your whole body will take on an entirely different appearance. But you've only started. Now comes the real works. I've only built my foundation. I want just 60 days more (90 in all) and you'll make those friends of yours who think they're strong look like something the cat dragged in.



Earle E. Liederman as he is to-day

A Real Man

When I'm through with you, you're a real man. The kind that can prove it. You will be able to do things that you had thought impossible. And the beauty of it is you keep on going. Your deep full chest breathes in rich pure air, stimulating your blood and making you just bubble over with vim and vitality. Your huge, square shoulders and your massive muscular arms have that rowing for the exercise of a regular he man. You have the flash to your eye and the pep to your step that will make you admired and sought after in both the business and social world.

This is no idle prattle, fellows. If you doubt me, make me prove it. Go ahead. I like it. I have already done this for thousands of others and my records are unchallenged. What I have done for them, I will do for you. Come then, for time flies and every day counts. Let this very day be the beginning of new life to you.

Send for my new 64-page book

"MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT"

It contains dozens and dozens of full-page photographs of both myself and my numerous pupils. Also full description of my wonderful offer to you. This book is bound to interest you and thrill you. It will be an impetus—an inspiration to every red blooded man. I could easily collect a big price for a book of this kind just as others are now doing, but I want every man and boy who is interested to just send the attached coupon and the book is his **absolutely free.** All I ask you to cover is the price of wrapping and postage—10 cents. Remember this does not obligate you in any way. I want you to have it. So it's yours to keep. Now don't delay one minute—this may be the turning point in your life to-day. So tear off the coupon and mail at once while it is on your mind.

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN
Dept. 5001, 305 Broadway, New York

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN
Dept. 5001, 305 Broadway, N. Y. City

Dear Sir:—I enclose herewith 10 cents for which you are to send me, without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development." (Please write or print plainly.)

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City ..... State .....

Everybody's

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If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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The Complete Novel for February

The Swan and the Mule

By Della MacLeod

Louisiana in the old days when young lovers sometimes encountered that stern, often unscrupulous opposition that furnishes an effective ingredient for stirring fiction.

SOME FEBRUARY SHORT STORIES

Once Chance Nodded — By Garet Garrett
A business story in which truth and fiction are successfully blended

The Trap — By Beth B. Gilchrist
A feminine method of meeting a crisis

The Digger — By John Russell
Whose "Where the Pavement Ends" won international fame

Only the High Spots — By Walter De Leon
The pathos of ambition unsupported by success-winning qualities

And there will be others in

February *EVERYBODY'S*—out January 15th

For further announcements, see page 149 and "The Chimney Corner," page 173

Gen. Wair

Everybody's

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Miss Commonplace

MANY folk go far afield, seeking the woman whom we have named Romance. I know her well, too; also her sister, Miss Commonplace. Unlike the woman named Romance, Miss Commonplace walks with her eyes downcast, wondering, and calling to none to follow her quiet feet, though, I think, hoping that some may follow her.

I know a man who for twelve years served as a soldier. He has often been inspected, in all the gaudiness of soldiers' appareling, by presidents and princes. He speaks resignedly of war and places far away from his small shanty. Sometimes, stopping in his labors, he looks up, looking straight ahead, as though he watched an enemy's approach. Yesterday, when I met him out in the sun, shoveling cement, he said,

"Little Dicky ain't gettin' no better."

Little Dicky is fourteen, but smaller than most healthy boys of eight. He is a shadowy child, with lost eyes and a queer smile, as though he saw something far beyond his childhood. His father works all day in the sun, turning concrete. When I came away from seeing little Dicky, I met him just outside the yard gate.

"I ain't worryin' " he said; " 'tain't no use." And added, "I was 'opin' to 'ave paid for sister's funeral first." Little Dicky's sister is gone whither little Dicky soon must follow.

I have a great respect for Miss Commonplace, whose eyes are downcast in pity and whose feet follow not any blaring bugle. I think she hears the words of little Dicky's father, seeing, too, the sorrow in his painful face.

It's a queer jig, this life of ours. One little narrow street, when you come to know each life upon it, with each heartache and hope, and pride and vanity, holds all of mortal life there is for any one to search into.

BILL ADAMS.

"You have made a statement. You are going to stand by it, make or break." She gazed at him tragically. "Don't you see, Jimmy?"

On *and* On

There's an Excellent New-Year Resolution That It May Occur to You to Accept After You've Read This Interesting Story of the Trials of a Plain, Every-Day American Couple

By Louis Lee Arms

Illustrations by E. Hopper

AT THE wedding in Detroit, friends of Jimmy and Stella Maynard said they were well matched. It was more important that at the end of the first nine months this could still be said. Time is the real match-maker. In the case of Jimmy and Stella, the elderly gentleman with the beetle-back seemed to be building as well as he knew how.

They had begun their married career modestly, as becomes a young woman who had learned about men and personal economics as a private secretary and an orphan, or as a young man whose prosperity was in ratio to the number of Mars-Detroit open and closed jobs he could dispose of.

Jimmy was a good automobile salesman. There were two reasons. He liked the selling game. He was selling something he liked.

Every man loves something for its sheer art. This was the basis of Jimmy's love for a lacquered aluminum body set plumply upon a rigid steel chassis. The music of the motor, the poetry of design, the boldness of sculpture—beautiful things were there.

Jimmy had no particular ambition beyond the vague one of the average young man. He wanted to make about a million dollars.

Stella had many ambitions both for herself and for Jimmy. There was one which dominated. It was one thousand times less pretentious than the somewhat nebulous desire of her husband. It was to save a thousand dollars. The reason was not prim but practical.

As secretary to an executive in a large automobile plant, she at times had investigated cases of protracted illness among employees. They had left her with a mental image of the proverbial rainy-day by which she meant to profit. Let others jest tritely about methodical thrift. Let others trust all to some future lucky stroke. Very well; she wouldn't.

"Go as far as you like, sweetness. The bank needs that money badly," said Jimmy, when she opened their account with a ten-dollar bill.

"We'll never miss it, Jimmy. If we do need it, we'll have it."

It was nine months and one day and some minutes since they had been married when Jimmy drove out Woodward Avenue with a yeasty feel in his chest. He was driving faster than usual, took a corner abruptly and stopped at the curb in the middle of the block. Hurriedly he locked the ignition. He could barely repress a desire to run shouting into the house.

"No," he murmured; "I'll wait until after dinner."

Stella was in the kitchen. He kissed her enthusiastically. She looked at him and smiled.

"What is it, Jimmy?"

"What is what?"

"What's happened?"

"What makes you think anything has happened?"

The gas-range demanded her attention. If Jimmy considered his wife beautiful, always he deemed her an angel in the kitchen.

In a gingham slip-over, now stirring this or pouring that, a steel kitchen-fork held like a tiny lance, Stella made a picture his eyes devoured. He felt that their little kitchen was one of those things that had contributed unexpectedly to married life.

Stella turned down the flame beneath one of the vegetables and looked at him.

"I could tell by your eyes," she said.

"Right! And something tells me that dinner is about done. What do you say to waiting until after? I'm hungry."

"SWEETHEART," said Jimmy, scuffing his chair back slightly from the table when they had done, "how would you like to go to New York?"

"New York? For a trip?"

"To live!" Stella was speechless. "It's this way," continued Jimmy rapidly. "Jack Duval has written that there's an opening with the Duplex people down there. He can get the place for me. It pays seventy-five and commissions to start with. Jack says it's a wide-open chance for a live man. What do you think?"

To Stella, New York was a place to read about—a place of incredible smartness and wealth, a city sometime to be visited in the sense of attending a magnificent picnic. But the thought of living there had never entered her head.

"Eh, sweetheart?"

Jimmy's face was glowing with pleasure.

"Why, Jimmy, it sounds splendid!"

"It ought to be better than it sounds. Jack made ten thousand down there last year with the Olympian Six. The Olympian, let me remark, is a herd of tin. The Duplex is a real car. Jack would take the place himself if the Olympian people didn't have him on a contract."

New York! Stella felt as though she had suddenly been lifted toward the clouds. Yet there was a pang of doubt. She liked Detroit. She had saved three hundred and twenty-eight of the coveted thousand dollars. Somehow, she felt if the idea had been more abstract, something to be carefully mulled over with months for a decision, she would have preferred it.

"As a matter of fact," Jimmy was saying, "I'm getting kind of tired of the way Crosson runs things down at the office. They say he's going to put in a time-clock for the salesmen on account of Metcalfe's son. A fine idea, isn't it? He's going to make clock-punchers out of us because the chief stockholder's son is a rounder."

Momentarily Stella put aside thoughts of New York.

"I never heard of time-clocks in a salesroom," she said.

"It's only a rumor," Jimmy added quickly. "But even if he doesn't put in the time-clock, I can't give him any cheers on the list of prospects he's been handing me the past month. I'd rather sell overshoes to Hawaiian dancers than try to peddle Mars-Detroits to some of the people he's sent me out to see. I told him so the other day."

There was something of alarm in Stella's eyes.

"You didn't let me know, Jimmy. What did he say?"

"Oh, the usual thing." Jimmy's lips curled slightly. "Said the field had to be covered, and—but what's the difference, sweetness? If we go to New York we can forget Crosson and that hooch-hoisting son. He—well, he's the limit."

Stella had a sudden atavistic thought. It was the secret envy of the static female for the dynamic male ready on the moment to seek new fields and new battles. Then there was curiosity.

"Jimmy, are you sure you could sell cars in New York?"

"What?" Jimmy's jaw dropped.

"You see, you haven't sold the Duplex. New York will be strange and—oh, I don't know," she concluded timidly.

Jimmy's laugh was reassuring.

"Sweetness, I can sell boats anywhere that there are people to buy 'em. Even if I was deaf and dumb, there's a law of average working for every boat-seller in the country. It's the same as though I was handling doughnuts. It wouldn't make any difference whether we were in Kalamazoo or Kokomo, would it? Automobiles are like that."

She began to assimilate Jimmy's bubbling confidence. Yet it was in part only. She could not feel that same magnificent indifference to a big undertaking that her tall, blond husband seemed to. His thoughts, obviously, were on that at which they would arrive; hers on what they would leave behind.

In Stella's voice there was the slightest of unconscious challenge.

"I have lived here all my life," she said. "I love Detroit."

"So do I," replied Jimmy stoutly. "But I'll tell you what I've found. It isn't the town but the people in it that makes things pleasant. I've worked in Cleveland, in Columbus and at the factory in Flint since I left college, and I liked them all." He looked at his wife and smiled tenderly. "But, of course, I like Detroit best."

She began gathering up the dishes, and he stooped over, kissing her.

"Is it New York?" he asked.

His voice could not hide his eagerness. She felt that there was much still to be gone over. To go to New York meant that the money she had resolutely put aside must be spent.

"Let's wait until to-morrow—anyhow."

"Sure!" said Jimmy. "I don't have to wire Jack until the day after to-morrow."

They went, later, to a movie. The feature-picture was a story of the great metropolis. In one of the scenes, a lustrous Fifth Avenue suddenly spread itself upon the silversheet. Stella envisaged herself lost in the bewildering traffic of this great thoroughfare. It gave her a tiny thrill. Jimmy ran an avid eye over the makes of pleasure-cars skimming up and down the avenue.

That night, when he crawled into bed, Jimmy said:

"Mebbe I'm a rolling stone, sweetness. But who wouldn't be, with Crosson, the gilded son and time-clocks to roll from? As for that, I seem to be rolling in the right direction."

He spoke a little proudly, a little complainingly, as a man will sometimes speak of his nerves.

TWO years had slipped by since they had become resident atoms in the great and casual city of New York. Their reactions toward the metropolis had been individual and characteristic. One night in Broadway, during the theater-hour, when they moved with a jostling, chattering mass of humanity, Jimmy said:

"I like this town, sweetheart. It's a constant tonic. It's like it was made for me."

Stella clung snugly to his arm.

"Yes, I know," she answered a little breathlessly, and felt a strange elbow poked against her ribs.

The period of adjustment to New York had meant much different things to each of them.

Jimmy, as he said, liked it. It was as though he were playing a game against the big city—a game of knowing the hours to avoid the subway rush or the stations at which to fly from locals to expresses, how and where to pick up cut-rate theater tickets, which papers published the more sapient sporting news, where to buy clothes and haberdashery that gave the downtown look in contradistinction to the vulgarity that was Broadway, the little cafés in the Roaring Forties and the Furious Fifties that served home-cooked dinners, the less crowded boulevards on Long Island of Sundays.

He knew the crasser high lights and shadows of New York better than many who had spent their lives there. This knowledge, like his understanding of a motor-car, was the result of a cursory study of that which he admired. He was like a fish in exhilarating water.

It had been different with Stella. Jimmy had often told her that New York was impersonal, that she must not mind. To her, it seemed there was but the slightest distinction between this horrible impersonality and downright unfriendliness. In Detroit, she had felt that the butcher, the grocer, the baker were semisocial acquaintances with whom she liked to exchange views on many subjects.

In New York, these tradespeople seemed hard and foreign.

When she contrasted their strident, three-room flat in Harlem with the pretty little home off Woodward Avenue, she could not restrain tears.

"I—I can't help it, Jimmy," she sobbed one evening. "It seems so big and strange and unfriendly."

He gathered her into his arms.

"There, there, sweetness! I know it isn't quite what we had. But look what's ahead of us! I've got a dandy deal on now. Five cars! When this lease is up, we'll move down in the Sixties. That's the district for us."

"It isn't Harlem or this apartment," she said, drying her eyes.

"I can't just see what you don't like about New York," said Jimmy in a puzzled voice. "It's got every modern convenience."

She smiled a little bitterly.

"It has," she answered, "but it seems to me that it's just a great city of inconvenient modern conveniences. It takes twice as long to do the simplest things here as it did in Detroit. Prices are outrageous. I've gone out of my way to be friendly to the women in this apartment-house. By every action they have indicated that they prefer to let and be let alone."

"I know," said Jimmy, nodding. "In a way, I get the same thing down at the shop. There are fellows working in the office that I haven't met yet. There aren't more than three who have tried to be friendly."

"Doesn't it make you feel uncomfortable?"

"I can't say it has." He smiled.

Stella shook her head gravely.

"It seems to me," she said, "that happiness is made up of a number of friendly little things that we can anticipate regularly and be sure of. It was just a big thing to come to New York."

"But remember, sweetness," said Jimmy, "if we win here, we win something. To win means that doors will open to us that we never have dreamed of." Jack Duval had told him that.

Stella tried to remember. After all, Jimmy's career was more important than the various depressing reactions that New York disturbingly set up within her. Jimmy was enthusiastic, an adorable husband, at once lovable and loving. The impersonality of the big city seemed only to make sweeter the assurance of his encircling arms.

Gradually she, too, built for herself that invisible casque which is the conventional shield for the New Yorker's emotions. She experimented with inhibitions. She shopped and did not smile. In the subway or on the elevated her face might have been a pretty mask; she dismissed her Harlem neighbors with half-nods or curt greetings.

As the months slipped by, she even began to feel a New York identity. The thought of Detroit brought less of nostalgia.

IT WAS puzzling to Stella that she had not yet been able to save the rainy-day thousand dollars. There was arithmetical proof, to be sure, that current expenses, plus occasional luxuries—invariably urged by Jimmy and frequently indulged for her benefit in an arbitrary manner—left but a slight balance for the bank in Harlem.

But it seemed, in view of Jimmy's increased income, that the failure to lay by the thousand dollars was a reflection on her thrift.

It was, she decided, an indictment of her character, even, for her mental resolve had been of the finest stuff in the texture of self.

In two years in New York Stella had been able to save precisely seven hundred and fifty-eight dollars and forty cents.

She was thinking of this on her way to the grocer's. Edith and Jack Duval were coming to dinner. Afterward they were going to the theater. It was Jimmy's treat. They had talked it over, but there was one point that Jimmy had tactfully neglected to mention. He had paid a scalper thirty-nine dollars and sixty cents for four seats to a musical revue. Afterward they would visit a dance club in the Fifties.

One of Stella's most difficult adjustments had been to the *modus operandi* of New York's social contact. She and Jimmy had found it a matter of theaters, clubs and cafés. It was exciting in a way; in a way hollow, too.

But, again, Jimmy liked it.

Jimmy came home early, whistling. He was inclined to be mysterious about a package in his coat pocket. At length he exhibited a bottle of sherry.

"Got it from a dago in a basement in a Hundred and Forty-third Street," he explained. "The real stuff. At half-price, too."

"Then we'll need the glasses," said Stella, without enthusiasm. Drinking was a new thing for Jimmy, and she rather disapproved of it.

Jack and Edith arrived very spotless and *blasé*. To play the prosperous and complacent guest in the most owlish of manners was part of the game in New York. Stella

mentally classified persons as those who saved against a rainy day and those who did not. She decided Edith did.

"How's the Duplex going these days, Jimmy?" asked Duval, sipping his wine.

"I suppose you heard about McClintick," said Jimmy.

"No."

"He's going to St. Louis to take over the agency for the new Saturn."

"I hadn't heard."

"Who's McClintick?" inquired Edith.

"He's the sales-manager at our shop," said Jimmy.

Stella gazed at her husband.

"Who's going to succeed him, Jimmy?" she asked.

He flushed slightly.

"I don't know. I don't think the old man has decided yet," he answered.

Duval looked at Jimmy keenly. It suddenly occurred to him that Jimmy would be the next sales-manager of the Duplex.

"By George, Jimmy, that looks like a chance for you!" he exclaimed.

There was a momentary silence, broken by an exclamation from Stella.

"Jimmy!"

Jimmy grinned boyishly.

"I'll admit I have hopes. McClintick seems to think I ought to get it. Some of the other fellows do, too. I've been shot full of luck the last couple of months."

Duval raised his glass.

"Congratulations, Jimmy! Here's to you!"

Jimmy threw up his hands in mock alarm.

"Nix!" he exclaimed. "No toasts before the chickens are hatched."

But they persisted, and he joined them laughingly.

"If I should get the place," he said, smiling, "I'll have to let old Crosson know about it—Father Crosson, the Columbus of time-clocks for boat salesmen!"

For Stella, it was an evening not soon to be forgotten. From Jack and Jimmy's conversation she sensed something of the conflict of her husband's workaday world. It was a queer sensation, and triumph was bubbly, like wine. Jimmy observed her heightened color. At the crowded dance club he whispered,

"Sweetness, you're wonderful!"

She was proud of her tall, blond, unafraid husband. His judgment had been better than hers. New York, for all its exasperating impersonality, its inconvenient modern conveniences, was going to be worth while. It would be very much worth while as Jimmy raced up the ladder of the motor world.

EACH day brought McClintick's leave-taking nearer. For Stella, it was a period of many emotions. When Jimmy arrived back at his Harlem base in the evening, much of the talk turned upon office symptoms. He was radiant on the eve of McClintick's departure.

"It looks promising," he said, striving to be conservative. "The old man called me into his lair to-day. Said McClintick had recommended me. Asked if I had any new selling-ideas. I told him I thought I knew how we could blanket the town. Then he asked my age. I was tempted to tell him I was thirty-six. Honest, sweetie, I think I'll grow a mustache."

Stella smiled. Jimmy was twenty-six.

Because their ambition had been so keen, the blow fell with pile-driving force. Jimmy came home, his face a little white, his lips trembling.

"It's all off," he said. "I didn't get it."

Stella felt herself reeling. She put her arms round his neck and buried her face against his bosom.

"Oh, Jimmy!"

Tears gathered in her dark eyes. She felt dimly that she should comfort Jimmy, not add to his misery. But the tears persisted. Jimmy made a stab at the philosophic.

"It's all in a lifetime," he said. But he did not look at Stella. He was gazing straight ahead, unseeingly. Deep within him, a tiny voice seemed to speak. Its message was incoherent.

He caressed Stella's hair.

"Who got the place?" she asked, when she could trust her voice.

"Pearsall's his name. The old man brought him over from the Jupiter agency."

Stella let her arms drop. She grasped Jimmy's hands in hers and squeezed them, looking into his eyes.

"There are compensations, Jimmy," she said bravely. "To have been the head of the entire selling organization would be a tremendous responsibility. As it is, you have only to look to yourself."

"That's right," he answered. But his smile was singularly detached.

During the ensuing few days, Stella played at the Stoic. In spite of her keen disappointment, she said no more of the lost sales-managership.

Jimmy was young. He could wait. The very fact that he had been considered for an executive position presaged a brilliant future.

A WEEK went by, and Stella thought there was less of buoyancy in Jimmy's manner than she had come to expect. She attributed it to an added effort to make good under the new sales-manager.

Then, one afternoon, he called her on the telephone to ask if she would care to take dinner at the Plaza. Something in his voice carried her back joyously to those months before their marriage in Detroit when they had met at odd places for dinners and determined on various expeditions.

"But, Jimmy, the expense," she objected.

"We can stand it—once," he affirmed.

"I haven't a thing to wear."

"All right. I'll meet you at seven o'clock at the Fifty-ninth Street entrance."

As Stella emerged from the subway and crossed into Columbus Circle, she felt rather pleased at her self-reliance. Two years before, had she been alone, the scene that now spread itself before her would have filled her with terror. Open cars, closed cars, motor-trucks, Fifth Avenue 'buses, delivery-wagons, motor-cycles and what-not whirled about this great vehicular merry-go-round. Up and down Broadway, across Fifty-ninth Street, down Central Park West, up Eighth Avenue and out of Central Park, like scurrying ants, they converged upon the circle only to be flung from it, by the apparent law of centrifugal force, into avenues other than whence they came.

The majority of pedestrians moved on the outer rim of the circle, swiftly or slowly, more or less in character. A few cut through the traffic and were promptly swallowed up by it. Surface-cars fought clamorously for every inch of headway; traffic-officers blew whistles and waved their arms until they were red in the face.

Passing out of the circle, Stella chose the north side of Fifty-ninth Street and strolled along the edge of Central Park toward the Plaza. A low sun threw Brobdingnagian shadows down sprightly vistas. The park was restful, unexcited; yet less than a half-block away there was the hectic turbulence of the busiest traffic-center in the world.

Stella was beginning to feel pride in this infinite variety. She was, in truth, being rapidly converted to New York. She thought again, as she often had of late, that Jimmy's judgment had been better than hers.

Jimmy ordered recklessly. As a culminating rite, the waiter set before her a luscious strawberry parfait and a demi-tasse.

Throughout the dinner Jimmy had maintained an air of gay mystery. Suddenly he exclaimed,

"Mr. and Mrs. James Hilton Maynard, St. Louis, Missouri!"

She looked at him, thinking he was having a joke.

"How does that sound, sweetness?"

Then her heart sank. He was serious.

"I—I don't understand," she answered in a choked voice.

"That's what all the shooting's for," said Jimmy buoyantly. "I want to tell you about it now that everything's set."

He recounted an unexpected exchange of telegrams with McClintick that had resulted in an offer to join the Saturn forces in St. Louis. There would be an increase in salary. He must decide at once.

"What will that answer be, sweetness?" he concluded.

In the rush of engulfing emotions, that which dominated was a sense of abject helplessness. This suddenly strange husband of hers! Stella wanted to scream.

"I don't know how you feel about it," said Jimmy, unobserving, "but, to tell the truth, I'm getting tired of this man's town. It's a stick-up layout from the word 'go.' I know you've called that to my attention many times, but I'm just beginning to realize it."

He looked at her aggrievedly, and she tried to smile.

"But, Jimmy, it means losing all the headway that you've gained in two years with the Duplex people," she remonstrated.

"As for that," he replied, "between you and me and Jacques over there, unless the Duplex people get a hump on and modernize their bodies, they are going to be up

against it. There isn't a more practical motor in the market, I'll admit. But they seem to forget that there are a lot of customers, particularly in New York, who buy for body-lines and not for motors."

This fortunately interested Stella; it gave her a chance to orient her emotions.

"That's what I like about the Saturn," Jimmy continued. "I don't know much about its motor, but it surely has the lines. A car like that sells itself. It eliminates all the technical guff that bores most customers to tears."

Stella understood. Her thoughts now were of the bank in Harlem and the rainy-day balance. That, of course, would again be raided.

"Another thing," Jimmy was saying; "I like McClintick. He likes me. It was he who got the old man to—to call me into the office." He flushed slightly.

As Stella adjusted her wraps and they went out, a 'bus-boy gathered up an unfinished strawberry parfait. From a branch telegraph office on Broadway near One Hundred and Forty-second Street, they sent a night-letter to St. Louis.

THEIR first year in St. Louis was drawing to a close. It had been one they would always remember. The great city which stretched for twenty miles along the western bank of the lazy Mississippi held a singular charm and friendliness.

It was good again to live in a little home—off Kingshighway—and to be the proud lessees of a real veranda. It was pleasant, too, to have young married friends who entertained at home and not under the nose of a demoniacal jazz orchestra.

There were the Berkleys, the O'Connors, the Hylands and the Buckleys and others of the young married set that Jimmy had fallen in with. These had inherited the easy, graceful hospitality which has been handed down for generations in St. Louis, and in which there is much of the South and some of the Gallic.

To Stella, the memory of New York was like a syncopated dream. She discovered that any sentiment which she tried to express for New York was counterfeit; so she stopped trying.

The Saturn was a new car, still to make its mark in the motor market. It was making it. But sophisticated motor-buyers do not discard the old to bring on the new until the new has gone through a period that is tacitly understood to be seasoning.

Young cars are like young men. They must wait their turn, however impatiently.

Jimmy's commissions for the first six months in St. Louis had not exceeded his drawing-account. It was an unusual experience for him.

At times when he had tried to his utmost to make a sale, providing a demonstration smooth as oil, convincing his client apparently on every question of quality and service, he could not hide his disappointment when the prospect bought another make. It was irony that in many instances this other make was a Duplex.

"Don't worry, my boy," said McClintick. "When the tide comes in, it comes swiftly."

"I don't know how they do it," replied Jimmy disconsolately. "I'd swear I've had some of these birds nailed to the mast; then —blooey!"

"It's a good thing not to worry too much about the fellow that gets away," said McClintick. "It's apt to slow you up for the next one."

"All of which listens all right, but doesn't put any commissions in the pocket or Saturns on the street," answered Jimmy dourly.

But the law of average, the cumulative effect of well-written advertising copy and the peripatetic tenacles of selling-contact were making themselves felt. In the first week of the seventh month, Jimmy turned up three sales—two phaetons and a brougham.

"What did I tell you?" exulted McClintick. "The tide has turned."

"Anyhow, I guess my jinx is short-circuited," ventured Jimmy.

He suggested to Stella a mild celebration, say a dinner and theater-party to the O'Connors and the Berkleys with, perhaps, a bottle thrown in. Charlie Berkley knew a man who knew a bootlegger on Market Street.

"The idea!" said Stella, with a withering smile.

"As you say, sweetness," replied Jimmy meekly.

"It isn't that I shouldn't love to entertain, Jimmy," she said, "but remember—since we've come to St. Louis I haven't been able to save a penny."

"Turrubil!" he said good-humoredly.

"It is—almost," she answered seriously. "It's nearly four years, Jimmy, since I began trying to save a thousand dollars."

"Oh, that!"

"Suppose something should happen?"

"You'd get the insurance," he said, with a quick smile. The insurance had become an ancient jest.

It was to Stella's deep regret that Jimmy would not be more serious about money matters.

"I don't mean that," she said. "What if you should become ill or lose your position? What if I should become ill or meet with an accident?"

"You win," declared Jimmy. "No theater-party."

"It cost us two hundred to move from New York," she persisted, "and we've only a little more that five hundred in the bank. I've only half reached my goal."

"They say the first thousand is the hardest," he said, kissing her.

WHILE the two-phaeton-and-brougham record was not equaled the next week, nor yet the next, Jimmy did sell a roadster, a sedan landaulet and a coupé in the course of the ensuing month. As McClintick said, the tide was beginning to turn.

But it was turning slowly. In New York Jimmy had once sold five Duplexes in a fortnight.

It was from Bob Buckley that Jimmy received a tip. Bob was a political writer on the *Republic*. Among other things he knew the city hall inside and out, and the men in it as well.

"The board is going to authorize the purchase of fifteen gas-buggies for various departments and deparmental heads," he said to Jimmy. "The boys get tired sitting in those revolving swivel chairs over at the hall, and it's hard for them to walk. Another thing—their feet are soft from banging them on roll-top desks. So they are going to swat the taxpayer."

"That's good news," said Jimmy.

"Not for the taxpayer," replied Bob. "I don't know what kind of cars they are going to buy. I don't know anything about cars except dodging them. You'd better see Arnold Banks. He's secretary to the board. I'm going to Jefferson City to cover the legislature, but I'll send the word along."

Banks was non-committal. Where had Jimmy heard?

"From a newspaper man, Bob Buckley," said Jimmy. "He said he would get word to you."

"Come back Thursday," advised Banks, thawing. "Between you and I, there is something in it. But we've been holding it back. It always makes a lot of damn-fool talk in the newspapers about joy-riding and such."

It was Jimmy's first thought to tell Stella. She would have her thousand dollars in a lump. Then it occurred to him it would be extremely pleasant to say nothing about it and surprise her one evening by laying the check for the full commission before her. That would be an effective quietus to her unjustified worry.

Thursday he met Banks in the secretary's private office.

"A new car, the Saturn, isn't it?" asked the secretary crisply.

"Going on a year," said Jimmy; "but we've made that year count. You may remember our St. Louis to Kansas City record and the results of the economy run through the Ozarks."

"I don't recall," said the secretary.

"We lowered the Kansas City time by an hour and three minutes. We finished second in the economy run."

"That doesn't mean much, does it?"

Jimmy smiled pleasantly.

"I don't understand," he said.

"Motor dealers never sell customers the kind of cars they put in these runs, do they?" asked the secretary.

"That's a mistaken notion that's been handed down from the old racing-days," Jimmy protested. "I'll admit it was a practise, and in some isolated cases still is, to doctor cars to increase piston-displacement and use doped gas for records. But our car was stock."

The secretary was not unduly impressed. He leaned closer to Jimmy.

"See Sam Bodie at the American Hotel. Sam knows something about cars. I don't. If you can convince him, I am convinced. I'll 'phone him you're coming."

The secretary turned to a pile of correspondence. Jimmy drove over to Market Street.

"Well, think it over," said Bodie, stepping out of the car.

"I understan'," said Sam Bodie, looking Jimmy quickly in the eye. "I guess Banks wants yeh to take me fur a li'l spin."

Bodie was a big man, roughly dressed. A protruding lower lip held the faint trace of tobacco stain. His voice was inclusively soft and quizzical, as though to belie the pugnacious cast of the lower part of his face.

Jimmy was acting in the double capacity of demonstrator and salesman. Bodie climbed into the front seat beside him and they drove out Olive Street.

"Don't know how you fellers get aholt of a thing so quick," said Bodie affably, as he chewed a torn black cigar. "I guess you're 'bout the fifth feller 'at's had me out."

Jimmy had thought he was beating competition to the mark.

"You don't say," he said, hiding his disappointment.

"Yeah. I been up Art Hill so many times I'm gettin' sick of it. What's there to that?"

Art Hill was in Forest Park. In a flat country it was inevitably a choice demonstrating-spot. There was an unpaved road on it that put a throbbing motor to the test. Jimmy smiled.

"That's where I was going," he said.

"Awri'," declared Bodie resignedly. "I kin stand it if you kin. But it sure bumps yeh up a hell of a lot, don't it?"

"A man likes to know what his motor can do," suggested Jimmy.

"The way I figger, these department fellers are purty lucky to get a car, hills er no hills. They wouldn't 'a' had any such lux'rys in the ole days," said Bodie decisively.

AT THE foot of the abandoned, bumpy wagon-track that led up Art Hill Jimmy had a bright thought. He felt that McClintick, who prescribed selling-psychology, would have seconded it. He stopped the car.

"It has just occurred to me, Mr. Bodie, that, if you like, you can wait at the bottom here while I climb the hill. With a fifty-yard run, I think I can go up it without changing gears. But it will be rough going."

"So fur as I'm concerned, yeh don't have to go up the hill at tall, young feller," said Bodie.

Jimmy hesitated. Did this indicate an ignorance of motor-values or, indeed, a superior knowledge of them? Hill-climbing, after all, was a popular bluff. Was ever a salesman known to try to go up a hill that he wasn't sure he could make—when he was trying to close a sale?

"But on high," Jimmy insisted.

"I don't know what yeh mean by 'high,'" replied Bodie inscrutably. "The only high that intrists me is high prices and high times."

Jimmy smiled accomodatingly at a poor pun. By a magnificient gesture of his lips, Bodie shifted his cigar to the corner of his mouth.

"By the way," he said, "this here Saturn is a new car, ain't it?"

"Going on a year," replied Jimmy.

"Yeah? It would be a purty good ad fer the Saturn people to have the city supply 'em to the departments, wouldn't it?"

"It wouldn't hurt any," Jimmy agreed.

"Well, think it over," said Bodie, stepping out of the car.

Jimmy had overestimated his driving-ability and the Saturn motor. He did not make Art Hill on high. With a seventy-five yard take-off, he hit the foot of the grade at forty-five miles an hour. But the road was fit to break the heart of a motor-car. Now the little Saturn tilted to the right, again to the left. The mad acceleration of the motor told when some bump sent the rear wheels clear of the road. The tires shot a stream of stones against the fenders. To drive was like rowing in a choppy sea.

Twenty-five yards from the top of the hill, the Saturn had almost lost momentum. Jimmy reluctantly shot the gears into second.

But he had delayed too long; the motor would not pick up. He came down to first—a perilous operation—grumbling.

At the top of the hill he paused and gazed back. Another car was at the bottom and its driver stood beside Bodie, looking up. Both were smiling.

Jimmy turned about, killed his motor, slipped the gears into second and coasted slowly down-grade.

"Yeh didn't make it," said Bodie, when Jimmy stepped out of the Saturn.

"Not on high," Jimmy replied. "She would have gone over easy on second if it

hadn't been for my poor driving. I guess I'm a bit out of practise."

He smiled apologetically, then sensed amusement in the stranger's manner.

"Meet my fren' Phelps," said Bodie. "Lemme see—what's your name?"

"Maynard," Jimmy replied, shaking hands.

"Phelps sells the Venus," explained Bodie. "He ain't achin' none to go up the hill."

"What's the use?" said Phelps, with a sardonic smile. "By the way, Sam, there's something I want to speak to you about."

"'Scuse me a minute," said Bodie to Jimmy.

Jimmy was annoyed at Phelps' intrusion. It was in violation of an unwritten law among salesmen.

Bodie and Phelps drew off several yards and conversed in low tones. Bodie seemed to complain.

Pleasure-seekers were gathering. In the distance there were golfers swinging on the municipal links. A camera fan with a slouch hat focused on the Art Museum and, as Bodie and Phelps rejoined Jimmy, shot his picture.

Bodie, chewing on his cigar, sank into the front seat of the Saturn with a grunt. Phelps waved and was off.

"Nice car, the Venus," said Bodie.

It was an open secret that the Venus people were having trouble with their rear construction. Jimmy maintained the silence of professional charity.

"Nice car, I said," persisted Bodie.

"It seems to get by," said Jimmy shortly.

He felt vaguely uncomfortable. They rode several blocks in silence.

"Guess you don't think much of the Venus," said Bodie finally.

"No, I don't," responded Jimmy.

More silence.

"Say, 'ave yeh ever been in politics?" Bodie suddenly asked.

"Not yet," said Jimmy.

For several moments, Bodie chewed into his cigar thoughtfully.

"I thought not," he said.

When they reached the hotel, Bodie lumbered out of the car.

"When shall I call again?" asked Jimmy.

"I'll see yeh to-morrow," said Bodie, and his eyes narrowed as he added, "and talk turkey."

But the next day Sam Bodie was too busy to see Jimmy and talk turkey. The police arrested him along with Arnold Banks, secretary of the board, on a warrant charging bribe-taking and extortion sworn to by the manager of the Duplex Motor Company.

The newspapers were filled with it. The scandal began to pyramid. Banks, with Bodie as one of his outside agents, was accused of an elaborate scheme of graft. He had accepted two thousand dollars in marked bills from a Duplex salesman.

There was a four-column picture on the front page of the *Post-Dispatch*. When Jimmy saw it, his lips became dry and his throat felt lumpy. It showed Bodie, Phelps and himself conversing in Forest Park.

"Bodie, his West End office, and two of his clients," the head-line read.

Jimmy felt an overwhelming rush of mortification. The office and the persons in it became unendurable. He went home early and found Stella in their little garden. She was wearing a gingham apron and one of his discarded straw hats, tilted to exclude the sun from her eyes.

"It's fortunate. He'd probably have asked you for money to-day," she said, when Jimmy had concluded his story.

"Probably," he agreed in a colorless voice.

"What did Mr. McClintick say?" she asked.

Jimmy's lips felt dry again.

"He laughed," he said grimly.

A WEEK passed. Automobile Row simmered with the scandal and chided those who were in it. It was suspected that some of the companies which had made payments to Bodie or Banks would neglect to ask for their money back. It was a popular belief that the Saturn was among these.

Jimmy met Phelps on Twelfth Street.

"What did he nick you for?" asked the Venus salesman.

"Me? Nothing!" said Jimmy distastefully. Phelps laughed.

"I must look like a marine," he said. "But I don't blame you. I'll see you in church—I mean court. So long!"

Phelps walked off with an irritating smile.

The board met and decided to purchase the Duplex, fifteen black, glinting cars, bringing more than fifty thousand dollars. Jimmy sighed for the commissions that had eluded him.

Then he received a letter post-marked "Los Angeles." It was from Joe Holt. Joe had been with the Mars-Detroit when Jimmy was on their selling staff. He was now the Pacific Coast manager for the Diana Eight.

Joe painted Los Angeles in the colors of a Norwegian sunset. Next to printing currency or hunting big game, he could think of no sport to equal selling the Diana Eight to the movie kings and queens of Hollywood. It was a shame to take the money—really. Did Jimmy want to come out?

On the way home that evening, Jimmy solemnly bought orchids.

Is it not charitable to draw a curtain before Stella and Jimmy in that which was their first serious quarrel? May we not screeen Stella's bitter tears and shield a heart that was full of sorrow?

The Berkleys, the Hylands, the O'Connors and the Buckleys were at the Market Street Station to see them off on their long journey. There were boxes of candy for Stella and cigarettes by the carton for Jimmy.

Jimmy was the soul of wit and good cheer. The men said they envied him and asked him to give their best to Theda Bara. The women saw through Stella's dry-eyed misery and tried to comfort her.

As they rumbled through the outskirts of the big city, Jimmy gazed eagerly toward the West. Stella turned in her seat and looked back at St. Louis.

In her beaded bag, which she held tightly, there was a blue, tear-stained slip of paper. It was a bank-draft for two hundred and fifty dollars.

WITH the rusty pipes of an antiquated glee-club baritone, Jimmy concluded the popular lyric:

> "We will live on love and kiss-iz,
> I will help you with the dish-iz
> In a bung-ga-low
> Where the red, red roses ga-row-w."

He began whistling in a manner that makes wives wonder if their husbands will ever grow up, executed a few airy dance-steps and kissed Stella. Then he hung up his dish-towel.

"Jimmy, what do you think?" asked Stella, smiling.

"Why should I think?" replied Jimmy, still in the mood of musical comedy.

"To-day I saw a Turk wearing a red fez."

"Wonderful!"

Stella bit her lip.

"Jimmy Maynard, I don't believe you more than half see the picturesqueness and color of Los Angeles!"

"Sure I do!" protested Jimmy. "Greatest climate, biggest oranges, finest boulevards——"

"I don't mean that."

"No? What do you mean?"

Stella's eyes brightened.

"I mean the people. Was there ever a street like Broadway? In a single afternoon I've seen Hindus with turbans, Chinese wearing their native costumes, Mexican laborers, Japanese in odd-fitting American clothes, aristocratic Spaniards, English tourists in tweeds, South American women highly rouged, immigrant Jews, American Indians, Los Angeles girls in khaki breeches, Arizona miners, big-hatted cattlemen from Texas and the movies, Eastern pleasure-seekers, fat Hawaiians, motion-picture actors and actresses, Italian mothers in their slattern shawls, almost dead from sea and land travel, and now a Turk with heavy shoes, baggy trousers and a red fez. It's wonderful! There was never anything to equal it in Detroit, St. Louis or even New York, so far as I saw."

"Certainly not! That's the reason we decided on Los Angeles," he answered smilingly.

Stella bit her lip again, then took Jimmy's arm as they walked into the living-room. It had been more than two years since he, not they, had decided upon Los Angeles.

Time seemed to go on wings. Yet much had happened. The first year had been made tender and glorious by the arrival of James Hilton Maynard, junior. He was now asleep in a pretty white bed on the screened sleeping-porch. On his first birthday, Jimmy had bought his son and heir a marvelous toy motor-car.

Stella still had less than a thousand dollars in the bank. But there was more. They owned this trig little bungalow

on Orange Drive off Santa Monica Boulevard. Standing at the curb was a low green sporty roadster with nickel fittings, and two spares strapped on the rear.

"You have to have a car in Los Angeles," Jimmy said, when he purchased it. To Stella, this green roadster was symbolic, somehow, of her husband.

Nor in two years had Stella once detected that sudden, queer look in Jimmy's eyes that she had come to associate with Detroit, with New York, with St. Louis and which filled her with a nameless dread. Jimsey, junior, she decided, had been the ballast necessary.

"I expect to close with Opal Sands tomorrow," said Jimmy, when they were in the broad, low-ceiling living-room.

"So she's decided on the Diana!" Stella exclaimed joyously.

Opal Sands was a motion-picture actress skimping along on three thousand a week. After two years in Los Angeles, these gilded celebrities of the screen no longer knocked them pop-eyed, as Jimmy put it.

"Not officially," Jimmy answered; "but I think a suggestion I made to-day will turn the trick."

"What was that?"

"'Miss Sands,' said I, 'have you ever thought that a disappearing phonograph built into your limousine would help pass the time pleasantly while you are on location?' Just like that! It had never occurred to her. It had never occurred to me, either. Somehow, I was talking and it just came out."

Stella smiled.

"What did she say?"

"It wasn't what she said. It was the way she looked. I had the same feeling as when Joe and I are after tarpon at Catalina and I get a strike."

"It's taken her a long time to decide."

"That's why Barnes gave her up. He seems to think that if one of the movies doesn't buy a car on the first trip, that it's all off. He quit after a week."

"You've been more than a month on the sale."

Jimmy nodded.

"Well, if she buys, it will be worth it," he said. "With the special body and the trimmings, which range from a phonograph to a French-enamel toilet-set, the job will come to fifteen thousand. I get one grand."

Automobile salesmen along Pico Street knew "one grand" as a thousand dollars. There was an added commission for special-built jobs.

"I simply have to get little Jimmy a motor-coat," said Stella. "He'll catch his death of cold riding some day."

"Get him a flock of 'em," Jimmy answered. "Where are my carpet slippers, dear?"

Jimmy had begun to study steel. A knowledge of metallurgy was a handy thing for a boat-seller. Too many salesmen, he averred, paid too great attention to the color of their cravats and the cut of their clothes and trusted to luck and demand for their commissions. He had himself. Barnes did.

With his carpet slippers and a battered smoking-jacket, poring over a text-book, he was, Stella thought, a more substantial Jimmy Maynard than he had been in Detroit, in New York or in St. Louis. Nor had he lost any of his easy charm.

OPAL SANDS bought the Diana Eight. Subject to a written guarantee, she paid for it—fifteen thousand dollars in advance. Out of a clear sky, Chester Barnes demanded a split commission.

"I'm entitled to it," he declared. "I started the ball rolling."

"But you tossed it up," retorted Jimmy warmly.

"I had other prospects at the time. Joe turned her over to you," said Barnes.

"And I made the sale."

Jimmy and Barnes looked at each other with the quick eyes of prize-fighters in a ring.

"There's no use of us arguing," said Barnes shortly. "I'll take it up with Joe. If I don't get a split commission, I quit."

Jimmy's lips curled slightly.

"If you do get it, I quit," he answered.

Joe Holt, the tactful, young manager of Diana Motors, Inc., was in the trying position of an impressario who has unfortunately cast two prima donnas in a single production. He had observed early that Barnes and Jimmy did not get along together. Until now, he had, by careful direction, kept them apart so far as business was concerned.

Barnes was a local product with a valuable acquaintance. Jimmy was a whirlwind salesman. Barnes, on the whole, was successful with Angelenos and Southern Californians; Jimmy had the trick of selling to tourists and the picture-people.

"Wait a moment, Jimmy!" protested Joe. "Don't fly off the handle."

"I'm not flying off the handle, Joe. I'm just telling you that this bird doesn't get any split on the commission. He isn't entitled to it."

"There have been splits before," suggested Joe.

Jimmy was exasperated.

"When they're understood—fine! But Barnes dropped Sands to try those Bakersfield people. You know Sands had him buffaloed. He never would have sold her. Nothing was said or ever has been about a split commission."

Joe lit a cigarette and cocked his feet upon a flat-top desk.

"Leave it to me, Jimmy," he said gravely. "I'll try to straighten it out."

"All right, Joe. But I want you to know that I feel—well, I feel rotten about this."

As Jimmy walked from the managerial office he came upon Barnes in the anteroom.

For an instant he was filled with a red impulse whose reflex left him shaking. He passed down a little stairway. Through the broad expanse of window glass he saw Stella, with Jimsey, junior by her side, in the little green roadster. He paused at the water-cooler.

"You look pale, Jimmy," Stella exclaimed.

"My head is feeling a little rocky," he answered.

The roadster darted through the downtown traffic and turned out Seventh Street, Jimmy driving, Stella beside him, holding the baby. His preoccupation worried her.

"I know," she said. "Opal Sands didn't buy the car."

Jimmy grinned after a fashion.

"Wrong!" he answered. "She did buy it."

"Splendid, Jimmy!"

As they shot into Wilshire Boulevard, he turned for an instant and smiled at her. But it was not the smile that made her tremble violently. In his eyes there was the look she had come to dread.

The next day, Joe Holt, with all the diplomacy at his command, tried to patch things up. He explained to Jimmy that he stood unenviably between two fires. Barnes had worked on the deal. There was a precedent in such cases.

"But I've whittled him down, Jimmy," he said. "Barnes will be satisfied with two hundred."

Jimmy shook his head slowly.

"Not a cent, Joe! Not a red penny!" he said doggedly.

"Look here, Jimmy; I've already written a check for eight hundred. I can make it up to you. There's something I want to talk to you about," pleaded Joe.

Jimmy ignored the slip of paper. He rose from his chair and walked from the office. He took his hat and stepped out into Grand Avenue. Then he started downtown.

THAT night, in their cozy living-room, with the baby tucked away on the sleeping-porch, Jimmy faced Stella. He was pale but resolute.

"Sweetness, I—I'd like to move to San Francisco," he said.

The suspense was over. Stella's choked exclamation was not of surprise, but relief.

"Why?" she asked dully.

Jimmy fidgeted. Then, composing himself, he related the trouble that had arisen over the Opal Sands commission.

"I'm not surprised at Barnes," he concluded acidly, "but I am disappointed in Joe."

Stella was silent.

"There's a fine opportunity with the Neptune people in San Francisco. They know my work. To tell the truth, I'm getting tired of this town, anyhow," he said.

He looked closer at Stella. Her head was bowed; she was sobbing softly. The years of their married life only emphasized Jimmy's thought that Stella would go on indefinitely. Her tears crushed him.

"Don't cry, sweetness—please!"

Stella slowly dried her eyes, then looked at him tenderly.

"I'm not crying because of myself, Jimmy. I—I'm crying because of you." He was puzzled. "Don't you see," she continued, "that in the six years we have been married, it has been a case of

beginning over and over again? We've never taken root anywhere. We just go on and on."

"I don't see——"

"It isn't because I mind going, Jimmy, though I do mind very much," she interrupted. "It's because it isn't fair to you. The men you started with have become executives and managers. You could do the same."

There was a pause; then Jimmy gestured in protest.

"We have gone on and on," he said, "but we've always done a little better. New York was an improvement on Detroit; we found more business in St. Louis than New York, and it seemes to me we have done well in Los Angeles. I told you long ago I was a rolling stone."

"Do you know why, Jimmy?"

Stella spoke quietly. He was startled.

"It isn't because you are a rolling stone in the sense of a born wanderer," she said. "If you were, you'd never have taken the pleasure you do in your home, in your family. It's because you are fleeing from something. That something is yourself." He smiled deprecatingly. But Stella was unshakably serious. "I mean it Jimmy. You are proud, and when something happens, you tuck your silly pride under your arm like a football and run."

"Come, now—" he protested.

"In Detroit, it was the thought of a time-clock that cut. In New York, you had expected the sales-managership, and your pride couldn't face the disappointment. In St. Louis, your pride mistook good-humored joking for ridicule, and you felt you had to flee. Now it is asserting itself in another way. You have made a statement. You are going to stand by it, make or break." She gazed at him tragically. "Don't you see, Jimmy?"

Suddenly Jimmy did see. It seemed to him that a great vista leading directly into his subconscious thoughts had been miraculously lighted.

"Oh, Jimmy," sobbed Stella, "I—I can't move again."

Jimmy's hands were moist.

"I—I believe you're right, dear," he stammered. Then his face clouded and he came to his feet. "But I couldn't—I just couldn't accept that eight hundred dollars from Joe now."

Stella's silence was an inarticulate indictment of that instinctive idea of flight that had brought only tears and bitterness. Jimmy found his cap and stepped through the open door to the veranda. A cold yellow moon was flattened against the night. From the hills of Hollywood there came the faint cry of a coyote. Its loneliness strummed a vibrant chord in Jimmy's soul.

HANDS deep in pockets, chin sunk to his chest, Jimmy walked a half-dozen blocks. He tried to think and could not. Again and again the words came to him: "On and on!" "On and on!" It was diabolic meter mocking his footsteps.

He turned back. His preoccupation was such that he had entered the living-room and tossed aside his cap before he saw Joe Holt.

He gazed at the Diana manager as though he were looking at a stranger.

Joe came to his feet, a boyish smile lighting his face.

"Jimmy, I just want to tell you that you get that thousand dollars," he said. "I can't change Barnes, but I'll throw my own commission into the pot this time."

"I won't take it!"

"You don't mean you are really going to quit, Jimmy?"

Jimmy wiped his dry lips with the back of his hand, then shook his head nervously.

"I mean that I'm not going to quit, Joe!" There was a fierceness in his voice that was almost a cry. "I mean that you couldn't even fire me. I'll accept only eight hundred. By God, I'll——"

He left off trembling and sat down. Joe looked at his friend in a puzzled way.

"You had me worried, Jimmy," he said. "I was just saying that I have a wire from the factory. They want me there. Some one will have to keep shop while I'm gone. As I understand it, it may be a permanent arrangement."

When Joe had gone, Stella came to Jimmy's side and ran her fingers through his hair.

"It was wonderful, dear!" she said simply.

Jimmy smiled slowly, then looked up at her. In his eyes a something new had come to conquer a something old.

The Story *of* Bertha

Every One Went Down Before Her. Can You Pull Out Leviathan's Tongue with a Fish-hook? That Was Bertha's Mother. Maybe You Have Met Her

By James Oppenheim

HAVE you read Bertha Barry's poetry? There is a note in it. Wistfulness? Yes—and longing. It stirs something in you. I heard one of Satsu's letters last night. Satsu is the Japanese friend of Mrs. Knisely, whose husband runs the Los Angeles *Sentinel*. Satsu writes about the moon. It is late and quiet. She and her mother are out beside the pond, and the moonlight is on their backs. They listen to the insect musicians. The moon puts silver tips on the cherry trees. Everything is still. Satsu's heart is aching. She looks at the moon and thinks: "Mrs. Knisely will look at you, too, over in America, across the Pacific. I love her."

There is this note in Bertha Barry's poetry. People love it. Her book, "The Sea-Lovers," runs to a tenth edition. And the end is not yet. It is very simple. It is very true. It is what it should be.

How did Bertha come to write that book? I will tell you.

She lived with her mother in Hawley, Massachusetts. The houses are white, with green shutters. Then there is one square brick house, solemn and imposing, the "mansion house." Some stores tail off at the end of the street. The station is a mile away. Everything sleeps. Bees hum in the gardens. Petunias and rambler roses and old-fashioned hollyhocks and sunflowers and gardenias blow lazily in the summer air. Everything sleeps but the people. They are only half asleep.

And what? Bertha and her mother lived together in a little cottage. Her mother told Bertha she ought to be happy. Why?

"You have everything a body could want. You have me, a devoted mother. You have a home. You have comfort. You have books: 'Pilgrim's Progress' and 'Paradise Lost' and 'The Lady of the Lake' and the Bible, and the Carnegie Library over to Middleton. And you have it easy. I do the work. You set around and mope. What is the matter with you, Bertha? Don't we go to New York once a year? Your cousin Travis thinks you're the most unreasonable child imaginable."

"But I'm not a child," said Bertha. "Why do you insist on calling me a child? A woman of thirty-seven! Look at me! I'm an old maid, and hate it."

"Why didn't you marry Joe Harris, then, when you had a chance to?"

Ah, why didn't she? Poor Bertha! She had as much chance of marrying Joe Harris as she did of convincing her mother that she was no longer a little girl in pigtail and short skirts. That was the trouble. Joe would have come along. He said so. He caught her on the stairs, coming up, and sat her down and kissed her. She liked it. Oh, how she liked it! But then? Her mother said: "Look out for that Harris boy. He's a bad one."

Bertha shivered, New England style. They shiver up there with the north wind and the flesh and the devil. You know what

I mean. They want love *à la* Emerson. The sky-kind. The kind we get after death. In plain words, they are afraid of passion.

But Bertha? Longed for it. Oh, how she longed! And it made her sick. And she took to her bed.

Dr. Weedon, of New York, was summering at Middleton Hills. He had a rough pine shack there beside the lake. He and his brother loafed there together.

Bertha's mother sent for him. She believed in New York doctors. They were more expensive, for one thing. And, for another, they knew more. Why? New York. That is all.

But what? Henry Weedon motored into the sleepy, shining green of Hawley and drew up at the vine-clad cottage. He liked it. He was a simple man. He was tall and handsome, with the flush of health in his cheeks and shining eyes. They were blue and good. He had a professional hand of the best kind—cool and caressing and smooth. He used that hand. He used his ringing musical voice and his rippling laughter. He used his eyes. He was a good doctor. The only trouble was you felt so good when he came into the room at last. You'd ought to feel terrible, so he'd see something was the matter with you. That would be important. Instead, you perked right up, grew happy, laughed, talked a streak. Then he'd say, "There's nothing the matter with you in the world." A good doctor!

Bertha thought so. She felt better right away. The sunlight lay over the white spread and on her chestnut hair, which was really beautiful. She was not beautiful, and knew it. So she had her long hair spread out over the pillow. It was good to look at. And she? Very thin, I am sorry to say. And what? Plain. A good face, but plain. She wasn't bad-looking, and she wasn't good-looking. She was New-England-looking. You know what I mean. They are a stern people, our Down-Easterners, a stern people. They need more Dr. Weedons.

She needed him, and knew it. He saw she did. So he sent her mother out of the room. I don't blame him. The mother was a holy terror. Every one went down before her. She pushed you down; she elbowed and shoved, and she was a large woman. Not as large as Mrs. Davidson, the housekeeper, who terrorized my friend Elizabeth into eating apple pie three times a day. But that is another story. But large enough. And she had the tongue of the Old Testament, and that is a tongue, believe me. Can you pull out Leviathan's tongue with a fish-hook? Not much! That was Bertha's mother. Dr. Weedon would have none of her. He laughed.

"Cool off in the kitchen," he said. "I've got something to tell your daughter."

He did have something to tell. He told her she was being ruined by her mother. How? Her mother was a monster and was devouring her. So Bertha wept and told him the story of her life.

SHE was born in Providence, Rhode Island. Her father was a lumber merchant, and large and liberal. She loved him. She was a very happy child. Every summer they went to Cape Cod, and she romped with her father. They walked and cycled and rowed and swam. She loved swimming. She was healthy and sound, always laughing, always sunny and bright. And then, at fourteen, a change came. She was sent to a boarding-school. She couldn't stand it. She found she was very shy. She felt inferior to the other girls. And what else? She kept to herself and had long crying-spells. Finally her mother came and took her home. This crushed her. She felt that she was a failure because she hadn't stuck and gone through with the school. So she never went through on anything. If she took piano lessons, she began with a rush and in three weeks petered out. Three weeks was the limit. More and more she felt incapable and weak until all life was impossible. She felt that the world was too much for her. She shrank from it. She was afraid of everything. She screamed when she saw a snake. Lightning and thunder struck terror into her. She could not be alone; she could not be with people. They were looking at her. They thought her low and mean. They were persecuting her. And what else? She could not trust herself in anything. But there was her mother, always strong, always sure, a rock of rigidness. She leaned on that rock. More and more. Until the time came when she had no life of her own. Her mother was her life.

This is why the love-affair with Joe Harris had come to nothing.

And now? She was sick.

"Very well," said Dr. Weedon. "You see what is the matter with you. There is only one thing to do. Leave your mother."

"It will kill both of us," wept Bertha.

"It will kill neither of you," said Dr. Weedon. "You both need it. She needs to be free as well as you. Is she free? Hardly. She feeds on you. It is unnatural."

And he told her to go down to New York for a visit and try it out. She was terrified. Alone in New York? And what could she do?

"Anything," said Dr. Weedon. "Get a job. Loaf. Write poetry." He laughed. "Every New England woman writes poetry. Why don't you?"

Well, she went. It was incredible, but she went. It was a terrific thing to do, but she did it. She lived through a storm with her mother, and it didn't kill her. She lived through a storm with herself on the train down. She thought she would die. She thought the lonely bedroom on East Thirty-first Street would kill her. She thought that walking alone in the streets and eating alone in cheap restaurants would end her. Nothing happened. She went to Dr. Weedon. And he explained the miracle to her.

"You love me," he said. "It needed something as great as love to work this wonder. I knew it. I let you love me. How? I made myself seem perfect to you. I am not perfect. I am only a human being like yourself. I am no God, Miss Barry. But you thought I was. Your Puritan nature is religious, you know, and needs a God, and the divine love of a God. You have it now. It is healing you."

She was stunned. Her mouth was open piteously, and she was gasping.

"I love you?" she echoed. "Yes! Yes! I love you!"

She saw. Love had lifted her from her bed and beaten down her mother, and carried her on broad, strong wings down to New York and sustained her through the terrible days. It was love, the miracle-worker. For a sight of the young doctor she had come and stayed. And now she was here. And did he love her? Impossible! But the heart hopes wild things, and who can hold it against its dreams?

"I love you," she repeated, and her large eyes pleaded for his love.

"No," he said steadily, looking right at her. "It can't be. You needed this to heal you. It is a terrible cure. But I know you, Miss Barry, and what you need. You need to love. That's all."

Did she understand? No. Did she see what he meant as she groped blindly and dizzily out into the cruel street and went on swaying through the flashing and noisy dream of the city? She did not. Days had to pass when she was too weak to go out, and even too weak to go home again. But she knew at last. She knew she could never marry. She was not the kind. For her there could be no real love, but only the ideal, the love of God which once sent women into nunneries. And that love was hers, and that love she needed. She was that kind of woman. And when she knew this at last, she began to sing. She began to sing "The Sea-Lovers." She wrote her book. And it cured her. And it revealed the meaning to her. That is all.

Afternoon

By Theodosia Garrison

I DO not run now when the fiddles call
  As once I did—I am content to stay
A little farther from the carnival,
  A little distant from the jester's play—

For yesterday that selfsame tale was told,
  And yesterday that selfsame song was sung.
I wish I knew if I am growing old,
  Or if I just am tired of being young.

THE BELOVED PAWN

A Big, Human Drama of the Great Lakes

David MacKinnon Finds That He Has Played the Game All Wrong from the Beginning. Norman Eldred Descends Upon High Island, and Events Take a Totally Unexpected Turn

By Harold Titus

Author of "Foraker's Folly"

Illustrations by Stockton Mulford

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

DID Eve Eldred have any part in the dastardly and cowardly act her father committed when he set fire to David MacKinnon's trading hooker? It was hard for the lad to believe this, for hadn't the girl shown that she wanted to be his friend, and hadn't she gone away willingly with him—even begged him to take her—when the angry father had turned her out after that stormy scene in which she had proved her feeling for him? And yet—why had she detained him at the house while Norman Eldred slipped down to the dock to do his evil work?

Well, he had his revenge now. He had carried her off to High Island, and while he was treating her with all respect, the father back on Garden Island must be in an agony of doubt as to her fate.

Norman Eldred was the fisherman "king" of Garden Island in Lake Michigan, holding despotic sway over the rough characters whom he employed. With him lived his daughter Eve, whom he passionately loved, guarding her zealously from the men who surrounded her. Hers was a lonesome life, and her dog her only friend. Then, one spring night, a storm compelled young MacKinnon to seek shelter in Eldred's harbor—the very place he had been warned to keep away from, for some years before his father had been lured to his death there by Eldred.

Eve liked David from the first, and Eldred resented this. Before two days were over, things came to a climax. David protected Eve from the advances of a French-Canadian, Mosseau, and just then her father realized her feelings for the stranger. Followed the burning of the *Annabelle* and the casting-out of the girl. Then it was that David had taken her to High Island.

But now David's love for his daughter had reasserted itself, and he had sent Dimmock, one of his men, to High Island to make terms with MacKinnon.

On the neighboring Squaw Island lived "Aunt Jen" Borden, wife of the lighthouse keeper. She had, for some reason, a strong interest in Eve, and when she heard of the girl's predicament, she set about making some clothes to take to her.

While Dimmock was in St. James hearing the story that he had later related to Eldred, and which resulted in the visit to MacKinnon, the lighthouse supply-boat came to dock at High Island.

There were new grates to be put in the boiler at Squaw Island—a task for the two men which could not be delayed—and the keeper did not want his wife to go on this trip alone. Furthermore, though she had gone to bed for a brief time after her night at the sewing-machine, he knew she had not slept, but he did not find the heart to protest vigorously against her going by herself, because, for one thing, he saw her eagerness and, for another, he sensed that there was something here which she would not confide to him, and this realization hurt.

EVE saw the boat coming and watched from the house until it had docked and the woman started for shore alone, a bundle under one thick arm. Then the girl went to meet her, surprised and animated.

"Hello, dearie!" boomed Aunt Jen, when they were fifty yards apart. "Gosh A'mighty, this sand sure gives a body's heart all the gas it'll stand!"

She came to a halt, panting, but it was not natural that an active woman should breathe that rapidly, no matter if the sand was deep.

"I heard about it all," she went on, before Eve could speak. "And just to show that I can be neighborly, I stitched up a few things you might be needing."

Eve took the offered package wonderingly, looking from it to the woman.

"For me? Oh, isn't that nice?" There was something childish in this. "Clothes? Why—why, nobody ever made clothes for me! Nobody has since I was a little girl in the convent."

"Then they're considerably overdue, ain't they?" Jen's eyes were busy—oh, so busy!—on that fine face. "I had to guess at your figger, having seen it only once since—since I come up here"—faltering and then hurrying on with only a slight show of her confusion. "Come up to the shanty and let's see what kind of a job I've done. Alone?"

Yes; Eve was alone. MacKinnon was on the lake, down the shore there. She tore the wrapping from the bundle eagerly, holding up the garments one after another and exclaiming over each.

"Nothing much," Jen blustered modestly. "I only put beading in one of them shimmys, and I brung along that pink ribbon so's you could run it in if you like pink. I do myself, though there's them that prefers blue. Brought that tape-needle, thinking you might 'ave mislaid yourn. Then there's some pink silk there, too. A row of French knots on them nightgowns wouldn't be a bad idea"—indicating with a finger—"if you get the time. Hold it up ag'in' you—There! Yeah—long enough all right, and not much too big." She reached for a waist and shook out the folds. "This is all that worries me, having to guess at your figger the way I did. It's a nice, soft voile if it fits. Take off that shirt an' slip it on."

Exclaiming over the garment, as enthusiastic as a child with a new toy, as grateful as a woman for some necessary service rendered, Eve stripped off the flannel shirt she wore. The other watched her, nodding when the full lengths of her fine arms were exposed, and stroking the smooth, small shoulder.

"What a neck!" she whispered, as if to herself. "Dearie, you're built like a bird!"

Then she held out the waist for the arms and fastened buttons and helped adjust the skirt-band, standing back then, with critical gaze and head tilted, while Eve looked down and smoothed the front of the waist in delight.

"Not so bad," the woman said roughly. "Not so——"

And then the impulse that had been growing in her heart broke through the shamming words, and she lifted her hands to take Eve's face between her palms and stare into it with tears springing into her own eyes.

"Dearie, dearie, you're all right, ain't you?" The hands slid down to Eve's shoulders and the big arms folded the slight figure close to the broad bosom. "Thank the Lord!" she whispered. "Thank the Lord!" For the answer to her question was there to read.

Confused and embarrassed by this outburst, Eve stood passive, and after a moment Jen released her and, wiping her eyes, said hoarsely:

"There! I'm a blamed old baby, ain't I? A blamed old hen; but I've been thinking so hard about you, dearie, since I heard you'd come here. I was so scared last night; I was so worried coming down this morning. I

didn't think he looked like the kind that'd hurt you; but men— Shucks! I didn't come down here to blubber and pry into your business. What's happened to you ain't any business of mine so long's you're all right, is it?"

Eve answered that question soberly and as if it had been put with the expectation of a reply.

"Not unless you make it your business. I mean"—when Jen looked quickly at her—"that maybe you'll understand when I say that there's times when a girl has to talk. I didn't know that until a little while ago. Then I did talk, and it helped; but this time I think I've been needing to talk to a woman—like you. Would you make it your business to listen?"

AND so the barrier of unfamiliarity that had been between them crashed down. For a moment, Aunt Jen eyed the girl while her own overwrought emotions swirled down to normal.

She put both hands on Eve's shoulders.

"You mean that? There's something you've got to tell? About your—about Norman Eldred?"

"No; not about him this time. It's about —David"—timidly.

The woman was at once relieved and surprised.

"Is it that you want to get away from him?"

The appraising look which scanned her face then was startling. Jen felt that she was being weighed in the girl's judgment. When Eve finally spoke, it was not in reply.

"Of course it's only been such a little while. This is just the second day; but when a man talks to you as though he hated you, when he does all he can to scare you, and when he can't always remember to act that way, but when he's sometimes—well, almost *polite* to you, and when he guards the place where you are at night from other men, do you think he means it when he says you're not safe with him?"

The woman drew a deep breath and took her hands from the girl's shoulders.

"I'd say offhand," she began finally, "that a man who'd do that was one thing or the other—that it'd pay to watch him, close, never letting him surprise you, or that you was as safe as if you was in your mother's arms."

"That's about what I've thought, but you see"—she frowned slightly—"there's so much I don't know, and this is the first time— Do you know about me?" The question was rather sharp, but that was not enough to give Jen Borden such a start. Strangely, too, she seemed relieved when the girl went on, "About the way I've lived on Garden Island, I mean."

"I've heard, o' course."

"I guess it's been as bad as anybody would hear it was, and if you've heard— I don't like to talk about it now. I did once; I had to once. I told David about it, and now I've got to talk to somebody about David, because it's worse—needing to talk, I mean."

The two sat down then, facing one another, and the girl began slowly, thoughtfully, telling the story from the begininng, very earnest and sober, and halting occasionally as she tried to explain her bewilderment. She told of that night in the store, of the trip across to High Island, of the knife, of the next day, of how MacKinnon drove Fred Mink back to his shack last night, and of his silence and gruffness this morning.

"But once I looked up and he was looking at me—so—why, so funny! It seemed it was like the way my father used to look at me sometimes. And it seemed, too, that he was asking himself something, some question about me. I was quite happy yesterday, because I was so relieved at being away from my father, and to-day—I don't know. One time it seems like I'd be happy here always—just this way, and at others I don't know about him."

She tugged at her thumb and looked away then, and Jen sat back, relaxing.

"He's done enough to make you ready to run away," she said, "if it wasn't for the other things he's done. It balances up, don't it? Pretty well, I'd say. He's barked at you a lot, but he's—he's stopped at that, when there wasn't any reason for his not biting if that suited him. Is there anything, dearie, that you know about that'd make him want to hurt you?"

"He quarreled with my father."

"Just that? With your father? Sure he don't have nothing to hold against you?"

"Why, no! Nothing." That came after a moment of debate, and with some surprise. On the answer, Jen visibly relaxed.

"Thank the Lord—for the third time today!" she murmured. "Oh, dearie, if there should be anything—if you can think of one little thing that he might be holding against you, don't you keep it back—tell him. Because"—her voice grew husky—"because it's hard to tell at the start, but it's worse a million times afterward. And you'll wish you told him if you keep on thinking you want to stay—as long as he stays."

EVE showed no surprise at this, but, after a pause, asked seriously,

"Do you think I'll want to do that?"

Jen reached out a hand to the girl's and said bruskly,

"What is it you hope, dearie?"

Eve said steadily,

"I hope that I will want to stay with him—always."

She could feel the tremor that ran through Aunt Jen's body and down to the hand that clutched hers.

"If that's what you want, work for it, pray for it, think about it, dearie! Don't let go of it, but don't be blind; suspect everything he does and says, but *hope* that it'll come out the way you want it to.

"Oh, you never can tell when the thing's coming that'll change your whole life. You never can tell on what a small stake you can tie your happiness fast.

"I know, dearie; I know what it means to pass up love. Not the love of a man—thank my stars I didn't pass that by when it come, but I did pass up other things that's next to it."

Unconsciously she had substituted the word "love" for "happiness." She had meant it so from the first.

"I've been on the lakes since I can remember. I was brung up on a trading hooker, sailing alone with my daddy after my mother died, and when he died I went from one thing to another until I got to be 'Red' Jenny—from my hair and my temper, they told me. I'd cooked on lumber schooners for years—lumber and ore schooners. A hard life in them days, without much love in it. And then, one night, when I was on the *Belle o' Scotland*, out o' Traverse City for Tonawanda, on the last trip of the season, Lake Erie was standing on end. Do you re—did you ever know about Lake Erie?"

She corrected herself hastily, but Eve did not notice the quick flush that came into Jen's cheeks, only to ebb as suddenly.

"No; I've never been there."

"It's bad water—shallow—and when she blows down there, she goes inside out. Old man Denoir was master of the *Belle*, and all day he'd been beating up to the Lo'th'rd, trying to get shelter under the Ontario shore. 'T was thick, too, with snow in the air. The deck-load was gone, and we was leaking when night come, and I guess everybody was thinking of their sins and what might 'ave been, more or less. Oh, the Lord's makes a lot of Christians on the Great Lakes with his November blows, dearie!"

She retrieved her handkerchief from her bosom and blew her nose.

"But what I was coming to was this: I'd been thinking of how my life hadn't brung me much to be proud or glad about while I stood in the galley holding the coffee-pot on the stove with my hands—the seas was that bad and the crew so in need of it. Then I heard somebody sing out and somebody answer, and seen one of the crew go running past the cabin with a line in his hands. He heaved it, dearie, and I thought first somebody'd gone overboard; but the mate come fighting his way back through the water in the waist, and I made the coffee-pot fast with a couple o' bricks for a minute and looked out. It was dark, but I could see 'em hauling on that line, slow-like, very careful, and then I made out a small boat. Yes, sir; a small boat out in that weather!

"Bad enough, that; and when I seen a man being swung aboard, I thought for sure the Lord was watching Lake Erie that night. But when he come over the rail with a bundle in his arms and I seen what was in that bundle, I forgot all about the Lord's goodness, my coffee, the storm and all. That man was carrying a baby, dearie!"

"From a wreck?"

Jen nodded grimly.

"A wreck? Yes; a wreck, and a lee-shore wreck." Her voice, on that, was rough and harsh again, but it modulated as suddenly when she continued: "I found myself outside, wet to the knees with green water, and soaked from there up with spray, grabbing that baby out of his arms. You know, dearie, sometimes a body don't know much about herself. Kids had always been kids to me, noisy and dirty and underfoot, but I hadn't stood over my stove five minutes

The smile was gone from David's face now as, with long oar upraised, he poised himself for a blow. The other sank back, eyes flaming.

with that cold baby in a dry blanket before something give way inside me and let loose a lot of thoughts and feelings I'd never had before.

"A terrible fear come up in me that that baby wasn't safe. From then on, that was all that mattered—a baby's safety. Holding her in my arms, feeling her get warm, sent something through me I'd never dreamed about before—a contented feeling, a peace like I'd never thought a woman could feel. And that with the old *Belle* groaning and taking water every minute! Oh, happiness come to me that night, but with it come that fear which was as terrible as the other was sweet."

Her chin quivered, and she sniffed.

"But old Denoir made it that night, and we found shelter and got on to Tonawanda when the blow dropped, and I went ashore with the baby for the winter."

"You kept it?"

The woman shook her head.

"Not for long. Not long enough. That's why I'm telling this story, dearie. She brought me something that I'd never dreamed about before. Men thought I was a bad woman—Red Jenny, a tough nut, but that baby made me over. It was better 'n getting salvation in a sailors' mission. And I let her go! I let him take her away—devil that he was!—when I should 'ave kept her if I'd had to claw his eyes out for it."

"But would he have let you?"

A low moan escaped the woman and she shook her head.

"He didn't love it like I did. Maybe I didn't have any right to that baby girl, but neither did he—'cause he don't know what love means. I let her go, and for years my life was worse 'n empty because in that time I had her I'd known what content and happiness meant." She put a hand over her eyes for a moment.

"And she never came back?" asked Eve.

Jen did not speak for a moment, and when she did it was not to reply.

"It was a hard lesson, a terrible hard lesson—never give happiness a chance to drift off when it comes your way. Lay hold of it and make it fast, so's nothing can tear it from you." After a moment: "Dearie, if I was to tell you that you could come to Squaw Island and stay with us as long as you wanted to, what would you say?"

It required a deal of courage for Jen to put that question, because if the girl answered in the affirmative, she did not know just what she could do. It would bring very close to the surface the thing she dreaded. So she watched with breath held down while Eve looked at her thoughtfully.

After that moment of consideration, during which Jen leaned forward, Eve said:

"That's the first time I've ever been asked anywhere in my life. It's what I wanted more than anything—friends, and places to go. But now—you see——"

It was not necessary for her to proceed. She had found this short experience, filled as it was with contradictions, most enjoyable, and the hope that those difficulties would melt away was so evident that her purpose was clear.

"I understand, dearie; I know." Jen was rising, and had Eve's hand again. Her voice was firmer, and some of the keenness was back in her eyes. "I hope it's your chance—your big chance; and if it is, Lord forbid it's Aunt Jen who should drag you away!"

Their talk did not end there, but it was the beginning of departure, and a half-hour later Eve stood on the dock and cast off the line that held Jen's boat.

"If ever you need me, come; if you can't come, send word. I won't be far off, ever, and I'll be thinking of you and dropping in whenever there's a chance."

That was Jen's parting promise, and a moment later she was inside, changing her suit coat for a denim jumper and spinning the fly-wheel of the motor, crying without restraint.

DAVID MacKINNON was lifting traps that morning, and from afar he had seen the boat making toward the harbor which was for the time his home. He got his glass hastily and made her out. For the moment he felt relief to know that it was from the light and not from Garden Island, but after that came perplexity, and he was curt with his helpers, mind more on what might be happening back yonder than on their work. Later he watched the departure, and could see Eve standing on the dock while the boat drew away, and that, also, was relief.

But this relief was wholly a relative matter and did not put his mind at rest. He had, strangely, resented the coming of

another to talk with Eve and had put in a bad half-hour wondering what the upshot of that meeting would be; he was distinctly glad when the visitor left and Eve remained. Was he jealous, he asked himself, and denied that sharply. And then wondered again.

He settled down to the serious business of self-interrogation.

Was he fulfilling his avowed purpose in bringing this girl here—to keep her in suspense? He was not, most assuredly. The tables had been turned, and it was he who was guessing now. As he looked back on his attempts to impress Eve with the dangers of this circumstance, he felt chagrined, because his posturings seemed so artificial and feeble and futile—mere stalkings and mouthings, badly executed, with the girl looking on with an odd delight and seeing completely through the sham.

Was, for that matter, his intent to exact compensation from Eve for what she had done to him as hot as it had been night before last, when he carried her from her father's shore to his boat? Again his reply was in the negative, and this actually surprised him, for it was the first time that he had brought his own point of view up for conscious inspection. That she had conspired to destroy his hooker he did not doubt, that she had helped in a greater piece of treachery— No; he put that other suspicion back resolutely. Whatever she might have done and however great her ability to deceive, that surprise of hers when he told of the storied part she had had in his father's death could not have been assumed. That surprise was real; it was convincing—no matter what men said of her.

He rubbed his chin with his finger-backs, shocked by this ready defense of the girl before his own judgment. And then, after a moment, went back to consideration of the point which had brought it about. Somehow, since yesterday morning, when she gave him her thanks for the service he had rendered, when she had accused him of being decent and kind and at heart gentle, his animosity had been disintegrating. There were moments when he felt her call, as he felt it when she first came aboard his *Annabelle* and helped him, as when, the next night, she had stood on the hooker's deck and plaintively wanted to know why she deserved humiliation, as when, a dozen times yesterday, he had caught her looking at him with half-amused curiosity while he was doing his best to frighten her, as when, above all, he had peered in on her before the stove last night and beheld the splendor of her beauty.

He stirred uneasily at that, and felt himself in the grip of a helpless denial of all the purposes he had avowed concerning the girl.

People had warned him of her—Jen Borden, first; Gam Gallagher again. But the woman's warning had been more as a plea, and yesterday Gallagher had said that she was as fair as a June morning. She was!

He put down his knife and went out on the stern to be alone, and after he had stood there a moment, he laughed aloud.

Why, he had done everything for her that a lover could have done except woo her! He had made her comfortable; he had protected her from the remote possibility of harm at the hands of the Indians. He had felt responsible for her in every sense, and he had even been jealous when he saw that another had come to talk to her. A species of rage rose then, and the humor in his face gave up to darkness. Damn her—she'd ruined him, hadn't she? He'd show her, he told himself; he'd show her now, to-day—to-morrow; he'd break down her assumption that she was in no danger here; he'd do that or he'd get rid of her tantalizing presence!

And then he stopped this contradictory nonsense and watched closely the steam-tug that bore down on him from Garden Island.

ELDRED was on the dock when Dimmock brought his tug home from that day's errand. The man stepped over the rail almost hesitantly, and the gaze with which he fixed his master had something of anxiety, something of dread. Eldred saw it, and a rigidity ran through his figure, to be gone in an instant and replaced by a flexity which was almost lassitude.

"You—" A feeble gesture of Eldred's one hand suggested the question.

"Aye." Dimmock nodded. "And he's a fool, Eldred!" No response, just the interrogation of those pain-filled eyes and a twitching of one hand. "But she's all right; I saw her on the beach."

A long sigh of satisfaction slipped from Eldred, as though threat of an impending blow had been removed.

"You saw her, then?"

"Aye! But he's a fool, Eldred."

"I know that; I told you that"—suggesting in his manner an approach of impatience. "What else? When will he——"

Dimmock had his cap in his hands and picked at it nervously.

"I told him you wouldn't," he began doggedly. "I told him he was a fool to think that you'd——"

"Would what? Come!"

The other looked away, and his eyes watered with embarrassment.

"He went too far. I done like you said. I put it that you asked him to come see you, and that it was all—friendly like. He laughed at me!"

"He refused?"

"That's it. He won't come. He'll talk, but not here."

"He'll talk, eh?" Eldred stirred. "He'll talk?" His face became alert.

But that gratification seemed to embarrass Dimmock further, for he nodded and hesitated, finally saying:

"He'll talk. He said he would, but—but where he wants, and when—and his own way. I—I'd 'ave choked him, Eldred. I'd 'ave broke his spine for it, but I knew you wouldn't want that. So I told him you'd see him in hell first. He said that he'd talk to you if you'd come to him; he won't come an inch. He said he was through with Garden Island until he come to—to touch you up again. Them was his words—to touch you up again. But he said that if you'd come to him he'd talk to you—Thursday, at four o'clock." He paused and licked his lips nervously. "He said if you'd come as he said, he'd talk; that if you'd come in a small boat, leavin' your tug a mile away, he'd row out and meet you. He said—said for you to come without a gun. He said to tell you that—without a gun, and to leave your tug a mile away and row toward him—Thursday—and this is only Tuesday. I told him he was a fool, that he was playin' with fire. I told him you'd——"

"I'd what?" Eldred interrupted sharply.

The other stopped fussing with his cap, amazed.

"Why, that you'd see him in hell first. But he laughed and said 'twas no matter to him — Thursday — and this is Tuesday—and you to go that way!"

"Didn't I tell you to be humble?"

"Aye; but *this*, Eldred!"

He spread one hand in a gesture of incredulity as he watched the anger grow in Eldred's face. Incredulity, for he saw that he had been wrong, that King Norman meant not only to humble himself but to undergo degradation if there should be no other way!

"Sometimes, Dimmock, you're a fool," Eldred said. "At four o'clock—Thursday."

THE action which transpired on High Island between Tuesday afternoon, when David went ashore, until Thursday morning, when he left for his day on the lake, may be related in a very few words.

What went on in the mind of Eve Eldred as well may be set down in a small space, because her rôle in that interval was one of waiting, hopefully, expectantly, consoled by the fact that she was losing nothing if nothing had been gained.

But what happened to David MacKinnon is another matter. He was peculiarly reluctant to approach the house when he landed after returning from St. James, where he had taken his lift. He fussed around the fish-boxes long after Mink and John had gone to their shack, and did not finally stop his unproductive and unnecessary puttering until well after dark.

The lamp in his house was lighted, the fire roaring, because May on the lakes is not a temperate month, and Eve was just emerging from her bedroom when David entered. He did not intend to stop and stare at her; he detected the impulse to do this and fought against it, but it was irresistible. In her apparel was but one difference—she was wearing the white waist that Aunt Jen had brought her—but it was sufficient to produce an amazing change in the girl. It gave a slenderness to her torso that he had not seen before, and the neck, square and moderately low, relieved the splendid upward flow of her throat; it set off the rich olive of her skin, the blackness of her hair, the size and color of her remarkable eyes. More than all, its effect was chastening, taking away the hint of hardness that had so often been about her, softening the lines of her face as well as making more impressive those of her waist and arms and shoulders. Before, even in those intervals when he was made breathless by her striking beauty, she had yet remained for him the

daughter of Norman Eldred; to-night, as she stood drawing that door shut behind her, she was a gentle, tender, beautiful girl, divorced from every suggestion of Garden Island.

He thought she would turn about and see him before he could recover, and he did not want that; and the device by which he recovered his self control was this: He said silently to himself, "But she dragged me away from my hooker so her father could burn me out."

It was like a steadying drug. He took off his hat and went casually enough, to all outward appearances, about the business of making their supper.

So much for that.

David did not speak—did not trust himself with words, though his curiosity was high—until well through the meal. Then he said,

"You had a visitor to-day."

He tried to put the bite of accusation into that remark, but Eve must have missed it, for she looked up brightly.

"Yes. The woman from the light. 'Aunt Jen,' they call her."

"And what business has she got here?"

"She brought me some things. This"—indicating the waist with a lowering of her head and placing a hand on her bosom to smooth the front of the garment—"and some other things."

"Other things, eh?" he began harshly and with a swagger. "I suppose she brought you some——"

Oh, no! A hard school of manners, his; he was not much different from the run of men who have lived their lives on the lakes, and he was doing his best to make this girl uncomfortable. But he found, with something like surprise, that he could not stoop to coarseness with Eve Eldred. He flushed smartly and did not hear what she said, though she talked as long as she could on the matter of Aunt Jen's visit, taking that opening with enthusiasm because he had given it to her. And MacKinnon had come so close to a shameful blunder that he could not try again to play the tyrant that night.

He could not even pretend to read later, but walked the beach for miles, up and down, up and down. That was easier than sitting in his boat, but even such a diversion presented its difficulty. One was the potent urge to creep close to the house and watch Eve through the window—and he could not drive that away until he said to himself, aloud this time, "She was a damned decoy!"

And Wednesday morning he told himself the same thing when he approached the house for breakfast—just as a precautionary measure.

ALL day he gave himself momentary resolution and relief by a repetition of that accusation, and went ashore with a feeling of better fortitude than he had had last night, but this was shattered when Eve, without leading up to it and as though she had intended mentioning it for long, said,

"That woman—Aunt Jen—told me I could come to Squaw Island and stay if I wanted to."

This gave David an unreasonable start and stirred, among other things, that flash of jealousy he had experienced when he saw the supply-boat come into High Island. It shook his self-possession, and he blurted out,

"Then why didn't you go?"

He was not looking at her, so he could not see the mischief which came into her face.

"Because I'm as good as—in jail here."

The lightness was in her voice, too, and stung him, because again she was making a bubble of his attempt to intimidate her.

"Jail be damned!" he cried, rising. "You're free to go when you want to."

His front, his defense—which had begun by being an offense—crumbled before that smile of hers; but a new resistance sprang to life when he saw her, the smile gone from her eyes, lips parted seriously, a hand half lifted toward him.

She spoke his name: "David!" just once, but the intonation was both reproach and plea. Oh, he knew why she reproached, but could only guess vaguely why she should plead, and in that moment he struggled desperately between two urges—the first of which was natural—the urge to take her, to hold her, to leave off this shamming, to make as brave an attempt to comfort her as he had a crude effort to humble her; and the other was that reasonable thing, that matter of logic in which he heard his own voice whispering, "She helped put me ashore; a woman like that 'd stop at nothing!"

She was saying:

"I knew that. If I'd wanted to go, I'd

have gone day before yesterday when she was here. But I wanted to stay here, because——"

"Why you wanted to stay don't interest me," he said doggedly. He saw the hurt sweep over her face and, for the moment, took a savage delight therein, because he was again holding the whip-hand. "Nothin' you say about anythin' interests me." He was at the door then, opening it, attempting to cover his confused retreat by this show of repugnance; but her words followed him across the threshold.

"Then why do you run away from me, David?"

Run away! The door slammed. And he did just that—ran away. Down on the beach again, he walked and grumbled and admitted defeat and told himself that she was a decoy, a hell-cat, and that, by all the laws of reason, he should loathe her. By all the laws of reason—yes!

But to-morrow was near. If Eldred had agreed to the meeting, provision for which David had sent back by Dimmock, he would be coming to ask for his daughter. And which would be the easier: to rid himself of the torment of her presence or to let Eldred off with only one payment made upon his incalculable debt? That was a fine point, indeed. Consideration of it demanded his concentration, and this gave him more peace than had been his measure for days. Finally he slept.

DAYLIGHT seeped across a lake that lay like a great, dusty mirror, the last undulations of yesterday's swell seeming as imperfections in glass. About the horizon hung a dirty haze which seemed heavy and deep and persistent enough to hold back the full measure of light for long, but when the sun pushed its rim above the distant mainland, it ate the mists in the east rapidly, and through the opening thus made poured across the water a flat yellow smear, turning the mirror to a plate of hammered brass. The rest of the murk was put to early flight by the breeze which came blowing out of the south, quite gentle and its chill tempered by a mellow promise. The stir of air touched the lake only here and there at first, spoiling the glaze on the surface, changing the color from brass to vivid blue. These patches grew, sending out long fingers, filling in the spaces between one another, throwing off a host of reflected light-rays as the wavelets picked up and recast the beams of the first sunlight, and finally, when the whole area of water became wind-riffled and the sun cleared the horizon, the lake became alive, a dancing and vivid blue, delicate, tremulous, beautiful.

David watched this change from the stern of the *Islander*, where he had gone to slosh water from a bucket over his head and chest, and the clearing-away of the mist which had cloaked the lake had a counterpart in his mind. There was one thing only for him to do: to be rid of this girl. He fought back the twinge that decision caused, bu the must not let any action of his work to the advantage of her father. He would plunge himself into the business of making Eldred uncomfortable now, seeking in that purpose relief from the confusion which his first step toward it had brought upon his head. His decision brought relief. He felt like a remade man, he told himself.

Yet he ate his breakfast with the Indians and did not go near Eve.

At four o'clock that afternoon, Fred Mink looked up from his work and stared hard at the tug which was bearing down on the *Islander* through the deepening haze from the direction of Eldred's harbor. He said no word, but MacKinnon, perceiving his concentration, looked also. After a moment he was certain that it was the craft which had brought Dimmock Tuesday, and a smile twitched at his lips. He had sent that humiliating message to Eldred, prescribing conditions which were not prompted by caution or fear but solely by a deviling sense of humor, and now Eldred was accepting—probably.

The qualifying probability was wiped out in a few minutes, for the tug's progress was checked, the bone in her teeth dwindled to a riffle, and a skiff, which had been in tow, put out from her with one man aboard.

It was a condition which he had set down. Not until the small boat had come well toward where the *Islander* lay at anchor, however, did MacKinnon set about meeting it. He saw the man who rowed turn to look in his direction, saw him dip his oars and come slowly on, and then David took out the rifle that Gam Gallagher had given him, dropped into his heavy pound-boat, placed the gun across the seat and began sculling quickly out to the meeting.

He looked out and saw Eldred, who had stopped rowing and was waiting his approach, and the vigor of his oar's push against the water abated somewhat. It was one of two things now. This morning he had told himself that there must be no question about what he would do; the manner of doing it, he had decided then, left the only room for argument. And now, despite his best effort, there was room to choose.

"Turn back; give her up!" one voice within him insisted.

That was his reason talking, prodded by all his experience with men and women, with all his appreciation of what Garden Island had meant to him.

But there was another voice, a quieter, gentler, sweeter voice, which whispered: "Oh, she is lovely, wholly lovely—and you may be wrong. Her hands and her heart may be clean!"

And then he was swinging his heavy boat about, bringing it broadside to the one a dozen feet away, and smiling as he looked into the face of Norman Eldred, who sat awaiting him, obedient to his orders.

Shaken and unpoised though he had been after that last scene in the store, Eldred's faculties were clear now, sharpened by the necessity of the occasion. His eyes, alive and alert, with all those quick lights playing in their depths, traveled the figure before him, which stood spread-legged, holding the long oar in one hand, balancing with grace against the moderate sea. There was hatred in the gaze as it rested on MacKinnon's face, which bore now an expression of amusement; contempt in Eldred's eyes as they followed the lines of the lad's figure into the rolled-down hip-boots, and a slowly kindling wrath as they rested on the rifle across the seat.

"You bargain with reservations," he said.

"Not a one, Eldred. You're here as I said."

"Unarmed."

"Perhaps. I didn't take a chance that you might cheat. I came ready."

"No one has ever doubted my word."

"And I wouldn't take it for the price of tacks." This was spoken lightly with a smile flung into the black look of the older man. "I'm here to listen to you and to plug you if you make a crooked move." And he laughed outright, hugely enjoying the situation.

Eldred's gaze roved to the shore, searching it keenly, but no one was in sight.

"I've come," he began, still looking toward the island, "to talk about my daughter. She is here with you, and I want her back."

"After you drove her out, eh?"

Eldred looked at David.

"A man can't put away his obligations so easily."

"That's right, Eldred."

"She's a girl, alone, without even a mother. She needs protection."

'Damned funny how we think alike, ain't it?"

Eldred stirred nervously and dipped the oars to steady the drift of his skiff.

"That's why I could come—this way, as you prescribed. Her well-being is more important than a man's pride—a father's pride."

'Well?" said David, as in challenge, and Eldred moved again on his seat.

"You've been rash—and a fool; you've played with fire. Ask any of them"—with a sweeping gesture—"and they'll tell you what comes to men who try to play me tricks. You've done more than any other ever has; you've sowed generously of—whirlwind, perhaps. You've one chance left to cancel that record and begin over again, with everything forgotten."

His eyes held steadily on David's face, and the boy lifted a hand to rub his chin with the finger-backs.

"Yeah? Go on."

"That's it; that's what I came to say. Turn her over to me now, unharmed, and I can forget. I can forget, boy, as well as I can remember."

"Lucky!" David laughed. "Damned lucky! I can't, Eldred. I can't forget a thing, let alone the burnin' of my hooker. And besides, anyhow, it's new and comfortable to have a woman round the place, doin' things."

ONE of Eldred's oars slipped from his grasp. It may have been a trick of the swell, but the hand did not catch at it immediately. It started toward his side, as though to grip the flesh there, but was checked and almost snatched at the oar again. His heart had leaped and stopped and gone on unevenly. That was the thing he had feared!

"So," he said in assent, struggling to gather his wits. "But there are women—and women. She's—she's not your sort, MacKinnon—not the sort to do things for a man for long."

THAT was what David's reason had been saying for days. For an instant, Eldred's voice struck a sympathetic vibration in his mind, and in that instant it passed, for there was in the man's manner something unreal, something counterfeit.

"And what of that?" he asked, trying to taunt. "It's said that King Norman's never been sent for before. That's what Dimmock told me the other day; but you're here. The impossible can happen. Your daughter has spirit, but spirits can be broken."

The white teeth gleamed through Eldred's black beard, and a smile lighted his eyes.

"You boast. You don't know her—and her moods."

"Yes; she has moods." Ah, he knew that the girl had moods; he had been drawn away from his *Annabelle* by one; he had been made breathless by others, and once she had carried an unsheathed blade for his body. He wanted to tell all he knew; the impulse to show his sagacity to this man was strong, and he went on, taunting with tone and smile. "She *has* moods—some of them lovely. You should have seen her the other night, sittin' by my stove with the firelight across her face, alone and yet not afraid—sort of sad, but with the smile close to her lips." To save himself, he could not keep a tremor from his voice, and Eldred detected that which he would conceal. Once again he stirred on the seat, and this time the hand did touch his side and clench there. Love! He was face to face with a man who not only had tormented him by an extravagant trick but who now had a reason equally strong with his, perhaps, for holding Eve close to him.

"Moods, ho! And there are others, Eldred. She'd have knifed me that night I brought her here. She drove a bargain with me for help, and she'd have knifed me before she paid. She's that kind—yes! And that's the thing, likely, that lets her conspire with firebugs to draw men away from their boats while you put in your dirty licks!" The bitterness here was as pronounced as his unacknowledged love had been a moment before.

A new thrill ran through Eldred, but he did not so much as lift his gaze from the rail of his skiff, though the eyes narrowed slightly. So MacKinnon suspected innocent Eve, did he? So he believed she would practise duplicity. It was good! He warmed inwardly.

"So long as you do her no harm," he began, with an effort to hold his voice low, "there'd be a way out for me if the responsibility could be shifted, you see." He looked up craftily and saw the trouble in the lad's face, brought to the surface by his own talk of the girl. "I did drive her out; I was through with her. I would be now if I thought— But you've made a fool of yourself once over the burning of your hooker; because of that, remembering what she did, her part in it, you might forget these other, gentler moods, MacKinnon. She might not be safe with you always."

"So you're coming clean, eh? So you admit it?"

"Admit? Perhaps I boast that I—that Eve and I—stop at nothing." There was a false note in his tone which caught David's ear, a discord when he spoke of Eve, stressing the pronunciation of her name, and Eldred moved on his seat once more eagerly—with overeagerness, David thought—and lifted a hand in quick gesture, animated, without reserve, so very eager in his argument. "Admit? Of course I admit! And I boast that worse things will happen unless you let me rest here"—tapping his breast. "No matter what she is, firebug or worse, she's mine, mine to protect—no other man will do that. You won't, MacKinnon. You"—he laughed again—"giving shelter to the woman who helps put you on shore, who took away your fine liberty and made Gam Gallagher's hired man of you!"

He threw back his head and laughed again, and though his mirth was loud enough, it had no ring and fell dead.

"You, in comfort with a woman of the Eldreds! Ah, that night— Moods? You should have seen her then, boy! She planned so carefully what she'd say; she plotted every move with me. I watched when she took you up the path to the house; I waited until she had you inside.

"Moods? I could see her then, and I could see you falling into the trap. Her eyes, you said, when they're somber, when they smile! They smiled that night—

didn't they, MacKinnon? That dragged you into helplessness, and I fired your hooker and you can't prove it. There's nobody here to listen now; there'd be men to swear me an alibi if I needed one. But I won't—I won't. It's our secret—yours and mine and Eve's."

He was agitated, breathless, his poise completely gone as he overstressed his argument; but his assertions fell flat, and before the suspicion that formed in David's mind he found something melting within him, giving way, and that was his reason, which had held him away from Eve, which had told him that she was a firebug, that she had conspired to ruin him; and as he looked into that face so close to him—for the boats were bumping rails—with its lifted eyebrows, the anxiety in its eyes, the tensity as of a man who grasps at a straw, he felt that this all was a lie, a ruse.

Eldred had stopped talking. One hand was half extended as if to beg credence for his charge against Eve. David again rubbed his chin, perplexed and saving time.

"Yes," he nodded; "it's all right. All that you say is right, Eldred. But what about the *Annabelle*? You want your property and your responsibility back, but where do I come in? What do I get?"

The other's hand dropped to his knee; he looked away a moment.

"Your hooker," he said flatly, as in surrender.

"My——"

"The price of her, and on top of it a season's earnings."

"For what?"

"The return of Eve—now—to-day."

"If I don't agree?"

"You will."

"You're mighty certain."

"Certain that you won't keep her, because she's as dangerous to you as I am if you refuse."

David laughed again.

"You—dangerous? Eldred, you're a joke. And as for your bargain— Hell! I've got a responsibility, too. Any white man has a responsibility to any woman who's good to look at. A firebug? A plotter?" He nodded. "All of 'em, maybe, Eldred; but no matter what she's done, no matter what she is, no matter what she may do at any time, she's a girl, and you are King Norman of Garden Island, and livin' there with you is too bitter a dose for her." The other lunged forward as if to rise. "Sit down!"

The smile was gone from David's face now as, with long oar upraised, he poised himself for a blow. The other sank back, eyes flaming.

"That's why I brought the gun. If you'd had yours—and it's likely you have—you'd drill me cheerfully. Now you've said your say and you've got your answer. I've no more time for kings to-day."

He bowed in stiff mockery and laughed boyishly, whole-heartedly, as one who embarks on an alluring adventure.

Eldred sat still for a moment, motionless and dumb, hate in his eyes. He watched MacKinnon drop the oar into place, watched the skilful wrench which put the heavy boat under motion, watched a breadth of water come between them. He rose then and lifted his clenched fists.

"You refuse?" he moaned. "You send me away? Damn you, MacKinnon; I'll——"

He choked to wordlessness in search of a threat which would relieve his rage, but David only bent forward and laughed again.

"Look out, King Norman!" he cried. "Your damned throne's makin' bad weather of it. If you don't stand by and watch somethin' 'll blow your tin crown overboard! And if I could reach you now, damn me if I wouldn't uproot a bunch of whiskers!"

He was gay in this, his second triumph, and the buoyancy of his mood was enhanced by the growing thing of wonder, the suspicion that Eve Eldred was not what he had thought her, that the last hold reason had upon his impatient heart was slipping.

For a long time Eldred stood in his boat, reeling as she rose and fell on the seas, watching David go away. He said no more, made no further gestures, but in his heart, mingling with the fear of the boy which had only been enhanced by this meeting, was a savage lust for revenge—and a growing hopelessness which had reached the point which all but discards caution.

THEY had eaten their meal together with hardly a word. Throughout, the girl's eyes had watched David, watched him from the time he landed at dusk, through the process of making the meal

until now, when he was finishing his last swallow of coffee. But once, that she had observed, had he looked at her.

Yet there was something new about his silence now. He was thinking of her, and it was difficult for him to keep his eyes away from her. She was certain of that much. Finally she spoke.

"My father was out there this afternoon."

He lifted his gaze.

"That's what I've got to talk to you about."

His manner alarmed her, sent a sharp fright through her like a chill. She took no pains to conceal this, but shrank against her chair-back, giving herself that appearance of smallness which had been marked at those other times when he had seen her frightened. After a pause, he said abruptly,

"He wants you back."

One of her hands, which had rested in her lap, slid off and hung limply at her side. She said flatly,

"I suppose so."

Resignation was in that short sentence, as though all the hope that had been in her heart for these last days had drained out—had gushed out, leaving it cold and empty.

MacKinnon felt himself trembling. Now was his time! This was the moment in which he must know. His reason still clamored a warning, crying that he beware of this child of the Eldreds, that the only foundation for his hope that her hands were clean and her record free from duplicity was a wild guess. But his heart was leaping, because, for the first time since her appeal had taken such a place in his consciousness, he had at least *some* ground for believing that she was completely worthy of admiration. He was strangely self-possessed, capable of being deliberate to a degree; he would not rush forward blindly now, he told himself.

"He wants you back, and he wants to pay me for the *Annabelle*," he said.

His eyes missed no phase of the girl's expression, and he saw a dull show of surprise come through her hopelessness.

"To pay you? But she's burned up! She isn't worth——"

"That's why he came, to pay for burnin' her."

At first it was as though Eve had not heard. Then she started slightly and leaned forward.

"*Burning* her?" There was no flicker of caution, no steeling herself to meet some dangerous accusation—only amazement. "David, do you mean that he *set* her on fire?"

HE FELT as though something were bursting in his breast. A great, joyous surge swept him, so remarkable in its potency that it brought in its wake a strange fright. If this should *not* be true! He heard himself saying—trying to search her heart from another angle:

"Your father set fire to her to drive me away. You should have known that."

If it were acting which made her seem not to hear that last, it was superb acting.

"He burned your boat because he didn't like you!" she cried, voice very low and uncertain, a hint of color creeping into her face. "I didn't know—I never dreamed—So *that* was why you were mad at him that night!"

He eyed her through a long moment of silence, searching her face, prying into her very soul to detect fraud, and his heart leaped until his temples throbbed. She was lovely in his incredulous intentness.

"He set her afire while I was with you. He waited until you had taken me ashore and into your house."

Her repressed dismay at this was wholly honest, and in that moment, between pulse-beats, MacKinnon's skepticism vanished. He ceased to be her judge and, instead, he became a timid suitor, covering his misgivings, assailed by all the doubts and fears that only youth with heart disturbed can know. With that change there came into his mind an absurd question—absurd, yes—but, nevertheless, one which put him into panic. She was clean of hand and heart, he knew; she was worthy of the love of any man, but what if the thing he wanted to say should be unwelcome—what if there should be some bond which held her to Eldred, which would make her *want* to go back to Garden Island? An unreasonable fear, of course, but it set him in a panic because an incredibly precious possession seemed to be within his reach, and he feared to believe that there was no trick about it, no lurking factor which would snatch it from him.

"And now he wants to make it right—as near right as he can," he found himself saying. "He wants to pay me now for both."

"Both?"

He stared hard at her.

"For the *Annabelle* and for you." Her lips twitched, and she drew back into her chair again very slowly, with that small portion of color draining from her cheeks. "That's the bargain—that he'll pay me for the *Annabelle* and give me a season's earnin's, make me a free man again so I can be my own master instead of workin' for somebody else—if I'll send you back to him."

She started as though frightened by a menacing sound.

"And you told him?"

He leaned forward with sudden intentness, so earnest that his face was set in an expression which was almost savage.

"What do you think I'd tell him? You've had a good deal to say since you've been here about my kindness and decency. What kind of answer do you think I'd give a man to such a proposition as that?"

AND then it was Eve's turn to steel herself against the hope that had been growing with the days. He had at once threatened and protected her; he had failed to cover his decent impulses. But those were forgotten now in the fear that swirled up to confound her. Her father had played a treacherous trick on David MacKinnon, and it was not reasonable to believe that he would have charity in his heart for her. Her hope of happiness and ultimate escape from Garden Island was the price of his hooker, his liberty, his independence to go when and where he chose. He was taunting her now with the fact that she was the daughter of Norman Eldred, that she could expect no mercy from him, who had suffered wrong at the hands of the man who was called king. There could be, she felt then, no other explanation for his tensity and the fire in his eyes. He was challenging her to fritter her hope on the improbability that a man who bore such a grudge against her kin would do anything less than trade her back for what he had lost, and she was in the grip of despair.

She rose sharply, without looking at him, and walked to the window and stood staring at the rain-splashed glass, opaque and glittering against the night. The wind sobbed about the building, but for a moment there was no other sound in the room save the drawing of the stove. Eve's knees shook once spasmodically, and a blindness not of tears shut out even the glisten of the drenched glass before her. MacKinnon, unconscious of what he did in the excitement of that moment, drew his pipe from his shirt pocket and scratched a match.

At the sound, the girl turned on him with such a look as he had never seen on human countenance. The features were not contorted; the eyes did not blaze; it was composed of none of the usual factors which go to make up expressions of violent emotion, but it was as though she saw clearly and with no mistake a fate which had neither mercy nor chance of change. A repressed bitterness was there—a bitterness directed at no individual but at the fate which had closed in about her after her hour of hope. And then she laughed—a tremendous laugh, as repressed as the look on her face, short and sharp and flat—a mockery of mirth itself.

"If that's the case," she said, "I guess I can go back well enough, and I guess that after this nothing that'll happen to me on Garden Island will be so very bad. I guess I can be hunted like a rabbit the minute I'm out of sound of my father's voice and it won't be such a terrible thing now. I guess I won't mind not having a f-friend——"

He rose quickly.

"Eve, you're all——"

And then fury blazed out at him from her eyes.

"Never mind!" Her look and her voice, sharp and explosive, balked him. For a second they stood confronting one another, and then she went on rapidly, drawing one hand through and through the other. "Never mind—anything, please! It's all over. Everything is over; and the sooner I make up my mind to it the better off I'll be. That don't mean anything to you, I suppose, but it counts with me, and I'll keep what I have—what peace I have"—with bitter irony. And she repeated the word again—"peace"—in a whisper, and followed it with a laugh, which may have been forced to cover a catch in her breath.

"But, Eve, listen to me! I didn't——"

"Please — don't — talk — to — me." Her words, widely spaced, fell on him like blows, though her voice was hardly of normal tone. "If it weren't for you, this wouldn't have happened—what's going on in here now, I mean"—a hand at her breast.

"It's all because you came to Garden Island. It was bad enough before that, but now it'll be ten times worse—and it won't matter.

"You were Jode MacKinnon's boy, in the first place, and then you were nice to me and that made me think that maybe things were going to be different. It was the first time I'd hoped for it, and that hope made me dissatisfied.

"It wasn't my fault that my father burned your boat, unless it's my fault being his daughter. I didn't know anything about that, but I see now why you—what makes you— You came into the store looking for him to start trouble"—voice steadying after the momentary break—"and you did what you did and then I made my choice between my father and you—because I liked you. I saved your life, I guess; but I was glad to. I didn't even want anything in pay for it at first, and then all I wanted was to get away from Garden Island——

"Oh, I got away, all right and I got to a place where I saw you every day and I let myself be a fool over you. I let myself hope that you'd keep me here, that you'd get to like me. I even thought you did, and that you were having a hard time hiding it. And now I'm going back to my father——"

"If you'll listen——"

She drew back at his approach, putting a chair between them and crying out:

"Don't come near me! Don't try to argue with me! Don't you see that the only way I can go back there and live is to *hate* you? Don't you see that after I've loved you I've got to hate you to have any peace? Don't you see that I've got to look at what you're going to do as if you were selling me back to slavery?

"For the price of your hooker! Why, I'd have worked my hands off for you; I'd have paid you that much money a dozen times over—I'd have got it somehow—just to be near you, and now, because I happen to be my father's daughter, I've got to be traded back—and I've got to hate you, David MacKinnon! I've got to think you're worse—worse than—worse——"

She stammered, and something changed in her manner—a swift passing of the iron that had been in her will. She paused a moment, not hearing his burst of words, seeing him approach through that dry blindness in her eyes, and then she whirled, stumbling into her room, slamming the door behind her, and as MacKinnon, recovering his balance finally, his tongue loosened, flung himself against it, she drove the bolt home, crying out brokenly:

"It locks from the inside! And you told me that—and it was the first thing that made me— But I don't! I don't! I'm going to hate you, David MacKinnon; I'm going to hate you!"

"Eve, don't do that! Open the door! You're all wrong—wrong from the beginnin'!" He beat with his flat palms on the panels and shook the latch, but the door remained fast. "Open it, Eve. You've *got* to listen to me!" he cried in panic.

"No! Go away! If you want to make it easier for me, go away!"

HE HEARD her move and tried the door again, but the bolt had not been withdrawn. Then he relaxed and listened.

"Eve, are you there?" No reply. "You've not left the room; I know that. You're goin' to listen to me now. I'm not goin' away, and all I have to say is this: That if you go back to him, you'll go after I'm helpless to stop you. Hear that? After I'm helpless to stop you! I wanted you to say that you *knew* I wouldn't let you go back. I wanted you to say again that I couldn't do you any harm. I wanted you to know that without bein' told. That was why I didn't tell you what I told him—that I was goin' to keep you here—as long as you'd stay. Do you hear that, Eve?"

He could not know that, with dry throat and lungs which seemed crushed by a great weight, she tried to speak and could not.

"I brought you here to play a trick on him. I didn't care anythin' about you then, but somethin' 's happened to change that, and you're here to stay or go when and where I go—always! Do you hear *that?*"

He had been very emphatic, almost belligerent in his intentness. He stopped, and, though no response came, he thought he could hear her breathing, close against the other side of the door.

"I've been all wrong about you. I've been fightin' against admittin' I was wrong. I listened to stories and believed them. I listened to the story that said that you with your own hands changed the beacons that sent my father on the reef, and I believed

it!" He could not hear the light moan of the girl who crouched low against the door. "I believed that until I talked with you that night aboard my hooker. And then I thought for sure you must have planned with your father to get me away so he could set the fire. I believed that until now, until to-night. Oh, Eve, Eve, I've been the fool! I've played the game all wrong from the beginnin'; but it was because I was afraid!"

He was seized with a spasm of remorse and desire and heat again on the door.

"Let me in!"—tone savage with intent. "You think bolts can keep you from me now? You think you can keep me out, now that I've come this far? I'll have you now if it takes my last breath; I'll have you if it's the last thing I do!"

He heard her stirring, and then her voice came, strangely weak:

"Oh, first, David—haven't you something to say first?"

His beating on the door frightened her; the hoarseness of his voice was alarming. She wanted him to come, yes—wanted with every fiber of body and soul—but not that way—not as a destroyer, but as a lover with words of that love on his lips.

He drew back, puzzled by her faint plea, and to them, from out on the lake, came four short, dull blasts of a boat's whistle.

It struck through David's tumult, froze the girl, too, because it was the call of sailors in distress. Four whistles, four barks from the metal throat of a steamboat coming when a swirl of passion was in the breast of David MacKinnon; but it meant need, and his were the ears which had heard it, his the duty to answer.

"Eve; hear that?"

His voice was still strained. He heard her say, "Yes" as though startled, heard her move, with a hand on the bolt, but waiting to listen. It was the whistle of her father's tug *Elsa*, and apprehension shot through her.

"Come," he said, as the whistle came again, four times, short and sharp.

He crossed the floor, and Eve knew by the sound that he was lighting a lantern. As she moved for her heavy jacket, she heard him getting into his oilskin coat. The outer door opened, and he said again,

"Come, Eve!"

She drew back the door that she had bolted against him and, stopping to adjust a sou'wester on her head, followed into the night, where he had gone.

DAYLIGHT had faded early that evening, and rain, which had come on the rising wind from the southwest, had made weather thick, and before darkness itself shut down, three boats were making slowly through the water of the lake, each of which would have its bearing sooner or later on the fortunes of the man and girl in the house on High Island.

The first was a steam-tug, slipping out of Norman Eldred's harbor just as dusk came, showing no lights, holding south of west. One man worked between the fire-hole and the engine; Dimmock puttered for'ard, and Eldred himself at the wheel made up the crew. The latter did not sit on the stool in the pilot-house, but stood over the wheel, staring into the night. Now and again his lips moved, and the faint light from the binnacle showed that rage was dancing in his eyes. Since yesterday he had smarted in silence; since yesterday he had nursed and prodded that rancor, fed it in the hope that it would eat away the fear that lingered in his heart. Fear was still in him, but with the motion of the tug over the dingy seas, he sensed relief. This was action—and night was coming.

And another boat, too, was bearing on High Island. A catboat, this, launched from the western shore of Beaver Island, its one sail catching the breeze and driving it on its way. One man was aboard, steering by the aid of a pocket-compass and by instinct, for he knew boats and water and weather. Now and then he drew his oilskin hat closer and wriggled and chuckled over the thing which he anticipated. The man was Jean Mosseau. Each day since his friend had brought the story of MacKinnon's prank on Eve Eldred, Mosseau had lain for long, watching the water. Tuesday, his vigil had been rewarded by sight of Eldred's tug standing across to High Island; it had come again to-day and he had witnessed the meeting of small boats. He could only conjecture as to the men in them, though he spied with a glass, but Eldred's tug went away without touching land. So there was a good chance that the girl was still there. He also was going into action now, his courage rehabilitated by the

passage of days, his chagrin mounting as the story of what David had done to him became light and common gossip.

And away to the north a third boat, which had been under way all that day, came to rest against a rickety dock at Naubinway. An old man, with soiled and grizzled hair, whose eyes were vacant and staring, whose neck was thin, whose lips moved constantly, made her fast and went ashore. He stood staring about for a time and then went up the dock to the land. He stared up and down until he made out the nearest lighted window; he went forward and peered into the room, fixing his immoderate stare on each of its occupants in turn. The face he sought was not there evidently, for he went slowly away, peering into other houses, watching rare figures on the village street. When all the windows were darkened, he returned to his mackinaw, crawled into the crazy little cabin and drew soiled blankets over his withered body. He muttered to himself for long, and now and then sat up and looked about in the darkness. Toward morning he slept.

WHEN David MacKinnon walked from the beach to his house that night to prepare the evening meal and confront Eve, his were not the only feet treading those sands.

The tug which had borne down on High Island from Indian Harbor had come the last mile silently, its engine turning ever so slowly, its exhaust making no noise that could be detected far up-wind.

"Here," said Eldred finally, and gave the wheel to Dimmock. He stepped outside, moved aft and gave a gesture to the engineer; the machinery stopped.

Then, speaking no other word, for their plan was well conceived, Eldred hauled on the long line that towed his skiff. He moved quickly, as a man will under great excitement, but when he put the oars aboard the small boat and lowered himself to it, he was most cautious to make no sound. He stood there, listening, and felt in his coat pocket, where the savage pistol lay ready.

He rowed toward the faint blotch of light and beached his boat on the sand spit. He stood for some time, watching and listening, and then he moved forward a few steps, waited, and went on again with great stealth, approaching the house from the rear by a circuitous route, as any prowler would. His heart beat quickly against his ribs and his hand went from time to time to that side pocket where the weapon nestled. He had need of the feel of that compact bolster for his courage. His fear of David was no less than it had been; perhaps it was greater after their interview of yesterday, but his humiliation had given way to rage, and that rage knew little compromise, not even in the face of great fear—only the compromise of coming in secret and after dark, with a weapon handy to use.

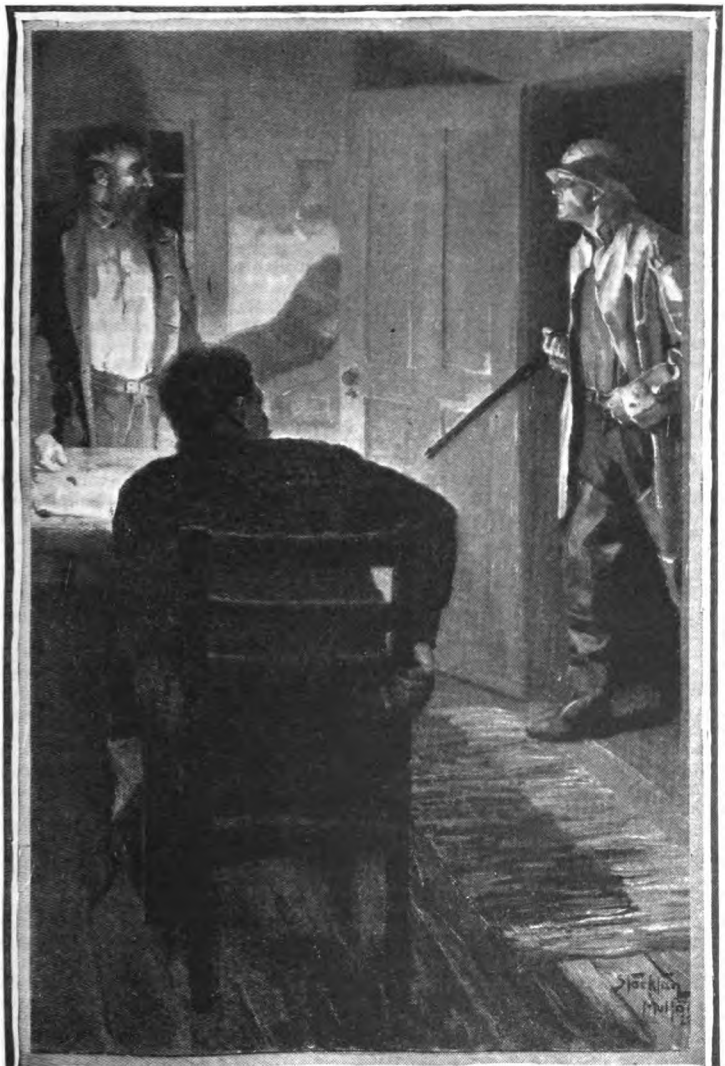
He reached a point directly back of the house and waited. Light from one window threw a yellow blotch out on the sand, and the scattering rain-drops shot across it. A half-dozen steps, with his heart beating almost to the point of suffocation, and he could see within.

He saw Eve, first, and his hand opened and shut against his side spasmodically, and a shudder ran through him, as though he had tasted something terribly bitter. Then he stared at the bent back of MacKinnon as he ate, eyes on his food, and Eldred's hand slipped down to caress once more the pistol.

And now, what? he debated, as he stood there with the fear coming up through his resolution again. He could shoot from where he stood, could shoot the lad from behind and without danger to himself, and yet he feared even to strike from behind. It was uncanny—the way this youth could mock at him! It was an unheard-of thing! And though Eldred clamped his teeth and fought against weakness, he found himself turning, withdrawing into the darkness—to wait—and for he knew not what.

He went on carefully to the rear of the house and stood there, listening. He heard the sound of voices within suddenly and squatted.

The voices subsided, covered by the wind and the waves on the beach. Eldred moved again, then froze against the ground. The faintest sound had come from back there against the gloom of the forest, and he checked his breath to listen. He could hear no more, not until his sight had functioned, and he made out a slightly luminous blotch in the darkness, and from that traced the outlines of a man's head and shoulders, standing still.



Eldred said: "After my daughter, are you? And by what right do you come hunting her—with that?"
"Right!" David said, under his breath. "Every right under the sun, Eldred."

A hissing breath slipped from his lips before he could check it. Suspected? Stalked? He felt again for the pistol, but it had lost its charm. The fool knew no fear! That figure was moving forward for all the world as though it hunted some one, and Eldred shrank even closer to the ground to let him pass.

Such slow steps! The figure was discernible now; it was abreast of him. Inside the house a lifted voice, and the figure moved quickly, changing its direction, and, with a sound like a moan, a shape rose at its feet and binding arms clamped about its legs, for this other had all but stepped on Norman Eldred.

They went down into the sand, fighting blindly, madly, threshing about, grappling for holds. Hands sought Eldred's throat, and he could not give up his struggle against them even long enough to try to get the pistol.

They rolled over, Eldred now on top, again underneath, seeking to bring the great power of his arms and hands to bear, but the other was agile, lightninglike in his shiftings. He threshed his arms free. A hand clamped on Eldred's chin, tearing at the beard, fumbling, relaxing, and then, close in his ear, a voice:

"*Sacré!* Eldret!"

On those words, all movement stopped, and Eldred remained fixed. He was not hunted. The man was not MacKinnon! He leaned forward—they were both on their knees—thrusting his face close to the other.

"Mosseau!"

"Ah!"—a gasp of fright.

"You followed me—is that it?"—fingers fastening in the clothing of the now thoroughly frightened Frenchman.

"*Na!* No, Eldret!" Mosseau's voice rose in the cry of protest. "I did not come here for you."

"Eh? Not for me?" Eldred was holding the other man half erect as he got to his feet, and felt rather than saw the other shake his head. "What are you here for, then?"

An inspiration was shooting through him as he recollected the facts which governed the relations between Mosseau, himself and MacKinnon.

"Leesten, Eldret; you know mabbe for why Jean Mosseau she come here. You know what de trader she do to Jean. Py gosh, I come to get efen!"

"Even? How? What were you going to do?"

Jean shrugged.

"He push my face off in your store, by gosh! Jean she not forget. She wait an' watch an' plan an' to-night she come wit' wan long knife, mabbe, to get back!"

FOR a moment they stood silent, staring at one another in the darkness. So this man, too, had come to seek vengeance on David MacKinnon! So he, too, was a coward, and ready to strike in the dark!

There was, true, the probability that Mosseau had designs on Eve, but that did not bother Eldred then. The Frenchman feared him, was abject before him, and perhaps he could use this fear and humility, perhaps he could bring it to bear against David MacKinnon.

"I've 'a score to settle with you—a heavy one, Mosseau. We won't talk of that to-night. He"—gesturing toward the house—"too, owes me. You know who is here with him?"

"*Oui!*"

"I am here for her; that is all—to-night. If you want to work out a part of your debt to me, Mosseau, maybe I'll let you help."

The Frenchman could feel that gaze in his face, felt, too, a hand grope for his wrist and mighty fingers clamp there. He drew back, and the strength that was in Eldred's arm gripped down, and he found himself jerked close to the other.

"No; you can't get away! I've had other things to think of, Mosseau, or you'd have paid before now. I've known all about you; you'd never have gotten to the mainland——"

"Ah—for sure, Eldret! Jean she was drunk——"

"Never mind; we won't talk of that now. You're here, and you'll help me, or——"

"Sure, Eldret!" Mosseau was thoroughly alarmed now. "You come to get her back. Py gosh, Jean she come to use hees knife, eh? Py gosh; mabbe Jean hurt heem more by helpin' you, eh?"

"You seem to understand—" The hand that had gripped Jean's wrist relaxed. "Back this way—" They walked fifty paces from the house and stopped. "Listen, Mosseau!"

Eldred talked rapidly, injecting a question now and then, voice becoming firmer and louder as his plan developed, as dread of that meeting which had, a half-hour ago appeared inevitable, diminished. He breathed easier; he even showed his old ironic triumph, and the Frenchman, listening, shrugged and nodded and watched this man whom he feared above all others. And he could appreciate the subtleties of revenge, could Jean!

Again Eldred went through the darkness, but this time swiftly, and he laughed to himself as he pushed off his skiff and rowed out. He stopped and listened and whistled sharply. An answering whistle came out of the thickness, and in a moment he was against his tug, being helped aboard.

"Easily," he said to the engineer. "Easily." And, to Dimmock, "Stand down the east side, past his harbor."

AND before the wheel had gone down to send the tug southward, Jean Mosseau was peering into the window of the log house, watching Eve Eldred confront MacKinnon. He strained forward, because that day when he had told the girl that her beauty had put him beside himself there had been no untruth spoken. He gripped the window-sill and watched with lips twitching, and then drew back, waiting, straining to hear what went on in there, waiting for the sound from the lake.

It came, and Mosseau flattened himself against the wall of the house. David ran down the beach peering into the thickness. His lantern flared as he reached the water's edge—and just as Eve was crossing toward the outer door—and he stopped, holding it against his body to lift the chimney and adjust the wick. Its light, for the moment, was screened from the house.

And so, when Eve looked out, she saw no evidence of a lantern. The bark of the whistle came again. She stepped into the sand; she started forward on a run, and an arm swept across her face, covering her mouth, cutting off her breath, and another grappled for her hand. She whirled, making the man's oilskin crackle.

"David!" she choked. "David, why——"

He made no answer. His arms were about her, trying to lift her from her feet. She caught a glimpse of him against the background of light.

"David!" She choked again. "Don't!"

And then she was free. A smashing of her two small fists into his face, a doubling of her knee that sent the breath driving from him broke his hold. She whirled and flung into the house, slamming the door, and the lamp was blown out by the draft. Then on, into her room, slamming that door, too, and bolting it, falling with her back against it, hands outspread.

"Why?" she cried to herself. Why had he done this? Why had he lured her outside? He had warned her that bolts would not suffice to-night—and there he was, coming across the other room!

She stood stock-still, trying to summon her faculties. He came on, knocking over a chair. He was at the door, fumbling for the latch, rattling it.

"David!" she called in low appeal; but he made no reply.

Instead, as though her word assured him of her whereabouts, he shoved against the door and wood cracked, but the barrier did not give. He drew back, and she could hear the breath beaten from him as he put his weight on the panels. The hinges started. No; bolts would not hold him!

Eve retreated across the room, weak and panic-stricken. She heard him again lunge against the door, and something broke and fell with a tinkle—a hinge, likely. Yes; she could see the glow of the stove through the opening made by the sagging door.

She thrust a foot over the window-sill and slid out. She was under the dripping eaves when the door gave. And then she was running through the wet sand, down toward the little harbor, to the only safety left her—the big lake and a small boat.

The girl stumbled into a skiff and fumbled for oars. The thing glided from shore. She dropped the oars into their locks with trembling hands and rowed awkwardly to turn the boat about.

She felt the heave of the first light swell and rowed faster to be away from that pestilential place where men waited and grappled with her in the dark. Her stroke settled to an even measure; she was outside the harbor, rolling in the trough of the seas.

She stopped all movement then. The distress-signal had stopped. The wind was brisk in her face and the hiss of rain on water was incessant.

And where now? She was alone on Lake

Michigan, alone in the world, with the man who had given her sanctuary turned into a madman, lying in wait for her, shattering all the trust that he had built for himself in those broken protests outside her broken door. Alone! A feeling of being the only life anywhere swept through her, and then, out of the night, far away, ever so faint at that distance, blotted out completely except for this moment's respite of wind and rain, came the steady, deep moan of a fog-whistle.

Squaw Island—and Aunt Jen Borden!

With a cry of relief the girl dipped her oars and, guided by the wind in her face, by the sound of the whistle which at first came only at rare intervals, she set herself for that journey.

And Jean Mosseau, leaving the broken door and the open window, slipped quickly out of the house and down the beach toward where he had left his catboat. He watched MacKinnon coming back carrying his lantern, stopping now and then to listen for the whistle which came no more, and when David was safely past him, the Frenchman ran on along the hard sand.

Afloat, he sat for a time indecisively. Eldred had charged him with this errand and he had failed. He might try to flee now, but he knew that Eldred was right. He could never get away—and, anyhow, he had tried—and he might try again because their scores—both his and King Norman's—were still unsettled.

IT WAS a bewildered David MacKinnon who walked back to his house and found no Eve there.

From the beginning, the incident which had interrupted his stormy wooing had borne a strange face, he felt now. The boat sounding the distress-signal had gone steadily to the southward; then, he thought, it swung into the east and, circling, went back on the way it had come.

He had the impression once that the ship was not far from him and stopped to listen and consider. If it were merely lost, it would be giving the prescribed fog-warning; but this was unmistakably a call for help.

Standing there, he felt a strange uneasiness come over him and looked about quickly beyond the small space lighted by his lantern with a sensation as if some one were near by who meant him no good. For long he was motionless, listening to the repeated whistling; then he began to walk down the beach.

All the way back he had that impression of impending danger, of the closeness of one who meant him harm, and reaching the point from where he could see the house, he was further alarmed at discovering it dark. So he went on at a run until he reached the door. It was open, and he stopped to listen, even calling Eve's name and waiting for reply. None came. He went in and held up his lantern and looked about in bewilderment. A chair was overturned, and he crossed the room to the bedroom door.

"Eve!" he said sharply and opened his lips to speak again, but did not; the fresh crack in the door-panel, the slight sagging of the door itself caught his eye. He put out a hand and shoved lightly; the door reeled inward on its broken hinges.

He was all action. He burst into that room, calling the girl's name, staring about, bewildered. In mid-floor lay a part of the broken door-latch, and one window was open.

Fright came then, and he could hear his own breath, quick and a bit hoarse, mingling with the light moan of the forest out there and the sound of rain on the roof. The apprehension which he had felt, the doubt of the genuineness of that call of distress from the lake became more pronounced. Eve was gone; a strong body had broken down the door of her room, and that call of distress had been a fraud!

Panic overwhelmed him as he ran toward the shack where the Indians were sleeping, and had been sleeping, likely, since their early meal. He swung his lantern into their faces and cried out excitedly, and they rolled out of their greasy quilts, befuddled with sleep. He questioned them a moment, when his judgment should have told him that they surely could know nothing. Then he explained and got lanterns from the boat, while they struggled into their boots, and sent them searching the beach.

The downpour had increased to an extent which obliterated tracks which might have told much of the story of the evening, but they did discover three things which betrayed the presence of men who had not been seen. A boat had landed on the sand spit and another, a larger craft—probably a sailboat—had been grounded far up the island. Lastly, a skiff was missing. Scant evidence,

surely, but to MacKinnon, considering the broken door in the house, it meant enough, and when, after a hurried tramping through the forest behind the house and repeated shoutings, he was satisfied that Eve was no longer on the island, he led his helpers to the dock and aboard the *Islander*.

There the men demurred, for they had guessed what David had deduced.

Peter John said something to Mink in his native Chippewa.

"What's that?" David asked.

"Eldred is a damn bad man, Dave." the Indian said. "He——"

"Never mind about Eldred! I'm as bad as he is. Get a move on!"

AN HOUR later, Norman Eldred and Jean Mosseau sat, one on either side of the table which bore an unshaded oil-lamp, in Eldred's house.

Mosseau leaned forward with elbows on his knees and talked and watched the other. There was craft in his expression and hope and inspiration in his heart. He made the second man to share knowledge of this weakness of Eldred's; Dimmock was the first—and Dimmock had been amazed—but Mosseau experienced only a strong elation at his discovery. Eldred had made a poor job of covering his secret, and his clumsy efforts did nothing but establish in Jean's mind the conviction that the man who was called king feared David MacKinnon desperately. He had sensed that first when Eldred, on the heels of their struggle in the darkness, evolved his hasty plan which placed the burden of a physical encounter with the trader on other shoulders; that was not like the Eldred who had ruled so ruthlessly. His suspicion had grown to certainty as he sat and debated with himself in his boat after shoving off from High Island when their plan had failed by the flight of the girl. Jean was even then a bit fearful of Eldred's successful pursuit if he tried escape from the islands, but the thing which set him sailing before the wind for Indian Harbor was not reluctant acknowledgment of this man's far-reaching power but the brazen hope that he now had Eldred in a corner.

He saw unlimited possibilities opening before him. He was not afraid of MacKinnon, and that courage was something for which Eldred would pay handsomely. His deduction was without error, and that was proven when he landed on Garden Island and Eldred had only a brief show of scorn for his failure and great eagerness to learn what had happened, and a manner of forgetfulness that there had ever been a quarrel between them. He was saying now:

"Py gosh, when she go t'rough dat window, Jean he t'ink for sure he catch her now! Hon my word, she go out from sight laak wan deer. She ron—py gosh, how she ron, an' nobody can see her!"

"But MacKinnon wasn't there? He was away up the beach, you said. Why didn't you stay?"

Mosseau shrugged.

"Py gosh, Eldret, a man wan beeg fool to taak many chances from MacKinnon. Wait! Py gosh, wait! Wan odder taam an' we catch heem."

"You should have waited to-night," Eldred said, with truculence. "She's there on the island somewhere. She couldn't get off, and if you were there now, maybe——"

He stopped and turned sharply, and Mosseau caught his breath, for a foot jammed against the door. It swung open, and David MacKinnon stood there, a rifle in the crook of his arm.

For an instant none of the three moved, and then Eldred rose rather unsteadily. The rifle twitched ever so slightly.

"Well?" grunted Eldred in a weak, characterless exclamation of amazement; then he steadied himself. "Hunting, eh? You must be hunting trouble."

"Not trouble, unless somebody gets in my way. Then there'll be trouble a-plenty. I'm after your daughter."

Now, it was no wonder that a man like Jean Mosseau should betray his surprise by a low ejaculation when a man like Norman Eldred let his amazement cross his face with such an unmistakable flash; but when the Frenchman made that sound, Eldred turned on him such a flash of rage that the rifle twitched again. For that sound, that look, that movement bred quick suspicion in David.

When Eldred's gaze came back to MacKinnon, the latter saw something like gratification mingling with the chagrin and temper, and then Eldred laughed quite easily and with a genuine ring, because something had happened, and this man who had

crossed him was also foiled. Eve was gone from High Island, and the trader was guessing wide of the mark, coming here for her.

David was damning himself. He had stepped into something unexpected; he had certainly guessed badly, because Mosseau's surprise, which showed him his mistake, and Eldred's one look of anger, which proved that Eldred knew the Frenchman's poor poise, had set David right, convinced him that he had followed a cold trail and that Eve was not here.

But Eldred was covering up as well as he could the botch that had been made. He said:

"After my daughter, are you? And by what right do you come hunting her—with that?"

Something of his old fine scorn was in the voice and a measure of his once secure superiority in the contempt with which he gestured toward the rifle.

So he was going to play it through this way, was he? David asked himself. They were going to try to cover up what they knew? Well, several could play at that.

"Right!" he said, under his breath. "Every right under the sun, Eldred. I'm after her to take her back with me, to keep her. And that's what I'll do, s'help me!"

The other put back the surge of jealousy that swept him and laughed again.

"You can't seem to learn, MacKinnon. Your rashness seems to grow with the days. You were rash when you took Eve away, a fool to make threats against me; you were worse than that when you refused the offer I made you yesterday—to settle for your hooker. To-night you have no boat, no money, no Eve! It would have been so different for you if you'd taken me up. But you were a fool—and again a fool for coming here this way."

David let the muzzle of the gun drop.

"You're right, Eldred. I *was* a fool. I gave you credit for doin' somethin' you're not up to. You had me guessin' wrong, but you couldn't fool Eve. You didn't bring her back, did you? Your little scheme only worked half-way!"

He laughed freely then, for shaking off the pretense of not understanding that both he and Eldred had given themselves away made him easier. That laugh sent a dark flood into the other's face, and his voice was thick.

"She *is* here! She's safe under this roof where she belongs, where she——"

"And that'll make me mad, Eldred, if you keep on! There's nothing that'd make me madder than to have you think you could lie to me and make it good. She's not here. Fair enough—I've showed my hand, but you've showed yours. Good-night, and when you come again, bring a bigger crowd, King Norman, because you're going to need it!"

And he was laughing as he ran down the steps and disappeared, hurrying back to the *Islander*, with relief wiping out the dismay at having guessed badly.

Eve was not here; she had not left High Island; he was going to find her!

BUT she was not on High Island.

Tardy dawn was seeping through the mist, and David, alone before the cook-stove in his house, shivered and stirred himself to replenish the fire. He was still clammy wet from the sweat that tramping through the forest had started; he began that tramping as soon as he had returned from his ill-advised trip to Eldred, and it had continued for hours without encountering a sign of the girl.

He stood up and stared at the broken door and rubbed his chin with the backs of his fingers. He was for the first time in hours wondering again. He had felt so singularly alone, so impressively beaten and confounded that recently there had been no energy for speculation. The *Annabelle* was gone, and now the girl, who had come to take a place that no material possession could fill, was gone. She was not in his house, not on his island, not with her father, either. But where?

He began to wipe his palms on his hips in excitement, and after a moment he laughed briefly, as a man will who is recovering from severe fright.

"Of course!" he said aloud. "A skiff's gone, and she's gone, and the other day the old girl told her she could come there. It was Eldred who broke down this door, and she got away—she got away!"

He went out hastily to rout his men once more.

What will be the outcome of the desperate game that David and Eldred are playing? See the concluding instalment of "The Beloved Pawn" in February EVERYBODY'S—out January 15th.

The Cloven Heel

Most of Us Succumb to the Good Old-fashioned Mystery Yarn. But That Shouldn't Keep Us from Chuckling at This Excellent Travesty on the Conventional Thriller

By Walter De Leon

Author of "Everything Save Honor," etc.

IT IS the fiction-writer's habit, formed of practise and plagiarism, to withhold the dénouement of a detective story until the last page. It is likewise the fiction-reader's habit, formed of impatience and curiosity, to read such last pages first. If there be added to these considerations the fact that the explanation of the mystery must necessarily be the starting-point of the author's endeavor, it would appear that a saving of time and trouble for both reader and writer might be effected by frankly placing the end of the story on the first page.

Therefore be it known that the hour was twenty minutes before midnight in the village of Pleasant Corners. It should have been midnight, for a daring crime had just been committed.

Perhaps this irregularity was due to the thief. He was not a regular thief. While planning and executing the robbery of Judge Cromwell's home while the judge and family were absent from the village, the thief's intention had been dishonest enough. But there was lacking in him that magnitude of imagination and rock-ribbed will to despoil which has carried so many men to the giddy heights of bank-presidencies and electric chairs.

The silverware and brasses in the pillow-case slung over his shoulder constituted this thief's first grand-larceny loot. So inexperienced was he that its possession perturbed him. It irked him; especially the old-fashioned ornate candelabrum whose prongs persisted in sticking into his kidneys. He staggered with the swag up the hill toward the reservoir.

At the summit, he glanced back nervously toward the village. The twin lights of a motor-car shot round the curving base of the hill at terrific speed. Close behind, the single searching light of a motor-cycle followed. The tines of a carving-fork pierced the taut skin between the burglar's shoulder-blades. With an inarticulate curse, he threw the pillow-case into the reservoir and sought the shelter of a large bush overgrown with wild raspberries.

While the ripples spread agitatedly from the spot which later would be marked by an "X," the thief, cowering in guilty consciousness, watched, and entirely misinterpreted, the efforts of Motor-cycle Officer Perkins to overhaul the female and malefactors who had disregarded the ten-mile-an-hour sign which welcomed the motorist to Hoakville, six miles to the east. When they had passed, the thief, silently thankful, wandered swiftly through the sylvan glades to more distant security.

At the risk of distracting the reader's—if any—attention, it should be borne in mind through the hurly-burly of succeeding events that the explanation of the mystery lies in the foregoing paragraphs.

At six o'clock the following morning, Friday, Gideon Splume, the constable of Pleasant Corners, sat up in bed, rubbed his eyes, gathered his whiskers, pulled on his trousers, polished the badge on his vest

with the tail of his *robe de nuit* and reached for his plug of eating-tobacco. Crossing to the window, he looked anxiously down the lane toward Judge Cromwell's house. He exhaled loudly in relief. It was still there, the front door closed, the windows unmolested, apparently intact. Loyalty to his political boss and Gideon's deep reverence for the oath of his office made doubly zealous the constable's protection of the judge's home during his absence.

Gideon had another cause for blithe joy and jubliant bliss that sun-kissed Friday morning. Ma Splume had taken her ever-sharp tongue with her on a visit to her folks. She had been gone a full week, and, unless untoward events should transpire, she would not return for another seven days equally as full. So it was a care-free Gideon who built the breakfast-fire, little dreaming that Fate had prepared to grant him the boon of his ambition.

The constable's nightly prayer was that, as long as mysterious crimes continued to be committed, one of them might occur in Pleasant Corners. Gideon had a new, tidily kept jail, as yet unoccupied, and many theories regarding the detection and apprehension of appropriate occupants. He craved opportunity to put his theories into practise.

OBSERVE the devious method of inscrutable Fate. At seven o'clock that morning, Pud Piddon remarked to Nahum Spindle, as he laid some eggs in a basket:

"Reservoir's a little mite muddy this morning. I seen it as I druve by."

At seven-thirty, Nahum remarked to Mrs. Bradshaw Sluppey, as he weighed her pound of tripe:

"I hear the reservoir's muddy again. Must have something stirred it up."

At eight o'clock, Mrs. Sluppey remarked to Mrs. Pierre Kelly, as she hung some wash on her clothes-line,

"I hear somebody throwed something into the reservoir and muddied it up."

At eight-thirty, Mrs. Kelly, in telephone conversation with her sister, Mrs. Cohen, remarked,

"I hope we don't all catch typhoid or something contagious from the things folks are throwing into the reservoir."

Half an hour later, Mrs. Cohen indignantly declared to Ephesus Plunkett, as he cut off some chicken-wire for her:

"They'd ought to screen over the reservoir, I say. Then nobody could throw dead cats and dogs in it and give us all typhoid."

"Who's been throwing dead animals in the reservoir?" asked Eph.

"Somebody has. It's awful muddied up."

Eph told the next customer he accommodated that something dead had been "throwed in the reservoir." Said customer recalled a newspaper account of the finding of a suicide's remains in a reservoir.

Before noon, the population of Pleasant Corners had heard and accepted the report that a murderer, at present unknown, had thrown the body of his victim, also unknown, into the reservoir.

The Chamber of Commerce held an impromptu meeting in Eph's store and decided that the law, as represented by Gideon Splume, should make an investigation. In a body they set out for his house.

It seems the accepted procedure in accounts of similiar mysteries to direct suspicion toward some individual who, on the last page, is shown to be guiltless if not entirely dissociated with the crime. The misleading character in the Pleasant Corners mystery chanced to be Jim Juniper.

Jim had all the physical attributes of a villain. He was short, stocky, bandy-legged, gruff-voiced; his face was covered with a short, stubbly brown beard; he had beady eyes beneath bushy brows which glittered shrewdly—some folks said secretively. His dusty hardware store, over which he and his wife lived, at the end of Main Street, only partly concealed the junk piled behind it—junk collected and paid for and once a month loaded on big city trucks, which rumbled ominously away.

Constable Splume had long believed that Juniper's junk business was but a cover for some other more profitable and nefarious undertaking. Juniper's natural taciturnity and unsociableness had but strengthened this conviction. From time to time he had tried to trap Jim with casual remarks and leading insinuations. These thinly veiled accusations had served to anger Juniper until the enmity between the two was an accomplished fact.

This condition of affairs had resulted in

an awkward situation the night before Ma Splume left Pleasant Corners.

Unknown to aught save Mrs. Splume, the constable was a periodic somnambulist. Every third year, for a few weeks at the beginning of summer, he was prone to walk in his sleep. After the first of these nocturnal meanderings every third year, ma nightly tied one end of a stout cord to Gideon's toe and the other to her thumb, thus providing against his wandering far without her.

But upon the night in question, the cord had slipped from her thumb. Gideon, dreaming that he was discovering the illicit source of Juniper's income, had gone prowling round the junk-pile with the midnight moon sheening his nightshirt.

Mrs. Juniper, wakened by the uneasy rustling of tin cans, had crept to the window. Hysterically she had roused her husband.

"Ghosts! There's a ghost trying to get into the house!"

Barely half awake, Juniper had seized his shotgun and blazed away blankly at the stooping whited figure with a charge of bird-shot. When the smoke cleared, the ghost had disappeared.

Some time later, Gideon, painfully awake, carefully crawled in beside his still slumbering wife, hoping against hope that his limp would have disappeared by morning, taking with it the necessity for explanations.

WHEN it became told about town that Juniper had shot at a ghost, Jim's curt confirmation of the report satisfied the constable's thought that his enemy was a person of cold-blooded malevolence, ruthless cruelty and strong homicidal tendencies. This belief recurred to Gideon every time he sat down.

But the Chamber of Commerce delegation which descended upon Gideon, sitting on his back stoop just before dinner-time, was too engrossed in its mission to notice the pillows in the rocking-chair.

"Why ain't you 'vestigating the murder?" Pud Piddon demanded heatedly.

"Murder!" Gideon jumped to his feet. "Who's been murdered?"

"We don't know. The body's in the reservoir."

"Who put it there? How long has it been there?"

"Don't know. But Jim Juniper says last night 'bout midnight he seen an auto tear through town, hell for leather, and climb the hill to the reservoir."

"Jim Juniper says that, does he? Now, what was Jim Juniper doing awake at twelve o'clock midnight?"

"He—he didn't say," volunteered Eph Plunkett, palpably impressed.

"Looks suspicious, don't it?" relentlessly continued the constable. "Did he tell you the numbers on the license-tag?"

"Nope."

Gideon smiled in superior manner.

"Thought as much. But, be fair; be fair! Anybody else see the murder-car? You, Eph? Pud? Abe? Xenophon?" Each in turn shook a negative head. "Anybody *hear* it?"

None had.

"Sounds mighty suspicious, boys. Just what Jim would say if he was trying to throw suspicion on somebody else, ain't it?"

Inexorably, the constable walked into the kitchen and took a blank warrant for arrest from the bundle of them ma used to wipe her sad-irons on. With pen in hand, he sat down to fill in the blank spaces.

"In connection with the murder of—" The constable hesitated. "Who was killed?"

"Don't know," Eph answered.

"Well, who's missing?"

"Ain't nobody missing. That's the mysterious part of it."

"Then, how the heck——"

"Because there's the body in the reservoir!" Eph leaped agilely to the crux of the matter. "Forty people seen it."

"Seen the body?"

"No; the reservoir. It's so muddied up nobody can't see nothing. That's why we come here. It's got to be drugged."

"Got to be what?"

"Drugged—with grappling-hooks and -irons."

"Well, why didn't you say so before?" retorted the constable. "Who's got any drag-irons in town?"

It appeared no one had.

"How in tarnation can I drag the reservoir without dragging-tools?" shouted the constable.

"Maybe Jim Juniper's got some in his junk-pile," suggested Pud.

The constable's glance was withering.

"And maybe he'd lend 'em to us when he found out what we wanted 'em for," he remarked, with rare sarcasm. "Besides, I don't want him to get suspicious."

Fortunately, Eph Plunkett thought of several large fish-hooks Judge Cromwell had exhibited upon his return from a Florida fishing-trip. Eph allowed they might serve in lieu of more professional equipment. The constable agreed.

"You boys rig up a raft and some paddles," he ordered. "Take along plenty of rope and Doc Breed, the coroner. I'll get the hooks from the judge's and meet you at the reservoir in quarter of an hour."

Gideon hurried to the back door of the Cromwell home and put hand in trousers pocket for the key. There was no key in the pocket. He searched his other pockets. The judge's key, the symbol of his trust in Gideon, was not in them.

Gideon sat weakly on the top step of the back porch, the better to collect his thoughts. The last time he had used the key was two evenings before, when he had watered the rubber plants in the Cromwell parlor. On that occasion he had worn the same pants he now had on. And the same vest. It was a Wednesday——

"By crickey!" he ejaculated. "I remember!" Wednesday evening had been chill after a warm day, and he had put on his coat before leaving his house.

Hastily he retraced his steps to his own abode and into the bedroom. He plunged his hand into the right-side pocket of the coat, hanging over the back of the chair. No key. He explored the left-side pocket. Then the breast-pocket, and finally the inside pocket. The key was lost!

Lost, also, was the day's joy and exhilaration. Gloom settled thickly about the constable as he determined to find the key if it took all day. All day——

But that was impossible. A committee of virtuous voters was awaiting him and the judge's shark- and tarpon-tackle at the reservoir. Which created a new difficulty. The hooks were inside the judge's house, and Gideon had lost the only key!

"Maybe one of my keys will fit the judge's cellar door," Gideon hoped. "The door from the kitchen to the cellar ain't locked. I remember I forgot to lock it Wednesday. If I can't unlock the cellar door, I'll bust it open."

Absorbed in his thoughts, Gideon walked to the other house. His feet subconsciously bore him along the path at the side of the house to the back porch. Still brooding, they carried him up the steps. Not until his hand was on the back-door knob did he remember his plan to open the cellar door. But habit had already prompted his hand to turn the knob. The door opened. *The back door had been unlocked!*

His heart beating wildly, he dashed into the house and into the dining-room. A moan escaped his pallid lips as the havoc therein smote his popping eyes.

He tottered over to the mahogany sideboard and opened the two small doors at the bottom. Fearfully, he looked within. Thank heaven! The thief had left two stiff drinks in the judge's decanter.

With the second drink came courage and cunning determination. The constable decided to get the hooks, to drag the reservoir, to ascertain whether the one crime bore any relation to the other before making public the robbery of Judge Cromwell's house. An uncomfortable number of persons knew that he had the key.

Gideon procured the hooks, squeezed the last drop from the decanter and rapidly left the house.

AT THE reservoir, some minutes later, the able-bodied of Pleasant Corners rubbed elbows with the feeble-minded as all pressed closely round the grim group on the raft. Their faces stern, they shoved off and sank their lines. The hooks were in the hands of the coroner and the constable. Eph Plunkett and Pud Piddon manned the sweeps.

Back and forth they maneuvered, dragging their hooks behind them, the while excitement on the shore waxed ever higher.

On the raft, the coroner felt a tug on his line. Instinctively he jerked it sharply.

"A strike!" he whispered.

The others on the raft rushed to his assistance. The raft careened sharply. Eph Plunkett slid off and under the surface of the water.

When he came up, he grabbed frantically the edge of the raft and tried to pull himself aboard. Again it up-ended.

"You can't climb up, consarn it!" shrieked the constable, hanging on grimly. "Swim ashore!"

"I can't swim!" sputtered Eph.

"Then drown, dog-gone it! I can't swim, neither."

When order and equilibrium had been restored—and Eph lay panting on the shore—the coroner confessed that he could not land his strike. Gideon's suggestion that he drop his own line and snag onto the horrid weight beneath was approved. In another moment he called out that his hook had hooked on.

Carefully they tugged and heaved. They felt the weight released from the suction of the muddy bottom. A myriad bubbles gulped to the surface.

"Here she comes!" yelled the coroner, his eyes agleam with anticipation.

Arose a difficulty. The coroner's line hung from the port side, the constable's from the starboard; between them the body was suspended under the keel. If one joined the other, their weight on that side and the pull of the object on their hooks would capsize the raft. Pud Puddon straddled the horns of the dilemma.

"Tow it ashore," he said.

A few moments later, the bulky outlines of a pillow-case tied at the top showed in the shallow water.

"A torso!" exulted the coroner.

"That's Missus Cromwell's!" shrieked Mrs. Murphy, the town wash-lady, recognizing the embroidered monogram on the slip.

"Open it!" gasped the constable, as he saw the protruding tines of a carving-fork glint in the sun.

One by one he drew the stolen articles from the pillow-case and laid them on the grassy bank. All bets were declared off and forgotten in the unexpectedness of this new twist of the mystery.

Reaching into the wet corners of the slip, Gideon's hand encountered a small object. Quickly he stuck his head inside the bag. He saw a door-key—*the* door-key. A long scratch along the shank identified it.

He started to remove the key, thought better of it and, instead, began replacing the silverware in the case.

"What are you going to do with it?" Pud asked.

"Put the slip and everything in the safe at the jail and lock the jail," Gideon replied. "Doc, you come with me."

"A *good* constable"— Gideon wheeled sharply at the sneering tone and met Jim Juniper's beady gaze—"a *good* constable would be thinking more of putting the robber in jail."

"That shows all you know about the constable business!" Gideon flared back at Jim. "I have *already* been thinking about it. I'll have him in jail probably before night."

"To hear you tell it," Juniper jeered.

"I already been working on this here case," reiterated the constable. "And I found out several things. For one, I know you was up last night at midnight."

"So does everybody else. What about it?"

"Maybe you'd like to tell me what you was doing up at that time."

"I'll tell you. I was gunning for ghosts."

The constable took it between the eyes.

"To—to hear you tell it." He managed a creditable imitation of a jeer. Quickly he turned to the coroner. "Come on, Doc; I can't stand here jawing all day. I got to catch this here burglar."

REFUSING all offers of help, closing his ears to every theory advanced, Gideon hastened to the seclusion of his own home to ponder the situation and evolve a course of action. Now that the long-hoped-for crime had been committed, he wished a less clever criminal might have done it. Here indeed was a problem upon which to expend the deduction of a Holmes, the instinct of a Lecoq, the science of a Dr. Goodrich and the determination of a Nick Carter.

How could the thief have obtained the key? Wednesday evening, Gideon had gone directly from the Cromwell house to his own and had remained there. Consequently, he must have had the key on Thursday morning. Thursday he had also remained at home, hoeing and spading his garden. After supper he had gone to the barber shop for a hair-cut. While he was there, besides Bill, the barber, at one time or another there had come in Eph Plunkett, Abe Cohen and—Jim Juniper!

Jim Juniper, who admitted to being up at midnight Thursday night! Jim sold second-hand things. Jim hadn't paid his taxes yet. Jim could easily have taken the key from the pocket of Gideon's coat as it hung——

No—no! The evening had been sultry, and Gideon remembered he had not worn his coat.

"I'm going at this wrong." The constable massed his whiskers in a nervous hand. "The first thing is to find a clue. A crime ain't no good to nobody without a clue. And the likeliest place to find a clue, I expect, is the scene of the crime."

From its resting-place atop the family Bible, the constable took a large magnifying reading-glass. Next, he took the tape measure from ma's sewing-basket, a teaspoon and an empty pill-box in which to collect and keep any overlooked cigar ashes he might find, a small camera with which to photograph footprints, and a cup of flour to dust over objects in a search for telltale finger-marks.

While he thus prepared, his clear sense of duty rose triumphant over all his pettier emotions. As he strode toward the Cromwell house, peaceful calm descended round him.

Reaching the back porch, he gazed comprehensively over the truck-garden.

"Ah!" His keen eye, without the aid of the reading-glass, detected a footprint—two of them, in the green-onion patch. They pointed toward the front of the house, aligned toward the corner of lawn and lane nearest the village.

"He stood here"— Gideon reconstructed the scene—"and, being in a hurry to get away, he jumped off the end of the porch and run across the onions and the lawn."

Obviously, the next step on the constable's part was to measure the distance between the footprints. This measurement, calculated on an oversize basis because of its being made by a running man, would give him the length of the man's stride, which, in turn, would give him the approximate height of the thief.

Gingerly stepping into the onion patch, Gideon bent over one of the shoe-marks with glass and tape measure.

"He wore rubber heels," he gloated, as he examined the right foot. "Number ten, D. Same size as me."

He moved on to the depression in the soft loam left by the left foot.

"Jumping crickets!"

Showing plainly, perfectly, was the mark of a small round patch in the center of the sole. And the slight but easily discerned protuberance in the heel-mark could have been made by nothing except a groove running the length of the rubber. Two months previously, with his Sunday shoes on, Gideon had fallen asleep after dinner with his left foot propped on the stove. He had wakened with the odor of scorching leather and burning rubber in his nostrils and the shrill tones of his wife in his ears. The creased rubber heel had been left on the shoe when the hole in the sole had been patched.

The first shock of his discovery gave way to amusement in the constable's mind.

"Guess I ain't the only dum fool that goes to sleep with his foot on a hot stove." He grinned.

Finding no other footprints, Gideon was about to enter the house to calculate when a new thought entered his head. If he were able to find similar footprints near the reservoir, he might be able to determine the course of the thief after he had disposed of his loot. He might even be able to track the crook to his lair.

PUTTING his paraphernalia on the porch, the constable hurried up Reservoir Hill. He examined the edges of the road opposite the point where the pillow-slip had been found. On the far side he saw the imprint of the grooved rubber heel. It pointed toward a bush fifteen feet distant. Thither Gideon glided. Peering cautiously round the bush, he saw an object caught on the thorns of the bush. It was a woolen sock—a new woolen sock, a white woolen sock, a familiar woolen sock. With trip-hammering heart, Gideon recognized it as his own, one of a pair ma had knitted for him, with extra-high tops for cold weather.

Resolutely resisting the temptation to conjecture which his find roused, unable to detect other footprints, Gideon rapidly returned to the Cromwell house, intent on discovering identifying finger-prints. He used his entire cup of flour on the back door without silhouetting a single thumb-whorl other than those he knew to be his own.

"I shouldn't have touched the door," he complained, "though I expect the burglar wore gloves, anyway."

He recalled that among the recovered silver were several articles belonging to a toilet-set. Perhaps upon the polished top

of the bureau from which they had been removed the thief had left his mark. Up the stairs to Mrs. Cromwell's boudoir went Gideon.

The door was open. He glanced within. On the bed lay a pillow, denuded of its slip. Across the foot of the bed— Gideon reeled as he saw *his new rain-coat*, the rain-coat he'd ordered from Sears Roebuck, the only rain-coat of its kind in town. There was no mistaking the rain-coat. But to make assurance doubly damning, Gideon felt inside the right-hand pocket. His faintest hope flickered out as his fingers encountered a letter he'd forgotten to post for ma.

Too numbed for thought, there raced through Gideon's brain but words. Bed—rain-coat — shoe — sock — bed — rain-coat. Good heavens, the *key!* The only key—the key found in the pillow-slip!

Suspicion, horrid, nightmarish, became dreadful, devastating certainty. Every clue argued but one deduction. Every fact pointed but one direction. He, Gideon Splume, was the thief!

His key had unlocked the back door; *his* rain-coat had been left upon the bed in the haste of stuffing the silver into the pillow-case; *his* shoes had crushed the onions under their heels; *his* sock had caught on the thorns of the bush by the reservoir, and all because his had been the refusal to tie the other end of the string on his toe to the dinner-bell during ma's absence.

Gideon saw it all. The responsibility of guarding the judge's property had preyed on his mind. His last thought as he dropped off into sleep, it had strangely stimulated his debilitated perambulatory nerve-centers. His infirmity was accountable for his felonious and Freudian act. The constable's gray head bent low in grief.

Whatever the cause, there was no palliation for sacking his friend's home.

Darkness had long since settled when, with sagging shoulders and suffering soul, Gideon slunk through back alleys to the unoccupied jail, brooding in the moonlight. Shakily he entered himself on the blotter. Silently he pleaded guilty to the charge as entered. Slowly he locked himself in the meanest cell, and sternly he threw away the key. Sobbing, he secured a string about his big toe and tied the other end to one of the bars of the door. Then, sinking upon the iron cot, he abandoned himself to sorrow.

IT WAS Pud Piddon who noticed the front door of the lockup unlocked the next morning. Likewise it was Pud who greeted Judge Cromwell an hour later, when he alighted from the ten-thirty-seven and garrulously accompanied him to the jail. The conversation between the judge and the constable developed a legal point as delicate as it was unusual.

After explanations had been offered and accepted and opinions amicably exchanged, Gideon inquired,

"Well, now 'bout my trial——"

"Trial?" interrupted the judge. "Nothing's missing, is there?"

"No. But I robbed the house just the same; and robbery calls for a jury trial."

Cromwell assented. But——

"Seeing as I'm the court," the judge opined, "I am reasonably certain that the court will instruct the jury to return a verdict of not guilty on the grounds that defendant was temporarily insane."

"You can't do that, judge. That'd give Jim Juniper and his gang a chance to demand my removal from office."

"Um. Well then, plead not guilty."

"I got to plead guilty. As an officer of the law, I'm sworn to uphold it. I done the crime. Knowing the criminal, if I don't run him to earth and convict him, not only I ain't upholding the law but I'm committing perjury besides."

"Um. I have it. I won't prosecute you. I'm the injured party. I don't have to."

"Yep; but you're also the judge, and I've confessed to unlawful entry and seizure."

"But you also recovered the goods."

"Sure! That's going to be my campaign argument for reelection next fall, if you can figure some way to keep me out of jail."

"I could give you a suspended sentence."

"But a suspended sentence would make me ineligible for running for office."

The judge made sure Pud could not hear. He cleared his throat.

"Unofficially, as a friend, I would suggest that, as the only record against you is your own entry in your own day-book, a means for erasing or destroying the page might be found."

"Nope. That'd make me guilty of tampering with and destroying official documents, and I'd have to swear you was accessory before the fact."

"Well"— the judge rose testily—"I'm totally unfamiliar with the Supreme Court's somnambulistic rulings, but it seems to me that a man who can sleep-walk himself into jail ought to be able to sleep-walk himself out of it."

PLEASANT CORNERS divided itself on partisan lines over the question of the constable's guilt. It became the sole subject of debate in the barber shop and post-office corridors. "Fever-heat" might be the term employed to connote the pitch of excitement which stirred the spectators in the crowded court-room when Constable Splume rose to plead to the charge as altered with the consent of the prosecution—the charge of "conduct unbecoming an officer."

Solemnly the judge intoned,

"Are you guilty or not guilty?"

In words which welled from a clear conscience, Gideon replied,

"Your Honor, gentlemen of the jury, I plead——"

"Stop! Stop! Wait a shake!"

Every head in the room pivoted toward the door through which came the frenzied voice.

Pud Piddon, eyes and nostrils distended, gasping with short-windedness and shock, rushed into the room. In one hand he held aloft a sheet of paper.

"Order in the court!" the judge commanded. Then, to Pud, "What the heck's eating you?"

"Suicide! Man in the reservoir!"

"What in tarnation—" began the judge. But Pud interrupted.

"Read what I found pinned to his coat on the bank! Seen it as I was driving by just now."

Judge Cromwell took the paper. He read:

To Whom It May Concern, especially R. R. Ring, Superintendent of R—— Home for Neurasthenics: I write these words before casting myself into the water for the last time. On the evening of July first, footsore and hungry, I wandered into the village of Pleasant Corners by the back way. Since leaving the asylum, I had fared poorly. Suddenly the odor of frying eggs assailed my nostrils. I traced it. When the constable—I presume it was he; he wore a badge and some tobacco stains upon his vest—finished his supper, I noticed he neglected to lock his front door upon leaving. I entered, fried some further eggs and finished the pot of tea. Whatever it is the constable puts into his tea stimulated to unwonted action my brain, accustomed to nothing more daring than the writing of detective fiction which is invariably rejected and returned.

At any rate, it seemed but normal for me to exchange my worn shoes for an almost new pair I found under the bed. I appropriated a new raincoat hanging on a hook. I requisitioned two pairs of home-made hose. The pockets of an old coat hanging on a chair I searched for loose change and tobacco. I found, instead, a door-key. Unsuccessful in my chosen field though I have been, I nevertheless recognized in it a skeleton key—a masterkey for a certain common variety of door-lock.

When the possibilities of the constable's home were exhausted, my eyes chanced upon a substantial house further along the lane. I saw no smoke rising from its chimney. Upon the front porch, still rolled, a collection of morning papers furnished convincing indication of suspended tenantship.

Under cover of darkness I tried the skeleton key in the back-door lock. The bolt slid back easily. I entered. In a sideboard I discovered a decanter of home brew. It must have been home-brew. On no other theory can my subsequent actions be explained.

As I stood slowly quaffing glass after glass, I suddenly saw a name engraved in a silver napkin-ring. It was "Cromwell." Cromwell! The editor with whose rejection-slips two rooms of my apartment have been papered!

A madness seized me. I wanted to harm, to harass, to maim, to cruelly split infinitives and otherwise lacerate any one by the name of Cromwell. As I say, it must have been the contents of the decanter.

I dimly recall stuffing valuables in a pillow-case. Vaguely I remember climbing a hill to a reservoir. As in a dream, I recollect the glaring lights of the automobile pursuing me. Throwing the bag into the water, I escaped.

To-day I returned for the valuables, not to realize upon them in some pawn-shop but to return them to their owner in exchange for the recipe for his home brew, which had carried me out of myself and kept me out for four full days.

Conceive of my heart broken misery when repeated dives failed to locate the sunken treasure. A failure to the end, I seek a failure's finish. *Sic transit* Corona—tied to my feet.

A. B. BATTY.

"Case dismissed!" thundered the judge, breaking the spell. "Jury excused. Did you find the body, Pud?"

"Body? Shucks! The dum fool's setting on the bank waiting for the tide to rise so's it ll be deep enough to drown in, he says. Judge, I can't help thinking the fellow's a little bit nutty."

The judge gravely shook his head.

"Pud, between you and me and the gatepost, I think the whole of this here reservoir-mystery business is a little bit nutty."

Facing the East

A Novel Complete in This Issue

What Ambitious Youth Has Not Had the Feeling That He Must Leave His Environment, Go Far Afield to Find Fulfilment? How Many Have Discovered in the End That What They Sought Was There at Home All the Time!

By Will Levington Comfort

Illustrations by A. L. Ripley

BEN TOLLER and a boy of ten were tramping across a breezy pine-shaded ridge of the San Bernardino Mountains. Each carried a big pack for his weight, and though they were hot and tired, the man paused to point out where a drove of big-horn sheep had recently passed, feeding. They let down their packs, and Ben picked up a half-wilted wild-parsnip top.

"This is the part the sheep spit out, Gary," he said to the boy. "They dig for the root. See where that feller dug? I can dig a little deeper than he did and find a tip of parsnip. You can see their forms around where they rested—probably along about this time yesterday." Ben chuckled and wiped the sweat from his eyebrows. "I've always found it about like this, Gary, in matters pertainin' to a big-horn ram and his family. About twenty-four hours late, I am, as a rule."

"You have seen 'em, though," Gary said, his voice husky with interest and exertion.

"Yep; I've seen 'em— Hello!" The loose brown hand of the man swung round and knocked the boy against the belt. The fingers opened and closed upon his hip. "Yep; I've seen 'em," Ben repeated absently, "and bear, too, but not for some time."

The boy followed his eyes to the skyline, where a big brown bear was sharply delineated against the blue.

"Stand in your tracks, Gary!"

Now Ben drew off to the right without stealth. His idea was to attract the bear's attention from the boy, but it didn't work out that way. The bear saw the man presently, stopped and sniffed, raised, man-fashion, the better to look, then continued his way down. His slightly altered direction now pointed him straight at the boy, whom, as yet, he wasn't aware of.

Gary didn't move. He felt cold and different with Ben Toller gone from his side. The bear plumped toward him, less than thirty yards distant, his head cocked sidewise, eying the man. He wasn't old, but nearly full-sized—wary rather than angry,

as curious as afraid. To the boy of ten he was bull-big, and all that a monster could mean. Twenty yards, ten yards. Now the bear stopped and lifted again, facing the boy.

For an instant it seemed the black points of his small round eyes turned red, as if this were a bit too much for his temper; but he raked out his pipes with a rough breath, dropped to his fours again, and widened his détour to avoid the second, and smaller, man thing.

Gary turned and found the man at his side—a faint gray streak under the deep tan of the weathered face, a shine of sweat over all. The boy swallowed and grinned. Ben Toller regarded him a few seconds with a look such as Gary hadn't seen before.

Over the ridge they found a spring they had been aiming for and made camp for the day. A little later, Ben Toller said, as he poured batter from an old coffee-pot into the sizzling frying-pan:

"That bear could have trepanned you, Gary, with one stroke of his paw. He taught me somethin'—somethin' I won't forget. If I thought it would do you any good, I'd tell you; but it wouldn't. Are you hungry?"

"Sure!"

WHEN Ben said he wouldn't forget what he had learned that moment, he meant no more or less. It was as if he found out something he had cared to know for a long time. Ben had a daughter of his own, but Gary was the son of an old prospecting partner of his who had taken a grub-stake alone up into the Silver Teeth and never come down. The elder McMicken had seldom spoken of Gary's mother, though other people did. They had little enough to go on, but talk is cheap. The boy of ten who could stand still when he was told and let a brown bear walk up to him, a boy who could relish pancakes immediately afterward, hadn't budded forth from a weeping-willow tree—at least, not to Ben Toller's idea.

"That boy will come through," he would always say to the doubters of Crawley. "He's queer, a bit pig-headed, a trifle too smart, but he's got gray matter in his backbone—not soft soap, but hard gray grain, and he didn't get it all from Jake McMicken, neither."

Gary had lived months of boyhood with no shelter over him but his hat. For years together he was as much in the mountains as at home in the town of Crawley—months afield at a time, year after year, on prospecting-trips with Ben Toller. It was only in the evenings, for half an hour or so after coffee, when his pipe was going good, that Ben talked. The boy didn't know how well he talked, or how much life-essence was in the old prospector's words, or how much kindness and patience. He sort of took these things for granted from a man of adult years. Ben was all the father he knew, and a boy does not stand off and make character-sketches of a male parent.

A boy brought up in the mountains doesn't love mountains particularly. He looks away from the high places toward the towns, and his mysterious cub-feelings go forth to distant low smudges on the plains. He flings his heart over into the midst of the cities and his legs follow soon afterward. It is only after he gets good and smudged that the mountains wake once more within him.

Gary made no character-sketch of Ida Toller, either, though he grew up with her, fought his way up with her, for they kept whacking continually at inequalities between them. It hurt Ida especially—for instance, when she saw a trout-pool as grass-green and Gary said it was whitish blue. It seemed as if they never could get together, as if mountains and ages and continents stretched between them, and she would always ache because it was so.

Gary sullenly reiterated, "It's blue with white in it," and that's all she could get from him, except the old ache. They were of an age, but she had washed too many of his shirts and spread too many square inches of his toast with jam not to have wakened the pangs a girl knows about live dolls. Naturally, when things are as green as a trout-pool, and a member of the family goes on calling it blue, one trembles for his future. But Ida never trembled on the outside. She had mountain nerves, like her father. Her voice didn't tremble. The tremble was deeper than that—so deep that only one man would ever know.

Gary was coming twenty now, and had a way of getting himself disliked. Ben Toller was white-haired. He hadn't done

so badly with the years, and no man was better held in the town of Crawley, California, which lay on the edge of the desert, against an abrupt wall of mountains to the west. Over the mountains stretched the sea-cooled citrus groves, but on the Crawley side the sunshine was untempered and practically changeless. The only escape for the natives was to crawl like lizards up among the shadowy ravines on the steep slopes of the range. A half-hundred miners did this every day, because there were four or five gold-claims in decent working-order overlooking the town. Old Ben Toller had opened up the first of these claims and still held a paying interest.

"No, sir," Ben had to say one day in town, where there was talk of Gary going away; "Gary don't hold Crawley as bein' the world-metropolis. I've seen him lookin' toward Los Angeles more than ever lately. He has the queerest way of lookin' over the desert into the east, too, as if his world lay out there. We won't hold Gary much longer, and I know a lot of people who can live through his goin'-away; but that boy'll come through all right. He works his own way, but keeps on improvin' himself with his books. I think he'll stand as much punishment as the world gives him out there, and that's the best any parent can prepare a boy for. More than that, I'll gamble Gary'll find the big humor that's back of everything before he's done."

Mrs. Hattie Church, who had known Ida's mother and kept a store of canned and bottled goods and tobacco, hinted that Gary and Ida were alone a lot together, especially since Ben Toller and the boy weren't prospecting as much as formerly.

"They ain't a-goin' together, are they?" Mrs. Church asked.

"As for them goin' together," Ben said, "the more I see of them the less I know what's goin' on."

"That's the trouble—just. I'd find out ef I was you, Ben," Mrs. Church said, with sonorous rhythm. "Ida's mother would, an' Gary ain't the sort to be as appreciative as he might be."

Ben spoke with slow quiet.

"Do you remember that shaft of clear rich quartz we found in Fawnskin Canon and we thought Crawley was goin' to be another El Dorado—only, the shaft ended of a sudden in the walls of a ravine?"

"I heard of it enough, ef I didn't see it, the Lord knows—what with every miner in Crawley gettin' drunk for days," said Mrs. Church.

"There was a clear shaft just like that in Ida's mother," Ben said.

Mrs. Church was still thinking of the rich quartz.

"I've awlis felt the hand of the Lord ended that shaft so sudden because Crawley showed her herself so total unfit to stand prosperity," she observed.

"The shaft I'm talkin' about now didn't come to no sudden end in a ravine, Mrs. Church," Ben said. "It carried right on from mother to daughter. No; I'm not afraid of leavin' Ida alone, or Gary, neither——"

"You awlis did have a lot of faith for a man of your brains, Ben."

"Life's sure a shirt o' nettles without something of the kind to live on," the old man resumed. "Yep; they've fought their way up all the distance—like two cross-grained brothers, most of the time, Gary and Ida have. Sometimes I've fancied somethin' was between them, somethin' deeper than squabble, deeper than their quiet times. Then somethin' happens right off that makes me think I'm droppin' into premature old age for holdin' any such idea. Sometimes I ektually forget he isn't Ida's brother. All in all, I don't know but what Gary's mother and father have about as much reason to be satisfied as most of the family hearths in Crawley. You see, I've seen that boy stand still in a pinch and grin."

GARY and Ida stood eye to eye on the shaded trail a little above the Toller cabin. There had been months in the past when Ida was taller, and other months when the boy took a spurt in lengthening out. They were within a few weeks of the same age, and now, at twenty, the difference in their height was imperceptible. The afternoon was gray. A draggled cloud sagged low on the slopes. It had been torn in crossing over one of the peaks, and clung desperately to the eastern slopes now, as if affrighted at the plunge down into the burning sunlight of the desert. Rain was rare at this time of year. The boy and girl breathed the mist luxuriously.

"Smell the bay tree," Ida whispered.

"I am," Gary said.

"You'll remember it, too," she told him, her face turned partly away toward the stream, where the perfume came from. "Let's go to the tree."

"You can't smell it any better when you're close."

"I know. The smell's everywhere, because of the rain; but I want to go to it."

Gary followed. The fragrance stirred him, too. It seemed a part of every particle of the gray cloud. Once, long ago, in a rain, the bay tree had drawn them as now. They had read that this was the laureate bay that the Greeks twined in their hair, the same that "flourished" in the Bible. Each dusty leaf now seemed listening for the drops and pouring out itself—the whole tree intensely listening and pouring out itself.

"I'll miss the studying—won't you?" she said, as they sat down.

"I'll be studying, you bet!" he answered.

She watched him with gray eyes very steady and cold. She was safe, because he rarely looked at her.

"I never would have done all that studying if it hadn't been for you, Gary," she said, still watching.

He didn't answer. He was staring back at the east, facing the east in his old way. His eyes didn't seem to stop at the desert, but to burrow beyond—into the cities, across the rivers, never ending, into the east. Something like pain dulled her eyes for a moment, dulled and softened them. She heard the wail of an east-bound train and saw his eyes gleam.

"That's where I'm going," he said at last.

"But you're going to Los Angeles——"

"Yes; first, for a while, to get the ropes; then the East—the big towns, New York herself. It won't be long."

There didn't seem to be a trace of softness in him. The best thing she could do he never noticed. He made her keep trying. She wouldn't have liked it, perhaps, if he had always noticed and praised.

"Maybe they won't give you a job on the paper over in Los Angeles."

"They've got to," he said. "I'll work for nothing—till they do."

She was pulling bay twigs and braiding them.

"Take off your cap, Gary."

He turned impatiently, saw what was in her hand, suffered her to fasten the woven leaves about his head.

" 'Member what it said in the book?" she asked. "How the Greeks wove laurel for the heads of those who were too great to be kings—" She laughed softly, for he wasn't paying attention. "I wonder if any of them had freckles," she said.

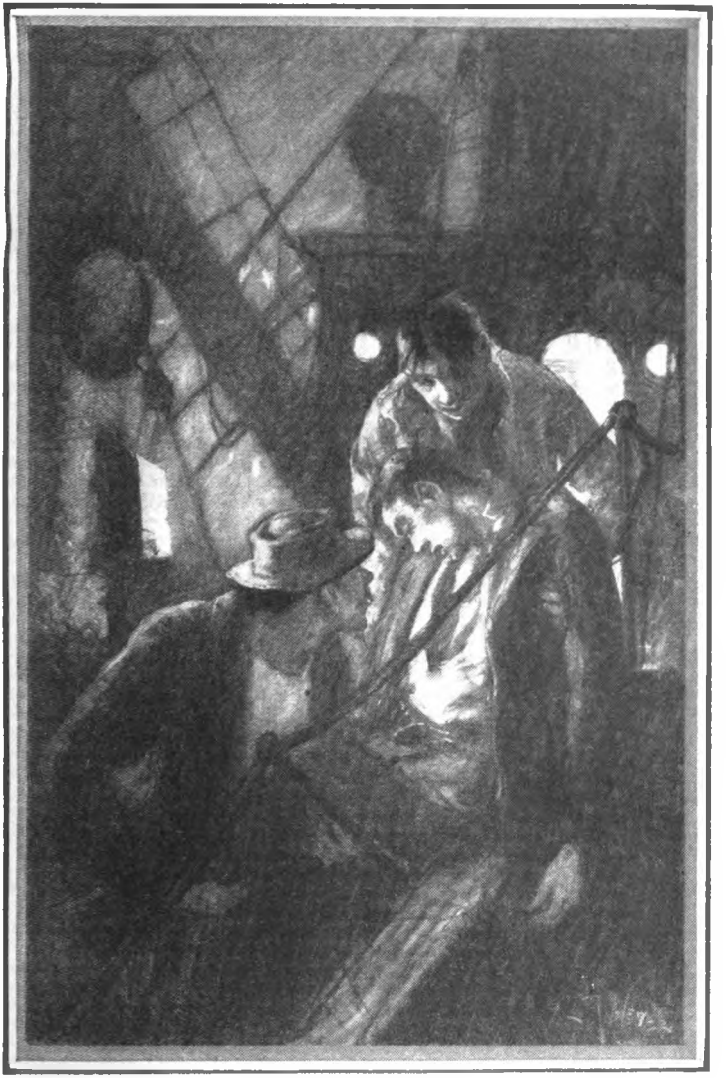
Her last remark called Gary into himself. A sudden flush darkened his browned face. Over in Cougar Lake, a few days ago, he had seen what fellows from the city look like. Of course, city men rambled over all the government trails in vacation-time; but Gary had never noticed them much before—at least, not in comparison with himself. He felt stunted and leathery compared with them. They laughed aloud with such curious freedom and banged back and forth at each other with words that had humor in them, sentence by sentence; only, Gary couldn't keep up to it. They would be chuckling at jokes three sentences ahead of where he was. It made him feel weak, because he had not only Los Angeles but the world to whip, and here he was whipped already by what Lafe Neade, who kept the Fawnskin Inn, called "a couple of ribbon-counter clerks."

THE undone things within him burned Gary McMicken. He could hold still enough; but he felt as if he were lathering inside, like a horse before a race. Of course, Ida had to bring up the matter of freckles. It's a wonder she didn't say he was all one freckle. She was always showing him up and picking at his faults. He had a good mind to tell *her* a few things right now—only, he thought in time of his going-away. Besides, he couldn't recall that she had ever looked quite as she looked now.

Ida had on a thin cotton dress that used to be colorful, but it had been washed so many times that it was of a soft, creamy pallor, now all its own. It was almost a part of her.

Her face was turned away, her lips smiling, probably still at the idea of the freckled face under the laurel wreath. Her eyelids drooped and her nostrils dilated, as if she were still searching the misty air for the delicacy of the bay tree.

She had on thick-soled tennis-shoes, which are fine for climbing over the rocks.



Thus it was that he found himself on a freight steamer, facing the east.

They were two sizes smaller than his, and three or four shades cleaner. Her white-cotton stockings were stretched loose round the ankles. They ended in a tight roll just below the knees. Also, they were altogether fresh from the clothes-line back of the cabin. Her body was warm from the climb, and it wasn't the bay tree that he was conscious of now in the air close to her, but something of orris-root, and the smell of clean clothes being sprinkled, and sun-warmed wood—and that was Ida Toller herself.

Now that he was going away, he knew a sudden ache that was old to her. He hadn't known before this moment that she was so utterly outside of him, and separate and different. He knew how straight she was, but he hadn't known how sweet. In fact, no one would ever think of calling Ida Toller "sweet," any more than a pine tree. She was, though, so sweet that it hurt—a sharp revelation for him right now, here in the reviving mist on the mountainside. He stared at her, realizing that he wanted to breathe closer to her, to hold her warmth close to him, to become one with this attraction of delicacy round her. One had to be quick to surprise Ida Toller.

"Gee, Ida!" And he sort of dove at her.

"Gary! Gary! What——"

She was pushing against his forehead, but his head eluded her hand and his face pressed against her throat. He was laughing, but extraordinarily intent, just the same. The "delicacy" could be breathed, but it was still hauntingly apart. It was of her, and they were two!

"Gary—I'll hurt you!"

"Go on; hurt away——"

She wrenched his face from her, one hand in his hair, another crushing at his ear.

"What do you mean?" she said breathlessly, holding his face before her. "What do you mean, and you—and you—going away?"

"I never knew before——"

"Knew what?"

"What you are."

"You won't ever know that way!"

"Listen, Ide——"

"What?"

His laurel wreath had fallen to the ground. His face was lower than hers, his thick hair rumpled, a line of angry white across his cheek that ended in a drop of blood under the ear—this from her fingernail. His eyes lowered, unable to hold hers.

"I didn't mean to scare you," he said.

"I wasn't scared—only jumped at first. I'm not afraid of a diamond-head—*when I locate him!*"

"I was going to tell you something."

"Fine way to start talking! What was it?"

"I can't now."

Gary talked so rarely, and he probably wouldn't now. She really wanted to know.

"I didn't mean to hurt you," she said, "but you came at me so——"

"It seemed we were all alone in the mist," he muttered vaguely.

This roused her more than ever. It was as if his face, pressing against her throat, had left her with something that was passing from him now. There was a secret about Gary McMicken in her heart. She had waited a long time for its answer from him. Now, when something of the sort had come, she had met it as one would meet a wildcat.

"Can't you tell me, Gary?" she said, with unexampled humility.

"I found out—oh, I can't get it again! First, I thought we could be one, and then I found out we were two—something like that," he added impatiently. "Sounds rotten. I acted rotten. Let's go down——"

She shut her eyes and prayed secretly to be satisfied just a little—not to be left like this—with him going away from Crawley. But there was no answer. The sudden furious impulse he had followed seemed altogether passed. Ida hadn't known enough to meet him—laugh for laugh. The ache of emptiness was greater than ever. The mist was clearing, and they started down in the wearying sunlight.

JAMSON, the city editor of a morning paper in Los Angeles, had come up through the sporting department; in fact, he had formerly held the sporting-desk for several years. What he said to Gary McMicken, after the boy had haunted the editorial offices for several weeks and finally been taken on, was etched in the steel of that young man's character.

"It's the same in every game, kid, whether it's play or work. One by one, the guys lose their bounce on the way up, find some notch half-way or so and stay there. Not

one in a million has the speed and the drive and the gameness in one body. Or, as they say in the fighting game, the science and the endurance and the punch. Not one in a million has all three. We're going to start you; it's up to you where you end."

"Thanks," said Gary.

"You won't think there's much to thank me for. You'll chase pictures at first; but, after all, it's up to you. Listen! Any fool knows the difference between a hundred-dollar horse and a five-hundred, but it takes a horseman to tell the difference between a horse that'll bring a thousand and fifteen hundred. Right in there you pass the last of the dubs and begin to show champion class——"

Gary felt that he had come into his own at last. The city pavements breathed up to him in the night hours with all their tired smells, and he called them good. Life was fairer and faster than he had hoped. The town beat upon him like a drum, and he learned to vibrate with it. He became a part of police and court and city-hall affairs. He began to see how a big town was run, and called it good; sometimes he called it rich. He centered himself in the paper's policy; and its friends and enemies, its spites and favoritisms and partizanships became his. He gradually came to realize that there were four worlds peculiar to Los Angeles—Mexican, Asiatic, movie and metaphysical. Specializing in these, one became more valuable to one's paper. He learned so fast that his head was often sore, like an overworked muscle. Lamson was the particular god he bowed to—Lamson, who had a perennial scorn for dubs in work and sport.

TWO years later, Gary knew so much about the city that he was beginning to forget that he had ever been other than part of it. He was kid enough still, however, to think that he was sophisticated. He wrote perfunctorily to Ida Toller and her father, but all that had to do with Crawley was far back in his mind—the manner of his bringing-up, the ways of speech and habits of people all looked little and stale. The big men of the paper, the managing editor and the "old man" himself, were still far above the clouds to Gary, so great was his conception of their acumen and efficiency and world-knowledge.

He received his fourth raise at the end of two years. Lamson said,

"Your stuff is getting good, kid."

Marian Whaley, who helped Lipton with the movie page, and did clubs and society, called him into her lit le den for congratulations.

"Oh, Gary, I'm hearing such *wonderful* things about you!" she said.

Marian put out saucers of this sort of milk for him very frequently as days drew on, and Gary dropped in to lap them up regularly as a houseless cat. She was the best-tempered thing he had ever known, and was held to be a "regular fellow" among reporters. She was consistently red-cheeked, and there was always a new author or playwright whose work she was "crazy about." She knew a lot of stage and society people and often referred to celebrities as "Millie" or "George"—little household names which the public rarely heard. She advised Gary what to read and study, and followed his "stuff" as it came out.

Once when Darnley, a general-assignment and feature man, the best writer on the local staff, had done a big Asiatic news-story, Marian asked Gary if it were his. He thought she was kidding at first, but apparently she wasn't. When he got alone, he gulped. Were they beginning to think so well of him as this?

Once Marian ran her fingers through his hair.

Shortly after Gary's fourth raise, Ida Toller came to town with her father. Ida looked pretty and something more; but the dress she wore—a new dress that doubtless cost a lot, for old man Toller was nothing if not generous—was stilted and pasty. It looked so modest as to be flaunting something to the eyes of one accustomed to the frankly enticing nothings of the city girls.

The supper which the three had together was a bit wearisome to the boy. Ida was solemn. Ben was painfully out of step with the big town. His hair was thinner and whiter, the figure shrunken away in the black clothes of another day. Gary's relief when Ben left was brief, because Ida was still unapproachable. She always stopped talking and even stopped listening to him when the music played. He kept telling her about his work, and yet, by her manner, she didn't hear half that he said. Her comments were entirely unsatisfactory.

"No, Gary," she said at last; "I don't know whether or not I like what the town is doing to you. Of course, it is a fine experience, but it frightens me, somehow."

"The town frightens you?" he said. "That's only at first. You get the hang of it, and then you get the laugh on it."

"I wasn't thinking about the town or about myself."

"What, then?"

"I was thinking of what the town is doing to you. You seem—you seem to be missing something."

Gary was irritated. Had he not told her of his progress, of his recent raise in salary, even bashfully of Marian Whaley's comment, explaining what a good fellow Marian was? Something was the matter with Ida.

"What brought dad to town?" he asked finally.

"There is trouble over in the mines. The Crawley folks pooled their holdings about six months ago and interested some Los Angeles capitalists in order to get machinery and to fit out a real plant. It appears now that the people here in Los Angeles claim they have a controlling interest. Dad came over to see about it and talk to lawyers."

Ida flushed and paled. She seemed displeased with herself for trying to explain.

"She isn't sure she's right," Gary reflected. "She ought to get out of Crawley for a while and see life. She looks weird with all that tan on her, and long sleeves."

TEN days later, Lamson called Gary to his desk, saying,

"Say, didn't you come from that hole over there they call Crawley?" Gary smiled. "There's trouble between your mining friends and a group of Los Angeles financiers. Why couldn't you run over there and do three or four features—studies of the miners—show up that they haven't got a chance. Of course we're pushing the L. A. end of the story."

"Sure!" said Gary, and he went back to the home town, carrying all his progress and sophistication alive in his eyes and walk and talk.

"Glad to see you back, Gary," Ben Toller said, as they met in the street. "You can help us right now. We're on the verge of losin' our birthright over here. We thought they were foolin' at first, but the Los Angeles people are actually tryin' to take over the mines."

Gary was thinking how pinched Ben Toller's face was getting to look and how he used to look up to this man as an ideal for all that courage and manhood meant.

"But you fellows have given over controlling interest to a syndicate, dad—what can you expect?"

Ben Toller turned slowly around.

"I didn't say we'd given over controllin' interest, Gary. I said the Los Angeles people are tryin' to make out we did."

Gary smiled to himself.

The Toller cabin was small and stuffy—this place that used to be his world. He placed his typewriter upon the bench, and it was like a fourth presence in the room like a black, silent stranger. He had taken Ida's hand. She looked a lot prettier here at home. Gary realized how a man might fall for a girl in her own house and see his mistake when he took her out into the world. It had been done. Ben went down to the village after supper—his old way of leaving them together.

"Yes; I came over for the paper," Gary said. "I've stayed on in L. A. because the game is big to learn. I want to have the whole thing up my sleeve before I go East. But I'm going."

That night he wrote a story of his impressions of the situation in Crawley. He couldn't see that the miners had a chance. He might have helped, as Ben Toller said, but he didn't see it that way. In representing the paper, he represented all that Crawley was not. He had the Crawley bringing-up, but used that with all the more effect for the syndicate's interest.

Ida was still as a mouse in the room while he worked, but for a long time he couldn't forget she was there. He had a feeling that she was looking over his shoulder, a little breathless as to what was on the page. He pocketed his copy at last, and suggested that they go out in the moonlight. They didn't get along very well. Ida couldn't understand his points of view, and yet they seemed so obvious that any one must understand. She couldn't see. She couldn't see.

Next morning early, his story was filed with Georgie Reed, down at the telegraph office. Crawley didn't have to wait for next day's paper to come out to learn what

Gary McMicken had done. A few remarks dropped by Georgie Reed let the matter out. Ben Toller said nothing, but waited for the paper next forenoon and carried it up the trail. Then, after he had washed for dinner, he read Gary's signed story twice before he looked up.

"I see you've grown out of Crawley, Gary," he said quietly. "I see you're against us."

Gary spoke a few words which were tense in contrast to the old man's quiet. There was silence.

"I've been tryin' to ricollect," Ben said at last; "I've been tryin' to ricollect if I ever heard of a young man growin' out of his home town and gettin' away with it."

Gary's and Ida's eyes met across the table. There was a positive shock in the contact. She didn't touch the paper—while he was in the cabin, at least. If she read it later in the day, while he was at work outside, she didn't mention the matter. Gary had taken his machine up among the rocks to be alone that afternoon. He knew he hadn't carried his point in his brief verbal discussion with Ben Toller, but he felt he was certainly putting it down on paper in this, his second story. He carried the copy of this back to Los Angeles that afternoon, instead of filing it on Georgie Reed's wire.

OF THE four worlds of Los Angeles, the one that interested Gary McMicken most, and which he chose to make his special field, was the Asiatic. He had spent much time in the quarter of the Chinese and Japanese, but he was handicapped from getting the faith of or any kind of devotion from these people because of the policy of the paper, which was aggressively against the encroachments of the Japanese on the western coast of America. It printed alarming articles about the increase of the Japanese population, the incredible ratio of childbirth, frequently pointing out that if this sort of thing continued a certain number of years, there would be no place in California for the native son to plant a geranium.

Gary swallowed the editorial policy whole in this matter, as he had done against the interests of his home town, writing articles which pleased the management but infuriated the aliens. At the same time, he continued to be fascinated in his study of the small cross-sections of Asia which were a part of the big town's magic.

"Sometime I'll go over to Japan and China and get these people straight, live with them, get them first-hand," he would say to himself; "but it's New York first."

He had certainly turned things over in Crawley. What his first article hadn't finished, the second accomplished. For some weeks following that assignment, he had the occasional satisfaction of feeling that he had shown the old town where she was at; but there was another side. Altogether, the Crawley articles hadn't left a pleasant taste. He began to feel "rotten" on Ida's account, and on account of dad.

One morning he came to work without having had any sleep. There had been a poker game and a lot of beer. In his depression of that afternoon, a hot shame stole over him, in the midst of which he pictured himself as he had gone back to Crawley to show the home town what power he had. He saw that he hadn't taken pains to look into the matter, that the whole story had been settled in his mind before he reached town. Lamson had been, indeed, the god he had bowed to, and, figuratively speaking, off went the heads of the miners so far as he was concerned.

One day he was looking for Lamson on a bit of rush copy and was told that he was in with the managing editor. Gary got as far as the door when he heard the resonant voice that controlled the destiny of the whole works, daily and Sunday. Big Chief was talking to a point, and that point was Lamson, the name being mentioned. Apparently, the idea was to obliterate the point. Gary didn't ascertain just what sort of a monkey-wrench the city editor had tossed into the machinery, but it must have been a big one. The reporter at the door drew back. He had decided that the bit of rush copy could wait. He retired, sick in the stomach. The god he had bowed to also had a god, and the lesser had been disheveled.

Now the feeling began to grow upon Gary that he was losing his "bounce," that he had slipped into a niche and didn't have the stuff to break out of the dub class. In this interval of weeks, one of Lamson's sentences on the first day repeated itself frequently through his mind: "Science, endurance, punch—not one in a million has all three."

Marian Whaley saved him from real discouragement for a time. She certainly knew how to stand by. Tolerant, large in sympathy, she never varied her interest in his behalf. Praise from Marian was all the high feeding Gary had just now, and he hung on, always pulling her into the subject of his work. Marian could bring out his best. She could straighten him out.

"They don't know what you're doing, Gary. They don't see the subtleties of your stuff. The farther you go the fewer can follow you. I think it's *wonderfull*"

Often they had lunch together, which is also breakfast for morning-newspaper workers. Though Marian was through before Gary, she would wait one or two nights a week and walk up-town with him to her apartment. One night it looked very simple to him—how they might make life work together, each keeping on with the job, for a time at least. Their united salary would make old obstacles easy and new things possible.

"We could manage the same day off," he reflected. "We could just about get along on my salary, and save hers."

He wasn't reflecting out loud. Their fingers trailed together as they walked. They were in a dark part of Beaudry Street and could see the lights of the Sisters' hospital sitting upon its hill. Marian always seemed shorter at night like this than she did in the office, as if she sagged a little under the hard hours. She was a little older than he, but there was a curious softness to her hands, to the brush of her arm against his. She was speaking, but Gary didn't hear.

Something in himself was daring another part to take this softness to him in the dark. It was taking a chance. Had she not reiterated how clean he was—how clean-minded and unmushy? Had she not repeatedly told him that what held her interest was his fine, clean drive to work? If he took her, would she say the ghastly thing a fellow never acknowledges to be true—that he is just like all the others?

"Oh, Gary, why did you do it?"

It was a whisper, yet a sob—as if she had nothing to do with it, as if she had been taken in a patrol-wagon.

"Why did you do it, Gary—Gary?"

And yet she was kissing him, and not pushing away. It seemed a great grief to her, and yet her kisses were inspired. Everything was being changed in him. So this was the secret of life he had lived for—this that had suddenly come upon him, the brimming cup of life! She was soft as the darkness, and penetrating. Something of her enveloped him like the night air; her lips were liquid fire.

Wonderful thoughts flashed through his mind, realizations. This little town-woman had moved about incognito. She was royalty—an enchanted princess down-town—this, the awakening in his arms. His mind seemed to have a hundred sets of senses. He sensed the powder that she had put on just before leaving the office—the powder—and something else. She had been so tired. She had said so—ten hours down-town, a hard day——

Yes; there was a sense of that about her garments, not altogether unpleasing—only for the powder. That was it. They didn't go together. Her lips stopped to whisper,

"Oh, Gary, why, why—did you?"

Of course, he would ask her presently. They would have the paper between them one day—work, house, this, their united salary—half to put away each week.

But just then a train whistled—a long-drawn, foggy wail, such as one only hears in the heart of the night. It meant the East to him. For the instant he saw the world as his field, not the town. Europe lifted with her coasts, no longer lay flat upon the map. And New York, the classroom so many newspaper men have to work through sometime; then wars, explorations, big politics, diplomacies, magazines, Asia. There was sweat under his collar.

"GARY," said Lamson, one day, "I hear they're laying for you over in Crawley as a result of the last stuff you did from there. What's there to it?"

"I haven't heard anything special lately."

Lamson had a carbon tissue of a late-news telegram in his hand.

"This is your story by rights, Gary. You ought to go over there again, later to-day, and file in a close-up story for us to run in the morning. Those fool miners shot up a plant-manager before breakfast to-day. They claim he wasn't working for their interests, but for the Los Angeles end. A man named Navin is said to have done the

shooting, and the plant-manager is expected to die. Navin is at large."

Gary felt himself getting gray in the face. He turned his eyes away, but Lamson wasn't looking at him. The city editor was calling for a boy to send to the telegraph-room.

"I know Navin," Gary remarked.

"All the better."

"But I have that follow-story to do on Yutaka Tahara for to-day."

"Couldn't you get that done first and then catch a train for San Ber'do?"

'Might," Gary said; "but it takes two or three hours to get it through to Crawley—longer still to go round by the desert."

Lamson glanced at him sharply. Gary went back to his desk. He didn't want to go back to Crawley right now. He felt clouded, defiled. It wasn't the danger of a bullet or a beating that held him back so much as the ugly fog in him that hung about the thing he had done before. There was something about Ida Toller, more than any one else in Crawley, that shook his nerve. He kept remembering how his eyes had met hers when dad had spoken that time about not being able to recollect any young man going against his home town and getting away with it. He had felt a shock from her that moment. Also, he kept seeing old Ben Toller as he had looked up from reading the first article in the Los Angeles paper. Ben had washed carefully for dinner before he read. His thin white hair had been pulled back over his temples with a wet brush.

The boy returned from the telegraph-room to tell Lamson that the plant-manager in Crawley was still alive.

Gary shivered, rose and went out on the Japanese story. Yutaka Tahara was a young lawyer who was in bad with the paper for publicly defending the reasonableness of the picture-bride system. Gary talked to him this afternoon. Strain and hatred was in the air, but the white man was seeing more in the situation than he ever saw before. None but the old stuff could come out, however. The column and a half that he wrote in police headquarters was all in the interest of deporting the Oriental, but it left its author in a deeper depression than he had ever fallen into before.

A few drinks did not seem to help; in fact, they made the fog more dirty round him. Gary felt he was getting into a relation with the local Asiatic quarter similar to that of his relation to Crawley. If one didn't get him, the other would. He was in bad all round.

He kept thinking of Ida. He half hated her for "having it on him" this way. The thing that had happened a few nights before on his way home with Marian seemed to have something to do with his fears of Crawley—something that made it harder to cope with them now.

He took a drink or two more, finally called a messenger and sent in the Japanese story. Then, over in a Chinese shop, out of touch with the office, he sat with further "fixed teas," while the light of afternoon flicked swiftly out, as it does in that country of abbreviated twilights. Finally it occurred to him to call up the telegraph editor, as a stranger might, inquiring if the plant-manager at Crawley was dead.

"No word in yet that he is," was the answer.

"Have they caught Navin?"

"No."

The face of Navin came before Gary's eyes, a "poker-face," it was called in Crawley, always a face of grim and disturbing humor there. No, Gary thought; he didn't care for any of the Crawley game just now. The strange part was that he didn't see that he was making the failure of his life. The personal thing that he had in his mind about Ida and dad kept from him the fact that he was also cowed by the town's reaction against him.

HE DIDN'T 'phone in, but called a second messenger and sent word to Lamson that he wasn't going to Crawley, that he was ready to quit the paper. Then, sitting alone, the young man tried another kind of tea.

He showed up as usual at the office the next day. Lamson called him to the city desk the first thing.

"Why didn't you tell me at first you didn't want to go over to Crawley—and not run off and take a flock of drinks?"

"I didn't know—until I studied it out."

A man often sees what he fears. At least, it was there for Gary's eyes—the lifting of Lamson's upper lip just now in scorn. Outwardly, however, the city editor was inclined to be humorous over the affair,

but there was plainly lacking the grim care he had formerly shown when Gary, as a comer, had made a mistake. The young man repeated the fact that he was ready to quit, but Lamson laughed at him, gave him what once would have appeared as a peculiarly attractive assignment, and further remarked that the Crawley plant-manager had "cashed in," his murderer being still at large.

It was late in the afternoon before the young man found time to run into Marian's office.

"Hello, Gary!" she said, with eager welcome. "Where were you all day yesterday?"

Marian always knew about such things and didn't need to ask. He was looking at his best on the outside, as only youth can after a break in training, but he was gray and hopeless within. None of his old pictures about life and the part this woman might play lived in his mind to-day.

"I don't blame you, Gary," Marian said. "You've been working steadily without a vacation for a long time. It's probably the best thing you could have done. I mean it doesn't hurt a fellow now and then to get what Lamson calls 'a contemplative souse.' It clears out his head. You've been growing so fast——"

"Cut it, Mimi! I've stopped growing."

She was up from the desk and after him as he turned out of the room, a tight hand on his elbow.

"Why, Gary, you mustn't be discouraged!"

He laughed at her, but his smile didn't hold its scorn under her searching eyes.

"I don't need to be petted," he said. "I need a beating."

"But I know you better—better than any one!"

"You're only kidding yourself that you know me."

"What a thing to say!"

"It's true. You're paregoric, Mimi, and I've got the habit."

There was something loose in the laugh that he saw in her face now. It wasn't at all a look that went with her words, which were still gentle.

"I didn't know you could be so cruel."

"That's just it. You don't know me. You don't know my sort. I'm going East—" He hadn't actually decided up to this moment.

"Gary!"

"I'm going to get out of here."

"But, think——"

"I'm going East to-night. So long!"

He went to the city desk. Lamson was out, but Gary typed two and a half lines of resignation on his own machine and took it back to his chief's blotter. His tension now was to get out of the editorial rooms before Lamson returned. Of course, the bank was closed. He couldn't get his savings until to-morrow; so there was no hope of clearing out of town to-night, even if he had told Marian he was going. There was no humor in town to-night; at least, none in the cosmos of Gary McMicken to wake it up.

IDA was alone by the spring on the shaded trail above the cabin. There was a book and a pad on her lap, and other books on the rock at her side. She hadn't forgotten what Gary said on the day before he went away: "I'll be studying, you bet!" And she had kept steadily on, working with the books since he left. It was different, working alone, too. In a way, books were foreign to her—not the sense and meanings of them, but to labor among them as he did for knowledge. He had seemed bent on *training* somebody all the time, training his head, perhaps.

There should be a better way, she often thought, a natural way. One should pick up knowledge as a part of life, as one learned to work with nature by loving her ways and walking in them. One didn't study about drinking at a spring, or knowing an alder from an oak, or a rattler from a moccasin; and one who learned this way didn't keep telling something all the time that he knew, as one did when he had just learned something from a book. There must be an easier and pleasanter way.

But Ida didn't trust herself. She didn't take a chance. If she couldn't get the world at first hand, she wasn't going to miss taking what she could of it out of books. She didn't intend to have somebody grow out of her sight and reach—not if books could help any.

She heard the voices of the miners and the faint ringing of their tools at the claims still farther above. A frown clouded her eyes; her eyelids dropped a minute, as if she were trying to get something straight

within *herself*. She rose and, leaving her books, pushed laterally through the foliage, walking lightly, rapidly for minutes until she came to a sunlit open space, in the midst of which the bay tree stood. It was dusty-leaved, altogether unresponsive. There was not the faintest trace of its fragrance in the air that she could sense. She pulled off a leaf that held stubbornly, broke it in her fingers and held it to her nostrils warily. Yes; it was there—almost too pungent. But the leaf had to be broken for its potent essence to escape. She shut her eyes again.

Up from the desert came the whistle of the east-bound train. Her shoulders twitched a little. She looked down upon its crawling white plume with strange, hungry eyes. Into the East! It was three in the afternoon, if the train were on time. He had said this train left Los Angeles a little before noon. Into the East—a mail-train. But no letters came back from the East.

"We were out of step on that last afternoon," she was thinking, for the bay tree always brought such thoughts close. "Poor babies! We didn't know. First, he knew something, and then I knew something—but neither of us knew enough, and neither of us knew the little we knew—at the same time."

She was startled again. It was a step this time. Her face flushed that any one should be on the same mountain when she was thinking such thoughts. It was "Brick" Galton.

"Hello, Ida!" he called cheerfully, yet not at all sure of himself.

"Hello, Brick!"

"Studyin' as usual. I saw your books back on the rock——"

"I've been reading a little, if that's what you mean, and now I'm going down to the cabin."

"I'm goin' down that way, too. Broke my nail-file," he said pleasantly, showing her a split in the hickory handle of his pick.

Brick was a sizable young miner, sun-darkened upon a bright-red base. He was about as good a sort as Crawley had to offer, and having seen something he liked in Ida Toller a while back, had tried to visualize it again each day since. They walked down together, and Ida shook him at the cabin door, but not until he had been refreshed with a dipper of buttermilk.

"He's always hunting me out lately," she said to herself, as she went into the kitchen-garden to get some string-beans for supper. "I'll have to tell him something if he keeps it up."

DAD TOLLER came up the trail from the town as the shadows of the mountain stretched out long over the desert. Evening fell early for Crawley, with a big mountain stacked up against the west; but the day started early also, with nothing but the level desert to the east.

Ida couldn't help it. For a minute or two after dad came this way in the evening, she always watched his hands in such a breathless, ashen-lipped way. In his own fashion, he shared this pain and usually in silence, but to-night, after he had washed, he stepped up behind Ida as she stood at the stove, and his left arm went over her shoulder.

"No; there wasn't a letter, Ida. He isn't ready to write yet. I understand him. He's gettin' ashamed of himself and thinkin' we're all against him. He's runnin' away from himself—trvin' to cover himself up in New York—tellin' himself we don't want to hear from him. I know how he feels, and I know he'll come out of it. Don't you worry too much, Ida. We'll hold the place for him here on the mountain; and just like a colt that has strayed off so reckless, he'll come runnin' home when he's hungry."

Ida turned to him from the stove and bowed her head against his shoulder. Very rare was this also between them.

"I know—I know," she said; "but it's so hard to think of him, thinking that we've turned our backs to him."

"Yes, it is hard," he answered; "but he's strong, and you're strong. You two are no shorn lambs that the wind has to be tempered to—not you! Life'll take care of him and polish off the edges, so when he comes home to us, he'll fit as he never did aforetime——"

"I know; but all the time he's polishing, I'm staying here on the mountain—not keeping up, maybe, not keeping up!"

His voice went on calmly:

"I used to think that—when I went away from your mother with a two or three months' grub-stake—how I'd have changes in myself and improvements to bring back. I *would* bring back a lot, because I loved to

change and grow for your mother. That was her happiness, but always I'd find that she had somethin' to match me from stayin' at home. A man fills his arms from the outside, Ida, a woman from within herself. Gary has a lot to do out there, but he'll do it—and bring it back to Crawley *donel* I know, Ida, because I've seen the stuff he's made of. I've seen him stand still in a pinch and grin."

AGAIN Gary passed the girl with the drowsy eyes in the upper hall of the rooming-house. She always left her door open. His room was farther forward on the same floor. Once he had seen her squarely under the skylight, as she came from the bath with her soap and towel. Sleep-signs hadn't all been washed away. It was the face of a big, sleepy child—a slow, fearless wonder in it, he decided. He began to see her face in the dark of his own room, and to contemplate the fact that she was across the hall and a little farther back, her door partly open.

Two or three times a week she came in about five in the afternoon. Gary managed to do the same. He had caught on an afternoon paper and was usually through at four; but he had formerly avoided his room until bedtime, because, unless he were fagged and ready to drop asleep, he had too much time to realize the unqualified loneliness of New York. His room was in West Eleventh Street, near the "L," and if he lay awake at night, he could hear the wolves howl.

Loneliness had meant that, most of all, to Gary before coming to New York—to be wakened by wolves or coyotes in the night. It had been good to feel Dad Toller under the blankets with him in those days of prospecting, good to wake up later with the bright light in the sky and the smell of wood smoke and pancakes and coffee in the air, for dad had always let him sleep until five minutes or so before breakfast. There were times now in New York when his heart actually thumped at the thought of the mountains. This was a water-level wilderness, this New York, and young men from all states came into it and lost their way, and some were eaten alive and never heard of afterward. That's what New York fed on, he thought—the young men from all the states. Young girls, too, he added, thinking of the girl across the hall. A name had come to him for her. He called her "Drowsy Eyes."

Hunger and thirst rolled into one—this yearning for the mountains that grew upon him month after month in New York. Once he woke from a dream that he had been lying in the sunlight on the floor of the Toller cabin, that clean-scrubbed floor. He could hear the stream in his dream and smell the bay tree, and he woke to find he had not put out the light in his room. Light had been beating down from the bulb upon his eyelids.

He had stopped writing Ida and dad. They hadn't his address in New York. He saw them more clearly from this distance than he had from Los Angeles. The lives of the girl and her father called to him with far more attraction. There was a clearness about them of the mountains; in fact, they were identified with the mountains that he was slowly dying for, but they were of Crawley, too. He had crippled himself in relation to all that. He didn't feel there was any hope of their ever looking at him again after what he had done. He had burned his bridges behind him all right, and he would always be an exile, unless——

Right there was the rub. If he could march straight and make extraordinarily good, if he could bring back a big world-winning and lay it at Crawley's feet, so to speak, that might make the miners forget the mistake he had committed—and one miner's daughter. But he wasn't making good in New York. Six months in the big town showed him that. He had tried to get the assignment to watch Chinatown for daily features. He had made his way to Pell and Mott Streets during his very first days in New York, but that was too rich and delicate a field to be given to a cub reporter. No paper in New York had men too good to answer a signal of "doings" in this spectacular Tenderloin. He occasionally spent an evening there on his own hook, but felt like a man without credentials.

Shortly after his arrival, he had written to Marian Whaley. There had been some hope left in him of unearthing treasure in Chinatown that night.

"I'm sure you are doing *wonderful* work, Gary," she had written back. But by that time his hope had flattened out—to stay flat. A mocking grin was on his lips as he

read. He could hear her say her word "wonderful."

He answered Marian in an altogether different tone this time.

No chance for my kind here. They don't let a man up out of the basement for more than an hour or two a day. Why, I'm not only a dub but a cub in this man's town. Hundreds of fellows come in from the West, and presently fall into the mill and forget what they came for, holding down a desk or a routine-job of one kind or another. You have to pass them before you get a real job, and they'll die before they let you by. They've forgotten there is a dream in the world, and naturally they don't recognize a dream in a newcomer. The trouble with New York is there is too much dirty work to be done every day. They put you on the dirt pile and leave you there until you die or run away.

And that closed the letter-writing to Marian Whaley.

IT WAS growing on him if he could only go into that room and talk to Drowsy Eyes, there might be something to live for. Gary wasn't much on making overtures. Things weren't running his way enough to spur up his nerve, but one summer afternoon when she was carrying a pitcher of water, he took it from her, pushed her door open wider and set it down on her washstand.

"Thankth," she said. "Hathn't it been deathly hot?"

The place was littered and perfumy.

"It sure has!" he granted.

"I'm tho tired and hot. Won't you thit down?"

"I'd like to, but wouldn't you rather—rather get freshened up first? I mean—the water. You just came in——"

She was looking up at the wall near the ceiling. She didn't seem to notice him there at all, or notice the fact that had now stricken him—that his talk indicated her need and the need of the room being policed up.

"There'th no hurry," she said.

She sat on the couch with her legs under her, running her fingers through her bobbed golden hair, as if to let the air in her locks, which her hat had pressed down. And still she looked up toward the ceiling—wide golden eyes, most thoughtful, eyes apparently, that had never been defiled with the taint of embarrassment between strange folks. The brown window-shades were drawn, but the western sun, beating against them, made them luminous and gave the room a faint golden effect to the farthest corners.

Gary knew something like happiness. He reflected that this was the first girl he had ever known. Of course, he had grown up with Ida Toller, but she was part a mother, part a sister, part a side-kick. Here was poise. There wasn't a nerve in her body, apparently. Drowsy golden eyes in the dim warmth. This was the fearless splendor he had heard about as belonging to New York. Why, this girl was so like a child she disarmed a man! No wonder she left her door open. Here they were together in her room, as alone and isolated as if they were married. The people of the house were so accustomed to boys and girls and men and women moving about together as not to look twice. Here was the freedom that protected the——

Gary's rush of thoughts stopped. "Pure" he was going to say, but that was hardly the word. It sounded sentimental.

She had come from Iowa. She had been in town two years and worked now in a millinery shop. She had other jobs not so good before that. Yes; she had met some boys in New York, but never for long. She liked men better than women, felt she could understand them better.

One discarded stocking lay like a sizable bird's nest on the floor at the foot of the couch. Gary hadn't been able quite to make it out in the gloom at first. Her eyes were still upturned as she talked. She agreed that they might go out to supper together a little later.

"It would be nithe," she said.

Gary was happy. He wondered where the other stocking was.

It was not quite dark when they reached the street. It was that hour when the evening crowds were gone. The pavements were covered with a thin sheet of trampled dust. It was gray, like the face of a woman on a bed after a great ordeal. Those that they passed were mainly young men, and every face was a sketch of a different kind of wanting. It was as if a master painter were turning out these sketches in rapid succession and letting them walk on Sixth Avenue before he finished the composite that was to be called, "I Crave." And all these faces looked hungrily at Drowsy Eyes. She did not avoid them, but not a single

pang that they knew seemed to waken a pang in her.

"They all see what a stunning thing she is," Gary thought. "No one misses that wherever she goes, and what a gorgeous unconcern! She's so used to it, it never feases——"

Drowsy Eyes ate heartily, slowly. All through the meal he wondered if he dare offer her a cigarette. When he finally ventured, she took one from his package thoughtlessly, and smoked, staring at the door.

"It doesn't mean anything to her," he thought. "Take it or leave it—all the same to her. New York hasn't gotten to her. Nothing defiles *her!* What a creature to pal round with! She doesn't talk a man's head off. She's game and quiet, and sure ointment for the eyes."

He wondered if he would take her to a picture-show or go straight home. What he wanted the more was to sit with her in the little room again—to sit before her, out of the crowd and racket, cut off from the world—as if they were in their own house.

He had taken the chance of not asking her to go anywhere. They were in the upper hall in West Eleventh Street again. He felt he would surely hear the wolves howl tonight if she didn't ask him in, but she did, and went ahead of him into the dark to turn on the gold-brown lamp.

That lamp belonged. It stood at the head of the couch, and Drowsy Eyes resumed her old seat on the couch with her feet folded under her and her eyes turned to the dim upper corner, as if her soul were awake and listening.

"Life ith tho thad," she said at last.

Life had been worse than this for Gary until that step upon the stairs. He heard it coming, but was so ensconsed in his quickening dream that it had no particular significance until the knock.

"Yeth?"

"Hello, Countess! May I come in?"

"Yeth."

ENTER a young male in tennis-flannels to whom life was apparently one prolonged syncopated song. He didn't deign to use a chair. A violin was wailing up from the area back of the building, and he gave his body to the uncertain rhythm of that as he swayed about the room. Meanwhile, he chatted affably about himself and why he had come to call on the countess this evening, which reason he did not make clear to Gary McMicken. His name was Georgie Herter or something of the sort. Gary was sure of the first part, because Drowsy Eyes spoke it a second and a third time.

"Georgie workth where I do," she admitted.

"Oh, in the hat works," said Gary.

Georgie liked the feel of his legs in the flannels, and his feet felt triumphant in his soft shoes.

"If we only had some real music—eh, Countess?" he asked, with sudden ardor, intimating dances they had lived through together. "Can't we go out somewhere—all three—a dance somewhere?"

This wasn't to be taken as an invitation, merely a genial play of words, for Georgie had already expressed himself among other things as a young person bogged in the shallows between pay-days. He moved about before the shadowy pictures on the walls, but did not look at them or at the books he picked up from the table. He merely used these objects as stations before which to conduct his rockings of hip and shoulder.

" 'Member the night on the boat, coming home from Coney, Countess?"

Gary measured him coldly. Just one—that was all Gary asked, to put Georgie out of his misery—just one between the eyes, and Georgie would light somewhere and be at peace for a space. Gary felt more like a native of the town of Crawley than at any time since he left—something sullen, ugly, slow to move in him, something that would stand just so much from a friend and rather less than that from an acquaintance. He rose.

"Pleathe, don't go," said Drowsy Eyes, and that slow tone whipped home to his heart. He fancied in the golden light of her eyes a swift intelligence that Georgie had only come because he had no place else to go.

"I don't feel safe here," he said in a low tone, close to her face, under the cover of Georgie's sustained hum.

For a moment her eyes came in from their roamings and held him, a curious, searching penetration for a second, as of one just come to the cage of a new sort of animal at the zoo.

He left, but from his room Gary heard

their voices, and what wore into him most was that the answers of Drowsy Eyes weren't irritable or noticeably bored. He thought of them alone in there; a sick heat came over him in their silences. This was New York. This was the freedom that the young came to find in New York, and didn't know what to do with. They were as alone——

Now it actually occurred to him that he had appreciated this freedom a while back before supper, when he was on the other side of Drowsy Eyes' door, but Gary didn't get the humor of the altered condition.

Ten, eleven; still their voices at intervals. They had danced together before to-night. He, Gary McMicken, had never learned to dance. He had learned to ride and shoot and fight and carry the pack, but he hadn't learned enough to stay straight to his home town. He couldn't go back. He didn't even have a clean bill of health in Los Angeles. He remembered Lamson's sneer, and the dirty heat went over him again.

Yes; he was hearing the wolves howl to-night all right. This was New York, and there wasn't a chance to climb up out of the basement. He couldn't even get the fun out of New York, like this young millinery male in pants and shoes and stockings in there. He couldn't even dance like Georgie.

Their voices sounded nearer. They were standing by her hall door.

NEXT day, in Forty-fourth Street at luncheon-time, Gary passed an oyster-bar and turned in. He was looking for something to eat and thought of a bit of broiled bluefish, but just as he was about to give the order to a thick-necked, ruddy-cheeked shell-fish expert, he saw chalked up against the mirror:

Fried soft clams with bacon.....65

He repeated that aloud instead of the bluefish order. The man on the stool at the right of him had just finished his platter of clams. Firmly this gentleman now grasped the catchup and poured out a half-saucerful onto the remaining crumbs. This he sopped up with white bread. Gary looked the gentleman over. He wasn't athletic. In fact, he was pale—fat and pale. Gary wondered if he did this sort of thing every day and what he ate for breakfast, for instance—probably doughnuts and fried potatoes or pie.

"This town's nuts," he decided.

The bull-necked waiter was opening and stripping another mess of clams just over the counter. It looked easy. He filled a porridge-bowl and dumped them into a saucepan of fryings with a couple of slices of bacon. A middle-aged man in a derby hat climbed wearily to the stool at Gary's left. The clam-opener braced himself before the newcomer, a smile dawning on his face. He said, with real gladness,

"How do you do, Mr. Pearson, and how's Mr. Laidlaw?"

The business man seemed only vaguely interested.

"Very well when I saw him last. But that was some time ago. You knew him?"

"You and Mr. Laidlaw used to come in to Melcher's place under the Cotton Exchange."

All the while, the bull-necked one was watching Gary's clams, filling cracker-bowls, passing catchup, opening shell-fish, counting up checks and relaying orders for coffee and near-beer. Still, he had time to refresh himself with mutual memories of old days.

"Where's Melcher now?" the business man asked.

"Running a barber shop on Cape Cod."

"Some transfer from shell-fish to hair!"

"Old trade to Melcher, Mr. Pearson. Doing well. Cape Cod's his home. We all go back, as the feller says. The trouble is, when you get through work in Cape Cod, what have you got? When you get through work here, you've got New York."

Now the waiter reached back to the range for the saucepan, overturned it with a fling into a colander, the hot fryings sizzling back into their old crock beneath, and Gary had his catchup thumped in front of him.

"Tell Mr. Laidlaw you saw me," the waiter added. "Just say you saw Jack. He'll remember."

The business man nodded. He finished while Gary was still staying with the fried clams. Mr. Pearson left a dime for the waiter, his order being small, and the bull-necked one picked it off the counter with his right hand but dropped it into his left vest pocket.

"Old customer of mine," he muttered

genially, never losing a beat. "Old customer of mine."

"Nuts," concluded Gary McMicken.

The clams teased him from one to another. They tasted racy, but seemed to contain a penalty. "This bull-neck," he thought, "gets along in New York. He remembers his friends—maybe not his friends, but his customers. He knows his business and his place, is proud of it. He looks fit as a mat-artist, and when he gets through his shift here—he's got New York, and the wolves don't howl."

Gary had moments of racing speed that afternoon in doing two or three short local stories before the late edition went to press. He felt queer, a trifle stand-offish from himself. His failures passed through his brain like a string of black-garbed monks marching to a dirge, and outside of the office New York looked more than ever insane—heat, traffic, hate and pain—civilization's utmost climax in pandemonium. Under all, in and out through that three hours' work, he thought of seeing Drowsy Eyes at five.

To sit before her in that dim room! He didn't analyze it, but he felt he was dying for something her face and her room stood for—for some beauty of the golden hair and eyes in that golden light.

But he wasn't right on the stairs going up. The smell of the halls and carpets turned him cold. There was something about his room like an opened fish in the sun. He dropped down on his cot and felt a slow revolt forming within him. It was five minutes to five, and he hadn't washed.

If he could get to the bath and have it over before she came! But it wouldn't get over. He was back in his room, but it wouldn't let him rest. The revolt was no longer local; it was world-wide. In the bath again, in one of the loathely hushes, he heard her step at the top of the stair. She passed the door. Moments afterward, some one tried the knob. Then Gary's body was one organized insurgency for several seconds, at the end of which he heard a trailing voice:

"Thome one ith thick."

"I'll state," said a man's voice, "dead and buried and risen again, but still sick."

The tumult subsided, and he lay, cool and spent, back in his room. For twelve hours he lay, sometimes half awake and half asleep, sometimes in the full drag of passing moments, but practically all the time, not actually asleep, he tied himself to Drowsy Eyes with thoughts and hopes in a way both stubborn and naive.

Here was beauty; here was poise; here was a girl fine enough to be in New York but not of it. She accepted life as it came to her, rejecting nothing, yet remaining uncontaminated. Here was a new and real beginning in life so far as he was concerned. If he might play to her now, drop his burden of failures at her feet, build afresh under her golden eyes, start at the bottom, going slow, with her to tell the story of each day!

Even this horror of sickness had been a symbol, he thought—the wrecker before the builder. He saw it clearly now as a physical aspect of a clean-up which was taking place in every department of being—final preparation before the establishment of an entirely new order.

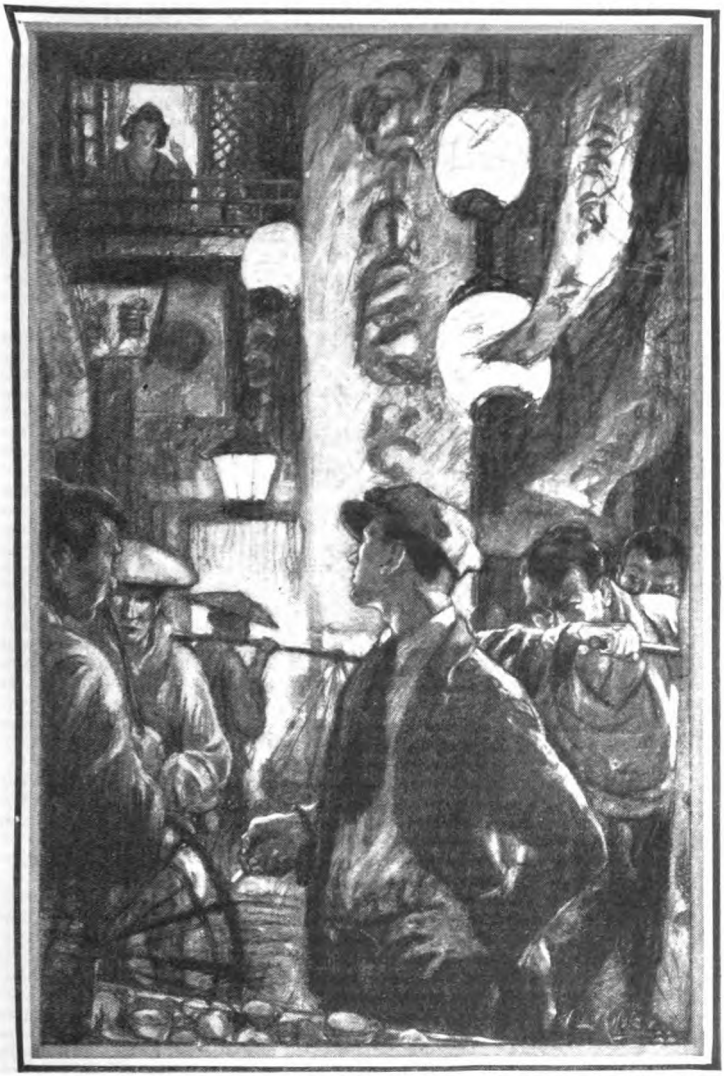
THE next day at work, he regarded life attentively, warily, without hate. He gave himself to his work with fresh eagerness. It seemed that they must observe the change in him, must see this new Gary McMicken that had come to life suddenly out of the misery of the old. That afternoon at five, he followed Drowsy Eyes into the dim brown place of magic. She had smiled, pushed the door wider. He went to his room and brought a cold drink which he had made ready.

He was breathless, like a fugitive gaining sanctuary, as he brought in the glass. He would not have had it different. She was sitting in her old way and place on the couch. She said the drink was "nithe." She sipped some more and said it was "very nithe."

"We'll have some supper later, eh?" Gary said.

She liked that prospect also. Gary studied her marvelous way of not unnecessarily obstructing anything. He couldn't think it out, but it occurred to him that great people must work this way, that they would move without wear or waste in the big flow of life, in the deep, bogless channel, so to speak, thus avoiding rock and snag—unless a principle were involved. Of course, such people would stand firmly at such times, quietly but firmly revealing themselves.

The vivid western sunlight pressed against the brown shade. It was like a web



He had turned up his eyes toward a sliding window, where a Japanese girl laughingly called to him. Then a gasp of breath behind him, a mashing blow upon the head.

of faint stars. Drowsy Eyes fluffed her bobbed head, thrusting all ten fingers straight up through it to let the air in. Softly she fanned herself with her hat and stared aloft.

To sit before her this way—this was all he asked. Gary saw himself like an Oriental before an image. There was something to it. It seemed that peace and order formed in him as he poured out his thoughts to her. This was all he had needed—something to turn and hold to in the big town. Otherwise, a man must surely drift——

Just to sit in silence. A whole lot of talk was no good.

"Let'th go out," she said at last.

He thought she would be quite a while getting ready as he waited in his room. A kind of happiness was upon him, the content that comes of beginning all over again. He had his thoughts, and it would have been easy to wait longer, but Drowsy Eyes wasn't the kind to keep a man waiting. It was almost better than one could hope—her way of taking it for granted that he was to come into her room again after supper. She wasn't itching for change or excitement or spending a man's money.

There was some tension until nine o'clock lest Georgie Herter show up, or some one else. She had known boys. She granted that, but never for long. Naturally, the Georgie Herter sort couldn't get to a girl like this. And now Gary came into a trace of all but forgotten power. New York was not so hopeless as he had made out. He had counted himself encroaching every time he went to Chinatown, when it was really as much his as anybody's. Nobody had a monopoly on Pell Street, and he had West Coast experience to work with. Funny how he had accepted routine and failure so long! The way to win New York was to dare—to lie in wait patiently for a big story, and then plunge. He saw it all clearly, like letters in fire upon the wall. The way to pass the dubs was to play along quietly and confidently, gathering force until the inevitable big story for every man turned up—to know it instantly when it came, and then *turn loose.*

OF COURSE it was sitting here with Drowsy Eyes that opened the way again. Life opened naturally with her in the room. More than the big story, he saw. It was not all death and defeat that lay behind. Making good in New York would give him the leverage to return to Los Angeles and, finally, to Crawley. The power that he would win here would work there, forcing even Crawley to see that because a man made a mistake once, he needn't keep on making them. In the new light he would carry from having made good in New York, even Crawley would have to see that a man sometimes changes. Of course there could be nothing between him and Ida. Perhaps Ida was already married. He had thought a lot about that, but the pang was gone from it in this room. Nothing but friendship, of course— They had grown up together—and the restoration of faith and friendship between him and Dad Toller, who had always played square in his own way.

Now something of Los Angeles came back in the midst of these clearing thoughts—not the failure about his refusing to go back to Crawley but a certain silent hour of the early morning, long before dawn, in Beaudry Street. Queer how he had fallen for Marian Whaley—a kid falling for an older woman! Every kid did it. All that was gone now—all but the kiss. Poor Marian had kept asking him why he did it. Some restless essence of that moment was born again in this—here in the dim gold-brown lamplight.

The girl's face was shaded, but her hands were in the light. Gary rubbed his fingers over his forehead. He had not spoken for long. Something told him not to frighten her. From away back somewhere came a warning—not to frighten this girl. He had no thought of words at this moment, but they came.

"Why do they call you 'Countess?'"

"It was at the plathe where I work. I wath trying on a new hat, and the headtrimmer thaid I looked like a counteth—that wath why."

He was standing.

"You do look like a countess, but I call you 'Drowsy Eyes.' Oh, Drowsy Eyes!"

She was sitting so far back on the couch that he couldn't kneel, but he sat at the head, at angles to her and leaned close to her, whispering it over again—"Drowsy Eyes"—his hand upon her far cheek, his face against her hair. She was laughing.

"That'th tho funny—Drowthy Eyeth!"

Though the kiss was in his mind like the single red light of a subway express, there was reverence, too, more than passion at this moment. He had something to give—a crude, coiled idolatry. He had heard Beauty calling, and he had come bringing all he had. His hand drew in her face to his. The near cheek came to his without resistance. She was laughing softly. His lips kissed her cheek again and again. It seemed more than he could hope. She had known all the time that he loved her.

"Drowthy Eyeth," she repeated.

His arms were round her as he leaned. Her neck was soft and cool, indescribably soft under the ear. This was New York—New York making a nest for him at last. The red light neared. He turned her face to his and their lips touched. They, too, were cool and laughing. They were like children—all lost in their own play. He threw kisses at the children, but they did not pay attention. She was rocking forward and back in his arms, but he kept his face close, kissing her cool lips that laughed and played a game of their own.

"Oh, listen!" he whispered. "Listen, Drowsy Eyes!"

"Oh, that'th too—too funny—Drowthy Eyeth—me!"

It was as if the red light struck him. He was being laughed at, his passion thwarted. The old ruffian sprang awake within him, and a sleety sentence shot past his lips:

"For God's sake—forget it!"

HE WAS in the hall. He had touched his own door-knob. He listened as one would listen for human voices after two motors crash together in the street. He couldn't be sure, but it was as if a sound of soft laughing still came from her half-open door. The wreck had happened in himself. The voices of the living and dying that he listened for—why, of course, the screams were rising from himself.

He turned the knob, thinking to get his cap. It was crushed in his hand. He had caught it up on the table of her room as he rushed out. He yanked his door shut and ran down-stairs. He was bewildered to see crowds still in the streets. Somehow, without thinking about it, he had expected to find them empty. The feeling had been upon him that this was the heart of the night. In fact, it was only a little after ten. On Sixth Avenue he turned downtown and presently reached the stairway of the "L" at Eighth Street. This he climbed, rolling a cigarette on the way up.

The dull want in him was to get away. He was like a sick man in a dark room, fumbling round for the window to shove it up. Standing on the platform above, he thought of a little creature like a chipmunk he had once seen in the mountains. It had just been stung by a rattler and was making its way to water as it died.

"Sure—it's like that," he muttered. "I've been stung. I need a drink."

At South Ferry he changed to a Third Avenue train and a few minutes later descended to Chatham Square, entering Chinatown by little curving Doyers Street to Pell; then up the narrow brass-shod stairway to the Ming Far Low, where the night was just getting into its stride. The "old man" was back of the show-case, and under the glass, where tea and herb-packages, teapots and teacups were shown for sale, sat a plump doll marked "Bisque." Gary looked at it, and a cold smile formed on his lips. The ruffian in him was pleased to observe, but not aloud: "That was it. It was like kissing a bisque doll."

He explained to old Ming Far his whim for illegitimate liquor, and was directed still higher up-stairs, where he was given a room by himself and a fuzzy-haired boy who made vacant sounds but understood very well. Still, he was unable to escape the sense of disruption that came from his last moment in the lamplight with Drow—with whatever her name was. There had been no warning of such a breaking-out. A moment before—a moment before—and suddenly, as a stone crashing into a pane of glass, that thing had shot from his lips. No warning. Now Gary thought of ordering fried soft clams and bacon when he had meant to order bluefish.

"I guess a man don't know what he's doing—eh?"

With stimulant, his thoughts became brisk and ugly. He reflected that this Chinese joint was no place to sit alone and burn oneself to death. Anyway, he could come back, and below—was Pell Street. Little old Pell, only a block long, from the Bowery running like a short, slender arrow into the curving bow of Mott

Street. He would see why this wasn't his habitat.

In the flickering lights of the street, almost at the door of the Ming Far Low, he passed a white man and glanced quickly back. He wouldn't have looked twice if the other hadn't suddenly averted his face. Gary McMicken had seen his big story. He turned and touched the man's arm.

"Why, hello, Navin!" he said softly.

The other turned. A kind of white glare looked out from his eyes for a second in the shadow.

"Hello, yourself!"

"Don't get peeved, Navin. I was just figuring on buying a little drink."

The face that looked down into his was hooked, pallid, desperate—but a cold smile now worked. It was the poker-face, famous in Crawley. One never knew what was going on back of Navin's eyes. One never knew what wasn't going on, either. Now Navin spoke slowly.

"I don't mind havin' a drink, but I don't think I'd care to drink in public, Gary. I've got habits of eatin' and drinkin' alone."

"It's solitary up-stairs at Ming's, where I mean—a room to yourself——"

"They're pullin' these solitary dumps now and again, here in New York, Gary. To you it don't mean nothin' but a little slum episode to be taken to police headquarters. To me it means the choker-tie." Gary was thinking of the plant-manager who didn't get well. Navin here in hiding—in Chinatown! The slow voice pursued, "I've got a little room over in Oliver Street—if you don't mind crossin' the square—and a drink or two left in the bottom of a teacup for an old playmate from Crawley."

GARY didn't relish the idea of going to Navin's room, but there was a queer pressure on him just now from failing to go back to Crawley that second time. Besides, he had to think out what to do. They were crossing Chatham Square under the massed superstructure of the "L." Oliver Street opened before Gary's eyes sloping to the water-front, and aloft across the slip at the foot of it—like a highway mystic and majestic to other worlds—stretched a tilted segment of the Brooklyn Bridge. He would have to pay a further price to write this story, but Crawley had been sacrificed already. Crawley was done for, so far as Gary McMicken was concerned.

The street was still crowded in this interminable summer night. Even the children had not yet all gone from the doorways. Their play in the street was stopped, but not all had been banished to the suffocating rooms. Navin turned in an empty doorway and Gary followed up-stairs. He was in for it, he thought, but if there was to be a story! Yes; this time he would see it through. Another flight of stairs, and then through an execrable hall to a rear door, which the lodger unlocked. A lamp burned dimly within. Navin pushed the door open wider, beckoning Gary to enter. The younger man obeyed, but when he turned, he faced a drawn gun and a frosty smile. Navin's left hand was feeling behind him to shove the door shut.

"A man can kill twice, Gary," he said, "but he can only hang once."

Queer what a fellow thinks of! The thing that struck Gary this instant was that this was doubtless the same gun Navin had used on the plant-manager. Gary had now touched bottom in himself—hard ground, that held.

"You spoke of a drink in a teacup," he managed to remark, with a cough.

"Yes; I could relish a drink, but I'd choke to death before I'd drink with a polecat. Sit down."

Gary obeyed. Navin sat opposite and surveyed him.

"I ought to kill you," he said, after a moment, "but I've done pretty well by the boys in Crawley—at least, for the present. I'm no glutton. At least, there's no hurry. Always think out careful the next play you make—that's the way I work."

Gary stared quietly into the other's face.

"I ought to kill you," Navin said musingly, "but it's a mean feelin' afterward to kill a man. You don't sleep right, Mister Reporter, after losin' your temper that way."

"You think I meant to turn you over?" Gary asked.

Navin chuckled.

"A feller on the run do have such queer thoughts. It ain't safe for a feller to be left too much to himself. It ain't natural. He goes mussy in the head. I don't want to lie to you, Gary. It ain't a good beginnin' between old townies met up in New

York, but I did have—just the faintest suspicion at first—that it occurred to you to turn me over."

Gary smiled. Something warmed him, in spite of the plight he was in.

"But it didn't hold, Gary. Do you know, right now, it's all gone from me—that suspicion? Wouldn't know I ever had one—not now." He twirled the gun on his finger and slowly observed: "It sure would be abrupt to kill you right now. I was leavin' this part of the city, anyway, this evenin'." Navin was looking thoughtfully round the room. "I believe I stated we weren't to have a drink together, didn't I? But right now you've just got to eat somethin'."

Navin was taking off a soiled pillow-case, which he brought close, standing in front of Gary's chair.

"Eat this," he said, shoving the half of the cloth between Gary's teeth. "This open plumbin' will help me a lot, too," he added, "and I can do without the straps from my bag."

With his six-shooter put out of sight behind him, Navin backed the other against the canvas-wrapped steam-pipe, now cold, and strapped Gary's hands behind him, but encircling the pipe. Then he wound a sheet round Gary's neck and mouth, from which the pillow-case protruded, and tied this also to the pipe. Another sheet finished the work at the feet.

"I haven't got the remotest idea you're goin' to turn me over, Gary, because I'm not goin' to give your little hand-tooled double-crosser the chance," Navin said, looking down approvingly upon his prisoner.

Then, taking a sup from the water-pitcher, he shook it round reflectively in his mouth and skited it into Gary's face—the way a Chinese laundryman sprinkles clothes. Now Navin, washing his teeth, paused to declare, with soap on his lips:

"Never take any important step, Gary, without washin' your teeth first. Makes your head clear somethin' remarkable."

Finally, the wanted man from Crawley tossed his few effects into a lean black bag and left the room with stealth.

GARY'S face itched from the dirty water; his eyes roved round the room. There was a wash-stand of stained warped wood, the bowl of water that Navin had washed in, a jar for waste and a pitcher on the floor. The narrow bed that had been rifled of its sheets and pillow-case was over in the dimness. It looked like an old boat, beached, abandoned, peeled by the years.

Gary was flat on the bottom of things, scraping bottom, where one sees clearly in a small way. The odd thing about it was that he didn't hate Navin. In spite of what had happened, there was an old roughness that warmed him—something of Crawley that he had forgotten, something of the mountains that he never could forget. He shivered, because he had thought of turning Navin over for the sake of the big story. He had been all balled up for a minute with the idea of a cub reporter finding a killer from California in Pell Street, New York—turning him over single-handed and all that—the man he had once studied admiringly, as a kid will study a gamester of the home town. He hadn't thought of the hanging-part at first.

The sheet was tight about his own throat right now; the soiled pillow-case was like a savage fist in his mouth. Turning Navin over was now curiously far—even to let it be known that the man wanted back there had been seen in Pell Street. He had fallen for a newspaper once, betraying the man who had fathered him and the men of his home town who were being bilked. Never again! Navin had had him helpless, yet hadn't smashed him. Another man less game, with blood already on his hands, might have killed one who endangered his narrowed liberty. The warmth of old Crawley was still perceptible.

Gary thought of Drowsy Eyes, and a groan leaked out through his nostrils. He could hardly believe that this was the same night he had left her lamp-lit room. It seemed as far back as Crawley. He heard a step in the next room and groaned again. There wasn't much carrying force through the gag. It was like the noise a sick man might make in his sleep, or of one having a tooth pulled. He was hideously uncomfortable. Sweat broke out at the thought of staying here the rest of the night.

The step in the next room again! It was weighty but soft, a big body in stockinged feet. Gary forced the groans out of him, and finally it seemed as if the step halted, as a man would when stopping to listen. He put all his force into the noise this time. It

horrified him—the hollow mindlessness of the sound. There were seconds of hopeless silence, then boots—no mistake about it. Gary worked now for his life. The lining of his nostrils was a torture of itching flame.

THE boots were in the hall. They moved erratically—with heaviness, but doubt. If they passed into silence, the wolves would howl as never before. It wasn't a knock—more like the scrape of buttons on the door. Gary turned loose a last time, and the knob moved with cautious reluctance. A broad, browned face appeared low in the dim doorway—a giant in breadth, a dwarf in stature—a figure such as you would see in a concave mirror.

"Trussed, be heaven!" came from the voice of the strange figure, without astonishment, as he sat down.

Gary worked his head violently to right and left. The broad one edged his chair closer and looked up.

"He says not," observed the stranger; "but trussed he is."

Gary now encouraged him with constricted nods.

"He agrees, he does, the lad. Is he wan av thim, I wonder now?"

Gary pressed his eyelids shut and circled his head.

"He is—an' he is not," said the stranger, taking out a big silver watch. "The town's full av thim, but I'll see, to be sure." He rose, standing on the outer edges of his feet. His thick, short legs teetered forward; a huge fist came up and yanked the crushed pillow-case out of Gary's mouth.

"An' now tell me, young sor, are ye wan av thim?"

"One of what?" Gary said thickly.

"Wan av thim byes with the divil's shine acrost their eyes?"

Gary shook his head vaguely.

"I don't get you, but I'm much obliged."

"Sure the town's full av thim, sor."

"Full of what?"

"The lads as offers coke an' heeroin, whin a man's come ashore for sthrong drink, an' decent."

"I haven't any dope to peddle, but I can get you a drink."

"They all promise," the stranger said moodily.

"What time is it?" Gary asked.

"'Tis midnight and fifteen minutes."

Gary could hardly believe.

"I thought it was morning," he said jerkily. "I can get you a drink any time before four in the morning, New York time——"

"An' what time, sor, d'ye think I'm carryin'—Honolula?"

"Turn me loose and I'll get you a drink at the Ming Far Low. I could do with one myself."

"'Tis fresh an' aisy they spake like that—all av thim. Plinty t' say, they have, but little t' dhrink."

"I had a couple of drinks before coming here."

"An' ye tucked yourself into bed on the steam-pipe? 'Tis a curyus thing is dhrink, but there's no harm thryin' wance more——"

And now he was undoing Navin's expert work with the sheets and straps. As he worked, he communed:

"'Any time before foor in the marnin',' says the lad. An' 'tis well I know where I'll be at foor in the marnin'—barrin' accidents av delivery an' perils av the passage, as the psalmist says——"

The voice halted; the broad, browned face jerked up suddenly close to Gary's. He stood on tiptoe, and his eyes looked inspired.

"Be heaven, the lad's not lyin' for wanct! 'Tis likker his young lips 'ave touched this night—an' what else I know not. Come, sor; step out av your windin'-sheet an' lade the way to Mick Farlow's place, or whativer the name was."

No questions were asked, and Gary offered no explanations as they went down into the street. The broad one clutched his arm desperately as they crossed Chatham Square under the mass of "L" tracks. Through Doyers to Pell and up the brass-shod stairs again, the night at its height in the Ming Far Low—and a further stairway to the solitary room and the fuzzy-haired boy. Gary had only been gone an hour and a half, but he felt the weight of intervening years. But not for long.

The broad face bent over the teacup and breathed. The thick neck straightened. The inspired look returned.

"Dhrink, lad," he whispered softly, "dhrink an' forgive a seafarin' man who thought you were wan av thim!"

A little over two hours later, in the smooth flow of abandonment, they were put out of the Ming Far Low by the boy, who no longer made vacant sounds. And down the hollow flags to the water-front they wove together, singing, vowing never to part. Hours afterward, Gary woke in a gently swinging hammock, rubbed his eyes and helped himself, hands and feet, to the deck. Thus it was that he found himself working, not on a newspaper but a freight steamer, facing the east.

"BRICK GALTON is no scut," said Ben Toller, as he smoothed his white hair back with a wet brush, preparatory to sitting down to supper.

Ida did not answer. She was not exactly sure what "scut" meant, but there was no disposition in her to disagree. If her father had said, "Brick Galton is a one-man dog," his meaning would have tallied accurately to her present idea. Such a dog asks nothing in words, yet in feeling is one continual supplication. He does not ask formally to go with one, yet does so every time he is loose or not positively commanded otherwise. Such a dog does not practise patience; he is patience—and can't help it. He does not ask to possess his adored one for all eternity but for to-day; and when told that he cannot, his brain is instantly supplied with possibilities of to-morrow. His fidelity is made much of by outsiders.

Brick wasn't a bore, either, with all his doglike devotion. He had a blithe humor much liked by men; in fact, he was appreciated by every one in Crawley except Ida herself, to whom he was becoming no laughing-matter. He wasn't losing flesh or color or neglecting his work for love. Since the Los Angeles financiers had retired from Crawley with notes that crippled somewhat the future of the local miners, Brick was one of those who were still making some money out of the claims. The royal *coup* that he put over with Ida was in standing up for Gary McMicken when that young man was being abused by his fellow townsmen. Crawley did not concede Ben Toller's daughter as having more than one chance in fifteen to escape.

"Brick's as good as got her," the town would have informed a stranger, had one inquired. There was a slight tension to have it so on Crawley's part, because the people were not yet in any mood to have Gary McMicken "cop" on one of its very best bets.

Word had leaked back that Gary had been seen in New York. This much was general knowledge, but there was an esoteric addition, in possession only of a few miners of proven trustworthiness. The natural code of Crawley was to pull and hang together. The unfortunate brush with Los Angeles capital had offered many tests of fidelity. A group had stood pat. Among these few, including Ben Toller and Brick Galton, it was known that Gary had been seen by no less person than Navin himself.

The man who had killed the plant-manager was attached to the nervous system of these Crawley miners like a member of their own body. Indeed, he was a member at large. He had done what needed to be done in a crisis, not for himself but for all. It would have been a black day for the outfit if Navin were caught. The whisper was passed about the few that Gary McMicken had had the look of double-crossing the fugitive miner in New York, but that Navin put it over on Mister Reporter instead.

"He ought to have killed the skunk," was observed, in effect, more than once in the week that followed the news.

And right here Brick Galton got to Ben Toller, by rising to state:

"Navin doesn't say Gary meant to turn him over, but only that it might have been in Gary's head. You know Navin. There wouldn't have been anythin' but the remains of one reporter if Navin had been sure——"

Then came the general information that there wasn't any remains. Something had happened to Gary McMicken after Navin had left him. His effects had been found unremoved from his lodgings; his newspaper had no word; a small savings-account had not been drawn. The police were on the case, but they had added so far but one minor point. A girl lodger in the same house where Gary lived in West Eleventh Street had reported that he left her room at ten o'clock on the night he was last seen.

Ida Toller took all this to the altitudes between meals. The bay tree had become too poignant for pain of this nature. Once

she went up and up where the cedars ended and the pines began to get further and further apart. There was something in her that knew he was not dead; and there was something in her that held to the boy with the very grip of life itself. This something cried and begged and fell into a sleep like death every night, only to be born again and brought to ordeal with each day.

Ida wasn't facing the east; she was facing the great bare rocks. A hundred times she had said, "But even when all's done, he doesn't care!" A hundred times, "The last thing—the last night—in a room with a girl!" She had tried to hate to ease the pain, but only one side of her worked at a time in the business of hating. His face would come up to her—in his trouble, in laughter, facing the east, studying a book, freckled all one freckle; and as it had looked in that one slow-revealing moment of living passion for her, the bay wreath fallen to the ground—his face would come up to her like the face of a babe at her own breast. "He is my boy—my boy!"

MANY weeks after that, in the early fall darkness, she was hurrying down from the farthest spring to the cabin, to get there before Brick arrived. He always came up to join her when she was on the mountain, and she liked it better with him down below. It had its drawbacks there, for dad always got up and left them together, but she felt more in charge of herself with the white floor of the cabin under her feet. She was always tortured, not for herself but for what Gary might think if he came in and saw Brick there, or if the town told him that Brick was always coming in leisure hours.

"But what can you refuse a man who doesn't ask anything?"

Still, there was something restless and unlovely about it to her—something that continually kept repeating within her that nothing could be right until she was clean of *that!* She had told Brick enough already for any ordinary man to stay away.

She halted at a turn of the trail that overlooked the desert. A full moon had risen—of a lovelier tint and texture than she had even seen—against the purple of an Egyptian night. It was of a pink pallor, of the delicacy of dreams—the tint of a dream-child sleeping——

"Hello, Ida!"

"You startled me, Brick!"

"Guess you must have been lost in the scenery, because I made plenty of noise comin' up. It's great, isn't it?" he added, taking his place beside her.

"You never make much noise," she said wearily.

He liked that, and laughed quietly.

She sensed something different in him. It wasn't that she caught the sweetish scent of alcohol in the thin, pure air. He often took a drink or two in the evening, and there hadn't been more than usual to-night.

"Ida——"

"Yes. Let's go down."

"Not for a minute, Ida. I have something to tell you——"

It might be news from New York—something from Navin, from——

"Ida——"

She had turned away in the stifling pain of breathlessness and intolerable suspense. And then, from behind, his arms closed round her. She turned icy cold. It had to come. This was the way her father took her. It might have been this which enabled her to stay still the first two or three seconds. After that, it became her purpose to hold still, keeping her back to him—eyes shut, holding, holding fast, against everything, to the living calm within the heart of her heart.

She felt his thick, powerful body. She felt his invincible arms, his face in her neck and hair, his whispers, his breath, the hurl of power that came from all his waiting. "If I can only live—if I can only live, until—" This was the purport of her silent prayer.

"Ida! Ida!" he was saying. "Ida! Ida!"

His lips were searching for hers, but slowly she turned her face farther and farther until he caught her chin and pulled it around. A moan came from her—the only sound through all. "If I can only——"

At last it bore in upon him against the red tides—the deathly resistless ice of her in his arms. For an added second he stood holding her in rigid fury—then wheeled her round in his arms and pushed her from him.

"Ida——"

"Yes. Yes," she said again in the quiet of great weariness. "And now I can tell you, since you have asked me. Oh, I am so very glad to tell you, since it will all be

over then, that I love Gary McMicken, that I have always loved Gary McMicken, that I shall always love Gary McMicken. And now you can go, having been told for once and for all. And you need not return to me, at any time, ever—for between us nothing—nothing remains to be said."

Within the same week after that, Dad Toller hurried up the trail from the town in the evening with a letter in his hand. It was from Haifa, which they found to be at the far end of the Mediterranean. It was directed to "Ben Toller, Crawley, Calif.," and contained but two lines of writing in pencil:

I'm working my way home the long way round, to begin all over again in Crawley. Tell Ida.

GARY.

Tell Ida!

GARY felt uncomfortable in Japan. On arriving in Nagasaki, he found he had five days to wait for a steamer to San Francisco, and his tension was high to get home by this time. There had been a sort of madness at first when he found himself at sea, but a slow summer passage to Spain in a freight ship had steadied that down. He worked with his hands, was presently eating and sleeping hard. This wasn't the mountains that he had been dying for, but there was a healing rhythm of its own for him from the sea. Gradually there reformed within him the great thought that all this belonged to his world—that the East didn't end in New York, that he was to keep on going.

At Cadiz he parted from his friend, the Irish boatswain whom he had encountered the last night in New York, and sunk into the forecastle of another freighter pushing on through the strait and across the Mediterranean with slow détours up and down. It was not until he touched Syria and heard the talk of Port Said being the next port of call—it was not, in fact, until he had actually nerved himself to write Dad Toller from Haifa that the actual tension began; then slow weeks that piled into months—two, almost three—when, from the waterfront at Nagasaki, still facing the east, he looked across the harbor, beyond the offing—one long passage more and the States again.

Five days to wait in Japan! They told him that an American transport from Manila and a British liner from Shanghai were both due in Nagasaki, *en route* for San Francisco, on the fifth morning. One of the two must carry him across, either for money or for the work of his hands. He had saved up enough to buy his passage if he met difficulty in working his way. No delay now, if he could help it, with the smell of the Pacific in his nostrils.

He wasn't breathing just right in Japan—a sinister feeling to him about the streets and faces, doubtless as a result of his work for Lamson in Los Angeles against the Japanese. He had made life rougher for a lot of them over there, especially that young law student, Yutaka Tahara.

Gary was striking back toward California sunlight, to begin again. A man might run away from one town after another, leaving a botch. They would let him keep on running in this man's world, but sooner or later he would be yanked back, to clean up and begin all over.

He wanted the California sunlight again. All other sunlights were treacherous and tainted, compared. Had he not been around? They boiled you up like a fever, and left you sweltering through the nights. That was the one deep, honest sky on the face of the earth; and when the sun went down, it was down for the day, and coolness stole in with the first touch of shadow. Most of all, he wanted that patch of sunlight on the floor of the cabin—that swept, scrubbed floor, with Ida cooking flapjacks and coffee.

Only one night more in Japan. Gary wasn't taking a drink. Once he had taken a cluster of drinks and left Los Angeles in reaction for New York; another time, after a night in Pell Street and vicinity, he had come to, finding himself before the mast for Europe. He was taking no chances now of passing the time with Oriental hootch and waking up in no-man's land or kingdom come. He ventured, however, to the waterfront that last night, which white men are warned not to do. There was a seaman's hotel back from the front where he had been putting up, but he was disinclined to go there early to toss in a room. The British liner was due at dawn, but sometime tonight the American transport would crawl into harbor. Out here on the water-front, a man could watch for her lights and breathe——

He had turned up his eyes toward a

sliding window, where a Japanese girl laughingly called to him. He remembered a figure bolting past—then a gasp of breath behind him, a mashing blow upon the head.

HE WOKE to partial consciousness hours afterward in a vague but smothery sort of dream. He did not realize where he was. Fellows from the L. A. editorial rooms mingled in his mind and had speech with citizens of Crawley in a fashion that could only be managed in delirium or dream. He kept looking for Ida Toller and her father, but when they didn't come, the fancy presently took him that he was in the Asiatic quarter of Los Angeles, held in torture by his enemies.

He heard the far-off whistle of a steamer in the harbor and thought it was a train, but it was that whistle which started him actually to remember. His head was clumsily bandaged, the hair matted at the edges. The crazy ache in his skull made thinking jerky and unreliable.

There was a lamp outside in a rickety sort of hallway. He lay on a pallet, which lay upon the matting. This was Nagasaki —waiting the passage home—the blow on the head. They had not taken off his coat and trousers.

Now he knew a slow-rising fear. He whimpered when the fear proved true—not a coin in his clothing—his savings gone. He had not bought his passage because he had hoped to work his way across. From the lower floor he heard voices of Japanese men and shy, half-frightened laughter of native girls.

Had he been picked up in the street and brought here until he should come to and be identified? Was this a water-front joint, in league with the man who had slugged him, or just a tea-house where he was being held by those who knew that even a looted American can summon aid from other white men in a far country? In any case, Gary became obsessed with the idea that he would be held past the time of the departure of both ships if he could not make a getaway unobserved. He crawled across the matting to the door. Twice he had to stop and wait for the grogginess to pass. As he listened, it came to him that the men below were leaving.

The voices had stopped. Sliding lower doors banged together. They were closing the house and shutting him in again. It must be long after midnight. Gary crawled back to his pallet and lay there, planning to make a break from this place, but he fell asleep, and gray light pressed against the paper windows when he opened his eyes.

The street below and the house itself were silent. He still had the fear if he called for help he would be detained. Right now, before full dawn, he must get out of here. He rose, carrying his boots, and went down the creaky stairs. Below, in the little vestibule, he sat on the boot-boy's bench. He had left his stockings or lost them on the way down. A blind beggar thumped past outside with his cane as Gary laced his boots on his bare feet. He waited a little before softly sliding back the wooden bars.

He was safely in the street. He couldn't go back to the seaman's lodging-house for his bag, because he owed for last night and couldn't pay. He was shivering because his body was damp and weak. He found himself in a side-street close to the harbor-front, but not at the place where the native boats landed from the steamers. Cool air from the water poured against him almost like the pressure of a tide, leaving him breathless and shaken. He would rouse one of the sampan coolies on the stones of the water-front. The coolie would not know he was broke until he reached the ship's ladder.

"Little old Japan is sure trying to get back at me," he muttered, pressing his hand to his head.

Shafts of sunlight were lifting out of the sea. Both ships were in, but he still had the water-front mainly to himself. His trouser-legs flapped against his bare ankles, and his cap was perched high on the bandage. He hadn't known when that bandage was put on. Whoever it was that carried him into the tea-house probably had reasons for not notifying the police.

He rubbed his hand across his chin as a man will who has important people to face and doesn't feel ready, but the sun was now humping its rim oversea, and Gary got a better clutch on his nerve.

"I'll get one of you to-day or croak," he said, with a glance at the two white strangers in the harbor. Their presence made Nagasaki look different.

A group of four American soldiers hurried down to the landing, and a sampan coolie

bobbed up from the waist of his craft and answered their summons. Gary stepped in front of the four.

"Let me ride out with you fellows," he said. "I took a beating last night as I strolled the water-front. I need to get out to the transport——"

The four were sober, and difficult to pry into, but one opened a trifle.

"You mean you haven't got a sampan ticket, bo?"

Gary nodded.

"They made a job of it when they got me down."

"Come on; get in," this soldier said.

"They won't let him aboard," one of the others growled, making room.

GARY shut his eyes as the small boat lurched across the harbor. At the ladder, he went up after the others. It appeared that the four were recently discharged from Luzon service and had waited over a ship in Japan. A petty officer and an infantry sergeant were at the rail. They glanced at the soldiers' orders for transportation. Gary presently stood before them, empty-handed, his eye glued to the cold Scotch stare of the petty officer.

"I was beaten up last night. They didn't leave a paper on me—or a sen," he said.

The four soldiers had disappeared.

"There's no coomin aboord here 'ithout the dokeyment." said the petty officer.

The face seemed dusted in gray-white. The morning sunlight had nothing to do with it.

"Couldn't I work a passage? I've had sailor's experience——"

"Ye've had exparience various, no doot; but ye'll no be havin' moor here th' day. Put yersel' doon the ladder——"

Gary glanced overside. The sampan coolie who had brought him out with the soldiers was hanging about for a return-fare.

"Hai, coolie!" the petty officer called. "Here's a passenger fer ye—a sockless passenger," he added, glancing down; and Gary, as he turned away, heard a soft nickering from the pale nose of the Scot.

He was at the foot of the ladder; the sampan slid under him like a hand of wrath. The white ship seemed pushed from him—took form before his eyes as the sampan receded—took form in full, even to the dipping American flag at her stern.

A grin was on his lips. He was being taken back toward the water-front.

A whistle sounded from farther out in the harbor. The British liner for America lay there in the sparkling morning light. Gary glanced ashore.

"You haven't got me yet," he muttered, reaching back to touch the bare foot of the poling Japanese, but the memory of Yutaka Tahara stuck fast in his brain.

"Take me to the Britisher," he said.

The Japanese obeyed. Gary made his way up the second ship's ladder. Passengers were already on deck, waiting for the tender to take them ashore for the forenoon. The fourth officer was on duty, and caught Gary's sleeve as he slipped past.

"What do you want, sir?"

"I'm a deck-hand looking for a berth——"

"We're full up. Stand aside."

Gary brushed against a smoky-eyed Chinese gentleman, who bowed an apology. A moment afterward, the fourth officer turned to him again.

"We make very few pick-ups on this side, except Chinese table-boys."

"I had passage-money, but last night they tunked me—ashore——"

"Sorry. Don't block the passage——"

Gary leaned against the rail. He was a bit groggy yet. This fourth officer wasn't a brute—busy just now, but not a brute.

"I've sailed all the way here from New York. Why, I'd peel potatoes to get across——"

"Sorry. Don't lose your sampan coolie——"

The smoky-eyed Chinese reached up to touch the officer's shoulder.

"Ex-cuse me," he said. "Ex-cuse me. I would like to inquire what iss it?"

"This man wants a passage—says he was hit over the head—money taken away."

"Passage to America?"

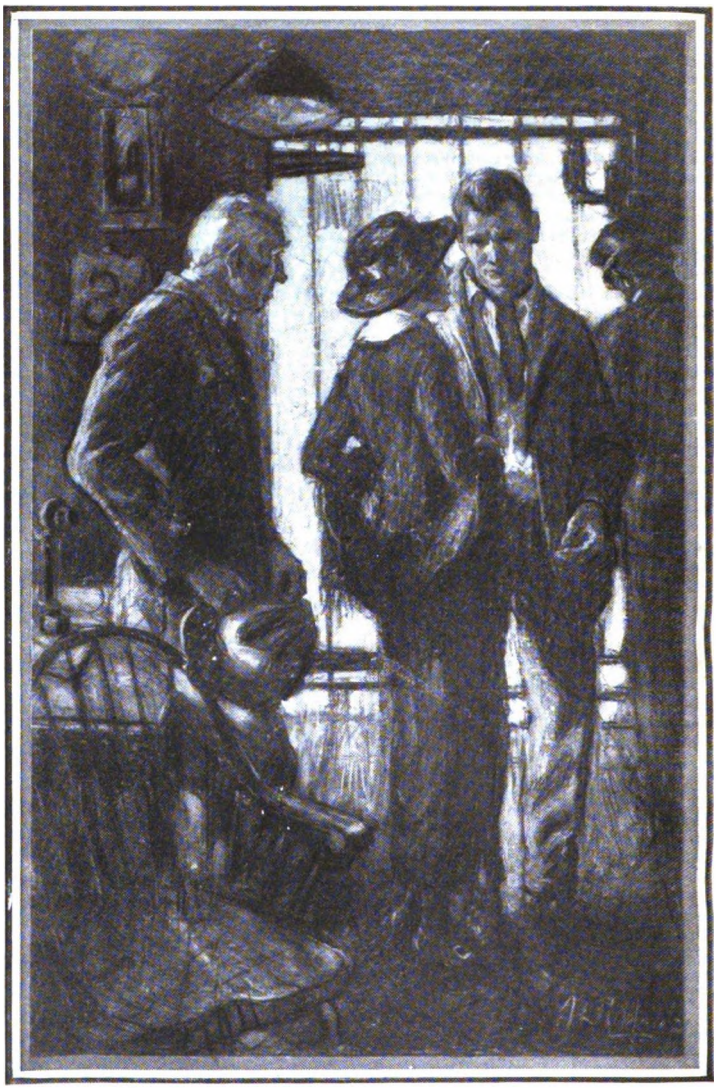
"Yes."

"Tell him I will pay. Yes; I will pay—sec-ond class—for this man. I was once so very anxious to get home from San Francis-co, and a 'Merican gentle-man helped me to do so, sec-ond class."

Gary held fast to the rail, but his head wabbled.

"Perhaps you would like some breakfast," said the smoky-eyed Chinese.

"Yes—but—yes; but toss a quarter down



"Jerry Calnon's going to live," Ida whispered. He was in a kind of perfumed air and lofty light. He went limp for a second—only Ida knew.

to that sampan coolie, will you? He didn't know he— He was trusting in God—or he wouldn't have brought me——"

GARY climbed into the upper bunk and lay there, panting a little, a smile on his lips. He was on the far side of the ship, facing the offing, upon which the morning danced in great light. He felt there was a joke under all this if he could only think it out. He had a second-class cabin all to himself—a little steel-walled cell, painted white, aft on the main-deck. Why had he crawled into the upper bunk, when he might just as well have tumbled in below? Oh, yes; his had been an upper bunk in the forecastle of his first freighter out of New York. Old Mr. Habit, he thought.

He heard the creaking of a winch. The liner was just up from Shanghai. Doubtless she was putting on crates of fresh vegetables —little hand-made radishes and lettuces from Japanese gardens. He smelled the galley—steamy with fish and rolls and coffee. And now he surveyed a certain phenomenon with cautious concentration. He didn't have to pile out and help with the crates at the winch; he didn't have to go to the galley and peel potatoes or scrub down decks. He need only lie here and heal and look out across the offing, and after that—the pulse of the engines, the thresh of seas overside—California!

A Chinaman was beating a gong in the passageway. The funny part of it was that Gary was one of those now called to the second-class dining-room. Several minutes were required to dope this out.

What was this joke under everything? It kept haunting him as he lay in the sun-warmed air from the open sea. After breakfast he came back to the upper berth to think it out some more. Finally he recalled an old saying of Dad Toller's about there being a big humor back of everything, underneath everything, if a man could only scrape down to it.

Drowsy Eyes popped into his mind at this point—or, rather, she strolled. It wasn't her way to move abruptly. Now Gary actually got a laugh out of Drowsy Eyes.

He lay and healed through the days—ate and slept and smoked and healed. The only sickness he knew after a day or two was a surge of hot pain when he thought of Ida Toller and Crawley. Here his fear hung on. He wanted them so much, he was afraid. Blur and confusion came over him, and he was weak. A thousand things might have happened——

On the tenth day out he met the Chinese passenger and began an explanation about having some money in the bank in New York and how soon he would pay back the loan. The Chinese listened respectfully and furnished his permanent address in America; but Gary suddenly realized that it would be more to the point to wait until he had some money to send on account before talking his head off.

In San Francisco he stepped down within two blocks of the Market Street ferry. Crawley and San Francisco had looked to belong to the same township from the distances of the Orient, a little preliminary matter of twelve hours' run by fast train to Los Angeles being a trifle to consider from across the world. He went to work as a pearl-diver in a San Francisco kitchen for shoes and clothes and his fare south, and reached the big southern town a month later in the dusk of a summer night.

There was but one step more to complete the big circle. That was the return to Crawley—his heart pumped hard at the thought of possible changes there. But, first, if he could work at reporting long enough to settle his debt with the Chinese and get a bit of a stake to go home with——

He did not go at once to the editorial rooms, but drifted down toward the Mexican Plaza—joyously observant, moving toward the lights at the foot of Sunset Boulevard, but inwardly stimulated, too—many old puzzles of life showing clear. Some one brushed roughly against him. Gary heard his name spoken with a laugh and joyous curse. Then he found himself in the midst of three men, their faces strangely familiar.

"Look who's here!" a voice said; then the three talked at once in a sort of savage gladness, but what Gary heard especially was this:

"Let's get him, fellows. Right now! Let's get this runt reporter—*right now!*" That was Calnon, an old playmate from Crawley. The other two were also from home.

They closed in. They didn't know; they couldn't know he wasn't the same man who

had written those articles against the miners. A leisurely fist jerked Gary's head sideways, speeded up his thoughts, tinctured them with red.

"I say—don't you fellows ever change the subject?" he gasped.

They were roughing him now, but they didn't hurry. That was one thing about Crawley. The town never hurried. Gary kept a laugh in his flaming anger. He saw Calnon's face now, and the rail of a basement barber shop at Calnon's back. The other two were at Gary's sides, but his concentration settled curiously upon Calnon, who was looking for a knock-out. He knew the lad's look—that slow gimlet stare and stiff smile.

Just at this moment Gary smelled the bay tree. No; it was the smell of bay rum up from the stairway of the basement barber shop. He was rocked by a blow from the side and a gouging rake of finger-nails, but still his concentration upon Calnon was not broken. His right hand started back of his hip. It swung clear. Gary put the meaning of the bay tree into that wallop and all the growth he had put on in circling the globe. It landed. The set pug look of Calnon's vanished—face, arms, shoulder, all. Over the iron railing backward he went, and plumped down on the stone steps leading to the barber shop.

There was a moment when the town of Crawley had held the walk, a moment afterward when the Mexico quarter and Los Angeles proper rushed in their delegates. Motors drew up; the basement barber shop emptied; a patrol was called, but what fascinated Gary most was the body that was being lifted from the sunken stone steps—the face all white below the eyes, even luminous from the street-light; the rest, a part of the dark. An ambulance came, a patrol-car. It was dawning upon Gary now that this was very much his business.

He was taken to police headquarters—old, familiar corridors to him, but none of the faces was the same. Standing at the desk, he heard the two Crawley men tell their story; the officer of the arrest told his. Calnon had been taken to the hospital. Presently he was walking to a cell beside the corridor officer, a huge person who looked down at him at intervals and quickly looked away, always cocking his head quizzically. The officer opened the block and finally a cell door, with the remark:

"Where do you keep it?"

"What?" said Gary.

"The wallop, young sir. From all I can learn so far, that was some wallop."

Gary was in a cell; all his world looked insane.

HE SAT sleepless through the night. The laugh had gone out of him—that laugh that had been earned so hard; the props went out from the corners of his mouth. And he was the same one who had fancied that the Asiatic side of the world had put it over on him forever by returning good for evil. He was the one who had become quite fascinated with the cleverness of some Plan and some Laugh back of the fleeting stabs of men. He saw it all now about the Chinese passenger giving him passage across the Pacific—just a flash in the pan—only an accident in a world of hideous accidents—preparation for this uglier trick to be played on him.

At midnight he heard the corridor officer, apparently just being relieved by another, explaining to the new man on shift:

"They say he was a reporter. I can't say about that, but he's sure got a wallop like a falling steeple, and maybe you can tell me, Henry, where he keeps it."

Gary sat through the hours after that with his face in his hands. It was as if there were lenses on the inner side of his eyeballs, made especially for him to see a face, the lower half faintly white and luminous, the upper part belonging to night and chaos—the face of an old playmate that looked upon him without anger, saying: "I may die. The chances are I'll die."

He heard it in actual human words in the corridor in the morning:

"Of course, the charges will be changed against him if this Calnon dies."

At noon, Lamson called.

"It looks dirty for you, Gary. This Calnon's got a bad fracture of the skull—may die. The other two say you assaulted them. What was it all about?"

Gary spoke out of a deep apathy.

"That old story of the miners I did for you—against the Crawley interests——"

"I'll see what I can do, if the Lord only lets this guy Calnon live. No bail's posted until the surgeons report the probable outcome."

"Bail or not's the same to me."

Lamson hastily changed the subject.

"So long! See you again soon. Keep your backles up, kid."

Everything was slowly turning to rottenness. Hours piled upon hours. The cell-block was lit with reddish, low-powered lamps. At four in the afternoon the first corridor officer returned to duty, approached the bars on the outside and stood looking long and earnestly at the prisoner. Then, with his thumb and first finger of his left hand, he slowly, very carefully lifted the cloth of his blue sleeve over the muscle of his right arm above the elbow and blew upon it long and reflectively.

"Some wallop, I'll say! Where did you get it, kid—honest, now?"

That was the long night of Gary's life. The thing that laced him hardest was the dirty irony of life—that he had been almost hoaxed into believing there was a Plan. And here he was home—this the home-coming; and he had thought of beginning all over, like they tell about in Sunday-school. Once he cried out against a face that continually haunted him, the same that had been lifted up—white below the eyes, dark above—from the steps of the basement shop: "Die, damn you; but quit talking about it!"

THE next morning he was led out of the cell to the visitors' room. Did this mean the indictment? Was it murder or manslaughter? And then, through the length of the passageway, he heard a slow voice with all the leisureliness of Crawley, and a gentleness of a quality that one citizen alone had added. The first thing Gary saw was the thin hair combed back—as if with a wet brush. Dad was holding his big black hat in his hands like a vestryman. A little to the side, Ida stood.

It happened queerly. He was somehow led between them—feeling little and shrunken and dark, having not a single word to say. He might have kept his sullen defiance, which was his vague idea, but for the sudden feeling of the mountains that they brought—altitudes and sun upon the pines and cedars and sun upon the cabin floor and the fresh-washed dress of this straight-eyed girl. It wasn't fair for them to come and find him here—all that he wanted on earth dangling before his eyes. It wasn't fair to shove this on him suddenly, when all the feeling he had ever known was rising in his throat in one seething ball. His hand had not lifted, but hers had found his and pressed it. His eyes stared away from her and away from dad, and his lips were locked to keep that seething ball in his throat from flying out—Ida Toller's sun-darkened face of calmness and cheer.

"Hello, Gary!" It was like a dream out of free spaces. Her hand was warm.

"Hello, Gary!" Ben Toller also said. "They're goin' to let us take you home in a few hours. We've been in town, but we didn't care to come to you until they'd take the bail-money. We thought you'd be glad to come home to Crawley with us and wait."

'Jerry Calnon's going to live," Ida whispered.

He was in a kind of perfumed air and lofty light—but Gary looked at the police captain all the time. He went limp for a second—only Ida knew. His elbow touched her hand that lifted to steady him. Yes; it was the scent of the altitudes—sun upon the pines and cedars.

He was back in the cell. He did not remember leaving them, but something of the mountains was with him still—some rest from the Crawley pines and hills and mines and springs and slopes. Now life broke slowly like a slow summer dawn upon him as upon an empty world. He had no thronging doubts or revolts or wants or hates or fears. It was as if all these had canceled each other, and Gary knew for the moment—a moment in which time stopped—that emptiness which alone can be filled. Then it was that he saw the Chinese gentleman on the liner's deck, not as a flash in the pan of a perverted world but the first coming-forward of order and beauty, and this coming of Ida and her father, the second return of good for evil, the second visible smile of the big humor which is back of and underneath all.

They had come again in the afternoon, and when Gary reached the anteroom where they waited, he heard himself say:

"I don't need bail, dad. I can see it through. It's all I can stand—honest it is—that you and Ida should come——"

"It's all done, Gary, the bail-money paid—no need of your stayin' further."

"Jerry Calnon's going to live," was whispered at his right.

"And we thought it would be better for you—waitin' in Crawley, than here."

"I'll stay here for the trial, dad. I've got something to wait with now."

"That's all right, son, but as things look now, there aren't going to be a trial. Young Calnon's come to his senses, and he never was a bad sort, if you remember. We've been talkin' it over and we've about decided this here's a Crawley affair—though started in Los Angeles. The case against you is going to be dropped, so far as L. A. is concerned. We see it this way: that we don't care to set about negotiatin' justice in a town the size of this."

In the evening they went round by the desert to the town and up the trail to the cabin—and Gary bathed and breathed.

DAD left them alone as he used to after supper in the cabin. They did up the dishes in silence and began to climb the ravine. They drank at the highest spring and found an old rounded rock in piny shadows.

"I thought you would be married," he said jerkily. "I didn't know who. I had to face it all the time. I saw how I had missed it—here in Crawley, over in Los Angeles, in New York. I wasn't true to you, any more than I was true to Crawley. I tried to see that Marian Whaley belonged. I went with her, but just as I might have told her something, a train whistled."

It seemed to him that he was slaying the loveliest thing—the only lovely thing—in him, but he went on doggedly:

"Then, in New York, I thought I had found the right one. I got to the point of telling her. I was telling her when she suddenly showed herself to me—I mean, I saw what she was, and not what I thought she was. I ran from the room—and woke up out in the Atlantic. Then I began to see you—as married. I had to face it. I had to see I deserved it. But, married or not, you never left me after that—closer and closer——"

His head rolled queerly to the side as he talked. Her hand moved out in the shadows and touched his close-cropped brow.

"It's the Gary I know, telling it straight—every word straight. That's the Gary I know. Even if it hurts at the time, the truth wears and wears brighter afterward."

"And now—" he said, the voice of one alone in a great place.

"And now—" she repeated, rising and looking around at the sky with arms lifted. "There's light left, Gary. And now—let's go to the bay tree!"

In the west was a young moon, very pale. The bay tree was still and scentless. They were in the great quiet, but he felt upon him still the filth of cities and forecastles and cells, the scars and lameness and great tiredness of the world he had girded in shame and haste and blind wanting all the miles. She was a part of this purity; he a part of that. She was the higher and inner, he of the outer and lower. He saw her bare throat and rounded breast, and a blue gleam from the young moon in her eyes. She was mother and child and maid, but more that called from ahead—that could not be reached, could only be pursued—never here and now, always on and on. The great tiredness in his limbs and brain and veins called to her. She would take it from him now. That was the world-old wonder.

"I failed here and I failed over in L. A.," he was saying. "Failed all the way round—" He clutched her arm with hard fingers. "And you waited, and you make good! What's the matter with me, Ida?"

"Nothing's the matter, Gary. There isn't any winning or losing. What I did here, I did for you—what you did down there—out there—you did for me. Listen——"

Up from the desert was heard the wail of an incoming train.

"You're home, but it's still going—the ship's still going——"

"You mean—sometime we'll tackle it all again—together?"

"Sometime when you are rested, Gary. Smell——"

She broke a twig from the bay tree and tore the leaf in her fingers. The secret that it had kept poured forth poignantly, like liquid fire—the essence of cleansing and healing in the volatile oil. And now her hands were empty and she took his face between them.

"You see, Gary, I know you—the boy you can never see, because you are he—but I see him always, because he is mine."

The Five Brass Cartridge-Cases

It All Happened Within Ten Minutes—and in Such a Way as to Give Rise to a Very Ingenious Theory and to Settle the Destinies of Several People. An Unusual Mystery Story

By Frederic Arnold Kummer

THERE is no doubt that in the events connected with the death of Mr. James Holton I played rather an important part, but I did not realize at the time that they were destined to change the whole course of my existence.

There were three of us involved in the affair—three, and Mr. Holton's colored butler. Those three were Floyd Holton, his nephew; Audrey Varian, his nurse, and myself. There was also, of course, Mr. Holton.

He had been ill for over a year—one of those cases of valvular heart-trouble in which death may come at any moment. When he retired from active business, which he did as soon as his health failed, he arranged to have me come down to the Long Island place as his secretary. The handling of his many investments kept me busy enough, but not too busy to think a great deal about Audrey Varian.

She had been with the old gentleman ever since the beginning of his illness, and he thought a great deal of her. There was nothing surprising in that, however, for so did I, and, by the same token, so did Floyd.

I did not like Floyd, which was perhaps natural in the circumstances, but I think that, even had Audrey not been involved, I should have disliked him anyhow. He was rather good-looking, in a heavy, florid way, but I felt that there was something shifty about him, something that always kept me on my guard. Still, Audrey appeared to like him, which made me think at times I must be wrong; it seemed incredible that she could like any one who wasn't everything they should be.

I exaggerated her good qualities, I suppose, as men usually do, with women they love. But it was hard for me to look at Audrey Varian and not think her an angel. Yet not precisely an angel, either. No woman could be that with such vivid coppery hair and such flagrantly bewitching eyes.

When she asked me, that afternoon, to drive over to the village and have a prescription refilled, I was glad of the opportunity to get away from the house for an hour. Mr. Holton had been unusually irascible all day—insisting that I call up his lawyer and have him down for a conference the next morning, cursing his nephew Floyd for something—I couldn't make out what—mumbling threats about changing his will—all that sort of thing. I paid no particular attention to it; the old gentleman was forever quarreling with somebody, and I knew that Floyd, being the only heir, would inherit his uncle's estate in the natural course of events. But his ill temper finally got on my nerves, and Audrey's request that I go to the village came as a very welcome interruption.

As she stood in the doorway, the sunlight through the porch vines flecking her lovely figure with a network of gold, it was all I could do to keep myself from taking her in my arms and kissing her. I never *had* kissed

her, but I think I should have done so then if Floyd Holton had not suddenly driven up in his car. It struck me that his nod was more than usually insolent, and I thought then, as I often had before, that some day I would give Floyd Holton the worst thrashing he had ever received in his life. I felt I could do it, too in spite of his twenty pounds more weight.

Just then the housekeeper hailed me and asked me to drive her to the station, so I set out.

I was gone about an hour, and when I returned I almost collided with Dr. Clarke, who dashed up in his roadster.

"What's the matter?" I asked, as we met on the veranda. "Is Mr. Holton worse?"

"Worse! He's shot!" the doctor exclaimed.

Lee, the colored butler, who let us in, seemed shaking with ague. Behind him were Floyd Holton and Audrey, pale and trembling, yet making desperate efforts to control their agitation.

"I got your message at the golf club," said the doctor, half out of breath. "Who shot him? Is he badly hurt?"

Floyd hesitated, but Audrey spoke at once.

"You'd better come right up," she said.

We followed her in silence.

THE door of Mr. Holton's room was open. Through it I saw his gaunt, massive frame propped up in bed by means of some pillows. There was a smear of blood beneath his right eye, and his head lolled forward in a way that was frightful to behold.

Dr. Clarke sprang to the side of the bed and grasped the old man's wrist.

"Why," he exclaimed, "he's dead! How did it happen?" He glanced from Miss Varian to Floyd.

"We don't know," Audrey replied, with a quick look at her companion. "Mr. Floyd and I were sitting on the front porch, talking, when we heard the shots. We had both been here, in this room, not fifteen minutes before. Mr. Floyd was talking to his uncle. I was clearing off the table, making it ready for Mr. Holton's supper-tray. Lee came up with the evening papers and then went down again. In a few moments Mr. Floyd went. I was the last to leave the room. I went down to the kitchen and spoke to the cook about the old gentleman's supper, and then I joined Mr. Floyd on the front porch. We sat there for some time, talking—it must have been at least ten minutes—and then we heard the shots—several of them, close together. They seemed to come from the floor above. We both ran into the house and up the stairs. When we came in, Mr. Holton was sitting up in bed, just as you see him now. There was no sign that any one had been in the room."

Dr. Clarke turned to Floyd Holton.

"If you were both on the front veranda," he said, "it is clear that no one could have entered the house and gone up the stairs without your knowing it."

"No one could have entered the house by the front door, certainly," young Holton replied; "but they might have gone up the stairs if they'd got in some other way."

"In that case," the doctor said, "they couldn't have come down again—at least, not by the front stairs—or you would have met them."

"Exactly." Floyd nodded. "But how about the windows—the back stairs?"

There were four windows in the room, two in the front, two at the side. All four were securely fastened.

"The murderer might have escaped down the rear stairs," young Holton went on. "We'd better talk to the cook." He sent Lee, the butler, to fetch her.

The woman came in, a bright-looking Irish girl. She seemed very much frightened.

"You heard the shots, Norah?" Floyd asked.

"Yes, sir. I was getting the sweetbreads for Mr. Holton's supper out of the ice-box, sir."

"Then the murderer did not escape by the rear staircase," I said, looking pointedly at young Floyd, "since the ice-box is in a cold pantry right at the foot of the stairs. You saw no one come down, did you?" I asked, turning to Norah.

"No, sir."

"Did your uncle have a revolver, Mr. Holton?" Dr. Clarke asked. "He may conceivably have committed suicide."

"Yes. He was very nervous about burglars. There it is, on the table at the head of his bed."

I picked up the revolver and slowly turned the cylinder. It was an old-fashioned thirty-eight-caliber self-cocker.

"Nothing in the suicide theory, doctor," I said. "All the chambers are filled."

"The bullet penetrated the right eyeball," Dr. Clarke went on, "and is now apparently lodged in the brain. Death must have been practically instantaneous. Have you sent for the police?"

"Yes," said Floyd. "I called them up immediately after I left you."

"What servants were in the house at the time of the shooting?"

"Only Norah, the cook, and Lee," Audrey replied. "Both the housekeeper and maid were off to-day."

"Where were you, Lee?" I asked, turning to the frightened negro. "Did you hear the shots?"

"In the butler's pantry, sir. I didn't hear no shots at all."

"Amazing!" Dr. Clarke burst out. "No one could have either entered or left the house, it seems, and yet a murder has been committed. Can you think of any motive?" he asked, turning to young Holton.

"None. My uncle had no enemies that I know of. For a year he's hardly seen any one."

"Was anything stolen?"

"I don't know," said Floyd, shaking his head; "but it seems unlikely. There wasn't anything to steal—not here. My uncle had no use for money while ill, and his watch and jewelry are locked in a safe down-stairs. There might have been a few dollars in his wallet." He drew open one of the bureau drawers, and, taking out a worn leather case, displayed its contents—a half-dozen bills.

I shivered as I heard this. Two days before, at Mr. Holton's request, I had gone to his safe-deposit box in town and withdrawn twenty-five thousand dollars in government bonds.

What the old gentleman wanted with them he did not tell me, but I saw him lock them in a drawer of his desk, and that drawer, I suddenly observed, now stood slightly open. I strolled over to the desk and glanced into the drawer. The envelope containing the bonds—a large one, of heavy blue linen—was gone.

I was about to speak when I looked up and caught Audrey's eye. I could not tell whether she had seen me glance into the desk drawer or not, but, with a choking feeling about my throat, I suddenly remembered that she had said she was the last person to leave the room. Could Floyd have revisited it while she was speaking to the cook? And they both declared that they were on the front porch when the shots were fired.

And yet I said nothing then about the bonds. I wanted a chance, first, to look into the matter a little further.

"How many shots did you say you heard?" I asked Floyd.

"I didn't say," he answered dryly, with that insolent look which he knew made me furious. "Four or five, I should think, in rapid succession."

WHILE the others were discussing the case in whispered tones, I went over to the wall behind the bed and examined it. There were four bullets embedded in the plaster at rather widely separated points. I could find no more.

"If five shots were fired," I said, "here are four of them in the wall. The fifth, I suppose, is now in Mr. Holton's brain."

They all examined the bullet-holes, but my discovery shed no new light on the tragedy. In fact, it only made matters worse.

"Rotten bad marksmanship," remarked the doctor, after he had completed his examination. Then he strode over to the fireplace, where a small fire was burning in an iron grate. "From the general direction of the shots, the person who did the shooting must have stood about here—not over four or five paces away. Five shots, and only one hit—incredible! Even a woman could hardly have missed at such short range."

I saw Audrey flush as he said this. She stood gazing out of the window, with Floyd beside her, talking to her in low tones. I would have liked to console her, too, for I realized the desperate situation she was in, but another and more immediate problem occupied my mind, having to do with those four bullets embedded in the plaster of the wall.

It did not take me long to find out that there was something queer about them. I took one of them by its base and gently pulled it out.

Then I pushed it back again and turned to Dr. Clarke.

"Doctor," I said, "do you notice anything

peculiar about these shots?" I indicated the holes in the wall.

The doctor peered at them through his glasses.

"No," he said. "Except rotten bad marksmanship."

"Doesn't it seem very remarkable to you," I went on, "that bullets from a thirty-eight-caliber revolver, fired at a distance of less than fifteen feet, should not have gone completely through the plaster and flattened themselves against the brick wall beneath?" I pointed to the protruding base of one of the bits of lead.

"By George!" said the doctor. "It does, indeed. And it's equally strange that a bullet entering a man's brain by way of the eyeball at that range did not penetrate the rear wall of the skull. I don't know what to make of it."

"There must be a reasonable explanation for it," I said, and went over to the fireplace. "Some one has burned a lot of papers in this grate since the fire was first made," I continued.

Audrey spoke quickly at this.

"I've already told you," she said, "that just before I left the room, I cleared off the old gentleman's table, making it ready for his supper-tray. He'd been going over a lot of letters, papers, boxes containing samples of various sorts—he'd been in the seed business, you know—and I suggested to him that I arrange the papers for him, but he ordered me, very impatiently, to throw them all in the fire. You remember?" She turned to Floyd, who nodded in corroboration. "I did as he told me, of course."

"Certainly. I saw you dump the stuff in the fire," he said. "I was just going out. A few moments later you joined me on the porch."

AT THAT moment the police came. Floyd and the others went down to meet them, leaving Dr. Clarke and myself in the room. The doctor resumed his examination of the dead man's wound. I got down on my knees and began, very carefully, to examine the mass of half-burned papers in the grate.

The drawn, almost frightened expression of Audrey's face haunted me. And I had discovered certain things that made me sick at heart during the past twenty minutes, and the missing package of bonds was only one of them. Of course I did not suspect Audrey—I loved her far too deeply for that—but I could not understand why she was defending Floyd Holton.

I knew that, when I told my story, matters would look rather black for both of them. The bonds were gone. Audrey had been the last person to leave the room. Old Mr. Holton had threatened to change his will after a quarrel with his nephew. As originally drawn, his will left everything to Floyd. It was a matter of village gossip that he and Audrey were in love with each other. The fact that they had been on the porch together, alone, when the shots were fired rested entirely on their own word. It is not surprising that I searched the ashes in the grate with meticulous care, for among them I hoped to find at least a partial solution of the mystery.

The police from the village were questioning Floyd and Audrey, going over the same ground we had already traveled, when I suddenly stood up and brushed the dust from my coat sleeve. I had found what I was looking for.

"If you'll take a look at these, Captain," I said quietly, "they may tell us something of importance."

"Huh?" He came over to where I was standing. "Look at what? I don't see anything."

Very carefully I brushed aside the flakes of half-burned paper and pointed to a row of objects lying on top of the coals.

"Do you know what those are?" I asked.

"Why—they look like cartridge-cases to me."

"Exactly. Five brass cartridge-cases. They were contained in a small cardboard box, which has burned away, although you can still see the faint outlines of it among the ashes. You notice, of course, that the cases are lying in a row, just as they were packed in the box, and that they are pointing toward the opposite side of the room. They must have been thrown in the fire by Miss Varian, along with a lot of other rubbish at Mr. Holton's orders. The heat of the fire, of course, exploded the shells, but the bullets did not travel with any great force, which is why they did no more than penetrate the plaster of the opposite wall. I remember the same thing happened once while I was in France. One man had a slight flesh-wound in the leg, nothing serious. I

found a couple of the bullets afterward, stuck in the side of the dugout. That's how I happened to figure out the way Mr. Holton was killed. The direction of the bullets was wild, of course, but, by some unfortunate accident, one of them happened to strike him in the eye. I guess the box of cartridges belonged to the sick man himself, as he had a revolver of the same caliber on the table beside his bed."

My little speech came like a bombshell. Dr. Clarke gave a snort of satisfaction. The officers beamed. Audrey and young Holton showed signs of relief. In fact, I was the only one in the party who doubted the solution of the matter which I had just given.

"Thanks, friend!" the detective from the village exclaimed. "That makes everything simple and easy. A clear case of accident."

Audrey came up to me and took my hand. "How can I ever, ever thank you?" she cried. "And to think it was my carelessness that caused his death!"

"I shouldn't worry about that if I were you," I told her. "Fate is a queer thing. You weren't to blame."

Floyd also offered a few words of thanks, but his manner was not cordial. I think he resented the hit I had apparently made with Audrey. And all the while I was puzzling my mind about two things. The first, of course, was the matter of the missing bonds. The second was more complex. In examining Mr. Holton's revolver, I had noticed that, while five of the cartridges were dull and green with age, as though they had been in the weapon a long time, the base of the sixth was bright and new, indicating that it had only recently been placed in the chamber. Of course this proved nothing, as Mr. Holton might have discharged the weapon and inserted a new cartridge himself.

I thought over this very carefully while we were waiting for the arrival of the coroner. Naturally, the new cartridge in the revolver meant little, taken by itself, but in connection with the theft of the bonds, the proposed change in Mr. Holton's will, it became significant. Who had known of the presence of the bonds in the house? I had told no one. Mr. Holton had locked them in the desk drawer himself and kept the keys beneath his pillow. Audrey, however, slept in the adjoining room, and was often called to the old gentleman's bedside during the night, to give him his medicine or fetch him a glass of water. On several occasions Lee, the butler, had been called in to sit up with the patient, so that Miss Varian's rest might not be broken. I had no reason to suspect Lee, any more than Audrey herself, but the possibility of guilt, at least, existed in either case.

I LEFT the house and went out on the lawn for a breath of air. A moment later, Dr. Clarke joined me.

"Don't go far," he said. "The coroner has telephoned that he will be here in a few minutes."

"Doctor," I said, "tell me something. If any one had murdered Mr. Holton by firing a shot pointblank into his right eye, it might explain certain things——"

"Don't be absurd," the doctor interrupted, with a laugh. "A shot from a thirty-eight-caliber revolver entering the eye-socket at that range would have gone clear through the rear wall of the skull as though it had been made of cardboard. Why try to make a mystery of what is only an unfortunate accident?"

His answer, logical as it was, did not satisfy me. I still had an unaccountable feeling that there was more to Mr. Holton's death than appeared on the surface.

When the coroner arrived, I was asked half a dozen questions of no importance and dismissed. Dr. Clarke's testimony, corroborated by that of the coroner's physician, the bullets sticking in the plaster of the wall, the exploded cartridge-cases in the fire, all pointed to death from accidental causes, and I was not surprised when, after a brief session, such a verdict was announced and the proceedings adjourned. But in spite of my every desire, I still felt, as I looked at Floyd Holton's dissipated face, that a murder and not an accident had been the cause of Mr. Holton's death.

I wandered about the house during the afternoon, hoping for a talk with Audrey, but she did not appear, and I knew she must be packing her things. I made up my mind, however, to see her before she left and tell her about the bonds. I should have gone straight to Floyd with the matter had it not been for his unfriendly attitude. So I continued to mull things over in my mind, without arriving at any really definite conclusions.

In the course of my wanderings I went once more to Mr. Holton's room—the old man's body had been removed to the library by the local undertaker—and tried my best to reconstruct the tragedy to correspond with the theory of a murder.

To start with, I put myself in the murderer's place. I knew the bonds were in the drawer and came to steal them. More, I knew that the old gentleman, if he lived until the following day, would alter his will to my disadvantage—I assumed, for the time being, that I was Floyd. To get the keys from beneath his pillow, open the desk drawer, take the bonds without his knowledge would be an impossibility. I decided, therefore, to kill him.

I seized his pistol and shot him, and then put the box of cartridges in the fire as a blind, first, however, inserting a new one in the chamber of the revolver to replace the one I had fired.

That was my theory, baldly stated. But what were its defects?

THE first weak link in my chain of reasoning, I saw at once, was this: If five cartridges had been placed in the fire, there would have been five bullets embedded in the opposite wall, and we had found but four. Yet this was no insurmountable objection. A man clever enough to commit such a murder could, without the least difficulty, have removed the bullet from one of the cartridges before placing the box in the fire. So far, I felt, my theory would hold.

Now came the second, and far more serious, objection. Dr. Clarke had told me that a shot fired pointblank into Mr. Holton's eye would have penetrated the rear wall of the skull unless the murderer, diabolically clever, had first reduced the charge in the cartridge he fired by removing the bullet and dumping out most of the powder, leaving just enough to drive the bullet through the eyeball into the brain. In fact, there were two very definite reasons why the murderer would *have* to do this—first, to make the death-dealing bullet appear to have been a spent one, like the others from the fire; second, to reduce the noise of the discharge. I knew very well that a cartridge containing but a pinch of powder could be discharged in a closed room with so little noise that the chances of the report being heard in other parts of the house were practically *nil*.

With the second objection to my theory removed, I felt satisfied that my chain of reasoning was complete. And yet I had no evidence to prove it. What had the murderer done with the unused bullet taken from one of the cartridges in the fire? What had he done with the spent shell removed from Mr. Holton's revolver after the murder?

These questions I could not answer.

My theories, complete as they seemed in detail, brought me no sense of satisfaction. In fact, they filled me with horror. If Floyd Holton had committed this murder in the way I had outlined it in my mind, *then Audrey must have been his accomplice!*

The uncertainty drove me frantic. I could not believe such a thing of Audrey—*would* not. I knew that we would both be leaving the house in the morning, I to look for a new position, Audrey to take another case. I determined to talk to her, settle this matter at once.

I found no opportunity, however, until after dinner. Floyd drove to the village about half-past eight for a conference with the undertaker. It was a beautiful autumn night, with the moon like a great ball of burnished silver. I suggested that we sit for a while on the stone bench that faced a little fountain at one end of the garden. Audrey got a wrap and joined me at once.

We sat there in the moonlight for many minutes in silence. Then, suddenly, I realized that she was crying.

"What is it, Audrey?" I asked, my theories forgotten. "Is anything wrong?"

"Nothing," she replied, turning to me with a strange look. "Nothing, except that I am sorry—very sorry to go away. I have been so happy here."

A flame of anger burned in me. Was she referring to her happiness with Floyd Holton?

"I've been happy here, too!" I burst out. "Happy because I have been near you, the one woman in the world I shall ever love." I said this defiantly enough, because I wanted her to know how I felt, hopeless as I felt it all to be.

What she did took my breath away, left me well-nigh speechless. For one moment she looked into my eyes as though she dared not believe what I had said, and then,

quite simply, she put her arms about my neck, and, laying her cheek against mine, began to cry again, very softly.

ALL my theories of Mr. Holton's death went up in smoke. In fact, I hardly thought of them in the sudden rush of happiness.

It was Audrey herself who brought the matter up at least an hour afterward.

"There is something, dear," she said, "that I think I ought to tell you. I—I'm not quite satisfied that—that Mr. Holton's death was an accident. And if it wasn't, I—I shouldn't feel that I had been responsible for it. As matters stand now, I—I really killed him."

Her words almost took my breath away.

"Why do you say that?" I demanded.

For answer, she put her hand in the pocket of her sweater and drew out two objects, which she laid in mine.

"I found these this afternoon," she said quietly. "They were lying in a flower-bed just beneath one of the windows of Mr. Holton's room. I should never have seen them if I hadn't gone there to pick some chrysanthemums."

I gazed at the two objects she had placed in my hand. One was a thirty-eight-caliber bullet, clearly unused. The other was a spent brass shell. They were the two missing links in my chain of evidence.

"I couldn't understand their being there," Audrey said. "Can you?"

I told her then everything I had thought—about Floyd Holton, about the will, the missing bonds. I did not mention the fact that my theories to some extent involved *her*, and Audrey, God bless her, did not mention it, either. Suddenly she turned to me.

"What time is it?" she asked.

"Half-past nine," I told her. "Why?"

"I have an idea," she said, and sprang to her feet. "I'm not going to tell you what it is until I have tested it. Hurry! We haven't much time." She led the way back to the house.

We found the butler still in the dining-room, setting the table for breakfast. Audrey spoke to him at once.

"Lee," she asked, "what time did Mr. Floyd say he would be back?"

"About ten o'clock, miss."

Audrey went to the writing-table in the hall and wrote a few lines.

"I want you to take this letter to the village at once, Lee," she said. "Put a special-delivery stamp on it. You can get one at the drug store. It is very important that it be delivered the first thing in the morning." She handed him the letter and some money. "And hurry back, Lee—won't you?" Her words were accompanied by a glance toward the closed door of the library, within which the body of Mr. Holton now lay.

The negro, who clearly shared her feelings, shivered slightly as he went out. We sat on the porch. Audrey watched him as he disappeared in the darkness. Then she rose and went to the door.

"Wait for me here a few moments, dear," she said quietly, although I could see that she was trembling from excitement. "If any one comes, please call me." She went into the house, leaving me alone with my happiness.

Ten minutes later she reappeared in the doorway. Her excitement had noticeably increased.

"What's the matter, Audrey?" I asked.

"I can't tell you now," she replied hastily. "There isn't time. I want you to call up the police station in the village and have them send a couple of men up here at once. They'd better come by motor-cycle, too. There isn't a moment to be lost."

I began to question her, but she would tell me nothing.

"Hurry—hurry!" she said, glancing at the clock. "You'll understand soon enough. Please!"

There was nothing to do but carry out her wishes. As I left the telephone and made my way back to the porch, I saw by the clock in the hall that it was ten minutes to ten. The butler had said that Floyd would return at ten o'clock. I began to wonder how he had found time, during the few moments that Audrey had left him to speak to the cook, to commit the murder and regain the porch before Audrey joined him. It was all very incomprehensible. I did not want to speak of it, but my curiosity got the better of me.

"Audrey," I said, "there's one thing about all this I don't understand. When you left Mr. Holton's room and went to speak to the cook, Floyd must have been on the front porch—unless"—a sudden thought came to me—"unless he didn't

go down-stairs. He might have been hiding just across the upper hall, and the moment you left the room——"

"Sh," Audrey whispered. "Here come the police."

A side-car motor-cycle swept up to the door and two men got out—the same two who had been at the house during the afternoon.

"What's the trouble here?" one of them asked.

Audrey went up to them, her face blazing with excitement.

"We have reason to believe that Mr. Holton was murdered after all," she said quickly, "but there isn't time to tell you why now. I want you to put your machine out of sight and then hide in the front hall, just inside the door. We will wait here on the porch. A man will enter the house in a few moments. I want you to arrest him."

The two policemen were as much mystified as I was, but Audrey would furnish no information.

"Sit down and smoke," she said to me. "Don't show the least excitement. Just act as though nothing had happened."

I WAITED for Floyd Holton to drive up, but he seemed a long time coming. The clock in the hall chimed the hour of ten. Lee, who had walked to the village, presently returned, paused for a moment to inform us he had posted the letter, and then turned toward the path at the side of the house that led to the servants' entrance. Audrey, however, called to him.

"Lee," she said, in her cool, sweet voice, "I think you had better light the lamps in the hall. We're going in presently."

I sat dumfounded as the man ascended the veranda steps and entered the front door. The hall was quite dark except for a faint glow that came from a light on the stairs. Suddenly we heard a shout, a scream of rage, followed by curses, the sound of a fierce struggle. I sprang to the doorway and switched on the lights. Lee, the butler, lay on the floor, his arms and legs pinioned by the two policemen. In one of his hands, outstretched in helpless rage, glittered a wicked-looking razor. I took it from him, and a moment later he was securely handcuffed.

Then Floyd Holton drove up.

Audrey explained everything as we stood about the big table in the hall. As soon as I had outlined to her my theory of how old Mr. Holton had been murdered, she at once thought of Lee. She knew that the colored man had sat up with Mr. Holton the night before, and it was then, we afterward found out, that he had learned about the bonds in the locked drawer of the desk. Mr. Holton had talked to him during the night, and explained that he meant to give the bonds to Audrey, in appreciation of the devoted way in which she had cared for him during his illness.

There was, however, no way in which the negro could take them at the time, Mr. Holton being awake, but during the hours he sat beside the sick man's bed, the butler had worked out his fiendish plot.

Audrey, who suspected him as soon as she heard my story, sent him off to the village with a fake letter, and having thus gotten him out of the way, left me on the porch and went to his room. A brief search resulted in her discovery of the stolen bonds beneath the mattress of his bed. Then she told me to telephone for the police.

The butler confessed the next day. He had crept up the front stairs to the sick man's room while Floyd and Audrey were talking on the porch, and shot him with a cartridge having a reduced charge, as I had already surmised. The report had been so slight as to be inaudible on the floor below. He had then taken the bonds and dropped the spent shell and the unused bullet out of the window into the flower-bed beneath. Having replaced the used shell in Mr. Holton's revolver with a new one, he had put the box containing the remaining cartridges in the fire, along with the other boxes and papers he had heard Mr. Holton order thrown there. To retrace his steps down the front stairs to his pantry was an easy matter. It was many minutes later, he said, before the heat of the coals exploded the shells and brought Audrey and Floyd Holton to the room.

Floyd has never forgiven me, I think, for taking Audrey away from him, for he was head over heels in love with her, but he proved himself a good loser by sending us a perfectly corking wedding-present. As for Dr. Clarke, he swears she is even a better detective than she is a trained nurse; but, of course, she's simply perfect as a wife, so it really doesn't matter.

If You Enjoy Adventure, You'll Find It Here

The Witch *of* Gondar

Sevier Has a Narrow Escape from the Clutches of El Fetnah, and Gets a Glimpse of His Friend Cohusac Where Least He Expects to See Him

By William Ashley Anderson

Illustrations by J. M. Clement

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

SEVIER looked about at the group in the British legation, smiling, chatting, enjoying the beauties of the place. Plainly even those who shared his knowledge were not alarmed. Here was Addis Abeba, the capital of Abyssinia, a stronghold of safety and peace. Yet actually, as Sevier knew, it might have stood on the slope of a volcano.

The road from the north was open, and down it the Negus Mikail, father of the deposed Lidj Yassou, the apostate ruler, was storming with fifty thousand warriors who had already destroyed Lul Seged and his little army. The railway to the coast was cut. Not only Addis Abeba but every European in the city was in deadly peril—and that included Barbara Whittington, whose father, political resident at Aden, with all his knowledge, had been fool enough to let her visit Abyssina at such a time.

Sevier knew more of the truth than any man in the legation. Since he had left Aden, he had been involved in the mesh of the great conspiracy, hatched by the fanatical Senussi, to launch a new holy war, worse—far worse—than the Mahdi's. He had seen the Witch of Gondar herself, the gloriously beautiful woman, the enchantress who had so nearly lured him to destruction at Aden. He had, moved by some impulse he was afraid to analyze, saved her at the risk of his own life when the terrible old eunuch, Maukara, had beaten her down after her attempt to corrupt him.

He had been in Harrar during that grim massacre, ordered by Maukara himself, that had driven the Mussulman Somalis out—those who were left. He had pursued the hunchback, who, with the Witch of Gondar, was at the heart of the Mussulman intrigue. And he knew what effect upon the whole war these obscure movements in Abyssinia might have.

The witch had corrupted Lidj Yassou, degenerate heir of Menilek the Great. His own nobles had deposed him; the Abyssinian primate had excommunicated him. But his father had the strength he lacked; it was he, the Negus Mikael, who was advancing now to challenge the deposition of his son, to seek to overturn the decision to maintain the Christian faith in Abyssinia. Should he succeed, an Abyssinian army would raid the Sudan and descend into Egypt. Smuts, in German East Africa, might have to fight a new foe for his life.

The odds against the Allies were great. They had Sevier himself, an American, son of an adventurer who had known Gordon

and fought against the Mahdi; a mysterious French agent who had, from his place in the hostile councils, brought the word of Mikael's plans. What else? The bravery and devotion of the Abyssinian *rases*.

The British minister was inclined to deprecate the immediacy of the danger. Monsieur Castigny, the French minister, on the other hand, believed the city might fall at any hour. Sevier was convinced that if there were any foundation for the rumor, the fate of all of them individually, and the issue of the war generally, might in all likelihood be decided within a week.

Making his excuses unobtrusively and escaping from the room in company with the French minister, he mounted and made away over the dark road, escorted by a couple of Sikh lancers whom he dismissed as they entered the long, dark lane that led to the entrance of the market-town. Here he was almost unhorsed.

His mount shied wildly at shadows swaying in the trees bending above them. The next moment the horse was seized roughly by the bridle, rifle-muzzles were pressed against his body, and he found himself a prisoner in the hands of a guard flung out by Dedjatch Maukara. It might have gone badly with him if he had not persuaded his captors to take him immediately before the *dedjatch* in person.

He found Maukara surrounded by silent, intent *rases*, delivering reports, taking orders, conversing earnestly but quietly among themselves. The courtyard was seething with nervous, sweating horses, and impatient *shums*, squires and excited slaves. As soon as Sevier was brought before him, the *dedjatch* dismissed the guard with a gesture and clasped the American's hand with an air of indifferent abstraction.

He had time only for a word of greeting, then passed him on to one of his aides for whatever information he might desire. As Sevier was turning away, however, the *dedjatch* unexpectedly twitched him by the shoulder and, bending slightly forward, like a dark, wavering shadow, with his expressionless eyes fixed upon Sevier, breathed,

"The Witch of Gondar is again the lightning in the storm!" Sevier bore the look without altering his expression, though he felt an unaccountable flutter within him. "And," added the *dedjatch* pointedly, "she is somewhere within a day's ride. Of that I am sure. This time, if my hand touches her, there will be no escape."

"*Insh'allah!*" replied Sevier grimly, turning away. "If it pleases God!"

IN THE confusion of rumors and reports, he learned that the British minister's information was absolutely correct.

The invaders, with that amazing rapidity of movement which Asiatic and African armies are sometimes capable of maintaining without elaborate transport, had swept down from Dessie, leaving death, ashes and desolation behind. The land of the Menzes was devastated. Each village was surrounded and the inhabitants put to the sword. Insatiable with success, swelling rapidly in numbers, the loosely organized yet firmly controlled army seemed to constitute an irresistible force. There were no columns, no rigid units, no inflexible lines.

The cause of the *negus* was not, ostensibly, the cause of Islam, however.

Blinded by his injured pride, furious to avenge the insult done his own blood by the casting-out of his worthless son, he seemed to care for nothing but power to crush those who had raised a hand against his family. Yet the fury of his rage did not cause him to ignore the necessity of reconciling the inimical elements of Christianity and Islam.

He insolently raised up another *abouna* as patriarch of the Church, claiming the primacy of Abyssinia and disavowing the authority of Abouna Matheos, the consecrated primate at Addis Abeba who had excommunicated Lidj Yassou.

By this means, the *negus* had secured a great following of Christians. He had as allies, however, a small army of Mussulmans. Ironically enough, he placed in command of his right wing Ras Gebri-Christos, who bore the name of the Messiah; while the left wing, commanded by Ras Omar, a Mussulman, was made up of followers of Islam. He himself, bearing the title of "*negus negusti*," king of kings, commanded in the center as the chief of this extraordinary trinity.

The report that Gebri-Christos commanded the right wing of the *negus's* invaders struck Sevier as a startling and curious circumstances, and he communicated it to Castigny, with observations for the benefit of the French agent.

This *ras*, it appeared, had at one time been the son-in-law of the Negus Mikael

and the recipient of rich favors from him, but had later divorced the daughter with the casualness Abyssinians observe in these matters. The infuriated *negus* thereupon had stripped him of all he had formerly bestowed upon him. Nevertheless, his services were retained because of his skill and courage as a warrior.

The fact that, despite his history, he was permitted to command the right wing, under the *negus*, seemed, therefore, of peculiar significance to Sevier.

He knew that Ras Apte Georgios, minister of War, aided by the Grand Council, was making every effort to assemble an army in time to meet the invaders before they reached Addis Abeba. He learned, also, that they had fixed upon the line of defense at a point near the village of Koromasch, about thirty-five miles north of the Shoan capital.

In the course of a ride in the cool freshness of the next morning, he found that the *dedjatch* had taken complete charge of the capital and with his usual ruthless inflexibility was keeping it in order. All roads entering the city were being strictly guarded.

DURING the next days, the Shoan army began rapidly to materialize.

The new danger unfortunately had risen with such shocking abruptness that there had not been sufficient time to assemble the quotas' fighting forces.

Ras Haile Georgios, governor of Damot and Godjam, who was reckoned upon for a comparatively large army, appeared with hardly a thousand warriors. Nevertheless, these small groups appearing from all directions in tens and scores and larger numbers, streaming up the valleys, began to swell the force collecting at Koromasch.

Some troop trains eventually got through from Dire Daoua, and these brought seven or eight thousand warriors, many of whom were still flushed with the brief successful combat against the Somalis. It began to appear that a fighting army might at last be thrown across the front of the Negus Mikael's invaders that could perhaps force him to parley or, at least, by a desperate resistance, give the Shoans time to bring up a second army.

Sevier had about decided to join Ras Taffari, the regent, who had taken command of the supports at Koromasch, and offer him his services in the field when a courier arrived from the British legation with a message urging him to come out at once.

He found Beveridge and Castigny in the office, studying maps silently and intently. The French minister explained that the night before, while returning from the Italian legation, he had been hailed by an Arab on horseback, who had identified himself as the agent whom he had supposed was working in from Eritrea.

"He explained," said Castigny, "that it was impossible for him to accompany me to the house or even to be recognized in my company, because he was known to be a European, though firmly believed to be loyal to Islam because of his attachment to a Mussulman woman. Discovery would certainly mean death. Is that clear?"

"Sufficiently," said Sevier. "Were you fully satisfied with his credentials?"

"*M'sieu*, have no doubt whatever about that. He seemed extremely nervous—not with fear, but indicating, I should say, a highly reckless nature."

"I can well imagine it."

"Very well. Then listen. He told me hurriedly that he had managed to get his ear where it was not supposed to listen. He had become one of a cabal—an insignificant one, to be sure, yet trusted enough to be permitted to hear—a cabal working against the Christian Shoans, mostly Mussulmans who welcome the *negus's* assistance in overthrowing Abyssinia.

"He declares a battle at Koromasch or Silti, which is near Koromasch, where the invaders have halted, is inevitable. He can see no hope now but in a battle. Therefore, you understand, he has concentrated all his efforts on that one point. And he has discovered this: The Negus Mikael intends to repeat the tactics of Ankober on a larger scale. He will envelope both flanks of the Shoan army and turn them in on the center."

"The horns of the Zulu *impi*?" suggested Beveridge.

"With this difference: the horns of the *impi* leave the center only a screen, the object being to force the enemy to fall back to save his communications. Am I right?"

"Quite."

"Well, the plan of the *negus* is to begin the envelopment, but at the same time to attack heavily in the center. In other

words, he will turn the Shoan flanks in on the center while attacking so furiously in the center itself that no one can withdraw——"

"Ah!" murmured Sevier appreciatively.

"Well, you have not heard all. Small groups of Mussulmans and Shoan traitors are to scatter and mingle among the warriors on the Shoans' left flank—and at the critical moment they are to fill it with panic by cries of treachery and so forth. You comprehend? Look!" He took a piece of paper and a pencil and sketched an outline as he spoke. "The Negus Mikael's line of battle has, on the right flank, Ras Gebri-Christos, Christian; in the center, the Negus Mikael himself, half Christian, half Mussulman, with Ras Tadela, his lieutenant, leading the advance; and on the left, Ras Omar, the Mussulman. There is as much the art of diplomacy in the arrangement as there is the art of war. Do you not see how skilfully he reaches and satisfies the prejudices of both Christian and Mussulman, and reconciles the two inimical forces in his own personality? You see, M'sieu Sevier, your deductions concerning Gebri-Christos were correct. But the Negus Mikael has made this disposition at a sacrifice.

"He knows and appreciates that his right flank, under his indifferent son-in-law, is weak, yet he cannot remove Gebri-Christos from command without risking the loss of a large part of his army. At the same time, he has not sufficient warriors to reenforce him, since he will need all his strength to attack the center. What can he do?"

Fascinated by the Frenchman's lucid exposition of the situation, Sevier and Beveridge listened in attentive silence.

"There remains," he concluded, "only the possibility of weakening the opposing wing by means of treachery. That is the hypothesis, then, upon which our agent is working."

"This agent," said Sevier slowly, "is evidently a most extraordinary man. If he is certain of these dispositions, it is an amazing stroke. It's absolutely clear we've got to overthrow Gebri-Christos."

"*M'sieu*," said Castigny blandly, "our agent has already left for the battle-field, I believe, with the intention of reaching the Negus Mikael's lines and seeking out Gebri-Christos himself. He says he will make a desperate attempt to weaken the Christian *ras's* command, and asks us to bear this in mind and do our best to cooperate——"

Sevier drew himself up with an exclamation. The British minister, in a burst of enthusiasm, said,

"By Jove, that fellow deserves something!"

"He told me," said Castigny, looking defiantly through his glasses, "that he will undoubtedly die in that battle, as he had expected to die in France. He had no time to consider honors. The battle is yet to be fought, in any event."

For weeks, every faculty of Sevier's had been alert, his body tensed for action, his mind keenly sensitive to every fresh impression. But he had no means of employing his suppressed energy. The unexpected and illuminating report of the mysterious Frenchman had coordinated all his scattered knowledge of the situation and pointed to a general solution. At the same time, it determined his own line of conduct.

He was of no further use in Addis Abeba. He resolved, therefore, to follow the Frenchman's lead to the battle-field at Silti.

AS THE small group of intent men, still engrossed with the subject that had brought them together, left the office a few minutes later and made their way down the long corridor that led to the living-quarters of the legation, they suddenly found themselves in the midst of the ladies just returning from the gardens, where they had been gathering armfuls of wonderful flowers.

Barbara Whittington, offering a remarkable contrast to the stern aspects of life that had been occupying Sevier's thoughts, presented a picture of serene loveliness that almost took his breath away. Fair, sparkling with delicate vivacity, her face flushed, her blue eyes wide and flashing, a pleasant disorder about her hair that had a special and unusual allure, her bared slim forearms pressing a great mass of carnations and ferns against her bosom and her lips parted from her teeth in a startled, joyous smile, she conveyed in one swift glance an impression that brought Sevier to a startled halt.

The other men, after a few words of greeting, continued to walk on. The ladies insisted on placing their flowers.

"We are working too hard to talk to you, Mr. Sevier," said Miss Whittington, with a laugh; "but we want you to ride with us

this afternoon. Sir Arthur has promised to show us some old ruins."

"And the warriors marching northward," said Mrs. Beveridge.

"Oh, yes," said Barbara. "With all these flowers about me, I had almost forgot they were fighting."

"There are times," said Sevier unpremeditatedly, "when all of us forget there is such a thing as fighting."

IT WAS a merry party, full of life and gaiety. The high, rolling hills were green and springy, the sky clear and deeply blue, and a cool wind whipped across the open meadows. The horses danced like lambs; the eyes of the riders sparkled; their cheeks flushed, and the blood sang in their veins. Everywhere were fields of golden mustard, and once they galloped through a meadow thick with wild sweet peas.

In the exhilaration of the ride, Sevier easily forgot the cares that had been obsessing him. The fact that he was about to enter a deadly conflict took nothing from the delight of the afternoon's ride and his serene pleasure in the companionship of Miss Whittington.

On his return, however, catching sight of Fritz Schiedel in the distance, riding with an armed attendant, he was thrown into doubt. Pulling his horse aside, he suggested that the others continue on so that he could have a word alone with the German.

He drew up on the crest of a high, rolling meadow from which he could see the dusty gray ribbon of the Entoto road below him, already vague with the long shadows of evening filling the valleys like a rising dusky flood. Small bodies of men on horse and afoot were scattering over the hills, traveling northward along the crests in order to take advantage of the last shreds of light.

Unconsciously, Sevier's attention became diverted by these groups. The significance of this movement of warriors along the hills began to press upon him.

His interest became centered upon one group he discovered traveling rapidly through the gathering shadows along the Entoto road. The peculiar actions of the horsemen perplexed him. Instead of continuing a steady, unbroken advance, they appeared to travel at a swift canter, but only while in the shadows, crossing the open patches, still lighted by the fading brightness of twilight, with an appearance of indifference.

As he studied this group more attentively, suddenly every thought of Fritz Schiedel and his friends from the legation fled from his mind. At that distance, he believed that among the horsemen he had at last discovered the Arab hunchback.

Without an instant's hesitation, Sevier urged his horse down the slope, hardly pausing to shout back at Schiedel, who, in turn, halted, hesitated, turned his horse doubtfully as though perplexed by Sevier's movements. This was still his attitude when Sevier lost sight of him.

In another moment he reached the road and was galloping straight for the Abyssinians. At the recklessness of his approach they scattered on the hillsides and vanished in the darkening *dongas*, as zebras scatter before the rush of a lion. Only one horseman kept the trail.

The hunchback seemed to have sensed danger at the first sight of the European. Riding straight and lightly as an Arab rides, like a figure in an ancient frieze, with the horse stretched to its fullest extent with belly close to the ground, his garments flowed in the wind and the long, light lute flapped loosely on his back. The expression on the pallid countenance was strangely alert, curious, unafraid as he fled northward.

The hoofs of his horse seemed hardly to touch the soft earth of the trail, sweeping round the bends, dipping in the hollows, soaring up the slopes and flying over the narrow *dongas* with the careless speed that characterizes the flight of an antelope confident in the freedom of the open veld.

They had not traversed half a mile when Sevier realized that further pursuit was hopeless. Bitter rage surged over him. Halting his horse, he relieved his mind in a burst of heartfelt profanity. Then, disgustedly, he drew his revolver and emptied the chamber in the hope of at least crippling the Arab's horse.

A faint mocking shout came echoing back.

But as he sat in the gloom, moodily watching the disappearing horseman, his hand hanging by his side, breathing heavily, this raucous yell became the broken tones of a familiar song shouted in the dark. Two hands seemed to squeeze his heart as,

despite the blood pounding in his ears, he recognized the words:

Oh! . . . . . rendra mon Hélène,
. . la montagne . . . grand chêne?
Leur souvenir . . . . . .
Ma peine.
Mon pays . . . . . .
Toujours!

Sevier, stupefied by the revelation of these words, could only murmur over and over again:

"My God! My God, it's Cohusac! Cohusac!"

At the same instant his free hand was seized.

He was struck a blow over the shoulders by a long staff, and, the frightened horse whirling from under him, was thrown heavily into a soft ditch, where he struggled in the grasp of determined men.

When the capture was complete, Sevier was thrust into the deeper shadow of some bushes near a clump of eucalyptus trees.

They enmeshed him in strips of cotton girdling, leaving his legs free of bonds but pinioned under the weight of two negro slaves.

The warriors stood somewhat apart, discussing how they would dispose of him. They spoke in Amharic, ignoring Sevier's efforts to talk to them in Arabic. He realized, however, that they were apparently waiting the arrival of their chieftain before disposing of him.

Scattered at his approach, not from fear but from judgment, they had converged against him with speed and determination. Impatient, they now cast uncertain, exasperated glances at him, and seemed to study with increasing nervousness the groups of warriors on the upland slopes hurrying northward and now beginning to sink into the obscurity of approaching night.

A jackal yelped in a near-by *donga*. Ravens uttered their raucous cries as they gathered with heavy awkwardness in the rustling tree-tops above. Sevier, gazing upward at the plumes of eucalyptus, like Lombardy poplars splashed in India ink against the flat blue sky of early night, with the white stars flashing forth, began to experience a strange, dreamlike apathy. The horses pawing the soft turf made little sound, and the noise of the ravens, the incomprehensible murmur of the Amharic syllables, the soughing of the wind through the trees, all united with the heavy perfumes of the hills, seemed the very stuff of which beautiful though sinister dreams are made.

The black trees particularly suggested horror to him, because when last his attention had been drawn to them, it had been at the hour when, stretched at a full gallop to reach town before Maukara's guards would forbid an entrance, his horse, with a startled side leap, had almost thrown him, and, looking up at the black trees bordering the rutted lane to discover the cause of the animal's fright, he saw, rasping unpleasantly against the straight boles, stirred by the gentle evening breeze, the bodies of several malefactors, each hung to a separate tree, heads bowed on chests, feet dangling, with toes turned in. It had been like a dark woodcut illustrating one of Laboulaye's fairy-tales, and brought flooding back with it the not entirely unpleasant thrill of passing horror with which a Swiss nurse had once enthralled him.

NOW the mood was on him again. Unconsciously he restrained his breathing as though feeling that some culminating shock would shortly terminate the dream. A phantasmagoria of the rapid events of the past six months wove colorful imaginings in his dazed head. It seemed utterly absurd to think that he had parted from Miss Whittington and her gay companions less than half an hour ago. The idea filled him with an hysterical desire to laugh, not, however, a laugh of amusement, but one of somewhat frightened helplessness.

Lifting his head with an effort from the turf on which he had been thrown, ignoring the black slaves who squatted on his legs, pinning them to the ground as effectively as the marble limbs of the Prince of the Black Isle, he tried to study in detail the black-and-white figures of his captors standing by their horses or moving uncertainly up and down the trail. Several were cautiously ranging the hillsides on horseback. Except for these meager impressions, however, he could learn nothing in the swiftly settling dark. He fell back again and began to consider his situation more coherently.

He did not seriously believe they would kill him. In fact, he was not greatly concerned over his safety, feeling sure that, if his captors brought him to their *ras*, he would obtain his release as soon as he

explained the reason for his attack upon the hunchback. For the present, it was useless to attempt an explanation to men who only spoke Amharic. The worst he had to fear was that they might abandon him in the open, when he might become as easy prey for some nocturnal beast.

All at once he remembered Schiedel, and wondered if the German had thought it worth while to follow him. This brought back, with amazement, horror and a numb feeling of intense nausea, the recollection that the hunchback was Cohusac.

Doubts, questions, tormenting thoughts flooded his staggered imagination. Step by step he swiftly traced the hunchback's activities, seeing no longer the Arab hunchback but the cripple, Cohusac. He realized that no cripple could ride as Cohusac had ridden. When this became clear, he understood how the Frenchman had scaled the wall of Abu Khalil's house in Aden and survived the subsequent fall without injury. For one hopeful moment he believed Cohusac was the mysterious agent to whom Castigny had spoken; but this was sufficiently refuted by the memory of Cohusac's treachery on the housetop, his pursuit of Sevier in disguise, the ambuscade on the road to Harrar and, above all, his base and traitorous association with El Fetnah, The Storm.

The utter vileness of the young Frenchman, for whom he had entertained a deep affection, all at once overcame Sevier. Twisting his body, he sank his face in the crook of his arm and, biting into the cloth to control his feelings, groaned. Then he remembered Cohusac looking at him furtively from under his bowed head!

THE two slaves scrambled to their feet and, seizing him by the shoulders, compelled him to stand up.

His captors were approaching once more, jabbering excitedly. He noted with disgust that they were now speaking fluently in Arabic. In their midst he was able to perceive a strange, short figure enveloped entirely in black. By the attitude of his captors, he knew immediately that this was the expected chieftain. Night had now fallen completely, and Sevier could make out no detail of the chieftain's features. He could only tell that he was small, quiet and restrained.

The chieftain spoke in a low voice, and a match suddenly flared in front of Sevier's eyes. The next instant there were two simultaneous ejaculations in Arabic:

"*Wal Nasrani!*"

"*El Fetnah!*"

In the brief flicker of yellow light, Sevier, the Christian, and El Fetnah, The Storm, had looked once more into each other's eyes.

His heart had bounded with unmistakable delight at the sight of her. Instantly, however, he associated Cohusac with her, and the thought caused his heart to contract again with a sensation of rage and pain.

For the inscrutable El Fetnah there appeared to be no such conflict of emotions. Her countenance was veiled in darkness. At first she had recoiled a step. But then, swiftly bending forward, with the fury of a woman who has in her power at last the one who has persistently and casually thrust her aside, making a bauble of her charms and a mockery of all her hopes and plans, she began falteringly to upbraid him. Her rage fed upon her words. At last, almost choking with fury, she stammered,

"Take the obscene dog and hang him to a tree!"

Several of her attendants sprang forward, whipping out their simitars murderously.

"No!" she cried sharply. "No credit for spilled blood! Throw a rope round his neck and strangle him!"

They rushed in. Sevier, stunned, amazed, overcome at the unexpectedness of this turn of affairs, tensed himself instinctively for the shock, though his mind was not yet prepared to realize in its full enormity that he was about to be strangled to death. He was still stupefied by the sense of unreality.

But rope was quickly produced, and an attempt was made to place it about his neck.

A wave of suffocating and uncontrollable terror swept him as the black warriors fell upon him silently. With sharpened vision, he caught a brief glimpse of El Fetnah looking at him with burning eyes.

Her beauty at that moment was extraordinary. Magnified, as it seemed, by the dominating intelligence that glowed in her features, she presented the aspect of some glorious siren at the moment of transfiguration into a demon. With a face and body made for love, every tender emotion was

apparently crushed out by the overwhelming force of her passion of revengeful rage. She was a vibrant, restrained fury, inspiring with the venom of her hate the actions of the powerful warriors who laid hands on Sevier to throttle him.

The first touch of the rope sent a convulsion through Sevier. With a violent effort he managed to tear his right hand free.

In another moment he was struggling upon the ground, biting, striking, kicking. The rowels of his riding-boots and El Fetnah's insistent cries that no weapon was to be used upon him seemed for a while to give him a chance to fight free. The startled horses, plunging and whirling about, required attention. The thin garments and bare feet of the Abyssinians made them shy of Sevier's armed boots; while Sevier himself fought with the blind fury of a snared animal.

Where his hand touched flesh, he clutched it convulsively. Where the chance offered, he even tore at it with his teeth. Once, as he writhed about, panting, grunting, straining, he was conscious of bringing his spurred heel with force down into the face of one of his assailants.

In the end, however, they overpowered him.

JERKING him to his feet, his tunic and shirt hanging from his heaving body in tatters, his scratched, muddied face, with tousled hair and bleeding lips, still alert with the flashing fury of his blue eyes, they succeeded at last in placing the rope about his neck, though he continued to struggle madly.

El Fetnah, standing before him with the naked blade of a jambeer in her hand, at last betrayed a curious change of expression that her companions did not observe. In her countenance there were all the signs of a terrible mental struggle. It appeared almost as though she had actually shared in the physical violence and was striving to recover her self-possession. Several times she made an effort to speak. She could not utter a word. At last she succeeded in making a violent gesture as though of disavowal. No one, however, saw it.

The Abyssinians, who are ordinarily calm, suave, with unshakable dignity and self-control, are roused to uncontrollable fury by any violent passion. These were Mussulmans. El Fetnah had said to hang the *nasrani*. Her first cry had in fact been like pressing an electric button. Nothing seemed capable of stopping the flash of their fury. The *nasrani* would hang!

"Nay, nay, nay!" she gasped, seizing the nearest of her body-guard. But her voice was lost. They had forgotten her. Her importance had gone. She was merely a woman.

The rope jerked tight about Sevier's throat. His heaving chest seemed stuffed with red-hot coals. He staggered. They flung him like a sock to the ground. He made a rasping, strangling sound.

El Fetnah suddenly screamed.

The shrill, piercing sound shattered the dark dome of silence hanging over the hills as though it were porcelain. The terrifying cry brought the Mussulmans to a rigid, startled halt. The silence, still quivering with the echoing vibrations of El Fetnah's agonized scream, was touched by the sound of galloping hoofs, distant but rapid and clear, like the drumming of nervous fingers on the baize covering of a desk. To Sevier, however, there was no sound.

El Fetnah, plucking the jambeer from the ground, threw herself upon the prostrate form.

The drum of hoofs grew in volume. Still panting and groaning from their struggle and wounds, the Mussulmans, panicky as cats, immediately took alarm. Several hesitated. The rest ran to their horses. They flung themselves into their saddles, pirouetted uncertainly, looking back along the dark road. Whirling about, they bolted for the north. The remaining warriors laid hands on El Fetnah and urged her to mount. But she seemed beyond reason.

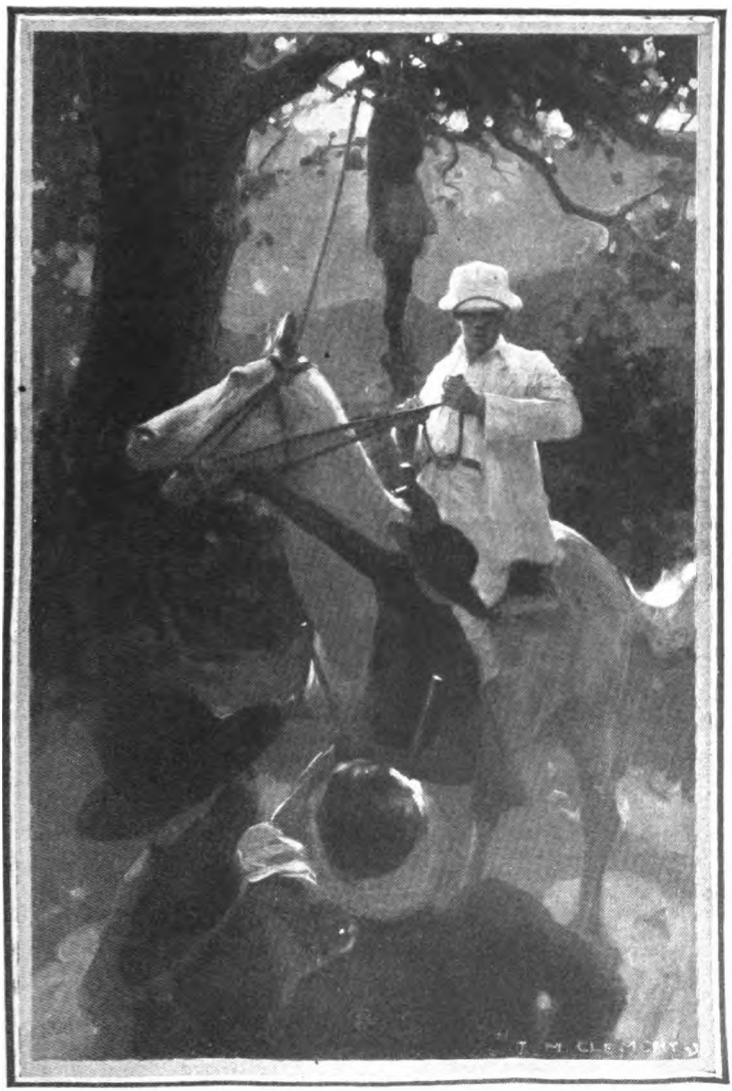
"By Allah," said one, slipping out his simitar, "let me whip the head off this stubborn Christian pig! Let us have blood! *Deen Mohammed!*"

El Fetnah shrieked. Thrusting him aside, she covered Sevier with her body. She turned the blade of her jambeer up at the warrior.

"Begone! Begone!" she cried wildly. "If you remain, you die, spawn of a pig! Witless one! Leave me to deal with the *nasrani!*"

"There is a resuce!"

"May Allah wither you!"



The next moment Sevier found himself a prisoner in the hands of a guard flung out by Dedjatch Maukara.

"Nay, holy one, for the love of Allah, listen; there is danger——"

"Thou dog!"

"By Allah," exclaimed the warrior, recoiling, "she is a storm indeed! She is mad," he added dazedly.

The sound of hoofs increased to a roar. The remaining Mussulmans, casting quick looks about them, withdrawing at first reluctantly, at last gave way and rushed for their horses.

The next instant, a body of horsemen charged into them. In the mêlée, shots were fired, horses overthrown. English voices mixed curses with Arabic, Amharic and Pushtu—for two lancers of the Sikh guard were among the rescuing party.

Sevier, opening his eyes, dry and aching, was vaguely conscious of a tumult. His mouth was full of dust and blood. A body stretched on his was crushing him to the earth. A hand, with a jambeer clutched in it, was flung across his face.

As though in a delirium, he knew he must struggle. Burying his teeth into the flesh of the forearm, he made a weak effort to struggle loose from the weight that pressed upon him, and in this struggle again sank into unconsciousness.

SEVIER regained full consciousness in a *tokhul*, murky with yellow light and saturated with smoke smelling of eucalyptus and manure.

The *tokhul* was built of two concentric walls under one high conical roof. Between the first and second wall the animals were stabled. The inner chamber was divided into several rooms for the family of owners and slaves, and in the largest of these Sevier had been placed on a rough pallet.

Fritz Schiedel was seated at one end of the pallet, smoking a pipe. Whitcomb, the consul-general, occupied a stool by the small smoldering fire, whose embers he was absentmindedly poking. In various attitudes about the room were members of the Abyssinian family, Schiedel's servant, and a Sikh squatted gravely against the wall with his turban toppling sideways and his carefully curled beard pillowed upon his great chest like some rare black, glossy plant.

There was silence except for the stirring of cattle in the outer chamber, the uneasy breathing of the disturbed Abyssinians, Schiedel puffing thoughtfully at his pipe and Whitcomb nervously clearing his throat.

Sevier lay for several minutes in silence, trying to collect his senses. He felt the helplessness of complete exhaustion. His head throbbed. His throat and chest were exceedingly painful. Tensing his muscles tentatively, he found that, beyond a general soreness, they were uninjured. Twisting his neck, he discovered that apparently he still suffered from nothing worse than a very tender, scorched stiff neck and swollen glands. At last he cleared his throat with an experimental cough. Every one in the room immediately looked up.

"Ah!" said Schiedel, knocking the ashes from his pipe. "That's good!"

"Hello!" exclaimed Whitcomb, jumping up and walking to the edge of the pallet. "He's coming round! How is it, Sevier? How do you feel, old boy?"

"Holy Joseph, thanks!" said the owner of the *tokhul* in an intimate aside. "He does not die under my roof. May God be praised!"

Tedj, the sour-sweet beer of the country, was brought forth in a leather beaker, and Sevier, sitting up with Whitcomb's arm about him, drained it slowly. It made his throat sting and the tears came gushing to his eyes, but the effect was marvelously refreshing. He felt the tingle of renewed life through all his body.

Slowly and gingerly, while Schiedel and Whitcomb expostulated and advised, he sat up and placed his feet on the floor, stretching out his hands to feel the warmth of the dancing flames. His face twisted with a half-mocking smile.

"Well," he said, coughing and gagging painfully between phrases, "it beats me! I don't know exactly what happened—but I was certainly dead—I tell you I went west! Dead as a smelt!"

"Cheeri-o, Sevier, old boy!" said Whitcomb reassuringly, as Sevier, suddenly closing his eyes, reached up with his hands and, grimacing, began gently to massage his shoulders and neck, shuddering slightly. "Hold hard! You're right as skittles. Try some more of this *tedj*."

Schiedel, standing awkwardly by his side, patted Sevier diffidently on the shoulder, a glow of something between admiration and affection in his eyes.

"The thing is safely finished, anyway," he said softly. "You've had your experience, and we've had our revenge."

Sevier lifted his head with a jerk, grunting as the unexpected pain seized the tissues of his neck.

"How do you mean?" he demanded confusedly.

"Holy God! We gave the *coup* to two of them—and bashed the rest about. It was a good surprise. I saw you signal when you started down the slope; but when that crowd scattered and you went off alone after the Arab, I couldn't guess what you were up to. The rest of your party seemed to be paying no attention and were trotting along quietly toward the legation. Anyway, I thought it best to go after them and find out what was wrong; so I caught up with this gentleman here——"

"I knew right away," said Whitcomb, "that something was up. You weren't likely to barge off like that for nothing."

"The whole outfit came along, except the ladies, who went back with the escort. Oh, one of the ladies came, too. She wouldn't go back."

"Miss Whittington," explained Whitcomb. "Keen as mustard! Of course, we didn't anticipate anything very serious, and the shots we heard we thought were too faint to have been made by you. We rode fairly cautiously, though, until we heard that scream; then we damn well bolted.

"We landed in that crowd with all feet. I'm dashed if I know who did the killing. There were some shots fired, and I expect Jowar used his lance a bit." At mention of his name, the Sikh lifted his large, gentle eyes and began with caressing fingers to curl his beard. "The beggars tried to use their simitars. Beveridge got a bit of a cut——

"Yes. They took him back with the girl. But I don't think they're badly hurt. We didn't like to risk you for a long carry until we saw how you were coming round——

"The girl!" exclaimed Sevier, catching hold of Whitcomb's knee. "El Fetnah! What have you done with her?"

The excitement that all at once flamed in Sevier's eyes seemed to disturb Whitcomb. He frowned, his gray eyes hardening coldly.

"Oh, you do know her, then? Well, she's quite all right. Not seriously hurt, you know—just a crease with a bullet behind the ear and a small cut on the shoulder. Your bite was about the worst wound she had——"

"My bite?" exclaimed Sevier.

"Your teeth were locked in her wrist when we found you," said Whitcomb bluntly.

Sevier uttered an ejaculation and ran his fingers confusedly through his tousled hair, straining to recall how such a thing could have happened.

"But you were unconscious," explained Schiedel softly. "It probably was a convulsion."

"Forget her!" said Whitcomb quickly. "They have her safely at the French legation. Castigny talked to her and insisted on taking her there. She didn't want to go. There was a little trouble in urging her. She became rather hysterical——"

"In the name of God," said Sevier in a low voice, striving to control himself, "tell Castigny not to let her go until I get back! She mustn't be allowed to leave."

"She's perfectly safe with Castigny."

"No; but you don't understand. She must be kept as strictly as a prisoner."

"She says she regards herself as your prisoner now."

"*My* prisoner?"

"So she said. Castigny gave me the message. She is yours entirely."

"What do you mean?" said Sevier incredulously.

Whitcomb shrugged his shoulder.

"I imagine that's for you to say. I'm sure I don't know what she means—and I don't particularly care. This country is a little different from England— But—I—well, to tell the truth, it rather hit Miss Whittington, I think. She can't quite see it——"

"Why, you fool," spluttered Sevier furiously, struggling upright, "she — she — she——"

They stripped him and massaged him gently with warm oil, bathing his head with aromatic spirits. When he stirred again into consciousness, they gave him more *tedj;* and when he slept, they continued the gentle manipulation of his muscles until finally his breathing became natural, restful, and he lay without twitching.

WHEN he woke at dawn, beyond a certain weakness and stiffness of the neck, he was near normal. Some scalding water was given him and he rubbed himself down until his glowing skin almost stung with reviving energy. He plunged his head in cold water. He drank hot, scraping drafts of black coffee. He ate heartily of

some fresh berries, a fruit stew and a bit of cheese that was placed before him by the hospitable owners of the *tokhul*. He went out into the crisp, chilly air of the morning, feeling that the events of the night were the forgotten phantasmagoria of meaningless nightmare.

The rolling meadows were saturated with sparkling dew. The tangy perfume of the uplands cleared his head. Birds whistled. The horses, brought out into the open and tethered, tossed their heads, dug up the soft turf with their restless hoofs, whinnied and quivered with leaping exhilaration.

After their long vigil, Sevier's companions were still wrapped in sleep. He stood alone and watched the bewitching loveliness of the highlands unfold itself in the clear, pure light of dawn. As it brightened, he discerned little clusters of tents in the valleys, and horsemen and men afoot—in ones and twos and larger groups, already hurrying on their way. All moved northward along the Entoto road.

All at once Sevier realized that the battle of Silti was yet to be fought. Their private council of war, held at the legation the day before, seemed to him already ancient, though the plans they had devised could not have had time even to be started. In Sevier's weakened condition, with nerves badly unsettled, anxiety swept quickly over him.

As his thoughts increased his misgivings and his brooding eye traversed the line of the Entoto road, he recalled his last sight of Cohusac, hand resting carelessly on the flank of his flying horse, head tilted over his shoulder, and the mocking shout that betrayed his character.

"I'll get that little rat," he whispered. "By God, I'll get that little rat—and I'll choke him! I'll choke him with my hands until his damned eyes burst!"

As he stood with brows drawn down in furious concentration, Schiedel, attracted by the sound of his voice calling to the passing warriors, woke and came out of the *tokhul*.

The sight of the German-Ethiopian reminded Sevier of the wavering spirit this friend had betrayed at the time of his quarrel with the Prussian. Also, remembering his obligation to him, he stood looking at him thoughtfully for a moment; then he said impulsively:

"Schiedel, I'm pushing off for Koromasch this morning. I'm perfectly fit, and nothing's going to stop me until this show's over. Besides, I'm going to get that damned Frenchman if it takes a month. If you want to come, you're welcome. Prussian or not, you ought to have some interest in Abyssinia, since you were born here." Schiedel made an angry gesture. "I don't mean to be offensive," insisted Sevier. "I'm not forgetting you saved my life yesterday."

"Oh, never mind that! A girl took the same risk I took." Sevier grunted absently. "But when I saw you last night," persisted Schiedel, frowning uneasily, as though finding it difficult to express himself, "lying there, apparently dead—your shirt all ripped and stained with blood, your face dirty and bruised, and that beautiful woman lying by you—dead, too, I thought—I went mad—I killed one of those swine myself."

"You did?"

"Yes. I expect I do owe something to Abyssinia. If you'll go north, I'll go, too."

"To Koromasch, you mean?"

"To Silti—to Ankober—to Dessie! By the Saviour," he cried in a gust of passion, "I'll drive Mikael to hell! I'll cut the throat of that cursed Mussulman son of a dog. Ras Omar, with an Arab jambeer——"

"Oh!" said Sevier, with a mirthless laugh. "If you are ready, then, we'll find horses."

WHITCOMB was wakened. Sevier told him his intention, insisting that he was as fit as any man could be in the circumstances, and borrowing the consul-general's shirt from off his back. Whitcomb also handed over unhesitatingly his excellent mount and refitted him with cartridges, blinking thoughtfully all the while, stifling the expostulations that rose involuntarily to his lips and muttering useless commonplaces. As they were about to move off, however, he blurted out,

"I say, Sevier; what about that woman?"

Sevier changed countenance.

"El Fetnah?" he said coldly, recalling The Storm as she ordered her warriors to strangle him. "I'll be back in three days. If I don't return, Castigny will know what to do with her. I'd just as soon see her handed over to Maukara, anyway," he added savagely, drawing his heels involuntarily into his mount.

"Well, right-o! It's not my affair. Chin-chins and good-luck to you!"

Sevier waved his hand; Schiedel saluted, and the two horsemen, turning their faces northward, trotted away, kicking up little puffs of dust, while the Abyssinian women, gathered in front of the *tokhul*, called blessings after them and plaintive messages to their men, who by no chance would ever receive them.

Accompanied by Schiedel's servant, Sevier and Schiedel progressed slowly on account of Sevier's weakness. The freshness he had felt at dawn passed rapidly away with the fatigue of the journey. After a few miles at a trot, therefore, hearing no news of immediate action, they continued on at a walk.

THEY arrived at the scattered *tokhuls* which bear the name of Koromasch late in the afternoon, and found the two great armies in a state of restless inaction, collected in loosely organized camps, spread far over the broad country. Tarriers like themselves continued to dribble into the Shoan camps; but the forces of the *negus*, plainly visible a short distance away—the main camps of the center of each opposing force being separated by less than a mile of easy country—seemed more compact in their formations and more generally alert.

Picking their way through the camp where fires were beginning to gleam, Sevier and Schiedel finally reached the tent of Ras Taffari, where they were made welcome by the young regent, who had not forgotten the critical events at Harrar and Dire Daoua which had brought the American into his confidence.

They were given shelter in one of the tents of the body-guard, a shelter for which they were deeply grateful, since during the night a storm rose, showers fell, and a vivid display of lightning, such as occurs in mountainous countries, seemed to presage with its terrific detonations and supernatural violence and confusion the human conflict that impended below. The thunder, hammering against the earth like the irregular crash of monstrous war-drums, beat the nerves of the sleeping warriors into revolt. They turned restlessly in their blankets, longing for action.

Nothing further, however, happened that night.

Sevier's first thought in the morning was to locate the traitor Cohusac, whom he believed he might find within the Shoan lines. To this end he again visited Taffari and was presented to Ras Apte Georgios, minister of War, who had arrived on the field at dawn. This warrior, a man well over six feet in height, powerfully built, with small, clean-cut features, thoughtfully grave and stern of aspect, suggesting the black-maned lion who faces the world undauntedly upon the hot, bare veld, listened with interest to Sevier's account of the adventure on the Entoto road.

An unremitting search was immediately instituted to locate Cohusac and his companions who threatened the left wing, and squires were detailed to escort Sevier and Schiedel through the encampment.

The country, which appears level on large maps, was green and undulating with small shallow brooks watering the valleys, while the slopes and hills were marked by clumps of wild fig and juniper. Grass and wild flowers grew luxuriantly, except where the ground had been grazed over by many small droves of sheep and larger herds of long-horned cattle. The circular *tokhuls*, surrounded by *zarebas* of closely packed thorn-bush as additional protection against marauding beasts, oozed smoke through their conical thatched roofs. Women and children moved about within these enclosures, grinding meal, gathering fuel and attending to other household duties.

Among the rolling hills were scattered the stained cotton tents of the Shoans, more conspicuous than those of the invaders, who had traveled lightly. There was a subdued hum of many people talking, calling, moving about, with horses plunging and galloping about as recklessly as at an Irish horse-fair.

The invading army had come as a horde comprised of groups varying only in accordance with the power and popularity of the commanding *shums* and *rases*, mounted on horses, donkeys, or afoot. As it made its advance, this apparently aimless mass had resembled an invasion of ants across a floor where sugar has been sprinkled. Hills, valleys, bush, deep *dongas* presented no obstacle. They swarmed and trickled over everything, halting in place at night when the *rases* were obliged to get in communication with the Negus Mikael, occupying a

small green-cotton tent somewhere near the center of the encampment.

Sevier estimated that these invaders numbered over fifty thousand warriors, drunk with victory, fierce with the experience of recent successful battles.

The Shoans had managed to gather an army of eighty-five thousand, though loosely balanced, large groups having as their feudal leaders chiefs of no renown, while some of the most famous warriors, hurrying from distant places, had arrived on the field with comparatively small forces.

Ras Apte Georgios had concentrated the main strength of his Shoans in the center, arranged in depth, with the evident intention of being able to reenforce quickly either threatened flank. The advanced camp was held by Ras Demissie, with Ras Apte Georgios himself in the van and Ras Taffari in support.

On the right flank was Ras Haile Georgios, a very brave fighter, who had, nevertheless, arrived on the field with hardly a thousand warriors. On the left flank was Ras Ligaba Bayana.

It seemed to Sevier that the minister of War had carried his precautions at this point almost to an extreme. The left flank was hardly more than a skeleton; nevertheless, he was too well acquainted with the renown of this leader to venture a suggestion.

The invaders, on the other hand, had been posted in the same relative positions they had occupied on the march, fully confirming the information Sevier had received on this point.

Ras Omar, with his fanatic Mussulmans, was on the left flank; Ras Gebri-Christos, the Christian, on the right flank, and the Negus Mikael in the center, with Ras Tadela leading the advance.

Sevier remitted nothing in his search for Cohusac. His rage had not cooled. It had become more pointed, more deadly as the vileness of the Frenchman's conduct and the enormity of his crime grew upon him. Nevertheless, he could not help being diverted by the amazing scenes that were spread before him.

The hordes of warriors, pausing for a breath, as it were, before launching themselves at each other's throats, showed little evidence of the excitement that must have been boiling in their veins. Priests in black went among them, exhorting them or blessing them as they bowed in genuflection. The horizontally striped tricolor of Abyssinia appeared here and there. A few banners and sacred emblems were in evidence bearing holy phrases, and some of the horses had exceptionally fine trappings. In general, however, the warriors, contrasting with the colorful beauty of the hills and deep-blue sky, with white and creamy clouds walling the horizon, presented an extraordinarily drab appearance.

The field-guns, captured from the Italians at Adowa, were parked without much forethought, and the *mitrailleuses* simply placed in the forward lines, where they were looked upon merely as cumbersome rapid-firing rifles. Scattered at odd points about the encampment were drummers nervously tapping or occasionally striking their big-bellied drums or blaring on deep-throated trumpets.

The smell of a circus, mingled with spicy smoke, and wisps of cool air, laden with the fragrance of the hills, hung over the encampments.

Flushed with drafts of stimulating *tedj* and food soaked in stinging spices, Sevier was restless. In the darkness he felt the presence of the great multitude of black warriors pressing about him. The air seemed to quiver like the electrically charged atmosphere before a dust-storm. There was also a tense suggestion of restrained ferocity that kept the still air vibrant with expectancy. Sevier felt uncomfortable and profoundly anxious.

The sudden snort of a horse by the wall of his tent made him start. A distant burst of song irritated him. He became exasperated at the heavy, endless silences. At last, after midnight, he slept.

HE WOKE with a stifled cry. Lying rigidly in the dark, wondering what was happening, he felt the fluttering impotence of a man who, wakening in the pitch-blackness of night, feels suddenly that he is alone, abandoned, forgotten. His narrow escape two nights before had left him shaken and still timid of the unseen dangers of the African night.

Increasingly conscious of the heavy rythmic beating of his heart, the blood stirring madly within, his hair creeping on his

When the capture was complete, Sevier was thrust into the deeper shadow of some bushes near a clump of eucalyptus trees.

scalp, he scrambled to his feet, restraining a wild impulse to yell and, stooping down, shook Schiedel roughly until he woke.

"Ah!" exclaimed Schiedel in a low, awed voice, instantly wide-awake. "Listen! The drums!"

The trembling roar swelled with a rush, then died away like the intermittent boom of surf. It seemed to soothe and stupefy, and in the next instant hammer wildly on the heart. The two men did not hear the sound so much as feel it. It stirred them with a sort of stimulating madness—suggesting the first muffled growl of thunder running rapidly through the whole celestial scale, accompanied by the shrieking pianissimo of a scraping wind and ending in a shocking crash—the gentle drone of bees—the trembling resonant grunt of a hunting lion—magnificent roar of repletion!

The drums roared. The trumpets blared tremblingly. The expectant warriors leaped to their feet, quivering.

Horses were beginning to plunge about. Men were calling plaintively and softly to each other or, in sudden burst of exasperation, cursing volubly, restraining the pitch of the voice with an effort. There were muffled clickings and clattering of weapons being adjusted.

Suddenly a roll of hoofs beat heavily on the turf and died away as a troop of horsemen galloped off in the darkness. Men whispered, cursed listlessly, shrieked with sudden fury.

Sevier and Schiedel left their shelter, found their horses tugging nervously at their pegs, mounted with the assistance of their squires and remained waiting by Ras Taffari's tent. Their mounts, excited by the drums and sensing the nervousness of their riders, reared and fretted under them.

Sevier kept his mouth partly open, humming and grunting to himself to relieve the tension set up by the rolling roar of the drums. The vibrations, unlike music that may be traced, or at least the instrument that makes it imagined, completely filled the atmosphere with a continuous throbbing roar like the drone of a huge dynamo. It seemed either a supernatural call or else an internal agitation which, if not relieved by action, would eventually drive the victim mad.

Sevier possessed a feeling of being on the verge of a confused nightmare mixed with a cool, intense curiosity. The enclosing darkness made it impossible to appreciate the vastness of the movements that were under way. They could do nothing but stare speculatively into the drapery of night that hung about them.

Ras Taffari came from his tent hurriedly. He raised his hand in salutation, with a bright, nervous smile, mounted lightly on his frightened horse and sat for a moment calming him, while his aides pushed about talking excitedly.

All lights and fires had been extinguished, and figures could only be discerned as blotches of black and white, like ghosts and shadows mingling together.

ALL at once, somewhere eastward, where Ras Omar with his Mussulmans must have commenced an attempt to encircle fierce old Haile Georgios's thin lines of desperate warriors, there came a crackling of rifles that sounded like the vicious snap of a whip over their heads. Like a flash of electricity it passed, spluttering and emitting sparks over the countryside.

A confusion of sounds immediately rose. While the throbbing drums continued their rythmic roar, the darkness became clamorous with discordant noises. A senseless staccato of guns hammered blindly at the doors of the night, illumining patches of broken terrain like the flickering of heat-lightning. There was a swish and hammer of hoofs as horses charged in the shadows—a rush of silent men through the tall wet grass, sounding like the sudden murmur of a flight of wild geese passing overhead—the ragged rip of musketry—an outburst of shrieks and yells and wild screams as infuriated warriors rushed at each other with naked steel.

The field-pieces, handled with utterly impotent rapidity, belched and banged, accomplishing nothing more than to add to the general uproar and confusion. The air rapidly filled with odorous vapors, the smell of black powder and sulphur, crushed grass and horses.

It was obvious that the *negus* had actually attacked simultaneously along the whole front.

A vivid description of the battle and the outcome of Sevier's great adventure are given in the last instalment of "The Witch of Gondar." See February EVERYBODY'S—out January 15th.

Little Journeys Back Home

"Gee! 'Tain't Easy"

Bobby and Theodore Tackle That Momentous Problem, the Origin of Man, and Make Some Startling Scientific Experiments

By Henry Francis Granger

Illustration by Harry Fisk

THE two or three times a year that Professor Newhaus dined at his house were occasions of anxious expectancy for Bobby King. The expectancy was natural enough, for it meant dinner at about six o'clock instead of noon, always something extra good in the way of dessert and all restrictions on second helpings lifted.

This would have been more than enough to rouse joyful anticipation, but Bobby was always deeply interested in the conversation between his parents and the professor. A considerable part was unintelligible to Bobby, but there were rich gleanings—common things, like the hills and stones he knew, decked out in astounding names with a wonderful history reaching back for thousands of years. The professor lifted these familiar things from the commonplace and enshrined them in the mysticism of a great creative plan.

To understand that the stone he tossed about and knew only as a common old hardhead had been polished in a glacial drift and looked just as it does now when Pharaoh's daughter was lifting Moses from the bulrushes raised the hardhead to the dignity of a diamond. And always when the professor came to dinner there was the probability that some other familiar thing would be set apart, to remain thereafter an object of veneration.

So this, in degree, explains the expectancy; but the anxiety was a more subtile thing, made up of nervous tremors and the thrill of near approach to the unapproachable—very much as though one were allowed to pet a tame bear—for Professor Newhaus taught at the academy. A school-teacher in the intimate, friendly relationship of a guest at dinner, and that school-teacher a professor at the academy—that, then, was a combination to appall any twelve-year-old boy.

The last time the professor had dined there was a few days after Bobby and Theodore, digging for sassafras, had come upon a flint arrow-head that Professor Newhaus pronounced strangely like the craftmanship displayed in primitive implements of war and chase. Bobby heard a great deal about flints at that time, and he wanted to hear more. But he could not be sure that on this occasion the talk would take this turn or that he could so direct it. These after-dinner discussions did not spring up, but seemed, rather, the continuation of other talks. Bobby suspected that Professor Newhaus and his father saw a great deal of each other, which was no less than the truth.

Mr. King, deeply interested in the ologies, had turned to journalism and published the village paper, but their common interest in science was the bond between editor and professor of geology and anthropology. To the outsider, this must have frequently

appeared a bond in dissension. And, indeed, the editor and the professor, delving deep in harmonious accord, were certain to wax sarcastically acrimonious when they touched upon anthropology. The professor's broad catholicity gave equal credence to every branch of natural science, but the editor was stubbornly insistent that the anthropologist commonly manufactured his evidence to fit his weird imaginings.

BOBBY, looking forward to this dinner and more interesting stories about flints, would have indeed felt hopeless could he have known that a recent work on prehistoric man was responsible for a discussion that had already lasted several days. But he did not lose hope until, in the interval of waiting between salad and dessert, the professor remarked,

"The more I study that book of Osborn's the clearer it appears a wonderful correlation of environmental and human events in the European ice age."

"Every intelligent person knows that anthropology is but a mass of conjecture based upon the so-called geological evidences of the antiquity of man," replied the editor.

"This geological evidence is incontrovertible!" snapped the professor.

"Geologically—perhaps."

The editor's insinuation drew a torrent of sound from the professor, in which Bobby caught strange words, like, "glacial drift," "moraines," "Pleistocene times" and "Kendeng strata," with occasional sentences he could almost understand.

But his father waited calmly until the professor paused for breath.

"You argumentatively establish the antiquity of man and then, when argument fails, arbitrarily construct a fabric to support a tottering theory of evolution."

"Not so!" disputed the professor heatedly. "From certain knowledge of comparative anatomy and geologic age, we arrive at the logical conclusion."

"That's almost exactly what you don't do," retorted the editor. "No logician would call a resemblance and a guess a conclusion. I admit an anthropoid ape is a monkey that looks like a man. We appreciate that it looks like a man because we have seen so many men who look like monkeys."

"Now you grow frivolous. Frivolity is ever the refuge of immaturity," declared the professor, with the dogmatism of his best schoolroom manner.

"I'm as serious as even a rudimentary sense of humor will permit. You start with a resemblance in your mind and a piece of bone in your fingers. The only certain and incontrovertible fact you ever touch is that it is a bone. From the supposition that it was found in or under a certain geological formation, you fix its approximate age. This is purely conjecture, for it might have been worked into its position by more recent action of the elements or even have dropped through a fissure opened by an earthquake."

"Nonsense!" exploded the professor.

"It might have been," insisted the editor calmly. "But Eugen Dubois, digging over a gravel bed at the edge of a Java river, in the hope of finding prehuman remains, came upon some small pieces of bone—a single upper molar tooth, the top of a skull and a left thigh-bone. Any man likes to find the thing he is looking for, and so when Dubois found those scraps of bone that failed to conform to recognized type, he announced the discovery of a new family of the order of primates, which he named the Pithecanthropidæ, and declared it to be the ancestor of man. So, at last, they had the makings of a missing link." The editor paused to grin cheerfully at his friend.

"Have you quite finished?" asked the professor icily.

"Not quite," was the cheerful rejoinder. "Allow me to instance a few more anthropological facts and then you shall have the rest of the evening to demolish me. Your latest authority, Osborn, says, 'This discovery of Dubois roused heated discussion, in which the foremost anatomists and paleontologists of the world took part. Some regarded the skull as that of a gibbon, others as prehuman and still others as a transition form.' Then your latest authority goes on: 'First we are struck by the marked resemblance which the top of the skull bears to that of the Neanderthal race. This fully justifies the opinion of Schwalbe that the skull of Pithecanthropus is nearer to that of Neanderthal man than to that of the anthropoid apes.' In other words, if a piece of tin looks more like platinum than it does like silver, that's

ample justification for calling it platinum."

The professor squirmed in his chair but maintained a glowering silence. The editor smiled blandly. However completely the professor might annihilate him later, he was enjoying himself now.

"So there is no agreement among these logicians." He grinned. "But, nevertheless, there remained those determined to have their missing link, and so they have built it—much as the beggar in the story made his broth from a stone—and we have Pithecanthropus, the Java ape-man, and, on the strength of this, the Trinil race.

"It was considerable of a job to graft man onto the monkey-stem, but here's where they did it. There is a sort of common conception of what the missing link should look like, as there is a common conception of the appearance of the devil. Anthropologists, out of their few disputed bones, have modeled a statue of the missing link. But they never agree as to the age of these disputed bones. Woodward and the British geologists concur in placing it in early Pleistocene times, but Osborn says late Pleistocene, a small difference of several hundreds of thousands of years. This is curious—at least, if, as you say, 'the geological evidence is incontrovertible.' But maybe Java rivers are tame and this is good geological evidence, but a lot of our rivers could shift a gravel bed overnight."

BOBBY had finished his second helping of dessert. The words meant little to him, but he sat quiet, thrilled in the belief that his father was the bravest man in the world to talk that way to Professor Newhaus.

"Then," continued the editor, "at the bottom of a sand-bank in southern Germany they find the lower half of a jaw. For years the workmen digging sand there had been told to watch out for bones. At last they produced this piece of jaw, and from where it was reported found they fix its age somewhere in second interglacial times, some few hundreds of thousands of years later than the Java man. But this was good enough for a second link—anthropologists are no more suspicious of its antiquity than was the mass of our population of the authenticity of the Cardiff giant—and upon this jaw-bone they have built a whole Heidelberg race. Then, in a gravel bed at Piltdown, Sussex, England, at a depth of only a few inches, and after an interval of some years, they find enough bone fragments to constitute part of a human head, and after long argument—which they term 'careful study'—they decide that these bones look like something between an adult ape and the Heidelberg man, and so they mold the scraps into their conception of what it should look like and they have the Piltdown man, or, as they also term him, the 'Dawn man.' And by the old process of alleged reasoning, which considers what might have been and as calmly ignores more of what might have been, they fix its age somewhere in the Pleistocene era, and declare the one-time existence of another race, the Piltdown race. They have their bust of the Piltdown man, that looks fully as human as Rodin's 'Thinker' and as intelligent as the commonly displayed busts of Socrates."

"This is atrocious!" stormed the professor.

"Yes—isn't it? But I sha'n't go into further harrowing details. From other scraps of bone, and by the same process of reasoning, they have created other entire races, the Neanderthal, the Grimaldi, the Cro-Magnon and Lord knows what other." The editor smiled calmly upon the professor, bristling with restrained rage. "It will be your turn in a minute. You say all this is the result of logical conclusions. You will agree, I presume, that a logical conclusion does not leave a lot of diametrically opposing possibilities.

"Now, we will imagine for a moment what might be. Suppose our American civilization disappears. A little internal disturbance, another glacial drift, and it is gone. So we are gone. Some thousands of years later, another race of men are digging for our remains. Pretty much of everything has disintegrated and disappeared, but here and there remain fragments preserved by some freak of nature.

"In one layer, or stratum, of the piled-up confusion they find the bone fragments of a four-foot man, and somewhere else, deeper down or closer to the top, those of a seven-foot man. According to you, they must logically conclude that at one time a race of pygmies inhabited this hemisphere and at another time a race of giants.

"At another place they come upon the skull of Zip or Jo-Jo or the Wild Man of Borneo or any one of the hundreds of

curious people one sees during a lifetime, and there they have all the material for a new theory of evolution or the foundation of innumerable linking races. It seems to me that our descendants are in for a hectic time if they abandon common sense, ignore the possibilities and call a mere guess logic, in the effort to bolster up a theory.

"I am but a layman seeking enlightenment. But among a few elementary facts that even a benighted newspaper man picks up, I know that a college professor may have a narrow head that will go into a six and seven-eighths hat, and an idiot a round one that will require a seven and a half, and that there is no possibility of measuring human intelligence by caliper and tape. But what I want to know is, how, if it won't work on live subjects where every dimension is shown, do you arrive at any logical conclusion as to intellectual capacity by measuring a skull reconstructed from a few mismatched fragments, and by what process of reasoning declare it typical of a race?"

"Have you done?" thundered the professor.

The editor laughed contentedly.

"Of course this is but an outline, but it is your turn now."

And then Professor Newhaus burst forth in a torrent of long words that sounded to Bobby and his mother like an alien tongue. For a time Mrs. King bowed submissively, and then quietly stole from the room without rousing the professor to knowledge of her departure. Bobby lingered, but he, too, tired at last and stole away to join his mother, where she sat at the piano, softly playing. She smiled at his disconsolate face and pressed down upon the loud pedal.

"Sometimes music calms them," she whispered, her lips close to Bobby's ear.

BUT of that dinner remained in Bobby's mind a nightmarish vision of ice a mile thick covering his familiar hills and a vague impression that one had to but dig anywhere to uncover the remains of everything from the saber-toothed tigers to prehistoric men. And something of this impression remained when he and Theodore started for school the following morning.

"Professor Newhaus was to our house to dinner yesterday," remarked Bobby.

"Huh! Old Bones and Stones!"

"Aw, that's jes' what fresh kids calls him! Professor Newhaus knows more'n anybody round here."

"My dad says he guesses he does," was Theodore's enigmatical reply.

"I guess there ain't nobody else round here knows how hills is made," declared Bobby.

"Shucks! Hills ain't made. They was always there."

"Some of 'em wasn't," insisted Bobby. "Them hills on your grandfather's farm wasn't."

"Huh! My grandad's lived there most a hundred years. I guess he'd know if they wasn't!" cried Theodore scornfully.

"Aw!" jeered Bobby. "It was longer ago than that, thousands and millions of years ago, before the Revolutionary War, even."

"How's old Bones and Stones know that?"

"Well, he—he knows." Bobby rallied bravely. "A great bunch of ice, more'n a mile thick, slid down here from Greenland—jes' like snow slides off a roof—and it buried the wooly rinoserces and elephants and tigers and cavemen 'at used to live here, and it jes' pushed all that truck and the loose dirt right up into hills. And then, when it melted, it sloshed round and made littler hills——"

"Aw, gee, Bobby! Do you believe there was ever rinoserces round here?"

"Sure they was! Ain't they got 'em in a muzem in New York city what they dug up right in this state?"

For a time, Theodore was silent. The possibility that rhinoceroses once roamed there was vastly more interesting than any amount of information about moraine hills and the glacial drift.

"Golly! I'd like to dig up one."

"We might! When we go huntin' baby woodchucks next Sat'day, we might run on to somethin'."

"There's lots of woodchucks out at granddad's," mused Theodore.

"Them's the kind of hills that things is buried in," said Bobby reflectively. "Glaciers made 'em."

"Did old Bones and Stones say that?"

"Gotta be things buried in 'em, ain't they? When that old ice came sloshin' along and scraped up everythin' there was and piled it in hills and then melted and left 'em there, they jes' got to be full of all kinds of truck, ain't they?"

"I dunno," muttered Theodore doubtfully. And then, after a pause, "Are you sure about that muzem?"

"Gee! Ain't you never heard of the Muzem of Natural Hist'ry in New York? My dad printed a long piece about it in his paper once."

This argument settled Theodore's doubt, at least as to the existence of the museum. To him, as to many a wiser person, if it appeared in a newspaper, it was irrefragable.

"Suppose we go out to granddad's, woodchuckin', Sat'day, 'stead of Lime Brook," he suggested.

"Sure!" agreed Bobby. "That's the place to go. And then, besides, we won't have to carry an old shovel and things clear from home." But neither mentioned the hope that they might come upon prehistoric remains that would be vastly more wonderful than woodchucks.

They had planned to return to the valley of the Lime Brook, where, through the efforts of Prince, Bobby's dog, they had caught their first young woodchuck while supposedly trout-fishing the Saturday before. But now their plans were changed as to locale if not as to original purpose. Catching a young woodchuck that had probably been surprised by the dog Prince, and fled in panic to a stone pile instead of to the safety of its home burrow suggested the idea of securing more of these desirable pets, for which they anticipated ready sale that would yield the money for the purchase of a long-coveted canoe.

"Jerry Field offered me fifty cents for my woodchuck, yeste'day," said Theodore, after they had walked some time in silence.

"I'll bet you we can get a dollar apiece for 'em." Bobby mentioned the figure with no evidence of the emotion such a prospect would have roused a few days before.

"I suppose so," agreed Theodore, with equally astonishing apathy. Then silence fell between them to be again broken by Theodore. "What d'you suppose that muzem would pay for a rinoserces?"

"Gee! I dunno. Maybe a hundred dollars!" Bobby was almost breathless at the thought.

And then they were overtaken by several schoolmates and there was no further opportunity for discussion of these intimately personal interests. And for some reason, when Bobby and Theodore were again alone and conversation worked round to consideration of plans for the coming Saturday, there was no mention of any hope apart from the number of woodchucks they expected to capture.

"We'll take our creels along to carry our lunches in and bring the woodchucks back in," said Bobby.

"Yes; and we want to keep away from the house till after dinner-time, else Mis' Hunter will want to get dinner for us, and she takes a awful long time. And grandad's li'ble to keep us talkin', and we'll never get no woodchucks."

"Sure!" agreed Bobby. "This is regular business, and we ain't goin' to have no time to waste."

GRANDFATHER BUTLER, at ninety-three, could not be represented as less than hale and hearty considering his great age. He was in possession of all his faculties, even though memory of recent events was not so clear as his recollection of things long past. He was still able to go about the farm as freely as he wished. For the past ten years, since Grandmother Butler died, he did not wish to move about much, although he himself was hardly conscious of the fact.

"Father is slowing up some," was the way his son Ira, who was Theodore's father, expressed it. And Ira Butler had arranged things for his father's greater comfort, and so it was Mrs. Hunter who ran the house and looked after the comfort of Grandfather Butler, while Mr. Hunter was the responsible farmer, and Grandfather Butler was content in the belief that he was still the directing head over all.

Saturday morning dawned with a haze through which the rising sun shone red, at that season the harbinger of a hot, windless day. It was a long walk to Grandfather Butler's, and to Bobby and Theodore one that was particularly irksome, not because of the distance but because they must follow the road for the greater part of the way before they could cut across lots.

But to-day they started cheerfully and at a pace more hurried than was their usual manner. Ordinarily, everything along the way was of possible interest, and they were not forgetful of the fact that a rabbit might lurk anywhere beyond the town limits, and so they traveled at a pace that would

encourage Prince to prospect widely upon either hand. But to-day they called Prince to heel and hurried ahead. A hidden hope, stronger than the lure of woodchucks, was urging them to the particular hills in which might lie buried so much of mystery. And they only stopped when securely astride of Grandfather Butler's nearest line-fence.

"You stay here and keep hold of Prince, and I'll sneak down and get a pick and shovel," volunteered Theodore. And Theodore succeeded with surprising ease. There was no one about, and he quickly secured the desired implements and returned to where Bobby waited. They felt that the hunt was beginning under most favorable auspices. They were early upon the ground. Never had they come so quickly before, and as long as they kept out of sight of the house, there would be nothing to interrupt them. It did not occur to either that, had their interest been confined to woodchucks, they would have looked upon dinner at the farm as the most enjoyable part of the day and sought for advice and possible assistance upon every hand. But now they were burdened with a weighty secret—a secret shared in knowledge but not in confidence between themselves, and to be guarded absolutely from every one else. It is one thing to believe in fairies, but admitting it is quite another matter, as any boy knows.

So Bobby and Theodore set about the avowed business of capturing woodchucks, in which neither now retained any absorbing interest. To be searching for a live woodchuck, worth possibly a dollar, in a hill that might contain the skeletal remains of a rhinoceros, worth probably a hundred dollars, was, to say the least, uninteresting business.

But Prince nosed out a woodchuck-hole and began to dig on his own account, and Bobby and Theodore pitched in to help him. At first the tunnel sloped downward, and they dug with interest. Then it turned, extending with an upward slope, and their interest rapidly diminished. The hole was too shallow to be an attractive prospect, and when it forked without again leading downward, with one accord they abandoned it.

And then they found another hole at the edge of a wood and explored it with sticks, searching about until they located the other opening in a patch of briers. It, too, was shallow and unattractive.

"Suppose we try smokin' it," Bobby suggested.

Theodore approved. An excuse to build a fire is always something. But when, after much effort, a thin trickle of smoke was visible, escaping from the opposite hole, they abandoned this prospect. Then they found another, and they dug at it a little and poked in it with sticks and abandoned it. It was beginning to look as if the woodchucks were all away from home, but this, that should have been a disappointing suggestion, was not the cause of their discontent. No burrowing woodchuck can be expected to compete in interest in a boy's mind with a buried rhinoceros.

BOBBY believed unquestioningly, from his interpretation of Professor Newhaus's statements, that all sorts of things were buried in these hills, but he doubted that Theodore was of equal faith, and he shrank from his chum's probably caustic remarks if they should be so unlucky as to find nothing. And Theodore also believed, but shrank from confession of faith in a thing so new as yet to appear bizarre.

"After we eat our lunch, we'll go over on the knoll," he said, in unformed hope that they might dig deeper there.

"That's the place, and it'll be easier diggin'!" cried Bobby, trying to recall just what Professor Newhaus had said about the knoll.

"But we can't go there till they get through dinner, 'cause they're li'ble to see us from the house and call us," warned Theodore. "But Mis' Hunter won't bother with us after she's cleared off the table."

"I'll bet you the woodchucks will dig down deeper in that old sand," said Bobby hopefully. And then they wandered about until they found a patch of young wintergreens, and while they were still pleasantly occupied, Prince barked at the other edge of the woods and they went to investigate. Prince seemed to have located something in the midst of an old deadfall, and they worked away for an hour before the dog appeared to become discouraged and they abandoned the spot. But at last it was time for lunch, and after they had eaten and rested, they decided that it would be safe to go to the knoll.

From the higher hill behind, the knoll appeared as a projecting point, but from the crest it stood as a distinct mound, connected with the elevation behind by a natural causeway as wide as its conical top. The sides, sloping steeply to a base several times the area of the top, showed bare patches of sand joining faintly terracing ridges of ancient plowings where coarse grasses, weeds and scattered bushes clung.

"There's always lots of woodchuck-holes on this old knoll," said Theodore, as they came out upon its top. And as though in confirmation, Prince barked wildly below them. With suddenly renewed interest, the boys scrambled down.

A few yards from the bottom of the slope the dog half crouched, braced in quivering excitement, his shaggy head pointing to a hole some feet distant at which he barked frantically, with spasmodic forward lunges, from each of which he recoiled in a panicky backward scramble.

"What's the matter with him?" exclaimed Theodore.

"Gee! He acts funny."

The dog redoubled his vocal efforts at Bobby's approach, but so far from indicating any intention of closer investigation of the hole, he shrank back, circling in a still wider arc.

"Sick 'em!" pointed Bobby, and the dog bounded and barked but maintained his distance.

"Gee! I wonder what it is."

"Must be something fierce." Theodore cast aside his encumbering creel and advanced upon the hole, pick in hand. There was nothing suspicious about the outward appearance of the place. It looked an ordinary woodchuck-hole in the side of a sand-hill.

Theodore cautiously inserted the pick-handle.

"Runs back toward that bush." He pointed above them.

Bobby's creel was tossed to lay beside Theodore's.

"Bet we can dig it out, whatever 'tis!" Shovel in hand, he scrambled up to the bush.

"Runs about there." Theodore pointed, and Bobby began to dig.

After another vain effort to incite Prince to nearer approach, Theodore joined Bobby, plying his pick valiantly as Bobby shoveled.

"If we can pull this old bush out, it will make a big hole." With the point of his pick under a root, Theodore was straining on the leverage thus obtained, but the bush resisted his efforts.

"Got to dig down deeper!" cried Bobby.

For ten minutes they labored in panting silence, excavating a considerable hole at the base of the bush.

"Maybe we can pull it over now if we jerk together." And at Theodore's suggestion they took hold and pulled. The bush bent under the combined strain, its roots slowly yielding their hold in the light soil.

"It's startin'!" gasped Bobby.

Then, without warning, boys and bush disappeared in a sliding rush of sand and gravel. They landed, jarred but unhurt, in a confused tangle of arms and legs and branches. As they struggled wildly to extricate themselves in the semidarkness of a cavernlike hole, some smaller object scrambled and twisted as frantically beneath them. Both boys realized that they had fallen upon an animal of some sort and shouted incoherently in wild panic, conscious mainly that they were choking and strangling in the narrow confines of some fearful place.

To Theodore and Bobby it seemed an eternity of convulsive effort, but in reality it was but a few palpitating seconds before they were upon their feet and the animal they had disturbed was clawing its frantic way toward the opening above them, through which the light came dimly.

In instinctive reaction, Theodore snatched up what appeared to be a stone, and when the object broke in his grasp, he hurled the piece remaining in his hand through the opening in the general direction of the departing animal.

"We'll smother in here!" gasped Bobby. Tears as from some potent gas filled their eyes, and they breathed in choking gasps. As they climbed, scrambling and crawling toward the opening, there was neither time nor coherency of sensation to consider the nature of the overpowering effluvium that filled the place. It was like nothing they had ever experienced or imagined, and a sense of deadly peril urged them on.

WHEN they again stood upon the knoll, a great pit yawned at their feet. From a distance, the barking of Prince

sounded faintly, and under the dilution of the fresh outside air the choking gas dissolved in an odor quickly and distinctly recognizable.

"Gosh, Bob! That was a skunk!" gasped Theodore in sudden realization of a plight, if less terrifying, fully as embarrassing as their recent position.

"Gee, The'dore! What are we goin' to do?"

"Don't know, 'less we go bury ourselves," said Theodore in gloomy disgust.

"We can't never go home this way," moaned Bobby.

"Gosh! There ain't no place for nobody that smells like us," Theodore admitted hopelessly.

Nevertheless, as they talked, they were slowly drifting toward the buildings. As they drew near the barn, Mr. Hunter appeared in a doorway. The farmer waved his hand in recognition and walked toward them, but as he drew within speaking-distance, he stopped abruptly.

"We found a cave!" shouted Theodore, running forward.

"You found something," admitted the farmer, waving them back.

"There was a skunk in it." Bobby advanced this superfluous information with the air of a discoverer.

"Only one?" The farmer grinned. "It don't seem possible. Say, you boys keep back until I can think."

Mr. Hunter moved further away, and the boys stood watching him hopefully.

"You stay there!" Hunter hurried back to the barn to return quickly to toss them a black cake of harness-soap. "Take that —it may take the skin off, but I guess it'll need to—and go down to the creek. Pile your clothes up somewhere and keep away from 'em. Then wash yourselves good, first with the soap and then find some mud and plaster it on thick all over, hair and all. Let it dry on until I come down." And the farmer turned away, muttering in the perplexity of a man confronted by an emergency beyond his experience. "Maybe that mud will sort of deaden it some, anyway."

But the boys turned to follow instructions in renewed hope.

"I'll bet the mud will be a good stunt," said Bobby.

"I dunno." Theodore was less hopeful. "We had a dog once that caught a skunk, and we washed him and clipped him, and all one summer, every time it rained, he was somethin' fierce."

"Gee!" cried Bobby, which expletive expressed everything. And then his face brightened. "If it ain't off by Monday, we won't have to go to school."

"Gosh! If the fellers find out the reason, we can't never go to school again!" exploded Theodore.

This was more than Bobby had bargained for.

"Gee! You wouldn't tell 'em!"

"If it don't come off, ain't nobody goin' to have to tell 'em," gloomed Theodore.

But Bobby's natural optimism refused to be downed.

"If it works like it did on your old dog, we can go to school on sunny days."

But Theodore failed to respond to this hope.

"If we had as much sense as Prince, we wouldn't be in this mess."

"I bet he knew that old skunk was in there!" cried Bobby pridefully.

"Prince is a darn smart dog." Theodore paid ungrudging homage where homage was due.

AT THE brook they quickly stripped, soaping themselves thoroughly as directed. Then they followed the additional direction and plastered their bodies with mud until they resembled two crude statues. This part was fun, and they stood drying in speculative contentment.

"Wonder if this old mud will take away all the smell," mused Bobby.

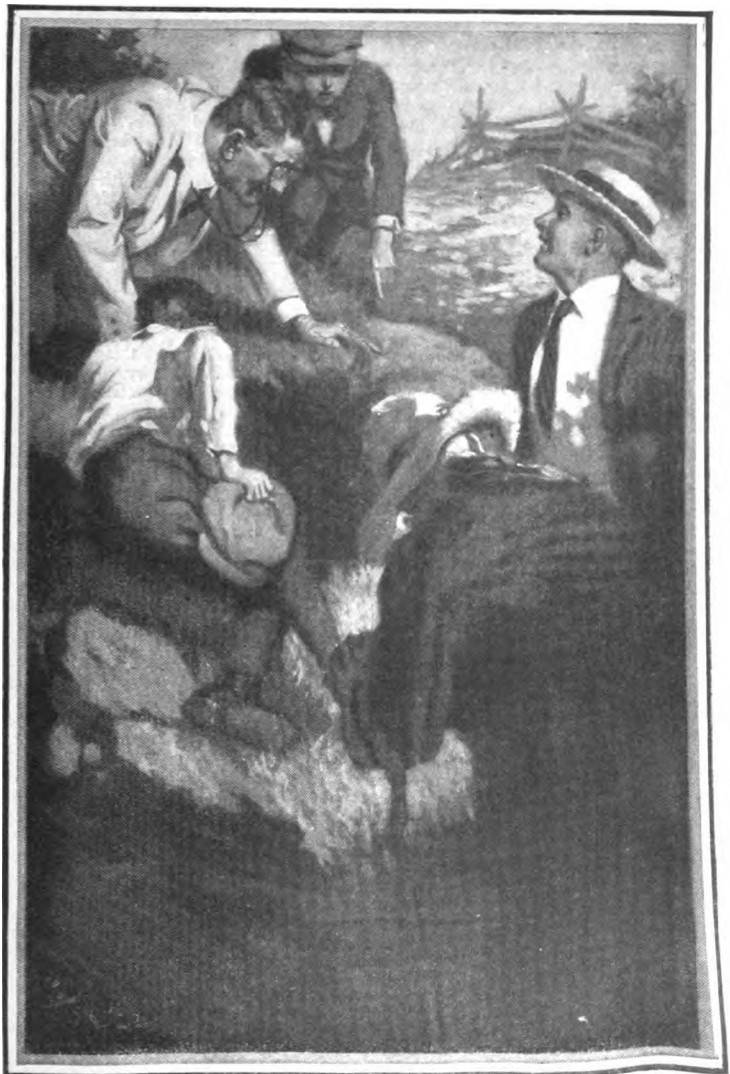
But Theodore did not answer the query.

"Say, Bobby; we found a whackin' big cave."

"Gee! It may be full of old bones and things." Bobby was dancing the mud off in his excitement.

"We got to 'splore it soon as it airs out," Theodore declared, more quiet but no less excited than Bobby. Things had happened in such bewildering succession that they were only now coming to realization of the wonderful possibilities that cave-in had opened.

"Professor Newhaus said them caves they found was full of bones of men and rinoserces, cave-bears, wooly elephants, saber-toothed tigers, and buffaloes and reindeers



The four were grouped about the opening when Grandfather Butler joined them. "This is of great scientific interest," declared the professor, peering over the edge.

and everythin'!" Bobby experienced no difficulty in remembering animals' names.

Theodore's eyes glistened with repressed excitement.

"Gosh! We'd be diggin' in there now if 'twasn't for that old skunk."

"What'd you want to go fall on him for?" cried Bobby, growing bitter at the prospect of delay.

The unjust accusation rendered Theodore speechless for the moment. But Bobby gave him no time to recover.

"We wouldn't 'ave busted through that way if you hadn't 'ave said, 'Let's pull on that old bush,' would we?"

"Gosh! Anybody'd think to hear you that I was rastlin' that old skunk on purpos'!"

"You bet he thought you done it a purpos'!" grumbled Bobby.

But the arrival of Mr. Hunter relieved a situation that threatened to become tense.

"Here's all I could find." Hunter opened a bundle displaying a man's shirt and overalls for each. "These will have to do. After milkin', I'll hitch up an' drive you home, so nobody will see you."

And then the farmer waited until they had washed off the mud and arrayed themselves in the baggy garments provided.

"I don't believe you got it all off." He sniffed suspiciously. "But I guess maybe I can stand it if your folks can." He chuckled.

"Guess we'll air out drivin' home," suggested Bobby.

"Maybe so; but there's something mighty lingerin' about skunks." And then, as they turned away, "What was it you said about findin' a cave?"

As to this, the boys enlightened him in eager concert.

"Guess I'll walk up and take a look."

"We'll show you. We got to go back and get our creels, anyway." And Theodore led off, the monstrous overalls flapping round his bare feet.

As they approached the cave, Mr. Hunter stopped to pick up something that gleamed white upon the ground.

"What's this?" he asked in amazement. And, as the boys came closer, "Looks mighty like the top of a skull."

"I'll bet that's what I chucked at the skunk!" gasped Theodore. "I thought it was a big stone, and when I grabbed it up it busted, and I threw part of it." Theodore's voice rose shrill in excitement, not unmixed with horror.

"Gee!" moaned Bobby, and then he swallowed several times before he could control his shaking voice. "I'll bet you it's another Pith—Pith—Pith—" But the word he sought was too much for him and he gave it up.

For a time they could only stare at the object held so carelessly in the farmer's hand.

"Gosh, Bobby! What'd we better do?" Involuntarily Theodore shrank back from the piece of bone.

"We better take that thing to Professor Newhaus, quick!" Bobby answered, with decision. But when Hunter extended the piece of skull toward him, he, too, shrank back in dismay. And then he bounded away for his creel. "If you'll chuck it in here, I'll carry it."

And then Hunter, fearful that the boys might catch cold, drove them home before milking.

As Bobby's mother hurried to prepare a bath, his father listened to Bobby's tale with twitching face.

"Hones', dad, it's a whoppin' cave! Ain't you goin' to 'phone Professor Newhaus?"

"Am I?" His father chuckled as he turned away.

WHEN Professor Newhaus arrived, Bobby was emerging from the second bath since his return home, at which last one his mother had officiated, to his considerable bodily discomfort. But scrubbed within an inch of his life and properly dressed, he came in to where Professor Newhaus and his father sat with the piece of skull on the table before them.

"Now, tell us about this find, Robert," began the professor, with an encouraging smile.

"Well, it was on Theodore Butler's grandfather's farm," began Bobby. "On the knoll you said was a—a——"

"Kame," prompted the professor.

"That's it! On that kame knoll." Bobby was gaining confidence. "We was diggin' round for baby woodchucks, and Prince he found the hole. Prince always digs, too, but he wouldn't have nothin' to do with this place—just bark and acted scart

when we tried to sick him. It looked jes' like a regular woodchuck-hole, and we didn't smell nothin'. We poked the pick-handle in to see which way it went, and then me and Theodore dug under a bush back up the hill a ways. Then all of a sudden we busted through."

"They probably dug into some old, forgotten grave," suggested Mr. King.

"It was old, indeed, to have contained that skull-cap," said the professor, and with his fingers he broke off a fragment that crumbled as he pressed it.

"Huh! I guess there ain't no grave as big as this house!" cried Bobby.

"Was it as large as that?" inquired the professor.

"Well, it was dark, and it smelled fierce and we couldn't see good, but it sounded like it run way back, and it was big as this room from what we could see." And then Bobby recalled a fact forgotten until now. "It had something soft all over the bottom of it—red and kinda like flour."

"That is interesting," commented the professor. "Caves are formed by the action of water, generally in Cretaceous or Carboniferous limestone, and they are frequently carpeted with fine cave-loam, often brown in color. The majority of caverns were formed in pluvial periods of early glacial times, where the ice-caps passed over the summits of the hills and the subglacial streams penetrated the limestone and formed caverns. I have never heard of caverns in such formation as we find here, but the moraines and kames formed by the lesser glaciations—like the Fourth—have never been carefully investigated."

"So caverns might form in these kames through some process of internal solidification?" inquired the editor.

"Anything might be," answered the professor guardedly.

"Only as it fits a theory." The editor smiled.

But the professor ignored this.

"The Fourth glaciation was contemporaneous in Europe and North America. This is of especial importance in connection with the question of the date of arrival of primitive man in America. In America, the Fourth glaciation is termed the 'Early Wisconsin,' with the Peorian recession interval followed by the Late Wisconsin, the last great glaciation of America. This Late Wisconsin, or 'upper drift,' spread south and eastward to this latitude and formed these moraine hills and kames."

"Then anything found in the bottom of one of these kame hills must have been deposited there by the receding waters of this last glaciation?" inquired the editor.

"That is a logical conclusion."

Bobby, listening wide-eyed, grasped at least the import of this wonderful thing that so deeply concerned him.

"Then that old skull may be a prim—prim——"

"That of a primitive man," again supplied the professor. Mr. King chuckled, but the professor, deep in thought, paid no attention.

"This skull-cap is of great antiquity, of unusual conformation and of less than we now consider normal capacity."

"Maybe the foundation of the Robert King or the Newhaus race," suggested the editor.

"Such a possibility should not be the subject of ribald mirth," snapped the professor, turning to question Bobby. "Explain again, Robert, just how you acquired this." The professor stroked the skull-bone with a caressing finger.

"The'dore thought it was a big stone, and he grabbed it up to throw at the skunk, and it broke and he chucked that piece."

"Hm-m," mused the professor. "Then the other portion remains in the cave?" Bobby nodded. "Unfortunate. Exposed to the air, it may disintegrate before we can secure it. I shall at once apply a protective coating to this fragment." The professor was plainly worried.

"I should like to see this wonderful cave. Suppose we invite Butler and his boy and motor out to-morrow morning," suggested Mr. King.

The professor eagerly agreed. Bobby, with his experience of four baths, doubted whether they would want to explore that cave yet, but he said nothing.

IRA BUTLER proved to be out of town, but Theodore quickly accepted the invitation for himself, and Sunday morning Professor Newhaus, Mr. King and the boys arrived at Grandfather Butler's.

The four were grouped about the opening to the dark pit in discussion as to what special provision in the way of clothing was

desirable before venturing upon closer investigation when Grandfather Butler joined them.

"This is of great scientific interest," declared the professor, peering over the edge of the opening. "It resembles more the paleolithic discovery-sites of Germany, in the *Loess* deposits, than the cavern stations in northern Spain, and yet it appears to differ from either." The professor was straining over the pit-edge.

"If you slide in there, we'll have to take you home rolled in a horse-blanket," warned the editor.

But the professor never even glanced round.

"Pench has estimated that the first maximum of the Fourth glaciation was reached forty thousand years ago and that the recession period ended not less than twenty thousand." The professor straightened up to glare at the editor. "Such facts may impress even you with the antiquity of this mound."

"I am impressed with the extreme freshness of its recent anointment," admitted the editor.

The professor threw out his arms in a gesture of despair.

"The jibes of ignorance have ever sounded the advance of science!" he exclaimed bitterly. And then he rallied in stern determination. "No personal discomfort must interfere with the immediate recovery of such bone fragments as have been uncovered. Exposure to the air will quickly ruin them." The professor was staring thoughtfully about. A plunge into that hole under present conditions was something to give even a scientist pause.

GRANDFATHER BUTLER had stood silent as the professor talked, his thoughts running back over the distant years.

"What do you think of that, Mr. Butler?" The editor pointed to the pit.

Grandfather Butler turned slowly, and his answer came musingly.

"Those logs must have all rotted away. Well, it was a long time ago, but I remember it just as well as if it was yesterday. I wasn't more than nine or ten years old. That would be more than eighty years ago. Don't many folks live to remember back that far."

A gleam of pride came into the dim eyes. The little group listened in expectant silence. But Grandfather Butler, in the garrulity of age, required no urging to indulge in reminiscence.

"This knoll was our corn field in those days. That spring, there was a big cloudburst back on the hills, and the water came across the top of the knoll and washed out a big gully down through here that just about ruined our corn field. There was a lot of down timber back on the hill must have been hit by a tornado long before my time, for some of it was part rotten. But there was sound timber there, too—big trees, five or six feet through at the butt, and a lot of them were cedars. The neighbors turned in to help with their oxen, and they skidded those logs down here and filled up the cut and scraped the knoll down to cover. I remember it used to settle, and we had to plow and fill in every spring, but of late years it hasn't shown any hollow. Those cedars would last a long time, but I guess the other stuff's all rotted out now and it's settling down again."

"But where did that skull come from?" cried the professor.

"Hunter said something about finding a skull," the old man reflected. "I guess I know how that might be. I remember my father telling about it. An old Indian, harmless and about half-witted, lived back on the hill when father first came here. I don't remember the Indian, but I knew where his grave was before the cloudburst washed it away. It cut a regular gully through where that grave was. I guess that Indian's bones washed down here."

The editor's laugh rang out in the Sabbath stillness of the moraine hills.

"There goes our Robert King and the Newhaus race!" he gasped, bending to the paroxysm of laughter that shook him. "Lord, Professor! Suppose some of those other archeological researchers had run into an oldest inhabitant!"

But the professor was striding wrathfully away.

As they climbed into the car for the return home, Bobby turned a disappointed face to Theodore.

"Gee! 'Tain't easy to be sure."

"Which remark displays perspicacity," chuckled his father, with a nudge to the still glooming professor.

A New Story by the Author of "Johansen"

A Matter *of* Face

Nothing So Perplexing to the Occidental as Why the Oriental Persists in Calmly Doing Certain Things Regardless of Cost—Even When It May Mean Murder

By James L. Hutchison

IN HIS upper room lighted only by one dim, flickering candle, Lao Tao'rh sat stiffly and rapidly revolved the two lacquered walnuts in his right hand while with his left he slowly stroked his white beard, pausing at intervals to take a sip of tea. The trick with the walnuts was learned from his father, and the speed with which he rolled them—there were those who said—was the only guide to the edge of his temper. For Lao Tao'rh was the eighth from generations of a line of fighters, and the traditions of his forefathers had molded him into a grim and taciturn Spartan, to whom discipline and courage were the only means to a life of which face and family were the ends.

His real name was Sung Kwei-Ti, and he was a general. But Lao Tao'rh—Old Father—his soldiers dubbed him. The term was an instinctive articulation of the love and awe in which he enslaved them. For he was stern and unyielding, and they, the Black Turbans, who feared not God or man, cringed to the wrath of Lao Tao'rh, and, in their careless, brutal way, worshiped the strength of him.

A pitiful three thousand they were; yet in the collective force of their will, instilled by the Old Father, they would have dared assault, as once they did, an army—but the tale of that is long.

To-night, as on many nights recently, when fetching tea, the old sergeant, grown bent and gray in the service of his master, paused for a moment outside the door to whisper to the sentry,

"The little walnuts roll quickly to-night—like that." And his hand opened and shut. "It's the same every night now." Nodding his head and muttering to himself, he faded gradually into a part of the night.

From lip to lip the word passed, and silence crept through the great courtyard where were the barracks. A silence that was heavy—as the stifling calm at sea before a typhoon. The mood of the father gripped his children. Here and there in the darkness, little groups of soldiers, hunched over their melon-seeds and teapots, squatted and spoke in guarded whispers; in the bunk-rooms, the dominoes lay still on tables where the gamblers had quit their *machiang*.

A faint, distant rumble drifted through the night air, hesitated, and increased in volume, finally settling into a steady thunder; above the south wall of Peking, distant some thirty-odd *li*, curled a thin, shapeless cloud of red, now brilliant, now dull, but always mounting higher, always growing in size.

Round the barracks, the little groups remained squatted over their tea, eyes fixed on the red horizon.

In his upper room, Lao Tao'rh continued to roll his lacquered walnuts and pull his beard. The noise did not penetrate his consciousness. He was lost in painful thought; he was perplexed—deeply. More, he was depressed, and, had he but known, was lonely and grief-stricken. But from inheritance and training he had learned only the larger emotions, and those of a minor quality had never tormented him.

Now, however, he was troubled. In a night the old empire had vanished, giving birth, before her death, to a republic. Lao Tao'rh thought deeply on that. What was a republic? The word conveyed no meaning. China was an empire; that it should be otherwise was inconceivable. Emperors ruled China, had always ruled it. Now there was no emperor, only an erstwhile official, a provincial chief magistrate, a fellow, Yuan Shih-Kai, who styled himself "president." And what, too, did the word "president" mean?

Lao Tao'rh was eighty-two, and it was all very silly. He gave a vicious twist to the two little lacquered walnuts and took a sip of tea.

Rather an eunuch than this man, Yuan, or that other man, the Southerner—what was he named? Sun—Sun something. Oh, yes; Sun Yat-Sen. Surely a turtle who ate nothing but fish and who also wanted to be a president. *Chia ti*, imitations, both of them, without face whatsoever. No meaning—all of it—no meaning.

His world was in dusty ruins about his feet, and Lao Tao'rh could not realize the fact. His staunch pride and iron will refused admittance to an idea that did not clearly convey a definite duty. His family ever had trained soldiers and fought for emperors. In Taku, the port from which the imperial stone highway led to the south gate of Peking, had not Lao Tao'rh himself for sixty years trained his men for his dowager and his emperor?

BUT now he had neither dowager nor emperor—but a something called a president. Even at that, was it *his* president? Since the throne was gone, Lao Tao'rh had received no instructions. He collected his supplies as usual; but though he had requested an audience with the president, no answer had been forthcoming. In the mad rush of events, the new government had failed to take count of Lao Tao'rh and his handful of old-fashioned troops stationed at Taku. To the president he was non-existent. Here was a patriot with three thousand warriors and no country.

For himself, Lao Tao'rh did not care. He had performed faithfully and well his duties. He was old; soon he would die. But the face of his family—ah, that was a different matter! His mind, sensitive only to points of face and honor, painfully visualized the government as an unified devil deliberately ignoring him and his authority. This it was that hurt—and deeply. That he, Lao Tao'rh, should thus lose face before the world, and, by so doing, disgrace forever the hitherto unbroken traditions of his family!

And his son, now twenty-four? His son, young Sung, was a captain under Lao Tao'rh, reared and trained under the stern discipline of his father. What was to become of him? Was the family tradition, now breaking, to leave the boy to the fate of a beggar without caste? It was inconceivable. To live in a republic, a world of no customs, no——

His labored thoughts were broken by the entrance of the sentry, who stood at attention before him.

"Well?"

"A fire, sir; a big fire in Peking, and much noise. A boom, boom, boo——"

"Silence! Enough! Tell Sung, the captain, I want him. Get out, dog!"

Within five minutes his son stood before him; as the sentry had done, he stood at attention. Young Sung had the tall, lean build of the Northerner, and his face was comely. But he was too thin, without the Northerner's usual hint of steel in his slender limbs; and the lines round his sensitive mouth were drawn, in the manner of a man whose mind suffered and strained in the night.

"Captain," snapped Lao Tao'rh, "in Peking is trouble. Noise and fire. Send a runner to report. Arm the troops. Have them stand ready."

"Yes, sir." His son saluted and was gone.

Late into the night, until the runner returned, Lao Tao'rh sat without movement other than rolling in his hand the two lacquered walnuts. They revolved more slowly now; the sense of impending action soothed and quieted his mind.

Near daybreak, the breathless runner made his report.

"Looting—shooting—fire. Fifty thousand, one hundred thousand Yuan Shih-Kai soldiers. Shooting everywhere, stealing everything, killing every——"

"Enough, fool! Get thee gone!"

Lao Tao'rh clapped his hands. The sentry appeared.

"The captain, and quickly, idiot!"

"Looting in Peking," he bruskly informed his son. "Soldiers broke loose. President! Hah! Order my carriage at once. We ride to Peking. Looting—*ai*—" He pulled his beard thoughtfully. "Fifty men are plenty for that—and the beheader; we take him. Now go!"

At the word "beheader," the body of young Sung stiffened and his hands clenched. His yellow cheeks turned the color of a corpse; but it was hardly perceptible before he had saluted, turned and disappeared.

Sitting in his closed carriage on the slow, bumpy ride over the rough stone road to Peking, Lao Tao'rh was happier than he had been for many days past. He was a soldier in action, and for the moment his troubles were forgotten—face was forgotten. Forgotten? No; not completely. Dimly, ever so dimly, he sensed an opportunity to recoup at one blow his loss of face. The notion did not occur to him that he was unlimbering for a country which no longer existed, for an emperor who was a shadow of his imagination. In truth, he did not think. There was a disturbance; he was a soldier; it was his duty to restore quiet. At this point, reflection ceased. What followed was almost instinctive reaction. The little lacquered walnuts rolled softly and slowly in his hand.

By the side of Lao Tao'rh, young Sung sat huddled in a nerveless despair. Behind his staring, lifeless face his thoughts raced at breakneck speed. As though he were a drowning man, his life, from the genesis of his first fear to the miserable present, passed in review before him. He recalled vividly the day, when but twelve years of age, he was playing in a corner of the parade-ground. Without warning, a squad of soldiers at double quick rushed on to the ground. Lao Tao'rh at their head, issued a few sharp commands. A man was led forth. He was stripped to the waist and his hands tied behind his back. A soldier forced the man to his knees, gripped his queue and stretched it taut. Another soldier lifted a huge, curved two-handed sword and——

At the image, young Sung flinched, and a cold sweat burst out on his forehead. Vainly he strove to drag his mind to the present, to escape; but his relentless memory held firmly to its course. The memory of that scene of blood nauseated and sickened him until he gritted his teeth from the fear that he would faint.

At the time he *had* fainted. But luckily—or unluckily—the child lying in the corner was unseen, and through the years his secret had remained locked in his breast.

The fear of fear! The sight of blood had sickened him, and he deemed himself a coward. With this idea dogging him, shrieking at him, he had grown into manhood. The longer he suppressed and battled with the fear the stronger and more deadly did it grow.

The fear of fear! To have this nightmare gnawing day and night at the vitals of his soul! To think that at any moment he might betray himself! To think that at any instant he might lose in one moment the face that through generations his family had laboriously earned! Suppose—tonight—the beheader trudging behind the carriage—blood—*ai yai* He caught his breath in a sharp intake.

SHORTLY after dawn, a morning of dry, stinging cold, they entered the south gate of Peking. The gates were open, but the keeper was absent, and the many hawker booths and adobe huts were deserted. The emptiness gave the impression of a city that was dead, but in the distance could be heard the crash—grown sharp now—of rifles and the whine of ricochetting bullets.

As they crossed into Hatamen, the main street of the Tatar city, Lao Tao'rh and his fifty soldiers presented an odd but menacing spectacle. A closed yellow brougham trimmed with black, drawn by two ponies at a slow walk; striding behind, two by two, fifty long, slender, muscular fighters, black turbans, long black sashes knotted about the waists, dark-blue coats and loose, baggy trousers belted in at the ankles—with one exception: a hard-faced fellow with turban and sash of red, balancing on his left shoulder a huge simitar. Matching the cold bleakness of dawn, a grim, determined procession—a procession of death.

Without hesitation they proceeded up Hatamen in the direction whence came the firing. Here lay a body almost absurd in its relaxed sprawl; there a huddled, moaning heap, still clasping tightly a bundle snatched from some pawn-shop; shadowy figures scurried up *hutungs*, staggering under their loads of loot.

A Republican soldier trotted past, bareheaded, his rifle gone, his arms laden with stolen goods. Lao Tao'rh, peering through the window of his brougham, spied him. He thumped on the window-pane; the carriage stopped. Turning to his son, he ordered harshly:

"Give the orders! Catch the dog; behead him; have his head strung on a tripod! They think, they do, that we, the sons of Sung, have no face. *Ai-ya*, I, Sung, shall tell them! 'Tis good; go!" He clutched his walnuts, pulled his beard and chuckled.

Young Sung descended from the carriage. For those few seconds his mind was blank; he was a machine obeying automatically the touch of its operator. In a hoarse, unnatural tone he issued his orders. The sound of his own voice apparently brought him back to realities; and as a squad of soldiers rushed after the looter, young Sung, with staring, horror-stricken eyes, swayed, to and fro as a young tree in the wind.

In a daze, gasping for control, he watched the soldiers catch the looter, roughly strip him to the waist and tie his hands behind him. With terrified dread he watched them as they led the looter to the middle of the street and forced him to his knees. His fascinated eyes followed the red-turbaned beheader as he stepped forward, sword poised, waiting the final order.

Young Sung opened his lips to speak, but no sound came forth. His tongue clung to the roof of his dry mouth. He was a man in a dream, detached, apart, gazing upon a scene two thousand miles distant—a scene which had no meaning. Mouth open, he stood swaying.

Lao Tao'rh, glaring through the carriage window, became impatient and tapped with his walnuts on the glass. At the sound, young Sung was swept back into his surroundings and wheeled round, facing the carriage. For five seconds—an eternity—their gazes locked—the menacing eyes of the father, the terrified eyes of the son.

Then, his eyes never leaving the face of his son, Lao Tao'rh opened the door and climbed from the brougham. He walked up closely to young Sung, stood looking at him, and without change of expression, without one word, pointed to the carriage. When young Sung had stumbled into his seat, Lao Tao'rh turned to the beheader, clapped his hands and issued a sharp command. White of hair, white of beard, eighty-two years of age, erect, Lao Tao'rh, a soul yet undefeated, strode at the head of his death-dealing troops.

Trembling violently from reaction, young Sung, in utter misery, sat with unseeing eyes glued on his father as the little force wended its interrupted journey down Hatamen. Blank despair engulfed him; his mind had room for naught else. His face was lost.

THUS it went for four, five, six cross-streets. Young Sung took a deep breath and suddenly, with a gasp, straightened up and rubbed his eyes. *Wang Pa Tan!* He swore in sudden surprise. For six cross-streets his eyes had been focused upon a series of slaughters, yet his misery was so great that his mind had refused to respond. Now he was alert, concentrated. At the next stop, he deliberately surveyed the gruesome performance from beginning to end. Then he leaned back with a sigh. Not a tremor had disturbed him. Blood? Bah! He was not afraid of blood; something red—that was all—nothing to fear, nothing to sicken over. And all these years he had—well, at least he knew now that he was not a coward; he knew that. Something had been curiously wrong, but whatever came now, he vowed to himself, he could meet—aye; would meet—as a man. He could have laughed aloud—but for the one thought that stayed him; his face was gone. Now it was too late, and forever the stain was there. The soldiers had seen.

And yet—was it too late? Perhaps—At least he would try it. Even yet, by quick action, might he save his face.

Taking a deep breath, he stepped from the carriage and ran up to where his father stood waiting that a looter be trussed up for the final order of death. Young Sung saluted and spoke loudly, that the Black Turbans, one and all, might hear.

"I take your orders, sir, and you give them. But a while back and I was near to being ill. In the night I had eaten of what hurt my stomach and was weak. Now it does not matter, sir, if I may direct the beheadings."

He stopped speaking. Lao Tao'rh, with never a word, returned his salute, turned on his heel and climbed into the brougham.

For two hours, young Sung continued to issue his terrible orders until the streets of

the Tatar city were empty save for a curious, startling mass at each corner. Fifty thousand armed soldiers had been subdued by the will of one old man and a son who thought himself afraid. The riot was smashed.

His work finished, young Sung seated himself by the side of his father, and the brougham, with its guard, retraced the bumpy stone road to Taku. Lao Tao'rh gazed out of the window and steadily rolled his two lacquered walnuts. Once young Sung leaned over and touched his arm.

"I am afraid of nothing," he said.

Lao Tao'rh might not have heard; he neither moved nor spoke. But maybe it was that he did not hear; for again a hint of trouble disturbed his mind, again arose a question of face. As he fought it out, the little walnuts rubbed against each other as if eagerly.

By his exploits of the morning, Lao Tao'rh had saved his face beyond a peradventure. He had proved himself mightier than this strange new government; his ancestors were vindicated for the insulting slight given them by the man, Yuan. But a greater problem now confronted him. What about young Sung? True, he had managed to pull himself together and at the last moment saved his face by telling a lie. For it was a lie. Of that Lao Tao'rh was convinced. Even the soldiers knew that it was a lie. But lie though it was, it could pass, for young Sung had supported his lie by honest action. And, according to custom, no one might declare it other than the truth. Thus, by the nature of things, was young Sung still brave before the eyes of the Black Turbans—and thus was his face saved.

For the present, Lao Tao'rh was satisfied. But the future? Aye; what then? Young Sung had shown the taint of fear. Lao Tao'rh had seen many men afraid. When he had climbed from the carriage that morning and looked into the eyes of his son, he had read surely the terror that lay there. And it might come again—that terror. The next time, a lie might be too late, or there might not be a lie. Then would be the loss of face—complete, irrevocable—a great tree killed to the roots by one small rotten branch.

Ah, yes; it was what the future might bring forth. Fear in the family of Sung? Lao Tao'rh was in the straits of a philosopher earnestly attempting to visualize infinity. He could not know, he would never believe the truth, even did young Sung tell him. He could never know that his son had shown the truest of all courage—that he had fought alone and slain a soul-crunching monster of his imagination. He had known his son to be afraid; he could only feel that again young Sung might fear, and he could vaguely see the horrible consequences—the loss of face before the world and before his ancestors.

At Taku, Lao Tao'rh ordered that young Sung be confined and a guard placed before the door and window. Then he returned to his upper room, where he refreshed himself, rubbing his face and hands with a hot wet towel on which was sprinkled scented toilet-water.

In the early hours of the morning, when it is blackest, the old gray sergeant paused outside the door.

"The little walnuts," he whispered to the sentry, "they go neither fast nor slow, but steady, like the tom-tom of a blind man. *Ai-ya;* the old do not sleep, my son."

AS THE door opened and young Sung, a guard on either side, entered, a shaft of morning sunlight split the gloom of the upper room and planted its rays on the face of Lao Tao'rh. It was like the flash of a light on a diamond which gives back sparks of fire but itself remains cold and unmoved. Serene and clear-eyed, young Sung faced his father.

The trial opened. Lao Tao'rh began deliberately:

"You committed a breach of discipline, sir. You disobeyed the orders of your superior. What say you to that?"

"It was a mistake, sire. The fault was mine, sire. I am a soldier. I am ready to pay the penalty."

The little walnuts rolled quickly as Lao Tao'rh absent-mindedly twisted his fingers.

"You know the penalty, sir?"

"Yes, sire."

"You know that it is death?"

"Yes, sire."

"Have you anything more to say, sir?"

The ghost of a smile lighted the face of young Sung, and his voice was steady.

"Yes, sire. I say that I fear nothing—nothing."

In the hand of Lao Tao'rh, the lacquered

walnuts rolled slowly and evenly around and around.

"It is good. Your rank gives you the privilege of being shot."

Lao Tao'rh waved his hand and, but for his son, cleared the room.

On the parade-ground, Lao Tao'rh stood by the side of the firing squad ready to give the command. On the opposite side, against the adobe wall, young Sung faced him. He refused the blindfold. A smile was in his eyes; a smile hovered round his lips. A command from Lao Tao'rh. A rattle of muskets. Another command. A shattering report. For a second, young Sung remained standing, still smiling, then slowly crumpled forward and lay face downward and still.

Again were the perversions of custom appeased. No disgrace was attached to the fact that young Sung was shot down coldbloodedly as though he were the veriest criminal. Under the circumstance, his courage made all the difference. Lao Tao'rh had staked the face of the family on one quick throw and—had won. His face and the face of his family were saved and were secure. His love for his son was deep and unwavering, but deeper and stronger was his fear of custom—his fear of face. Truly, Fate, surveying the struggle, must have smiled, perhaps sadly, perhaps a bit ironically.

In his upper room, Lao Tao'rh slowly rolled the little lacquered walnuts one against the other. He was tired and felt old—very, very old. But his face was serene and his heart was lighter than in many a day. The honor of the family was untarnished. He would never understand the Peking occurrence, but in the final test his son had proved himself—his son had died bravely. Better young Sung was dead—with no emperor, no country, and with— Yes; it was better. And good, too, it was, that the child of young Sung was only a girl. The women could live; it made no difference.

Lao Tao'rh sighed. Well, he, too, would go to join his ancestors—soon now.

When the bent and gray sergeant entered with the morning tea, the flickering candlelight illumined the smile on the lips of Lao Tao'rh and cast a faint halo round his white hair. In his right hand the two lacquered walnuts were motionless. The line was broken. The dragon was gone.

EPILOGUE

THE people of the South hated them who dwelt in the North with a hatred that was deep and unreasoning.

These Manchus, said they of the South, are not of our folk and therefore must they go.

And the Manchus were distressed for that their throne tottered and was near to falling.

Better it is, argued the prince regent to his kin, that a Northerner rule, though we, the Dragon, lose the throne for a time.

And he called in an official, saying:

"We know that we are like to lose our throne, but better it is that thou, though not of royal blood, than a Southerner, dost rule.

"For the day may come when the people are quieted, and our emperor may ascend once more, and thou wilt have kept all in readiness. So do thou pretend to seize the emperor and declare thyself as president."

And the man, Yuan Shih-Kai, did as he was bid, and the country, both North and South, acclaimed him patriot.

And Yuan ruled and talked much of cabinets and parliaments and other furniture of liberal governments. But the manner of ruling changed not, so that the people of the South were embittered and said:

"It is the same as though we had an emperor. We must have a voting that the people may have their desires."

Then they wrote to the man, Yuan, and said:

"Come thou to Shanghai, and we shall hold a voting before the people. For we, too, have a man of our people, Sun Yat-Sen, who is liked, and he and thou shall contest for the presidency."

But the man, Yuan, feared to go, for that he feared treachery, so that he sought about to make excuses not to go.

And he called in his generals and said:

"Command that all of the soldiers of Peking, numbering fifty thousand and more, fire their guns to-night and burn some several houses and loot, and on to-morrow at noon do ye bid them to cease.

"Thus shall I show the turtles of the South," said Yuan, "that in Peking am I sorely needed that peace may dwell in the land."

And thus were obeyed the commands, so that in Peking was looting and death.

But a greater man than the man, Yuan—an aged warrior with hair of white—did not know of such, and never knew, but did his duty as he saw it.

A Story of Paris, City of Contrasts

The Pointed Tower

Mr. Guelpa, by Testing Various Theories with Fact and Logic, Shows the Correct Method of Criminal Investigation and Winds Up the Great de Granlieu Case

By Vance Thompson

Illustrations by Gerald Leake

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

WITH the arrest of Heldon—chauffeur for one Jandel—and the recovery of the famous Granlieu diamond, chief ornament of the countess's historic tiara, from a "fence" in the Rue de Provence, to whom Heldon's wife, Viola, had sold it, the first ray of light was shed upon the mystery of the Comte de Granlieu's death. Put down at first as suicide by the *Sûreté* police, this verdict was changed to murder after evidence pointing to that cause was discovered by Mr. Guelpa, the noted criminologist, who was retained to investigate the case by the count's father. And now suspicion rested upon the countess, who had been Eva Ryle, an American heiress. So far, there was not sufficient reason for her arrest, but things were looking dark, and no one was more perturbed over this than John Faynis, an old-time sweetheart in New York, who, as her lawyer and trustee of her father's estate, was now in Paris on business in connection with her finances, which, owing to the count's profligacy, were in a somewhat disordered condition.

He and the countess paid a visit to Mr. Guelpa, and the latter put the case frankly before them—as the police saw it.

They believed the countess hated her husband and feared for her fortune. Also, that she was still in love with Faynis. The count had taken her tiara from her—it had been pledged with a money-lender, and she had borrowed it to wear to a ball—and over its loss a scandal might arise. She had gone to the apartment where he went to live after their separation, determined to get it back, and had failed.

They had left together in—it was known—a car owned by Jandel, a notorious character, well known in sporting-circles, and driven by Heldon.

The police also believed that she had shot the count in the car when he refused to give up the tiara, and by some means had deposited the body in the Bois de Boulogne, where it was discovered the next day.

Faynis had listened to Mr. Guelpa's statement of the case without comment. He did not for a moment imagine it had been made out of kindness; sentiment, he was sure, played a small part in the old scientist's criminal investigation. Although he was retained by the Marquis de Granlieu and was, of course, collaborating with the police, what he was really interested in was to find out the truth of the tragedy that ended at the Pool of Auteuil in the Bois de Boulogne. And with this calmly intellectual

attitude, Faynis rather sympathized; he could understand it. Then it was not without intention that Mr. Guelpa had disclosed the police case against the wife of the murdered man. He had wanted Faynis to know it; but why?

No accusation of any kind had been brought against her. The interrogation at the inquest, at which all the members of the family had been present, had been mere formality, and a verdict of suicide had seemingly closed the case.

But that verdict had been torn to pieces by the police, who had discovered the count did not commit suicide, and by the old marquis, who believed his son's wife was guilty of the murder. That was clear; but why had Mr. Guelpa shown him the police hand—laid the cards on the table? Because he did not believe Eva was guilty; because he did not believe she was in any way implicated in the crime. No other explanation was possible. And he had made the statement not with any kindly idea of bringing comfort to a woman in great distress but in order that he, Faynis, might know these facts and make what use of them he could.

From the beginning he had awaited developments.

He and Eva were moving among shadows—among obscure and vague suspicions. He had feared to take any steps in the darkness. Always before he acted he wanted to know; and this drama of crime and detection was being played in a world of which he knew neither the laws nor the methods. This Paris, with its social abysses, its antique and complicated laws and methods of procedure, was far from the Broadway he knew. And so he had hesitated to take any action; he had watched and waited. He had not even consulted Eva's French lawyers. But now he had something to go on. Mr. Guelpa, in his statement, had laid the cards on the table. He could see where he was going; he was not putting down his feet in the dark.

IT WAS characteristic of Faynis that he was not a man of impulse. Things ripened slowly for him. Once he had made up his mind, however, to a course of action, he went steadily to the end he had in view. He was not clever—he had too much brain to be clever with. But his intellect was sound. In a hard-working life it had brought success to him in a difficult profession. At last there was something he could do; he could perhaps, with the aid of the embassy, get an interview with Heldon, or, on the other hand, there was Dominique.

He rang the bell of the flat in the Rue Boissy-d'Anglas, where the Comte de Granlieu had betaken himself after the separation from his wife. Dominique, the count's valet, opened the door. It was an unperturbed Dominique, suave and dignified in his flabby way.

"You know me?" Faynis asked.

Dominique knew him very well; there was nothing connected with the house of Granlieu which Dominique did not know—save perhaps a profitable secret or two having to do with matters which had happened before his time.

"Then take me into a quiet place where we can talk."

"It is quiet enough here now, sir," said Dominique; "but perhaps the smoking-room is the more retired place—the *salon* opens on the street, and one never knows. May I take your things, sir? Thank you, sir."

The room into which Faynis was shown was small and comfortable, with its easy chairs and bookcases and card-tables and smoking-stands. There were a few good pictures on the wall and, over the mantelpiece, crossed foils and antique swords. It was a pleasant room to lounge in.

Faynis sat down and told Dominique to take a seat; and for a few seconds he looked at the valet, wondering what was behind that flabby face and what lurked in those round eyes. The dominant motive governing this respectable valet—squatting there politely on the edge of a chair—was evidently greed; and to that greed Faynis unhesitatingly appealed. Greed and pomposity—and the combination requires careful treatment.

"Dominique, you have served the de Granlieu family for many years."

"Fifteen years, sir."

"Of course the family must not forget what it owes you. Is there a pension for you? A legacy? Do you know?

Dominique moistened his lips.

"I have not heard—yet," he replied.

"The Comtesse de Granlieu wishes that all the servants should be taken care of—

especially you, who were so close to the count, for so many years his confidential servant—almost a friend."

"Yes, sir."

"It will be my duty to see that you are properly rewarded. But you understand one thing, Dominique: you've got to come out in the open and stand with us in this matter."

"With *us*, sir?"

"It's clear enough that I speak for the countess."

In Dominique's mind the request was that he should take his stand on the side of money. His inclination pointed that way, and, in addition, fear was driving him. The police had questioned him without much kindness. He had made up his mind that he would be safer in the hands of Faynis than if he tried to carry on alone. All his life he had taken orders, and it was hard to find himself masterless—left, like a lost dog, to think for himself.

"Ask me anything you please, sir," he said at last.

"You have been examined by the police?"

"I answered all their questions, sir. But what I didn't answer were the questions they didn't ask me."

"I see. And those are the things you are going to tell me now?"

"In confidence, sir, I trust."

"I don't know about that. I have no intention of protecting any guilty man or woman. That aside, I will respect your confidence," Faynis promised.

DOMINIQUE bent forward, his thick white hands on his knees, and stared ponderously at the young lawyer; the face he looked into was steady and hard—formidable for attack or defense.

'I'll have to trust you, sir," he said, after a pause. "I do not want to protect any one who is guilty, and I'm sure you'll understand that I did what was forced upon me, as it were, sir."

"I think you are right, Dominique. You will have to trust me. It will be best for you. I don't want you to make any statement. Just answer my questions—a few questions—and we'll see. You remember the night of the Dubrowski ball? It was two nights before the count was killed. You remember?"

"Yes, sir."

"What time did the count come home that night?"

"I remember perfectly well, sir. I was sitting up for him—it was about half-past three in the morning."

"Did he come directly from the ball?"

"Oh, no, sir. He came from the house in the Avenue Henri Martin."

"What? How do you know that?"

"Well, you see, sir, he brought home the tiara—the Granlieu tiara—which he had got from the countess that night."

"You saw it?"

"Certainly, sir. It was I who put it away in the safe—that little safe in the writing-desk. And, of course, the count told me what he intended to do with it. In fact," said Dominique, with a touch of his old pomposity, "he asked my advice."

"Well?"

"You see, sir, we were in need of money. We were very short. Of course, the count had no secrets from me. I was in his confidence. I knew all about the Granlieu tiara—it had helped us out before. The count had already had a bit of money on it, quite a large sum, from the jeweler, Dufrène. The countess had redeemed it and wore it to the ball. So, of course, the count went and got it and brought it home with him. He laughed a great deal when he took the tiara out of his pocket and told me to lock it up," Dominique concluded, and, in sympathy with de Granlieu's laughter, his fat face was creased with smiles.

"Did the count say that his wife had redeemed the jewels?"

"That is where he wasn't quite sure. The countess had told him some tale of her having merely borrowed them from Mr. Dufrène to wear that night. And he wasn't sure. Ah, sir, if we had really known! But we didn't know."

Dominique spoke as one who had a grievance against fate. He must have had some obscure kind of love for his dead master; there was real emotion in his voice.

"We thought it just possible that Mr. Dufrène had really lent the tiara to the countess for that night, and, if that were true, there would be little use in taking it to him for a new loan."

"So this time you did not dare to go to him?"

"It seemed unwise, sir. That was my advice, and the count agreed with me. What

else could I advise? We dared not risk going to Mr. Dufrêne. And the Granlieu jewels could not be pawned—like some common person's watch—in a government pawn-shop. And, then, we wanted more money. So we determined to sell them once for all and get as much money as possible. There was bitter need of money, sir—the count was pressed very hard those days."

"And he asked you to find a purchaser?"

"That was the beginning of it all, sir. We needed the money and, I think, sir, if you will permit me to say so, that the count did not wish the tiara ever to be returned to the countess. I am sure that was in his mind when he laughed. He was feeling very bitter toward the countess after the separation."

"Yes. And you found a purchaser?"

"I did not know my man, sir. You understand it had to be done in the dark, so to speak. The jewels were too well known to all the ordinary dealers, and the count did not wish the transaction to become public. It was then I thought of Heldon. I had known him for a long time—and his wife," Dominique added, with a sly, greasy look which came so often to his face. "I knew them both. I had done a bit of racing myself now and then—with Heldon——"

"Go on, Dominique; I am waiting."

"I knew that Heldon's *patron* was dealing in jewels and things of that sort."

"You're beating about the bush, Dominique. Did you know Jandel?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was he?"

A LITTLE color rose in Dominique's flabby face; he hesitated.

"I didn't know then," he admitted finally, "but I know now—he was what is called a dealer in stolen goods. His bookmaking business was more or less of a cover. The Heldons acted as go-between for him. I didn't know it then, sir, I assure you. When I spoke of the matter to Heldon, he told me at once that Jandel was our man. It was arranged I should let him see the tiara before there was any discussion of terms."

"What happened then?"

"Jandel was ready to buy. But he wanted to get it for a song. He thought——"

"Perhaps that you had stolen it?"

"That I had no authority," corrected Dominique, with dignity, "to sell it. So it was necessary that he should meet the count. That was necessary. He had to know it was a straightforward transaction, and the price had to be fair."

"And your commission? And Heldon's?"

"Of course, sir. He was to pay them. There was a good deal of discussion, but Jandel agreed to our terms. He said he would buy the tiara—but only from the count, that he would have the money at his house the next day, and he would send his car for the count at nine-thirty in the evening."

"He sent Heldon?"

"Yes, sir. It was about half-past nine when Heldon came, with his *patron's* car. I let him in and took him to the *salon*, where the count was waiting."

"Did you hear what was said?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but I was sent for the liqueur-case. I brought it into the *salon* with two glasses, which I placed on the table. The count offered Heldon a drink, but he refused—he was standing by the door—and said he would go out and wait in the car. The count laughed and drank a liqueur."

"And the second glass?"

"He had filled it and left it on the tray."

"And you drank it?"

"Later, sir—after he was gone. He was just going out—indeed, we were at the door—when the bell rang again. It was *madame la comtesse*. I think the count was rather startled, sir, for it seemed a strange coincidence to be stopped by the countess just as he was going out of the door with the tiara in his pocket. He went back with her to the *salon*."

"I believe you heard something of what was said, Dominique."

"It was impossible not to overhear something, for *madame la comtesse* was quite excited. You see, it was about the tiara. She insisted upon having it. Of course, that was impossible, and the count told her quite frankly—he was always frank and open, sir—that it was sold."

"Which it wasn't," said Faynis grimly.

"Practically sold, sir; for the count had given his word. With him, his word was sacred. *Noblesse oblige*," continued Dominique, and Faynis could not make out whether there was a sneer in his voice or not.

"Go on," he said curtly; there was something morally greasy and unclean about this smiling valet which was getting on Faynis's nerves, but he knew, nevertheless, that he was hearing the truth, in so far, at least, as Dominique could bring himself to tell it. He felt almost a touch of sympathy for the young count caught in the web of money-lenders and crooks, with only this greed-bitten servant to depend upon. In fact, it seemed clear to him that Dominique, keen on his commission for selling the jewels, was primarily responsible for those dark negotiations which had ended in death.

"I will go on, sir," Dominique replied. "They left together—the count and the countess—in the car Heldon was driving. They drove directly to the Avenue Henri Martin."

"You can't know that, Dominique."

"I had it from Heldon, sir, and I heard the count give him the order."

"Heldon can substantiate that?"

"I don't know what there is except his word for it. But why should he lie about it? He drove the countess directly to her home in the Avenue Henri Martin. He said so—and Heldon is a truthful man—that is," Dominique added, "in some things."

"Then Heldon and the count were alone in the car after it left the Avenue Henri Martin?"

"You have Heldon's word for it, sir."

"Yes; his word."

Faynis knew what the police would think his word was worth, since they held him for an accomplice in the crime and suspected him, as Mr. Guelpa had intimated, of being in the pay of the Comtesse de Granlieu. And yet it was something to have even his evidence that the countess did not, as the the police believed, accompany her husband on that fatal ride.

The one thing of importance now was that he should see Heldon, and that would be difficult, if not impossible. He did not quite know what the regulations were in regard to seeing a prisoner who had not yet been brought into court.

"Dominique?"

"Yes, sir."

"What part did Heldon take in the murder?"

"I don't believe it, sir. Heldon is not that kind. But he is in deep water, and he doesn't dare to talk. He doesn't know where he stands or what they've got against him. So he's shut his mouth. That's his way—he's English. But I don't believe he had part in the count's death. You see, I know why he is holding his tongue. I know a great deal."

"Well?"

"I know about the diamond. The police have it. They got it off old Meyer, to whom Mrs. Heldon sold it, and they found the money on Heldon. That's one thing they have against him. And when the police get a man for one thing, it's not long until they put something else on him. He's a wise man to hold his tongue, sir, but if he only knew he could trust you, as I do—" Dominique paused. "It's that little matter of the diamond. If that could be put right—if there were to be no prosecution for that—I think," Dominique went on, "Heldon could tell you a great deal more than he has told me."

FAYNIS got up and walked across the room. For a while he stood looking at the little varnished safe which had once held the tiara; then he strolled back to where Dominique, who had also risen, was standing respectfully by his chair. The two men looked at each other in silence. It was a trained mind pitting itself against a craftiness equally well trained. But Faynis felt he had scored. It had not been his intention to try to discover the murderer of the Comte de Granlieu. That was an affair for the police. His sole aim was to break down the case they had built up against the countess. In his interview with the valet, two very important points had been gained. The first would enable him to show that the countess had had no motive whatever in accompanying her husband in Jandel's car on the night of the crime, and that, on the contrary, she had every motive in terminating then and there an interview which, since she supposed the tiara to have been sold, led and could lead to no issue. The count, on his part, had an equally strong motive in leaving his wife, since Jandel was awaiting him, to conclude the sale of the jewels. So the motives of both husband and wife exactly fitted in with what Dominique and Heldon claimed—that she did not accompany the count but allowed him to drive her home.

The second bit of evidence revealed by

Dominique's story was equally important, for this evidence tended to destroy entirely the police theory of a passional crime.

The negotiations which the valet had opened with Jandel and Heldon for the sale of the tiara had led straight up to the murder. There could be no possible doubt of that. The count had been driven off in Jandel's car, by Jandel's chauffeur, to terminate a monetary transaction with him, and he was never seen alive after leaving the flat.

If any further proof of this were needed, there was the diamond—pawned or sold by Mrs. Heldon—showing incontestably that the tiara had somehow come into her possession on the death of the count.

Well satisfied, Faynis reseated himself and, looking up at Dominique, said quietly,

"There is only one way in which you could have learned about Meyer and the diamond and the money and the arrest—only one person could have told you."

"I do not understand, sir."

"I do, Dominique. And now will you tell Mrs. Heldon that I should like to speak with her?"

"Mrs. Heldon?"

"Certainly; for Mrs. Heldon is here," declared Faynis. "And unless she had hidden herself in the Pointed Tower, I don't know that she could have found a safer hiding-place. Am I right?"

Dominique glanced around uneasily.

"Yes, sir," he said. "Mrs. Heldon is here. She was at Jandel's, and made her escape just as the police raided his flat. It was at night, sir—two hours after midnight—when she reached here, and I couldn't turn her away. She had had a bad time of it. It seems that Jandel had tried to prevent her from leaving—or she had tried to prevent him. I don't know; but there was a struggle, and Jandel fell. He was unconscious when she left."

"He was injured?"

"That is what we don't know. There has been nothing in the newspapers. He may be arrested."

"I hope so," Faynis said. "It would mean that the police are seeing things as I see them—at last. Dominique, tell Mrs. Heldon I want to see her."

"I can tell her, sir, but I do not know what she will do. You see, she took a big chance in coming here."

"It was the safest place she could have found. No one would think of looking for her here. And if she got in unseen, I should think she is quite safe for the present. And I will not betray her. Tell her that, and tell her also that I can probably help her. She can't afford not to see me. Anyway, if she won't come to see me, I'll go to her—she has to see me."

"I'll make it plain enough to her," said Dominique, "and, after all, she's a sensible woman."

"Then bring her here."

Dominique was just leaving the room—his hand was on the door-knob—when a bell rang.

"Wait!" said Faynis quickly. "Was that the outside bell?"

"Yes, sir," Dominique answered, sinking his voice; "and it may be the police. I've been expecting them ever since that woman came."

"No matter who it is, bring them to me—directly into this room."

A MOMENT later Faynis heard voices in the hall. There was a smothered exclamation from Dominique, and then a clear voice, familiar to him as his own, spoke his name. With a smile, half whimsical, half annoyed, he went to the door and held it open as the valet announced the Comtesse de Granlieu.

"I might have known," he exclaimed, "it would be you!"

"Yes; it's I," replied Eva.

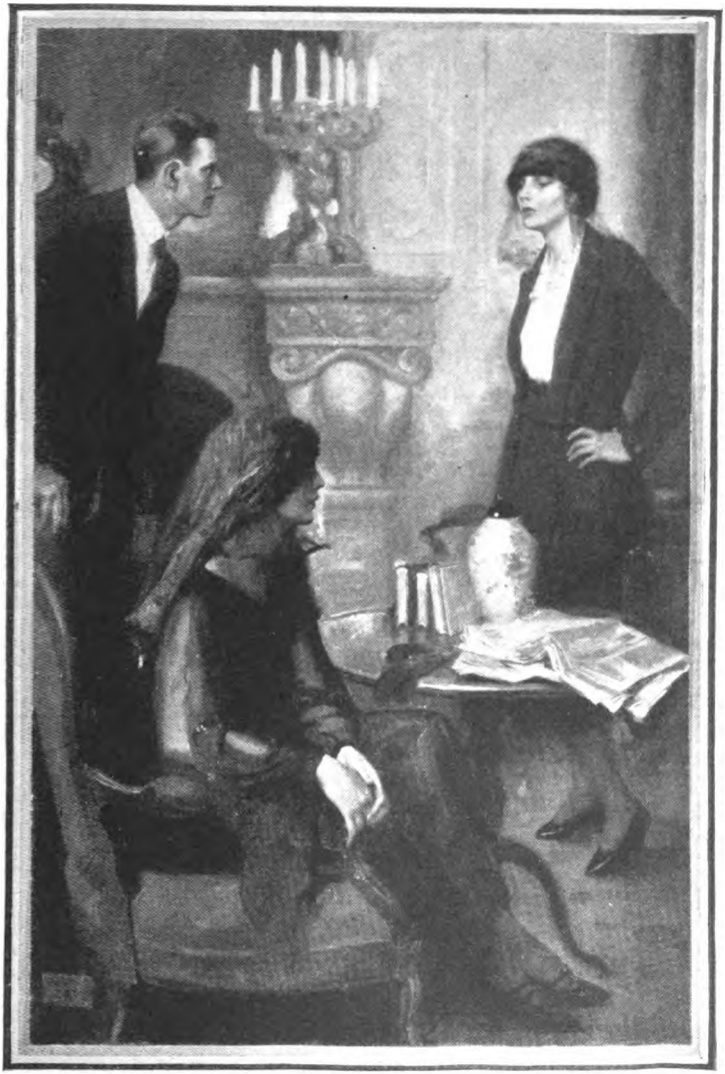
"I only hope you are alone."

"I don't know," she answered, glancing toward the window. "I never seem to be alone any more—I may have been followed."

"Probably. Why did you come? Why didn't you tell me? And yet I don't know—perhaps it was for the best. Dominique, go do as I told you."

Dominique closed the door behind him and left them alone.

"Yes; I am glad you came, Eva. Your troubles, dear, are very nearly over. After hearing what Mr. Guelpa had to say the other day, I began to see the light. Even he did not believe you were in Heldon's car—except for that short journey to your home. And now I can confirm your statement of what happened that night. It is not only that you had no motive in remaining in the car but that the count had a very



"Well, I'm here," Viola announced calmly. Suddenly she became aware of the black-veiled figure in the chair. "Who's that?" she asked sharply. "The Comtesse de Granlieu," Faynis explained politely.

strong motive in getting you out of it. He had an important engagement that evening with a man named Jandel. He was to sell Jandel your tiara."

"Then he still had it?"

"It was in his pocket while he was talking to you."

"And he told me he had already sold it!"

"Yes. And when he left you in the Avenue Henri Martin, he drove away in Heldon's car on that errand—to his death."

"John!"

"Yes, dear?"

"Then they can't suspect me any more?"

She leaned forward and looked anxiously in his face; she was very pale, and he saw how much she had suffered—suffered from those two things which, above all others, poison a woman's life—suspicion and ostracism. Her world, her little social world, had drawn away from her, and she had been left almost alone in a cold cloud of suspicion that enveloped her day and night.

Faynis reassured her. It was all over, he said; the suspicion against her would now be cleared away—patience, only for a little while. But though he said this, he knew, from what Mr. Guelpa had told him, that even should the police abandon their theory that she was in the murder-car at the time of the crime, they would still hold to the assumption that she had inspired it. But that assumption, like the other, could surely be broken down. They had got the man—probably the two men——

IT WAS Dominique's soft tapping at the door that interrupted them.

"Is it some one coming?" Eva asked. She moved back her chair and dropped over her face the long black mourning-veil she was wearing.

"It's all right, Eva," Faynis whispered, and, aloud, he said, "Come in!"

The door opened slowly. Dominique bowed and then effaced himself, and Viola Heldon entered. One hand was on her hip; her chin was tilted up, and she looked boldly at Faynis.

"Well, I'm here," she announced calmly. Suddenly she became aware of the black-veiled figure in the chair. "Who's that?" she asked sharply.

"The Comtesse de Granlieu," Faynis explained politely. "Eva, this is Mrs. Heldon."

Between women, when they meet for the first time, there is frequently a curious formality—it is like duelists saluting each other with swords. And these two women had more than one reason for being on guard. Each, in her way, had been a victim of the Comte de Granlieu—of his facile insincerities in love—and now each of them had been implicated in his death.

Eva had bowed slightly when Faynis had mentioned Mrs. Heldon's name, and Viola had returned the salutation in silence. Faynis placed a chair for her and she sat down, still staring at the veiled figure. Suddenly she turned to Faynis.

"What do you want, now that I'm here?"

Her chin was up and she looked at him steadily—with insolence rather than with defiance. She was wearing a dark walking-dress and no hat. Her thick yellow hair was piled roughly on her head. She lolled forward in her chair with a sort of boyish ease. There was no hint of fear about her—no sign of anxiety. She was cooler than Faynis himself, and he was not one to display emotion. And he, on his part, had been studying her, asking himself what was the right way to approach this woman who seemed to give no opening. There was no use in trying to play with her.

"What do you say, Mrs. Heldon—shall we lay all the cards on the table, face up?" She watched him shrewdly, but made no reply. "What do you say?"

"I would suggest," said Viola, "that the Comtesse de Granlieu remove her veil."

"I'm sure she will," said Faynis. He felt there was a cold antagonism between the two women, and wished he had arranged to see Viola alone. And yet he was not sure. One can never tell.

Eva threw back her veil and turned her face toward Viola. And so, for a moment, they looked at each other—earnestly, as though trying to read what lay behind the human mask. A little color rose in Eva's face, and she was the first to turn away her eyes. Viola's face lost none of its almost insolent calm, but a furtive smile touched her lips for a second and passed. It was as though in that smile, quick and not unkindly, she has summed up her opinion of the other woman, finding in her nothing to fear.

"Lay down *your* cards, Mr. Faynis," she said.

"I am willing, Mrs. Heldon. And you will be perfectly frank?"

"Yes," Viola answered, though her answer was delayed a little. She moved her chair, so that she might have a full view of him. Then, quite at her ease, she crossed one knee over the other. Faynis, as a student of human nature, thought that was not quite the position a woman takes when she is going to be frank.

"Good! Here are *my* cards. You pawned one of the Granlieu diamonds, or sold it. You gave the money to your husband, and by doing so you brought about his arrest." Viola made a movement as though she would interrupt him, but she thought better of it and listened in silence. "So, you see, you and your husband are both in it now. Your arrest is only a matter of time—you, for the theft of that diamond, at least. As for your husband, he drove the count to his death. That much is certain." Faynis paused.

"Are those the cards?" she asked quietly.

"Some of them. I don't know whether Heldon—your husband—is charged with the murder or not."

"No; you do not know! What do you expect to get from me?"

"The truth."

"That is worth something."

"I know it."

"Then, what I want is—" She broke off, and suddenly sat very erect, both feet on the floor. "For myself, I don't care a damn! I can take care of myself. But we'll get this down first. You are to make it all right about that diamond? I'll explain how it all happened; but I'm not to be prosecuted for that."

"No, no!" interposed Eva quickly. "Tell her, John, we don't care anything about her—taking—the diamond."

"Let him say it," said Viola calmly. "But, of course, that was nice of you, too."

"It's a promise," agreed Faynis; "everything that I can do."

"There's nothing against me but that—but my husband? You've got to get him out. That's my card. Nothing else matters."

"Did he kill the Comte de Granlieu?"

"That is silly! If he had done it, do you suppose I'd imagine you could get him off? It's because he didn't do it that I want you on my side."

"Tell me what you know. Make good what you have said, and you have my promise," said Faynis gravely, "my word for it, and all the aid that we can give."

Viola replied that was good enough for her to go on.

"The lot my husband got in with was too clever for him," she added, "and that is the worst that can be said for him. And I suppose he doesn't want to talk for fear of getting me deeper in it.

"I can tell you what I saw and what I know." She seemed to be thinking over how she should begin; at last she went back to the night of the murder. "I had dinner with my husband that night in a restaurant in the Rue Royale, where we often went when he had to take the car out in the evening. I was to wait for him there, for he thought he'd be back early and pick me up. It was a little after nine o'clock when he drove off. He didn't tell me where he was going. I supposed, of course, it was to drive Jandel somewhere or other. Afterward, I knew he went to get the Comte de Granlieu. He wouldn't mention that to me," she went on defiantly, with a side glance at Eva. "He wasn't the sort of person Heldon and I were likely to talk about. But that was it. He called for the count, and was to take him to meet Jandel. You know, of course, he was going to sell the tiara to Jandel and some of his backers. Dominique was the go-between, and I suppose he got in touch with Jandel through my husband. They were to split his per cent. of the selling price. Well, I waited in the restaurant. Finally I went outside and had my coffee at a table under the awning. It had been raining a little, but it was warm and pleasant. I was telling Louis, the waiter, that my husband was coming for me, when he said. 'Isn't that his car?' It was coming down the street, and as it came opposite the restaurant, it slowed up a little and Heldon, who was at the wheel, gave me a signal to wait. He looked all right—quite cheerful for him. I knew he had driven round by the restaurant to reassure me, for he was later than he had said. It was after half-past ten."

FAYNIS had let her tell her story in her own way. Now, for the first time, he interrupted her by asking who was in the car.

"Heldon was at the wheel," Viola explained thoughtfully, "and Jandel was sitting beside him in the front seat. The count was in the back seat—right-hand side. I do not know who the other man was."

"There was a fourth man in the car?"

"Certainly—sitting with the count on the back seat. He was on the farther side, and I did not recognize him. Indeed, all I could see was that there was a man there. I asked Louis, the waiter, who was watching the car as it came by, if he knew who the man in the back seat was. He didn't know."

"Have you found out who it was?"

"No."

"It is the most important thing you've told us. You know the police have had the theory that the fourth person in that car was a woman."

"Me?" asked Viola sharply.

"No; the countess herself."

Viola looked appraisingly at Eva, as though estimating her capacity for crime, and smiled and shook her head.

"There are a lot of foolish people in the world," she said, "even at the Pointed Tower. It was a man, all right."

"I am sorry I interrupted you," Faynis told her. "Please go on. You waited at the restaurant ——"

"A long time. At last the car drew up, but on the other side of the street, out of range of the brilliant lights of the restaurant. I ran across and got in, and Heldon drove on at once without a word. I thought at first he was sulky, but when I got a look at his face, I saw there was something up. His face was all white and twisted. I didn't dare to question him. The first thing he said was: 'I've got to take this damned car back to the garage.'

" 'Trouble?' I asked.

"He said there was hell to pay, and that the sooner he was out of it the better. There had been an accident, he explained, and Jandel was wounded.

" 'And the count?' I asked.

" 'Dead,' he replied.

"I couldn't get much more from him, except he told me he had had nothing to do with it—there had been a row in the car, but he never lifted his hands from the wheel. I knew well enough he wasn't lying—he can't lie to me—he isn't any good at it. He had taken Jandel home and put him to bed. Then he had come on for me."

"And the fourth man?"

"He never spoke of him. We only had a few minutes as the car ran on to the Porte Maillot. He wanted to get away—to England. He was going to get money from Jandel. Meanwhile, he meant to lie low. He wouldn't come home with me—he didn't know how soon the police might look him up. He hadn't much of a plan, except to get out of France as soon as possible. I didn't argue with him. Then he shoved a jewel-case into my hand."

"My tiara!" Eva exclaimed.

"That was it. He had found it on the floor of the car. Jandel had been half fainting, it seems, when he got him to his flat, and he must have let it fall."

"Jandel—or the fourth man?"

"I do not know. But Heldon told me to keep it. 'It's one hold we got on them, anyhow,' he said. Then, as he did not dare come to our flat, we arranged to communicate—he decided on the Pont St. Michel, as it was far from our quarter, and as he always had billiard-chalk in his pocket, he gave me a piece with which I was to put a mark on the bridge in case I was not arrested with the diamonds. And when we arranged that, I slipped out of the car and he drove off to the garage—I suppose. I did not see him again until——"

SHE broke off, and her face darkened as though she were picturing to herself that last savage struggle when she had seen her man pulled down by Rossingol and his men from the *Sûreté;* then she mastered her emotion and stood up.

"I'm trusting you—both of you," she said, looking from one to the other.

"You may trust me, Mrs. Heldon," Eva said softly. "Please believe me. And Mr. Faynis will not break his word. You shall not suffer if we can help it—or your husband."

"Then you might as well have it," Viola said, and she went toward the little safe near the bookcase. She pulled open the unlocked door and took out a black jewel-case and, crossing the floor, handed it to Eva.

"I pried out the big flat diamond," she remarked indifferently, "when I failed to get money from that swine, Jandel—but the rest of the tiara is all there."

Eva opened the case and looked at it; then, as though there were something

unclean about it, she laid the box on the table and pushed it away from her.

"I shall never want to see it again, John, or touch it."

"I understand, Eva," Faynis said. He shut the case and put it back in the safe. "For the present, it can remain there."

"Whatever you think best," Eva agreed.

"And now about you, Mrs. Heldon—you've been extremely lucky or clever or something," he added, "in not being arrested long before this."

"I kept out of the way," Viola answered calmly.

"You seem to have done so with some success. Only, you understand it will be hard to keep it up."

"I know that. I begin to see police spies everywhere. I don't dare go out. If people in the street look at me, I'm suspicious, and if they don't look at me, I suspect them all the more. And if you knew what the prison of Saint Lazare is——"

"You're not going there, Mrs. Heldon. If you were inside, it would be hard to get you out—but we'll keep you out. Do not worry. The key that will turn on you hasn't been made yet."

"It will take more than words, Mr. Faynis, to keep me out of the hands of the Paris police."

As though the last two words she spoke were a signal, there came a rapping at the door, and Dominique appeared, his flabby face quivering with emotion. Before he could speak, Rossignol elbowed him aside and rushed into the room. He glanced swiftly at Faynis and then at the two women, with a grin that showed his doggish teeth.

"Take off your hat, Rossignol."

This mild voice came from the doorway, and Mr. Guelpa—his own hat held respectfully in one hand—came quietly into the room. He bowed to the two women and gave Faynis a nod of recognition. Then he put his hand on Rossignol's shoulder.

"You are so impetuous, Inspector," he said. "I wanted you to wait for a moment—the clock is just striking seven. You remember my promise? Well, now, I want to present you to Mrs. Heldon."

"HE IS usually on time," said Mr. Meunier, the magistrate.

"Always on time," the chief of the *Sûreté* remarked, looking at the clock on his desk. "There are still a few minutes."

They were sitting in the chief's office in the Pointed Tower. The spring sunlight came in through the open windows and, from without, the eternal murmur of Paris—the wheels and hoofs and voices—could be heard.

"We were not far wrong," said Mr. Meunier.

'Nor far right," the chief retorted.

"I do not wish to criticize any one," Mr. Meunier added, "but it was unfortunate that Dr. Cray was so ready to accept the theory of suicide."

"That was the initial error. The body should not have been moved until the proper studies had been made. There must have been traces of the crime—were it only the ash of a cigarette or a broken spider-web."

"Possibly," agreed the magistrate; "but to my mind you are on the right track. It has all the marks of a passional crime. You will have to study it as a human complication—love, jealousy—in a word, the woman. When a young man is killed, there is usually a woman in it. Old men are murdered for money, young men for love; it is an axiom."

"Axioms sound all right, but they do not take us very far," said the chief. "I'd rather have Mr. Guelpa's report—it's gone ten o'clock."

He had hardly finished speaking when the door opened and Mr. Guelpa entered the room, smiling and alert, a flower in his buttonhole, his little hat in his hand, his dyed mustache twisted into points, as though they were sharing in his triumph. He laid down on the table a neatly folded manuscript of a dozen pages.

"You do not need to read it now," he said; "later will do. It is the de Granlieu case. Not quite the end of it—I thought you would like to write that yourself, Chief, and I have left the last page of my report blank. I will take this chair over here—I am afraid there is a current of air from that open window. Yes; you shall write that last page of the report—if you will."

There was something loquacious and cheery about Mr. Guelpa this morning which did not wholly please the great chief of the *Sûreté;* it was too evident that Mr. Guelpa was pleased with himself and with the report he had laid on the table, and the

chief was not, perhaps, wholly without a touch of professional jealousy. But after a moment he laughed.

"Come, Mr. Guelpa; what is it?"

"I shall have ample time," observed Mr. Guelpa. "Is your little clock right?"

"To the minute."

"Ample time, then," Mr. Guelpa repeated. "The history of the case, up to the present, is summarized in that report. We all got a wrong start."

"Thanks to Dr. Cray," said the magistrate sharply.

"To him and to all of us. I did not see it myself. And yet I should have seen it. And you, too, Mr. Vadecard. You remember the Vernier case?"

The chief brought his fist down on the table with a bang.

"I begin to see!" he exclaimed. "A duplicate crime."

"Yes. Our original error came in when we failed to see that there was one crime overlapping another. You do not remember the Vernier case, Mr. Meunier? The chief and I are not likely to forget it, for we came very near guillotining the wrong man.

'An old woman was robbed and murdered in a lonely house. Outside were footmarks in the wet earth leading up to the door and then back to the road and on to a wretched hovel, where we arrested a man who sat near a fire, drying those very shoes that had marked the trail. He crumpled up in terror when arrested, and seemed on the point of confessing. If ever a man looked like a murderer, he did. Well, I was examining the room where the crime had been committed, and on the dusty top of a commode I saw a mark—some one had leaned his elbow there and left the print of a corduroy sleeve. That was all we had—eh, Chief? But we got the man. He was a tramp—the stolen goods in his pocket, the victim's blood under his finger-nails. Our presumed murderer had set out to rob the old woman, but had lost courage and had gone back to his hut. A little later the tramp came by, broke into the house and committed the crime the other had intended to commit.

"Overlapping crime," Mr. Guelpa added. "Yes; when chance couples one crime to another, when an accident comes in to complicate a crime, there is every possibility of going astray at first. But then, on the other hand, when a crime is complicated, it is far easier to unravel—there are so many loose ends to be taken up."

"As in the de Granlieu case," the chief remarked dryly. "Not that I wish to hurry you—and your reminiscences, Mr. Guelpa, are always interesting."

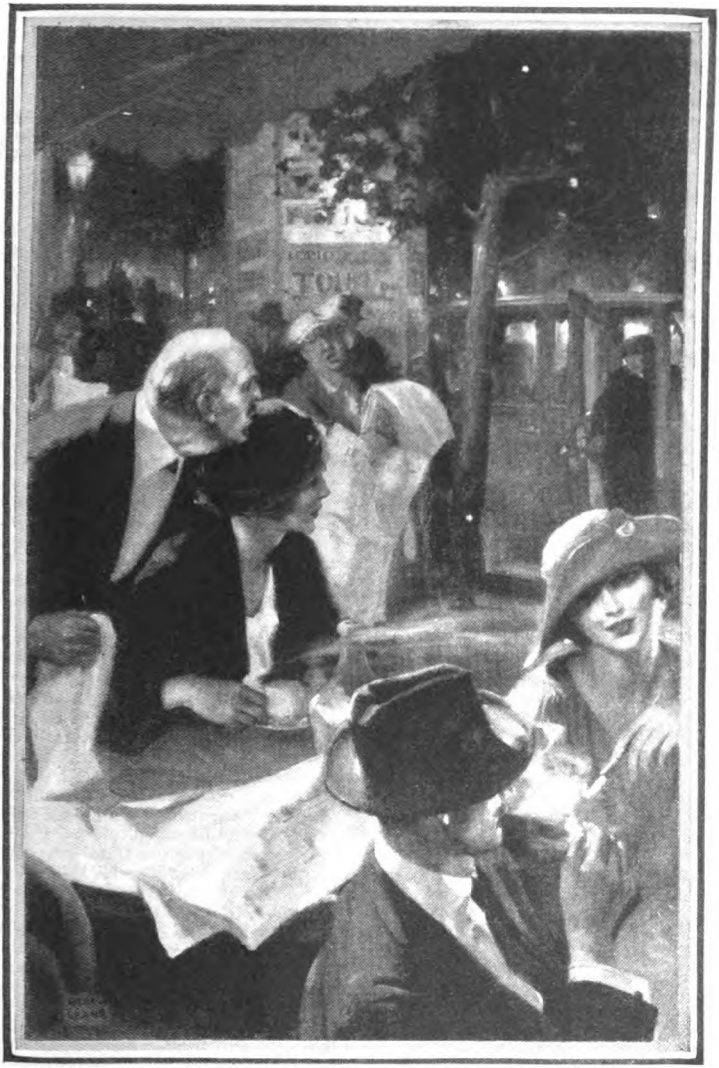
"They should be to you," Mr. Guelpa said bluntly. He drew himself up with sudden dignity.

"They are," agreed the chief apologetically. "I didn't mean anything else."

"Impatience is a mark of mental immaturity. May I be permitted to continue? Thank you. In the de Granlieu case, then, there were indications of a superimposed crime. Had it been possible for me to study the scene of the murder immediately, while all the marks were fresh, much time might have been saved. The facts would have afforded an almost mathematical demonstration of what had really taken place. I did not have the facts—or I had them at second hand, which comes to the same thing. But I had imagination. And imagination, where criminal investigation and discoveries are concerned, is just a trifle more important than anything else. There is no use in taking imprints of hands and wheels and feet if you have not imagination enough to invent a hypothesis that will reconstruct the crime. Very well. I had, then, certain facts—things seen or heard. I had also a hypothesis which covered them. But did it cover them? This was a matter I had to verify—in the laboratory, so far as material facts were concerned, and by pyschological tests where it came to the human element. There, too, I appealed to my imagination—to that intuition which reads humanity as you read a page of print. The correct method of police procedure, Mr. Vadecard, is to imagine by intuition a theory which covers the crime, then to test it by fact and logic, and arrive thus at the final equation: suspicion equals guilt."

IT MAY have been because he observed the disrespectful signs of impatience in his hearers that Mr. Guelpa had indulged in what was—for him—a rather pompous lecture on the processes of detection; it may have been he had another reason, for his eyes went every now and then to the clock.

"As material facts," he continued more



"Louis said, 'Isn't that his car?' As it came opposite the restaurant, Heldon, who was at the wheel, gave me a signal to wait."

rapidly, "a wheel-print, a revolver, a bullet—after all, you know all about them"—he indicated his report, which lay on the desk—"and you know about the blue chalk. That was the point of departure for my reconstruction of the case.

"A woman leaves a message for a man on a bridge—with blue chalk. In the dead man's *salon*, I find— No; credit where credit is due, Mr. Vadecard. It was Rossingol who found it, and I hope he will profit by his discovery.

"In that *salon*, amid swept-up dust, there is found—blue chalk. The night of the crime, a man had waited in that room, near the door, shuffling from foot to foot. Had the blue chalk fallen from his pocket as he drew out his handerkerchief—or glove? Never mind; it fell. And there you had the case—the bridge, the *salon*, the man and the woman were all marked with blue chalk. It was easy to follow the mark, and it led to the man in the billiard-room, to the motor-car, to the owner of the car, to the man—you notice I said 'man,' Mr. Meunier, not 'woman.' So it led, I say, to the man who killed the Comte de Granlieu."

With a little air of satisfaction, Mr. Guelpa straightened his glasses on his nose and leaned back in his chair, as though he had come to the end of his task and was well content.

"And the man?" asked Meunier.

"I thought you would like to see him here—in a quiet way," Mr. Guelpa replied, looking again at the clock. "And if Rossignol—an excellent man, Rossignol—is prompt as he usually is, and if nothing unforeseen has happened, he should be here— Ah! That's the knock on the door. May they come in?"

IN ANSWER to Mr. Vadecard's shout, the door swung open. Slowly, hesitatingly, a man came forward into the room. He was alone, for Rossignol, closing the door, had taken his stand outside. Looking round him with a distrustful air, the man advanced toward the table. He was lean of body, with scant hair plastered down and carefully parted in the middle; his mouth was thin-lipped, showing the teeth—showing also a smile so conciliatory it was almost obsequious. He bowed first to Mr. Guelpa and spoke his name; then to Mr. Meunier, but the one at whom his watchful eyes looked most attentively was the great chief of the *Sûreté*.

"Mr. Dufrène, merchant in precious stones—and other things," said Mr. Guelpa, by way of introduction, and he added dryly. "The man who killed the Comte de Granlieu."

"To save my own life," Dufrène interjected sharply, "my own life!"

He spoke of his own life as if it were something infinitely precious, and he looked from one to the other seeking approval.

"You will explain all that," Mr. Guelpa said calmly, "and in the mean time, Mr. Vadecard, I might call your attention to one or two points. It will save Mr. Dufrène the embarrassment—possibly—of stating that his business is wide and peculiar. He deals in precious stones and lends money. Now, as a money-lender, he is known to the best people—honorably. As a merchant in precious stones, buying and selling and trading, he is known to all kinds of people—such as Jandel, deceased, whose rogueries ran across most of the frontiers of Europe. He had had many transactions with Jandel. I might say they were occasionally mysterious transactions. There were times when what he bought from Jandel had to be bought in the dark and paid for in cash. There was risk in such transactions, of course, but the profits—eh, Mr. Dufrène, the profits? They were, I dare say, in proportion to the risks.

"I have made this statement merely to relieve Mr. Dufrène from the embarrassment of discussing this side of his business and to let you know that on the night of the count's death he was engaged in just such a peculiar transaction—in the dark—as those I have described.

"The second point is this: That night, Mr. Dufrène got back to his house in the Rue Molitor about half-past eleven. He looked as if he had been rolled in the gutter, and his explanation to his servant was that he had been knocked down by a cab. The next day he left town, and did not return until the newspapers published the news information that the count's death was due to suicide. Then he returned to Paris. To-day, at my request, he has been brought here by Rossignol—an admirable agent, Chief—to tell you how he killed de Granlieu."

"To save my own life," repeated Dufrène.

"Do not let us attach undue importance to that detail," Mr. Guelpa said. "You are to tell us all the facts. I think I could tell you, Mr. Vadecard, and you, Mr. Meunier, precisely what happened in that motor-car, but I am sure you will prefer to hear it from Mr. Dufrène, who, among other things, was engaged in saving his own life—as he has told you."

"That is why I am here as a witness," interposed Dufrène, "a voluntary witness."

"Brought by Inspector Rossignol," Mr. Guelpa remarked quietly.

"To tell just what occurred. It was Jandel who got me into it," Mr. Dufrène went on, his distrustful eyes glancing from face to face, "by promising to sell me a rare lot of precious stones. I had known him on and off for years. As Mr. Guelpa has ascertained, I did business with him now and again. I did not know the diamonds he was to sell me were the de Granlieu diamonds. He told me only that he was buying the stones from a third person and that he had not enough money to carry through the deal alone, and was not in a position to dispose of them to advantage—without my assistance.

"There is often a good deal of secrecy in buying precious stones, and I did not suspect anything wrong—nothing wrong——"

AGAIN Mr. Dufrène searched the faces of the three men sitting near the table, looking for signs of approbation or disbelief, but he might have been looking at so many paper masks for all he could read in them. And perhaps Mr. Guelpa's face, with its vague smile and twinkling eyes, was the most inscrutable of all.

"I had no reason to suspect Jandel," the dealer in precious stones said defensively. "Why should I suspect Jandel? I had a large sum of money in my pocket. Would I have gone out to meet a man I had reason to suspect with all that money in my possession? His motor-car called for me at the restaurant near the Madeleine, where I had dined that night. I went without hesitation. Jandel was on the front seat with his chauffeur. It was rather dark in the back of the car. When I got in, I saw there was another man there—in the right-hand seat. For a moment I did not make him out. Indeed, it was not until the car had run out into the Place de la Concorde that I recognized him—it was the Comte de Granlieu. And then—*mon Dieu!*—I was afraid. I did not see through it yet, but I began to see. These were the de Granlieu diamonds I was to buy—and they were mine, paid for with my money, though I had lent them to the countess to wear at a ball. A swindle! They were trying to sell me my own diamonds—honestly mine until they were redeemed—a swindle! And I had a large sum of money in my pocket. I knew I was in danger. Fortunately, I had a revolver with me—to protect my life. You understand?" he asked defiantly.

No one replied, and he went on, with increasing emphasis, gesticulating with his agitated, prehensile hands.

"I spoke to the count, and he gave a little exclamation when he heard my voice.

"'Ha, Dufrène; is it you?' he asked.

"'And you,' I said, 'were going to try to sell me my own jewels—mine!'

"At that he laughed and said it was a comedy. I was more afraid when he laughed than if he had threatened me. I did not know what Jandel meant to do. But I was determined to have my diamonds back. I demanded them, but still the count only laughed. He took the jewel-case from his pocket and said: 'You'll have to settle that with Jandel. They belong to him now.'

"Gentlemen, I was in fear of my life—with good cause. But leave the tiara in the possession of that spendthrift who only laughed—no; I could not do it!' I said to him quite plainly, 'The jewels are mine—I have already paid for them—and I understand now the plot you and your wife devised to swindle me out of them—you and she——'

"On my honor, that was all I said, but he started up, cursing, and drew his revolver Just as he was about to fire, I knocked his arm up. I heard the crash of glass and a cry from the front seat. He thrust the revolver toward me again, but before he could fire, I slipped down to the floor of the car and shot up at him—to save my own life."

Mr. Guelpa's precise voice broke the silence.

'You will have observed, Mr. Vadecard, and you, Mr. Meunier, that a little key can open a very large door. A little blue chalk dust—and it led to the motor-car and to the fourth man in that car, who was the

only man who could have possibly shot the Comte de Granlieu. It was easy to eliminate Heldon, who was at the wheel—a mere tool—and it was evident that Jandel did not fire the fatal shot. What I had to do was to find the fourth man in the car—a simple matter—I might say, a simple deduction. One and all they were gathered round the diamonds, like flies round a honey-pot. Of course—Dufrène. The little key that opens the heavy door," Mr. Guelpa said once more; and then, turning to the white-faced man who stood by the desk, he added: "You might continue now, Mr. Dufrène. I am sorry I interrupted you."

"I fired up at him, but it was to save my own life—with no intention of killing him. But he fell. He fell against me," Dufrène continued, and there was a touch of emotion in his voice, as though he were feeling again the horror of that moment when the count, dead or dying, reeled against him. He took a handkerchief from the sleeve of his coat and wiped his lips.

"I got out," he went on abruptly. "The car was still running fast, up to the Avenue des Champs Elysées, but I opened the door and jumped—forgetting everything—even the diamonds—my diamonds they were swindling me out of—mine! It was to save my life."

Again Mr. Guelpa's placid voice struck in, for neither the chief of the *Sûreté* nor the magistrate spoke—they listened, watched, studied.

"In self-defense, of course," he said; "and you observe, Mr. Vadecard, and you, Mr. Meunier, that the count called it a comedy. Of course the count never imagined the associate Jandel had brought into the deal was Mr. Dufrène, who had a prior right to the diamonds. And Jandel was equally ignorant of Dufrène's position regarding the count. It was droll; and the Comte de Granlieu called it a comedy and laughed—and was killed. Which ended the—comedy."

The chief spoke up sharply, rapping the desk with his knuckles and hammering out the words.

"Why didn't you come forward and tell this interesting story at once? 'Self-defense,' you say? Then you had nothing to fear.' Why did you attempt to deceive the justice of your country? Why?"

"When I saw it had been decided that the Comte de Granlieu had committed suicide, I thought it best to keep silent. It seemed to be all over. I did not know the case had been reopened until Mr. Guelpa came to me. Then I told the truth at once."

"Your confession comes a trifle late," the chief remarked.

Dufrène had recovered his defiant air; he stared back at Mr. Vadecard with eyes as resolute as the hard eyes of the crime-hunter himself and said boldly:

"Confession? This is not a confession! It is my justification."

"And I think," Mr. Guelpa suggested in his quietest manner, "that you will have to accept it—eh, Chief?"

THERE was confusion in the little house in the Street of the Buried Heart, and through it Mrs. Guelpa moved darkly, with potentiality of explosion. Luggage was piled up in the hall, and on one stout trunk, her own, Julie sat, bland and patient. For the family was going to the seaside. Only, in his study overhead Mr. Guelpa lingered—as he had lingered for weeks, while the web of the de Granlieu case was slowly untangled. Rossignol was with him, and Rossignol was astoundingly dressed in a new suit of clothes.

"My congratulations," Mr. Guelpa was saying. "No; not on your tailor—I cannot congratulate you on him—but on your new appointment."

Rossignol had had a step up, was now one of the five chief inspectors of the Brigade of the *Sûreté*. Mr. Guelpa's praise of the little man had been effective in the proper quarter. Rossignol was grateful; moreover, he was proud of himself—and strutted like a Cock Robin.

"So Heldon has been released?"

"To-day," Rossignol said lightly, "he was extracted from his cell—and given the key of the street. To get him out was the hardest thing of all. But your view of the case prevailed, Mr. Guelpa. We," continued Rossignol, drawing himself up as though he spoke for France and the world at large, "couldn't very well go against you."

"No—it was a very small part he played."

"He's a cool fellow," Rossignol remarked, laughing; "but I should have liked to have seen his face when the car drew up to the Pool of Auteuil and they hauled the corpse

out—and saw it was the count and not the jeweler. He had been driving at full speed—revolvers cracking behind him, glass clattering round his shoulders—and the one thing he had got into his bull-of-England head was that the count had killed Dufrêne and was big enough to shoulder the blame. And there was Jandel, yapping and moaning at his side. So he swung the car up to the Pool. Every racing-man knows that dark corner of the Bois. He opened the door—Jandel with him. They saw a pair of black legs and pulled. And the count's white face looked up at them and rolled about."

"You've been cultivating your imagination, Rossignol."

"Under your tuition, sir. And the car was empty. No Dufrêne—vanished! That is what hit them hardest. I should like to have seen that bull-of-England's face. So that is the part he played. He drove his boss's car and helped stow the body under the bushes. Even with that, we might have made a pretty good case against him, but you must have your way, Mr. Guelpa."

"I sometimes do, Rossignol. As long as you are all satisfied that Dufrêne fired in self-defense, you could not hold Heldon for complicity in a crime that was never committed."

"Still, he was in a bad position. Dufrêne had vanished. And there was Jandel. My man knew Jandel hadn't killed anybody or had anything to do with what happened there in the back seat. Silence seemed a good card to play. And when it was announced that the count had killed himself—suicide—they thought they were safe. There was nothing to do but lie low until they could get their hands on Dufrêne and make him pay. But when you put it up to Jandel, sir—that day in the flat—I don't see what he had to gain by holding his tongue. Why didn't he give Dufrêne away at once?"

"You remember, Rossignol, I asked for Jandel's *dossier*—the police record of the man? And you know what a virgin sort of report they turned up for me. Your system needs keying-up. At that very time there was an extradiction warrant out for him—he was wanted in Belgium for forgery, theft and a few other little crimes. He could not come forward. The moment he smelled 'police' on me he had only one thought—to get away. He was a clever rogue."

"It's too bad he's a dead rogue," Rossignol put in. "I should have liked to be on his trail—it would be good hunting."

"As for the diamond Mrs. Heldon sold to the old fence in the Rue de Provence—By the way, are you holding him?"

"He was released yesterday, since there is to be no prosecution. But we'll get him for something else—easy."

"The countess now has the diamond, I presume."

"I dare say. And the tiara."

"And the merchant of precious stones goes back to his shop in the Rue de la Paix and the world wags on as before."

"Not quite," Rossignol said. "I've got my step up."

"True—and I hope you will go further still. You are a young man, and time is ahead of you, which is a pleasant thought. You have sagacity of a sort, too. That will keep you from making mistakes, but it will never take you anywhere. It is imagination that leads to success. Cultivate it, Rossignol. It is imagination that gives the detective the lucky hypothesis which is the key to the crime."

"You talk like a book, sir."

"I am a book," Mr. Guelpa replied gravely, "and you would be the better for turning a page now and then."

"I am looking forward," Rossignol remarked, "to the day when I get that Heldon woman—for something. She's too clever to be at large. She'll burn her fingers one of these days."

"Not in your parish. The Heldons are going back to England. The countess has put some American money in their pockets. Why? An impulse, of course—a good impulse, if you will—but, frankly, I do not understand her psychic process. However, all that has been arranged. Heldon has visions of a public house—dogs and perhaps a horse or two. I do not know. But they will fit into English life better than they fit into the life of Paris. She is clever, as you say, but one can be clever and honest at the same time. Take yourself, eh?"

"AT TIMES I am not so sure of my cleverness," said Rossignol, "and occasionally I've had suspicions of my honesty. But as to the Viola girl—please advise her to keep on her own side of the Channel as long as I am at the Pointed Tower."

"It does a man good, Rossignol, to have a woman get the better of him—it crops off some of his self-conceit."

Mr. Guelpa stood up and looked round his study. Everything was in order—the papers put away, the drawers locked, the instruments covered with yellow cloths.

"Good-by, Rossignol," he said. "I am off on my holiday. It might be useful for you to know that when an intelligent man takes a holiday, he always takes it for other people. My wife and Julie are waiting. Good-by."

"Good-by to you, sir." And Rossignol wrung his hand. "When you go away you leave a hole in Paris."

AND when Mr. Guelpa was alone, he glanced once more at the room, the books, the instruments and records he did not want to exchange for wet sands and the clamor of a seaside hotel. The sound of music came up to him from below. It was Mrs. Guelpa striking a few admonitory chords before she locked the piano and hid the key in the copper vase on the mantelpiece. Then a silence, broken by the sheepish feet of Julie trotting up the stairs, and her young voice at the door bleating.

"Fa-ther!"

"Yes, Julie."

"It's not mother this time, fa-ther. It's the Marquis de Granlieu, and he's coming up—slowly."

"Very well. And tell mother I will not be long—there is ample time for the train."

He took from his pocket two envelopes and laid them on the writing-table, and then, having placed a chair for the marquis, he went to the door to meet him. The old man came in, aiding himself with his cane. He tried to stand erect, but he was very feeble and one of his legs dragged as he walked. He had grown much older since the day he had first mounted those stairs in the old house in the Street of the Buried Heart.

Mr. Guelpa had none of the little timidities that make social life difficult for many scholars, but he would have given a great deal had he been able to escape the visit of this old man, who seemed to be tottering on the edge of an invisible grave.

The marquis had first come to him asking one thing—that he save the honor of Granlieu. And what Mr. Guelpa had done in clearing up the case had added, if anything, to the shadow that lay upon the name of the young count. Suicide yonder by the lonely pool had been a cleaner end to his life than death in a brawl with shabby money-lenders. This was the thought in Mr. Guelpa's mind as he watched the old marquis let himself down into a chair and sit there, leaning on his ebony stick. He had made no offer to assist him, for he saw that what alone was unbroken in the aged nobleman was pride; and he waited for him to speak. The words came at last—in a monotonous, uninterested voice, which might have deceived an indifferent observer, but to Mr. Guelpa they seemed to be allied to a deep and tragic emotion.

"I am to thank you for what you have done for the memory of the late Comte de Granlieu," the marquis began, "and I am satisfied. It was repellent to me that my son should have run away from life without even a word of farewell to those who loved him. Our race does not do those things. And any one, Mr. Guelpa, may be killed by scoundrels. Therefore I am satisfied with you," he paused and finally added, "and with your work."

Mr. Guelpa bowed in silence. He took from the table the two envelopes he had placed there. One he handed to the Marquis de Granlieu.

"I never opened that envelope, Marquis," he said. "It contains the scrap of paper on which you wrote one day a name."

The marquis tore the envelope across and then again and dropped the pieces on the floor.

"I was mistaken," he remarked in his level, monotonous voice, "and I am very glad I was mistaken. I cannot discuss my late son's wife. It is hard to say where a responsibility begins and ends. Had she been different——"

He broke off and stared at the floor for a moment or two; then, with what seemed an extraordinary effort of concentration, he went on:

"The Comtesse de Granlieu did not understand us and we did not understand her. And this was not the fault of any one; it was a tragedy. She is going back to her own world and her own people. I hope she will be a happy woman and a happy wife."

"I have seen her," Mr. Guelpa said. "She came to bid me good-by—she and Mr. Faynis."

"Him, too, I misjudged," the marquis replied, "and I told him so—I am too old now to deal unjustly by any man. She brought the de Granlieu diamonds to my house and wished to give them herself to my wife—but the *marquise* is not well; she could not see her. I have put the jewels away. There is no one to wear them now."

The marquis got up stiffly, leaning on his stick.

"I thought these things should be within your knowledge, Mr. Guelpa. And I am grateful to you. You will accept my thanks."

"This envelope, Marquis, contains the check you gave me. I have no right to it. My work was not done for you, and it brought you, I fear, no benefit. Permit me to return the check."

The marquis waved it away. For the first time, he spoke in the grand manner, drawing himself up and radiating vanity.

"I am the judge of that, sir. You will keep the check. Good-morning."

It was the last word Mr. Guelpa was to hear him speak, for within a few months the great marquis and his faded little wife died, side by side, almost at the same moment. They flickered out like two old candles that had burned to the socket. And the high, historic house of Granlieu was no more. The very name perished. For within a year there was not even a Comtesse de Granlieu. That great name, with all its associations of splendor and crime, Eva had exchanged for one that fitted her more comfortably and become Mrs. Faynis.

But this was in the future as Mr. Guelpa stood there in his empty study. He stooped and picked up the fragments of the envelope the marquis had torn up and laid them away in a drawer of his desk. It was a little souvenir—this name of the Comtesse de Granlieu printed out by the old man in his first anger and suspicion—and Mr. Guelpa was fond of souvenirs of the kind.

"It is a little hobby of mine," he used to say.

He went to the windows and closed the blinds, leaving the room in darkness. Then he groped his way to the door, locked it and put the key in his pocket. From below a voice came up to him.

"Fa-ther! The cab is waiting."

"Plenty of time!" he called back.

"But, fa-ther, mother is waiting."

The stairs were dark, but in spite of the darkness, Mr. Guelpa began to run.

THE END

Connie Martin (Frances Starr) entertains her beau, *"Bilge" Smith* (James Rennie), at supper. It is for *Bilge* a passing affair and soon forgotten.

Two years later, *Connie* recovers the faithless *Bilge* by giving a dance to all the *Smiths* in the visiting fleet on her freight steamer.

Photographs by White Studio.

Shore Leave

The Joyous Story, in Play-Form, of a Girl in Search of a Husband in an Almost Barren Market

By Hubert Osborne

Published by courtesy of the author and the producer, David Belasco

"BILGE" *SMITH* is an easy-loving gob, and a new girl is of much less consequence in his life than a new brand of tobacco. But he is *Connie Martin's* first beau, and, as the importance of beaux is inversely according to their number, he quite obscures the rest of the universe for her. *Bilge* would have been surprised to know that he rated as a beau by *Connie*, for he had only exchanged a few words with her on a park bench and then walked home with her, but that was enough to change her whole scheme of things.

Connie is the daughter of a sea-captain and his wife, who was a circus rider for Barnum. Since the death of her parents, she has been living alone in her little cottage in the New England seaport town where she was born, supporting herself by dress-making. Besides the cottage, her legacy consisted of an old freighter, which is stuck somewhere in the mud of the Ganges, and a diamond necklace which was the tribute of Barnum to his most famous rider on her marriage. To-night, she is expecting *Bilge* to supper. When the sailor arrives, there is a moment of embarrassment. He quickly recovers, however, and looks about the room with interest while *Connie* finishes putting supper on the table. *Bilge* eats with gusto, but she is too happy to do anything but sit and watch him.

SMITH: Ain't you got any folks or nothing?

CONNIE: No.

SMITH: My mother's dead, too.

CONNIE: Oh, I'm sorry!

SMITH: It don't make so much difference to a guy like me—but it sure must be hell for a lady like you.

CONNIE: Oh, I manage to get on all right—though I'd like to do something more important than sewing. My mother was awful ambitious for me—she wanted me to be an opera-singer—or own a milliner shop in a big town or something like that.

SMITH: My mother wanted me to be a priest, and started me off on that tack.

CONNIE (*gazing at him in admiration*): Oh, you'd just look wonderful in a priest's robes—reading the services in front of a stained-glass window!

SMITH: Ah-h! I wanted to see the world. One day I beats it and jumps a freight and heads West—I gets as far as New Mexico—worked on a ranch there—and saved some money—but soon I gets restless—so I takes my roll— Say, sister, why ain't you eating?

CONNIE: Oh, I don't know. I'm not hungry. What with you being here—well, there's so much to talk about, I can't take the time to eat. Go on talking about yourself.

SMITH (*not unwillingly*): I starts back East—no brake-beams for me this time—Pullman and all—I was sure traveling heavy. Once again on the Java.

CONNIE: The what?

SMITH: The Java. I thought you were seagoing. The coffee. (*Passing his cup.*) When I gets to Philadelphia—that's where my mother lived—the old lady was sure glad to see me. I'd never wrote her except

a post-card the year before, but she knew I was coming back home, though. Her lamp-chimbley broke three nights running, and she said it was a sign—you see she comes from Ireland and believes in signs and things. But, then, she wasn't educated, like me.

CONNIE: Your mother must 'ave worried a lot about you when you didn't write.

SMITH: Sure! I guess she did. Women's like that—they're always wanting you to write to them. After my mother died, I started drinking to forget. When I come to, I was looking at one of those ads of a gob all rigged out in one of those white suits. Well, I'd always wanted to see the world—and the Barbary Coast out in Frisco.

CONNIE: The Barbary Coast! Oh, that's such a pretty name! I think I'd like to live there. I can see it—a long shore with white breakers rolling in—beautiful flowers growing along it—and palm trees, with birds singing in them. Is the Barbary Coast like that?

SMITH: Hell, no! It's— (*He looks perplexed.*) Oh—it's the place that they've lost the lid to. You don't understand—you ain't the sort that would. Well, I thinks this is my chance to get to Frisco, and, having nothing better to do, I goes it. They ask me a lot of fool questions; then I signs some papers, and then they sends me out to see the world. The world—he'—all I've seen of the world is the lights of Coney Island one night through the starboard ports as I was looking over the top of my hammock while we was beating it down the coast at a fourteen-knot clip. Have you ever slept in a hammock? Hammocks make you feel like the makings of a cigarette before you lick the paper. But they ain't so bad when you know how to swing them right—if you don't they sag down in the middle.

CONNIE: That must be very uncomfortable.

SMITH: It's worse than that—it ain't safe. To sleep with your back bent all up puts your kidneys on the bum. Oh, well—I won't be sleeping in a hammock all my life. I'm working hard and studying, and soon I'll be a chief petty officer and have a bunk to sleep in. And when my time's up, I'm going to write for my master's papers; then I'll try to get a job as captain of a freighter.

CONNIE (*her legacy beginning to appear in a different light*): Captain—of a freighter? You—

SMITH: Sure! And I could hold the job, too, if I ever get a crack at it.

Connie makes some rapid mental calculations. Then she ferrets round to find out whether *Bilge* is married before making any more plans.

SMITH: I could be married—lots o' girls have said they'd marry me, but I didn't want them.

CONNIE: Yes. I suppose you see lots of girls—traveling about as you do.

SMITH: Sure! They all fall for the little old blue suit. (*He rises and takes up his hat.*)

CONNIE: You—you're not going——

SMITH: I've got to. We shove off to-morrow.

CONNIE (*realizing her little romance is coming to an end*): Shove off—to-morrow! Where to?

SMITH: We're joining the Atlantic Fleet and sailing south with them.

CONNIE: Will that keep you away for long?

SMITH: Can't tell—a couple of years perhaps. (*Some one whistles outside.*) There's some gobs that walked over here with me coming back for me. The chow was great. You're some little hand in the galley.

CONNIE: I'm sorry I—I couldn't entertain you longer—so we could 'ave got better acquainted—and sort of got to know each other a little.

SMITH: Sure—setting here all snug-like, with a girl alongside—well, it ain't so bad.

SAILOR (*outside*): Hey—Bilge—break away!

SMITH (*calling to him*): All right! (*To* CONNIE) Good luck, sister—so long——

CONNIE: Must you be going so soon—must you?

SMITH: Do you want me to stay? (*She nods*) You do? (*She nods*) Really? (*She nods her head again. He looks at her queerly, smiling.*) All right, sister.

SAILOR (*outside*): Oh, come on, Bilge!

SMITH (*turns in the doorway and calls*): You guys needn't wait! I'll catch up with you.

The two sailors go down the street, whistling. *Smith* stands looking at *Connie* a minute, throws his cigarette out the door, closes it, swaggers down to her with a smile

on his face, then deliberately takes her in his arms and kisses her. After the kiss, he steps back and studies her as she stands before him.

SMITH: Never had a fellow before?

CONNIE: No.

SMITH: Why'd you let me kiss you?

CONNIE: I don't know.

SMITH: You want to see me again?

CONNIE: Yes—of course. You're sure you'll come back?

SMITH (*lightly*): Oh, sure—some day.

CONNIE does not believe in waiting passively for fate to deliver her romance into her hands. She immedaitely sets about helping things along.

One of the summer residents, *Mrs. Payne*, had made an offer some time before for the Barnum necklace, and *Connie* decides to sell it and salvage her freighter. She silences the objections of her uncle, *Captain Martin*, and enlists his help.

Two years later, the *Zonoma* is anchored in the harbor and *Connie* is living on her. *Captain Martin* brought back from India a heavy cargo, which enabled *Connie* to fix up the old freighter and left enough over for her to live on comfortably.

There has been no word from *Bilge* in these two years, although *Connie* has made constant inquiry of the gobs who have come and gone in that time.

Now the fleet is back again, and *Connie* is giving a party aboard the *Zonoma* to all the *Smiths*, officers and men. This is sanctioned by the admiral, for *Connie* has become a pet of the town and its visitors. Her sudden rise to affluence and her naive romance have interested every one, and they all enter with zest into the search for the missing *Bilge*.

There is a goodly number of Smiths in service with the fleet, from "*Battling*" *Smith*, lately of the squared circle, to the admiral, and all of them come to the party. *Bilge* does not appear until late in the evening. *Connie* is sitting forlornly on the deck when he scrambles over the side. She knows him at once, but he has no recollection of having seen her before.

SMITH (*after a pause*): Hello, girlie! Say—give me a dance, will you? (CONNIE, *staring at him, doesn't answer.*) Come on! What do you say?

CONNIE (*involuntarily*): Oh—h—h!

SMITH: What's the matter? What's eating you?

CONNIE (*still staring*): Don't you—don't you know me?

SMITH (*looking at her casually*): No—can't say I do.

CONNIE: You mean to say you—don't—know—who—I—am?

SMITH: Naw! Your face is familiar, sister, but—well, do you dance—or don't you? Come on. I ain't got no time to lose. (*Connie shakes her head.*) All right. (*He sees the lemonade on the table, goes to it, takes a doughnut and eats a bite, then glances at* CONNIE *again.*) You seem to be in trouble, sister—what it is? Aw—have a little supper with me—I'm not a bad fellow. (*Takes a bite.*) There's worse. (*Picks up a glass of lemonade.*) Gawd! I wish this had a kick to it. Say—you ain't a bad-looking girl!

CONNIE: Have you been drinking? Say—you've been drinking.

SMITH: No such luck! I ain't even had a decent cup of Java for two years.

CONNIE: Java— (*Trying to steady her voice.*) And you don't know a girl in this port that would give you a cup of Java—Java and jelly—and home-made biscuits. Do you?

SMITH: Java and biscuits—in *this* port? Nope! Hold on there! Sure I do! I was making a lot of ports then and—say—why—er—ain't you—why, of course—you're the little seagoing dressmaker or milliner or something—the girl that set and talked to me on a bench and then asked me up for chow. Here! Let me get a look at you. Back—front— It sure is the little girl herself! Howdy, sister? Put it there. (CONNIE *looks at him, but doesn't take his hand.*) Say—you ain't married, are you? (CONNIE *looks at him hopelessly.*) Oh, that's it—hey? Hell! You're married! (CONNIE *shakes her head. Mollified.*) No? All right, then. I'll tell you what we'll do—let's jump this dance and you take me up to your house again—what do you say?

CONNIE: You never—thought—o' going there—to find out if I was living or dead. (*Unable to realize it.*) You just forgot to—you just forgot me——

SMITH (*sizing up the situation*): Forgot *you?* (*Working fast.*) Say, don't fool yourself, sister. I—I knew you all the

time. I knew you'd be here to-night—I was just stringing you along.

CONNIE (*wanting to believe it*): What? Then you did——

SMITH: Sure! I remember you. (*Making it up as he goes along.*) I just wanted to know if *you* remembered *me* first. Girls forget fellows, and—and—I wanted to be sure.

CONNIE: Oh—I never was so frightened in all my life—never! Oh— (*Smiles at him weakly, relieved.*) After what you said—and promised—I didn't see how you *could* forget me—but——

SMITH: No— What *did* I promise you? Now, let's see if you remember it.

CONNIE: You said you'd come back—that's what you promised. You said you'd come back some day.

SMITH: Well, here I am.

CONNIE: Well, are you glad to see me?

SMITH (*thoughtfully*): Am I?

CONNIE (*happily*): Oh, I knew you'd come back after what you said!

SMITH (*pumping her to find out what he did say to her*): Now, you tell me every word I said and I'll remember it. Now, let's see if *you* do.

CONNIE (*eager to prove her faithfulness*): Oh, I do! You said your mother was dead—the lamp-chimney broke—a warning—and you lost her—left the sea—traveled on land—and you went to spiggety places—and the Barbary Coast— (*Wipes her eyes, smiling happily.*)

SMITH: All true—all true! You forgot nothing. Sure I remember you!

CONNIE: And then, when your friends came back and said it was time you was shoving off—you—you went up to the door—and started to go out. And I stood there saying good-by, and asked you if you'd ever come back, and you said——

SMITH: "Some day," didn't I?

CONNIE: Yes.

SMITH: There, you see! I remember.

CONNIE: And you started to go again—but you threw away your cigarette—and came back, and, and, oh, you remember *that*, Bilge, don't you?

SMITH (*eyes her, and knowing what he usually does on such occasions, resolves to take a chance*): Sure I remember it! I'd a been a landlubber if I hadn't kissed you.

CONNIE: Oh, yes; you do remember everything. Well, are you glad to see me?

SMITH: Sister — (*emphatically*) — I — I jumped ship just to see *you* to-night. I risked the brig for you—and if I get court-martialed for it, it's worth it, little lady! It's worth it! (*He opens his arms and steps back*) Come in!

CONNIE: Just a minute—just a minute—Oh, I will—I *will*—but—I got to get sort o' used to you again.

SMITH: All right. I won't rush you. You sure fell for me, hard, *chérie*.

Bilge has been to France since he saw *Connie*, and "*chérie*," which he pronounces "cherry," now rivals "sister" and "girlie" as an affectionate form of address for his lady friends.

SMITH (*pulling her down beside him on the skylight*): Say—lean over. (CONNIE *leans over; he kisses her. A pause.* SMITH *kisses her again. Another pause.*) Sister, them French dressmakers ain't a patch on you! Say, *chérie*, I'm going to take out insurance for you. I'm getting ninety-one dollars a month now.

CONNIE (*as if he were a millionaire*): Ninety-one dollars! More than I ever made at dressmaking.

SMITH: Sure! I'd like to help you out 'cause—'cause you're a nice girl. Say, what do you say we get spliced to-night? I dare you!

CONNIE: Oh, Bilge, I wished you'd ask me more romantic. Are you sure you want me?

SMITH: Now, haven't I asked you?

CONNIE: Well then, we'll get spliced to-night—right off. I know just who to go to. Wait'll I get my cape.

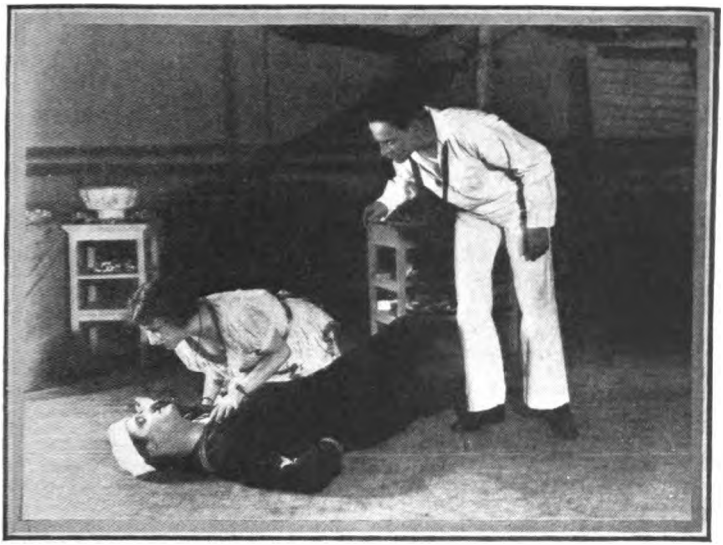
SMITH: Say, *chérie*, what's your name? I got to put it on the license.

CONNIE: Connie Martin.

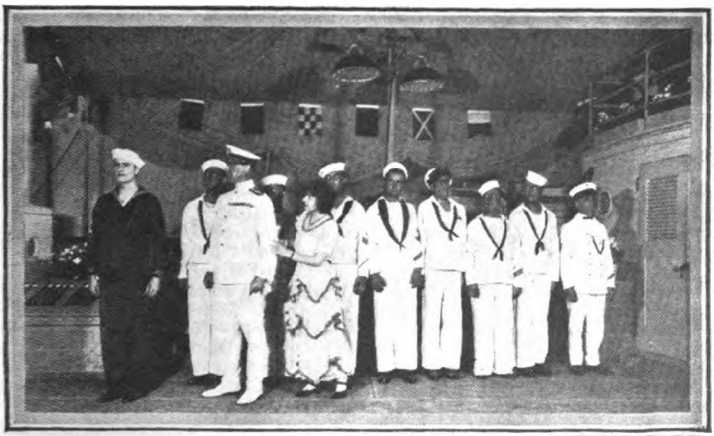
SMITH (*seeing the light*): Oh—oh! So you're the girl that's rotten with money. So this ship's yours, huh? (*Angrily.*) I've been on the level with you—ain't kept nothing back—it's you that's been stringing me along. *Me* take out an insurance for you! Why, my money wouldn't keep you in socks. Ninety-one dollars!

CONNIE: But that don't make any difference, Bilge. I——

SMITH: Say—I ain't the sort of guy that'd live off'n no woman. Now, listen, sister, and get this straight: When I first met you, you was a little ten-cent dressmaker down by the shore—and I felt sorry for you; but you



"Battling" Smith (Thomas E. Jackson), overhearing *Bilge's* stinging rebuke to *Connie* for the trick she has played on him, promptly knocks him out, much to *Connie's* distress.



The party of navy *Smiths* is rounded up by an officer for the return to their vessels after *Connie's* dance.

didn't make no hit with me that day. But when I seen you to-night, and seen you counted on me coming back—I changed my mind—and I like you awful well. But you ain't the girl for me.

"*Battling*" *Smith* saunters along in time to hear *Bilge's* ultimatum. He has exercised great restraint this evening, for a dance without a fight is to him like spring without violets. Eagerly he seizes the opportunity to avenge the affront to his hostess. A few heated words, and *Bat* and *Bilge* are hitting and clinching. *Connie* resents the efforts of her champion when she sees that *Bilge* is getting the worst of it. But *Bat* blackens his eye and knocks him down, and a semblance of peace is only restored by the appearance of an officer to line up the gobs for return to their ships.

AND so *Bilge* goes away again. For the second time, Romance escapes *Connie* just as she is about to close her hand on it.

Her life has been so limited that she can find nothing to fill it now that it is no longer necessary for her to earn her living, so finally she goes back to dressmaking.

Her uncle and her friends are impatient with her, but *Connie* is obdurate.

She makes over the freighter to *Captain Martin* and tells every one that she has lost her money, hoping that *Bilge* will hear of it and come back. Finally, her honesty will not let her keep up this pretense, and she goes to a lawyer and, unknown to her uncle, puts all of her money into a trust fund.

And then, after four years, *Bilge* does come back. One spring evening, as *Connie* is composing an imaginary letter to him, the door opens and he looks in at her.

His clothes are old and greasy, his face begrimed, and he wears, not naval clothes but a cap and pea-jacket. He has evidently been stoking.

Connie gives him towels, and he cleans up at the wash-stand in the corner, giving her a hasty survey of the last four years as he does so. He got fired from the navy as a result of a row he got into after *Connie's* party, and he's been doing all manner of things since. In Buenos Aires he met a gob who was at the *Smith* party. He told him that *Connie* had lost her money; hence his return.

SMITH: Say—you kinda need a feller to look after you, now, don't you?

CONNIE: Oh, I don't know. I'd want to be pretty sure if the fellow liked me before I——

SMITH: Well, you ain't got nothing, so you could be sure of it now. I ain't got no ninety-one dollars a month now myself.

CONNIE: Oh, that's nothing.

SMITH: And I couldn't give no girl a separation allowance—I couldn't take out no insurance for her——

CONNIE: Oh, *that's* nothing!

SMITH: But I've got a couple of arms, and I ain't afraid o' work. *Chérie*, I'm here to take care o' you—if you say so.

Connie feels that a little hesitation is due from her after the six years of uncertainty she has suffered at *Bilge's* hands. This almost costs her her dream, for *Captain Martin* comes in and lets fall the fact that *Connie* has still some jurisdiction over the *Zonoma*. When he leaves, *Bilge* calls for a show-down.

CONNIE: Oh, Bilge, I ain't got a cent now! I gave it all away. I'm as poor as poor can be, and I can prove it. My lawyer said——

SMITH: You got a lawyer, eh? You must be poor!

CONNIE: I had to get one to get rid of——

SMITH: Say—come across——

CONNIE: I can't tell till after we married.

SMITH: Why not?

CONNIE: 'Cause it's something that—that I couldn't tell any man—who—who wasn't my—my—husband.

SMITH: Hell! Then I'm off.

CONNIE (*stopping him*): Don't go—please—and I'll tell you. My money is where neither you nor I will ever get it—a penny of it as long as we live. (*Hesitates a moment.*) I—er—well—it's in—it's held in trust for—in trust for—oh, dear me!—for my—my first baby—if his—or—her—or its father's name is Smith. (*Quickly takes up a plate of biscuit and offers it.*) Have a biscuit, Bilge?

SMITH: Hell! (*He takes her in his arms and kisses her.*)

Hearts *and* Fists

The Hardest Nut the Fight Manager Has to Crack is Romance. For Full Details, Read This—Another Human, Very Human Experience of the Prize-Ring Impresario

By William Bullock

Author of "The Hereditary Punch" and "Mama's Boy"

THE great manager sent his two clever glove-men off to the early sleep called for by strict training, then strolled with me out into the straggling yard of Durkee's Hotel, snug in its semicircle of scrubby Long Island oak and within whispering sound of the Atlantic's blue rollers, thumping everlastingly on the foam-spattered, shell-strewn sandy shore.

"This is the kind of dreamy evenin' that is dange'ous for young men to be abroad," observed my genial companion, tilting his grizzled head to the soft air, laden with salty savor, and the round moon shining brightly down.

"The whole wide world is inviting romance," I made response, my senses tingling to the beauty of the night.

The great manager sank comfortably into the big rocker under the gnarled old apple tree, and finding two of his huge Havanas in the top pocket of his expansive checkered vest, lit up one and for a minute or two puffed in silent content. I had seen him act thusly oft before; I knew what was meet for the occasion, and held my peace.

"Romance is the plague of every fight manager's life," Tim Breslin remarked at last. "It's the hardest nut he ever has to crack—it's a perfect divil of a noosance."

"Whatever happened to make you a sour crust like that?" I lured him on.

"I know well what you're drivin' at," he rejoined tartly. "You'd delight in makin' me out an enemy of the sweet darlin's. But I'm not. Heaven help them, the women are all right, and most necessa'y in the scheme of things; but a man mustn't let them own him. Any one doin' that, no matter how smart he be, is doomed to get his wits twisted and run into a knock-out—sure."

I saw Tim go nodding vigorously; then saw him sit still as if musing, as if back in past days. Finally he turned, smiling at me.

"Do you want to hear tell of the mightiest romancer that ever drew on a padded glove inside the four ropes of the ring?" he asked me in lively tone.

"I'm all set and eager to listen to the good yarn," I hastened back. Then he starts right in:

It was in this selfsame place. Old Ted Durkee was alive and kickin' then. He'd started here with the weather-blown, one-story farmhouse. Every time he got a few more summer boarders he added another wing; when us managers with our strings of mitt-slingers found him, he took on style and named himself a hotel. But small matter about that—we handed him a better livin' than his few sandy acres and his reg'lar job of baitin' lobster-pots and diggin' clams. And one thing more—old Ted had a daughter. Yes, and, as usual, there's where the trouble begins.

I'd dandled her, big as a rosebud, on my knees. I'd watched her wadin' with her bare tootsies in the foamy fringes of the surf. I'd seen her glistenin' black braids and her big red bow as she romped on the road to school. Then I went campaignin' in the West, and came back after three years.

I had the old-young picture of her in my

mind—jiminy, isn't it the dickens how they spring up? I never suspec'ed the peachy girl that came to the table to wait on me, but when she smiled with them coal-black, flashin' eyes—ah, her smiles and her eyes were just the same. Anna sure was a gay and sprightly and winsome lass, but—leave that part of it to Mister Rube Henshaw, of Prairie Dog, Nebrasky.

I'd picked up the Rube out in Denver. He'd run away from the home town with a circus, and was grabbin' his three-a-day carryin' hay to the mules and elephants. Gettin' into a scrap with a camp-rustler, he took raps from a tent-peg on his coconut without blinkin' an eye, then wound up by knockin' his oppo'ent cold with a swing from his shoe-tops. The india-rubber man told him he was wastin' his young life not goin' in the ring. I seen him in his first prelim, liked the way he tore after his man and took him under my wing. After six months of seasonin' in the sticks, I stacked him up against a near-champ in Pueblo, and what he done to him was a caution. Three months more and we were in the Big Town, matched up for a twenty-round go in Madison Square Garden for the light-weight crown.

This sounds as if it all had been easy travelin'. But it's never soft goin' for the fight manager. The Rube was a good scrapper and a first-rate ring general; apart from that he was the victim of an over-common malady, a sufferer from the world's most direful ailment, as you'll shortly see.

IT WAS mid-September when we struck Ted Durkee's joint. The last of the summer boarders had vamosed; I looked forward to six quiet weeks of gettin' the Rube in tip-top trim. Never once did thought of Sweet Anna cross my mind.

But now here she was beside the table, grown and full-blown, smilin', blushin', rare eighteen—it started that very first evenin'. Yes; right off the bat. Why, Rube—he didn't wait to taste the soup! He fell kerplunk for that simple young thing, just as if he was a blitherin' ijiut—which he truly was. And the girl, I'll be tellin' you, wasn't far behind. Oh, no; they never are. Before we'd reached the apple pie, I was racked with dread and fear, and thinkin' hard on what I must do.

An hour later I find them on the beach, the pair of them holdin' hands. It was a night like this—of dreamy moonlight beguilin' young folks to sootherin' and cuddlin'.

I lays for Rube the very next mornin'. He's comin' back from road-work. As he draws near, I hear his tin-kettly Nebrasky tenor in a music-show song:

"Rain or shine, she is just the same.
I'll be happy forever with just one girl."

I steps across his path. "What young thing has started you warblin' like a thrush?" I asks. "Or are you soundin' your horr'ble voice for all of them?"

He pulls up in all his vainglory.

"I'm in love with Anna and Anna is in love with me," he lets fall.

"See here, you Rube!" I shouts, runnin' at him. "For two pins I'd knock your tow block off'n you. What are you goin' to do? Throw the fight on me? Toss away the light-weight crown for one smile from a pretty face?" I stepped still closer. "You can't train with love botherin' you. You know that, don't you?"

"Sure I know it," he gives back. "But what's the title compa'ed to my Anna?"

"Your Anna!" I yells. "Not knowin' her a dozen hours, and now she's *your* Anna!"

"Sure Mike!" says my prize nut. "I'm a quick worker."

"I know you are—I know you are—but this stops right here!" I roars. "Ever since I signed you up, you've been drivin' me bughouse with your loon love-affairs. You done it in Frisco, in Omaha and Memphis and Chicago and St. Paul and Duluth, didn't you? All over the map of the United States you've been fool-romancin', haven't you?" I poises, glarin' fierce. "Is that the truth, or isn't it? Haven't you stood in your own way and in mine, by your heart gettin' gummy as molasses whenever any girl, fair to middlin' in looks or homely as a mud fence or with clubfeet and harelip, so much as crooks her little finger at you?"

"The girls never crook no fingers at me," he answers. "I do the crookin' and they all come runnin'."

You see now what ailed him. You see now what I was up against. There's no doctor for this frightful complaint; I had to try dope him myself. A happy thought struck me—I went to Anna. She was in

the dinin'-room, fittin' the Rube's napkin in a new souvenir ring.

"It's real nice of you, Anna, to be presentin' Rube with a shiny silver ring," I opens up. "You're derservin' of a fine, good-lookin' man for a husband, and it's myself is sad and sorry you may be so unlucky as to tie up with the boy I've got under my charge."

"Why—why—what's wrong with him, Mr. Breslin?" she asks, half-gaspin'.

"There's nothin' wrong with him in any way whatsoever, Anna," I returns. "Only, knowin' you since you were a curly-head toddlin' round my knees, I'm sure bent on you havin' a man you'd be proud of."

"Please explain to me, Mr. Breslin," she beseeches. "Him and me is engaged."

"Jumpin' Jupiter!' I cries. "When did that dire tragedy take place?"

"Last evenin'."

"On the sandy shore in the moonbeams?"

"We both just love it out there."

I stops, tryin' to think. My lady-killer had gone clean daft. Nothin' else. I could only go on with Anna and trust to luck.

"What will be the outcome if you marry my Rube, Anna?" A scared look comes in her black eyes, and I expand my brill'ant idea. "Some day you'll be filled with sorrow and woe. He'll go into a fight and get a terr'ble lacin'. He'll come home to you with his front teeth missin', blind of one eye, and with two cauliflowers growin' where his ears ought to be. He'll have all his ribs busted, and will be coughin' a hoarse, bloody cough. He'll be a sad and horr'ble sight, lookin' not one bit better after he leaves the hospital wearin' his set of false teeth."

Tears were runnin' down Anna's cheeks. Shakin' with sobs, she flees the room. I'm for pattin' myself on the back. I'm sure I'd done a nifty stroke of work, cured her for all time, but—wait.

Two minutes later in dashes the Rube with the news he's quit the ring forevermore. Why? Sweet Anna had made him pledge her that. So! I'd laid the colorin' on too thick. Anna couldn't bear to think of a husband on crutches, winkin' at her with a glass eye, and sportin' store teeth. I stormed and raved, but without avail. Rube knocked off all trainin'. He didn't do a lick for six days on end.

A championship mill drawin' nigh, and all my touted challenger was doin' was roadwork—by Sweet Anna's side. Mornin' and afte'noon it was the same—they'd start off arm in arm, the two of them exchangin' looks like dyin' ducks. Then in the evenin' it was the beach—and all night it was myself tossin' on a sleepless cot.

One midnight I lay starin' at the black ceilin' and blamin' myself. "You bum fight manager," I says. "You ought to have fo'seen all this. You knew the Rube's weak streak. If you'd thought one second, you could have counted Anna's years, and known she must have sprouted into deadly allu'ement." So I often used to go wanderin' to myself; so it went along without change or sign of hope, till——

IT WAS here in this same yard one mornin' before breakfast when a gang of riders came gallopin' in and reined up short before me. There were seven or eight, all men but one—a girl—a real looker. Over from the wealth of Southampton for an early canter as an app'tizer, and to see my dandy lightweight go through his paces. They'd read about the Rube in the sport-pages; they'd passed him a few times sprintin' along the highway before the love-bug bit him.

I jumped at their request like a drownin' man. Rube had been assistin' his Anna lay the table; they'd heard the ring of steel shoes and now were standin' side by side in the kitchen door. I walks over and says, quiet:

"Here's a chance for you, Rube. These rich folks, and the lovely heiress in espec'al, think you are the world's greatest fighter, and would like to see you perform."

"He won't!" speaks up Anna, as if she owned him. "I won't let him get bruised and torn."

"I'll get no marks on me," says the Rube, growin' a couple of inches; and next shot he's down the steps and peelin' off his coat. He was a gonner when the rich girl smiled good-mornin' to him. That hollow numskull, he'd rush a whole armed regiment at a woman's nod!

P'esently the Rube is hammerin' the daylights out of first one sparrin' partner, then the other. It worked like a charm. I laid hold of the girl's prancin' mount, and led it over where she had a sure ringside seat. There she was, sittin' easy in the saddle and lookin' down at my lightweight, showin'

off like a struttin' peacock. Then, when she praised him for his graceful bearin' and beaut'ful skill, why, there was nothin' more to it—not a thing more in the world for myself to worry about.

That fool glove-thrower got the work-out of his life. When he got applause for toppin' over one of his sparrin' hands, he swelled out like a toy balloon. He puffed up still more when his ring of guests made known they would bet their last dime on him treatin' the champ to a knock-out. I thought he'd blow up and burst into atoms when they each give him a hand-shake in farewell.

As luck would have it, the Rube parted from Miss Letitia Van Nest last of all. She sure was some punkins. She was like the picture on the wall in her smart ridin'-suit, her trim, jaunty hat, jet black and shiny and stuck on at a saucy angle, just shadin' and settin' off her laughin', dancin' orbs.

It was a sight most amusin' when she reached down her tiny mitt and give a firm clasp, never mindin' the red ham that had won Rube Henshaw his knock-out record. But the best was yet to come—it was a scream the way she fed taffy to that Prairie Dog nizy. She was sure as sure could be he couldn't lose; and great indeed would be her delight if only she could be in the Garden to see them place the light-weight crown on his deservin' brow.

Then, when she rode off, remarkin' in general that it must take a manly and heroic spirit to win success in the ring, I knew the big fight would come off as sched'led and that the woll'pin' Rube would be in trim.

I could guess what my matchless simp would do, and he done it. As Miss Letitia Van Nest rode out of the yard, his niblets from Prairie Dog was drawn up like he was twelve feet tall. There wasn't another on earth to equal him. He returns, with his inf'ated chest, to Anna, waitin' in the kitchen door as if nothin' had happened.

"Now you see, Anna," he says, condescendin', "there's not a mark or scrape on me. I've changed my mind, and am goin' ahead with my trainin'. I'll win the fight without gettin' my hair mussed."

Anna objected some, but the Rube was convincin' and tenacious in arg'ment. He was moved by an unseen power which she never guessed; he won Anna's consent. Poor chick! She was blind in love.

I thinks my troubles are done. But the fight-manager's life is just one wild tu'moil after the other—that's what makes it so captivatin'. Miss Letitia Van Nest had started somethin'. Oh, yes, indeedy!

LATER that mornin' the Rube went on the road, leavin' Anna at home. He didn't come back from his five miles on time; he'd dropped clean from sight. We were all out scoutin' high and low for him when along in the afte'noon I see him hop off a train in the station with a big bundle under his arm. He'd been up to the city; but he won't tell me what he's carryin', and pays no heed when I bawl him out for breakin' orders. He does nothin' only snicker and grin, sayin' to just leave it to him and he'll be in the best condition I ever see.

This was the first evenin' the Rube and Anna missed the beach. For which I off'ed up thanks to Miss Letitia Van Nest. Anna swall'ed Rube's cheap excuse, hook, line and sinker. She never took a tumble when he jabbered all supper about the horseback girl. She never twigged when he rattled away, praisin' the young heiress for likin' the men brave enough to stand up and exchange blows in the ring. I was smokin' here under this apple tree in the gray dusk when the gay blade comes to me.

"I'm goin' to be up and out workin' hard early in the mornin', boss," he says.

"Bully for you, Rube, my son!" I responds. "That's the ticket. But there's one trifle I want to warn you against: Don't you go actin' foolish and gettin' both these girls mad at you—you'll have peace of mind then, and will sleep nights."

"Fudge!" he hands back. "I can play both of them and never get singed."

I looked quick at him, and could see his chest risin' again, as if to burst the buttons off his vest. That hoddy-doddy, with his monst'ous pride! The overtowerin' and despairin' conceit of him! And to think I had to humor him instead of doin' what I ought—bounce a rock off his booby lid!

"You sure are a case, Rube," I says; "but watch your step, like a good lad. Don't cut loose till the big fight is won. Lots of smart and able men, just like yourself, have lost out on account of designin' women."

"Fudge again!" he cries. "No two women, nor a double dozen of women, can bother me. You don't know me, you don't,

boss. Out in Prairie Dog I had all the girls fightin' each other over me. It's been the same story wherever I've roved—that is, when I've been minded to look at them. You seen some of my winnin' work before, and you see some of it right here now."

"I seen a lot of your maste'ful love-makin', both East and West, and the peerless gallant you sure do be, Rube," I says back. "But just for this once won't you go easy and hold off from spreadin' dest'uction in every female heart? Lay off them, like the big and merc'ful man you are, till we've landed the light-weight title and got that whale of a purse in our kick."

"Fudge once more!" he raves. "I can take care of the light-weight title and the whale of a big purse and all the women in the land. You seen how the girl on horseback fell for me. Did I do anythin' to make her come implorin' of me? Naw! I get them one and all like I got her—without tryin'. This here mix-up is too easy. Only a pair of them, and neither one suspectin' the other! Why, when I get busy, I can make victo'ious love to a whole host; I can lead them all to sighin' and sheddin' tears and breakin' their hearts over me, or else can start them to joyous laughin' by the free gift of my smiles."

"You and Anna are engaged to wed," I reminded him.

"I've been promised to a hun'red girls and I'm not done yet," he boasts. "I'm for Anna as strong as any in the lot. But what's a man goin' to do, I ask you, boss, when he's endow'd with winnin' ways like mine?"

I looked him up and down, with my mind marvelin'. That laddy-buck, talkin' as if he was the he lover of the ages!

"Well, I'll say this much," I remarks, keepin' my face straight: "You're a good bruiser, Rube, but——"

"But what?" he demands, sco'nful.

"Oh, nothin', Rube," I drawls out, slowly risin'. "I was only thinkin' how one-half the human race would cry and lament and wear black weeds if anythin' should happen and you was laid out with flowers at your head and your toes."

I HEARD the Rube shufflin' in his room the next mornin', and was glad of him keepin' his word for an early start. I walked out on the porch to view the morn, and just then along comes a youth, leadin' a saddled horse by the reins, pulled over its dec'epit head.

"What are you doin' with that sorry nag?" I asks, playful. "He looks as if he's got the ague."

"Does a Mr. Henshaw live in this here dump?" inquires the youth, miffed by my true comment.

I stared at him in blank amaze. I tugged on my collar, gaspin' for breath. I was staggerin' from the worst shock of my life. So that was it!

Then, without further notice, the big fireworks comes off—all in a bunch. Out on the scene walks the Rube, and, say—I had to shade my eyes.

"Well, of all the dog-goned carryin's-on—a pug like you!" I calls in loud and angry voice, and then stops—I was chokin' with rage.

There he was—in all his splen'or and glory! Before my two bulgin', red-shot eyes! Rube Henshaw, of Prairie Dog, Nebrasky, in his English ridin'-clothes—boots, hat, coat, breeches and all! It was paralyzin'. It was the funniest sight I ever did see. I didn't know whether to bend double laughin' or take his fancy crop out of his hand and splinter it over his tom-fool head. But do you think his nibs was feezed?

"I'm goin' ridin' every mornin'," he says. "I hope you like my rig."

"Oh, I like it all right, all right," I gives him. "If I was dolled like you, I wouldn't call King George my uncle."

"It's what they're all wearin'," he remarks, and marches for the nag.

"No matter about that!" I shouts, follow in' him. "You look like a scarecrow, and you're goin' straight up-stairs to take them cont'aptions off."

"This is one of the best ways to get in shape," he tries to argue.

"I don't care a whoop!" I hollers. "The thing for you is poundin' the dust at road-work and swingin' gloves at your sparrin' partners." I grips his shoulder and spins him round. "Come out of here, you! Enough of this monkey-doodlin'!" He glowers at me, and I fix my gaze on his two fish-eyes. "You don't have to tell me what this means," I tells him. "I know what's passin' in your sap head."

"You do, do you?" he flings back; and with that he tears loose and climbs into the

saddle. And, slashin' with his crop, off he trots.

I went inside and took a strong stim'lant. I needed it. I'd handled lots of boobs in my time; this was my first expe'ience with a crazy man. I watched Rube come home. Anna and her dad were on hand; they laughed till their sides were sore. The only ridin' the Rube had done was on the town pump and a mule in the circus; he hove in sight sittin' up straight in his stirrups and with one hand tangled in the horse's mane.

That same mount wasn't any Kentucky Derby winner—he was a knock-kneed collection of hide and bones that would run second to an ice-wagon. But just hand it to the Rube! All the while he was eatin' breakfast off the mantel, he was praisin' the delights of horseback ridin' to the skies. I never lets on I heard him. I'd thought it over, and, keepin' my mouth shut, went ahead with my plan.

SOME days later Rube was off the sick-list, ready to go into action again. I hears him 'phonin' the Good Ground livery for a dobbin for the followin' mornin'. I gave Ted Durkee due warnin' to be up on time, promisin' him fun of a rare and special brand.

Rube had his wish—he got a fire-eatin' charger. That part of it had been well attended to by me. I'd dropped down to the village and had a heart-to-heart talk with the livery-keeper, and had come away sat'sfied Rube Henshaw would be overglad hereafter to confine his ope'ations to the squared circle.

Ted and myself were enjoyin' a first smoke on the porch as if we hadn't a care in the world. We kept on smokin' and let the lad from Prairie Dog take rope. And, wow, didn't he take it!

The very second he touched the saddle things began to pop. This was no retired plow-horse, but a buckin' divil on springs. He arches his back into a rigid bow, brings his hoofs together, and up and down he goes. Sideways, crossways, frontways, endways—oh, boy! He was the concent'ated essence of horse-mischief.

Rube leaves the saddle with the first buck. He couldn't sit upon the air; so down he comes tryin' a scissors-hold on that jumpin' fiend's flanks, and claspin' him with both arms round the neck in a fond embrace. There he sticks like he was glued on and knew it was safest; and with each terrifyin' spring it seems the hick's fish-eyes pop farther out.

Yes; and then, just when the fun was at its height, who should come swingin' round the corner of the road but the same Southampton cava'cade that had been over to see the Rube perform. Miss Letitia Van Nest was there, too, right in the van; but the Rube wasn't waitin' for her.

He was otherwise engaged. By this time he was goin' down the road, hell bent for election. He was bein' carried from the scene with all the speed of a lickety-split runaway bronco. For a second there's a great hubbub of voices, then next the wild clatter of all the horsey party startin' on the pursuit.

When I reached the spot, the Rube was bein' unwound as tende'ly as pe'mitted from a barbed-wire fence. My heart sank, thinkin' my hidden scheme had worked out only too well. But when he stood up, with the worst damage showin' in his breeches, I felt relieved, seein' no bones were broken and that the fight could go on. I grips him by the arm, wantin' to lead him away. Then a terrible thing happens. Miss Letitia Van Nest takes out her scrap of a handke'chief and starts rubbin' the grime and gore from his homely mug. I see his fish-eyes come back to life.

"Thankee so much," he peeps. "I'm goin' to ride him yet."

Then I near croaks when she says, "You're very brave."

After them three short words, he was ready to walk into the mouths of belchin' cannon. I had to shake and pull him, wreck as he was, to keep him from goin' and layin' hold right there of the bronco, croppin' the grass off to one side and watchin' us out of one eye as if it was a lamb.

Ted and me armed the Rube home. Anna wept over him—aren't girls the simple souls?

Next day he was lively as a cricket again. Could I stop him? I could not. He was goin' to ride that four-legged imp of Satan or cash in. All left for me was to try make the best of a bad job.

I've wit'essed thrillin' and hair-raisin' ring-battles by the tens of scores, and kept cool and calm through them all. It was

diffe'ent a few days after the tragedy of the barbed-wire fence, when I stood and watched Rube and that jumpin'-jack fight it out in a ten-acre field. Lookin' at that mad spec'acle I couldn't help marvelin' at the dangers men will freely unde'go for the smiles and favors and on account of the graces and wiles of women.

That was the most nerve-rackin' sight of my whole life. Three times Rube hurled himself reck'essly out of the saddle, and went soarin' like a bird. Three times he dragged his achin' limbs and bones from the ground and, spittin' mud and stones in mouthfuls, went at it again. The way that wild beast kept diggin' up the earth broke all records for spring plowin'. I was like a ne'vous woman, wantin' to press my hand on my thumpin' heart. And small wonder. I could see the championship fight canceled any minute, with a few last lines, disposin' of everythin', in the obitua'y column.

But one thing sure: Young Buffalo Bill from Prairie Dog was game. He took a grip with everythin' but his teeth. He kept fallin' off and goin' back and hangin' on betweentimes till the fe'ocious spirit of that careenin' animal was dead broke, till there wasn't one spark of ill-temper or sign of a kick left in that infe'nal machine from the wild and woolly West. Rube tamed him so he'd nibble sugar out of his hand—Mister Henshaw, in his johnnie ridin'-breeches, had only to pucker his lips and whistle for that tempes'ous critter to rise up on its hind legs and dance a jig.

THREE weeks more to the big fight, and all was rosy. Rube was puttin' in hard licks at the punchin'-bag, and goin' the needed rounds daily with his sparrin' partners. He was hittin' the road reg'lar for the full mileage. He was takin' his mornin' rides; once or twice he boasted to me he'd run into the Southampton swells, includin' Miss Letitia Van Nest. But I'd ceased from all worryin'. Things had struck a balance. Anna was happy from Rube sparkin' her; he himself was content, thinkin' he was soft-soapin' the two of them. Peace had settled down. Trainin' was pushin' along. I smiled up my sleeve. I kept sayin' to myself that vict'ry, despite all the upheavals, would come off as planned.

But what short sight we mortals have! It was only the lull before the hurr'cane. Anna, sweepin' off the porch one fine, bright morn, saw Rube ridin' side by side with Miss Letitia Van Nest.

The others of her set were along, of course, but were takin' it easy and trailin' behind.

What diffe'ence to Anna if her Rube had the looks of a third-rater stable-hand? All that counted with her was the sight of them, joggin' and trottin' together, and with the girl throwin' back her head and laughin' hearty and long. If there had been a single speck of sense in Rube's concrete block—but what use talkin' of the imposs'ble? Instead of keepin' his lun'tic carcass out of sight, there he was in full view, glorifyin' himself, lettin' all the world see what an invinc'ble turtle-dove he was.

Anna leaned hard with both hands on her broom, watchin' with blazin' eyes as they go ridin' past. Then right after breakfast the to'nado bursts in all its fury. I'm out waitin' for Rube to start his hard day's work.

I hear the racket and tiptoe in to invest'gate.

He's backed up into a corner of the din-in'-room. Anna is holdin' him over the coals, and cookin' him to a crisp. Treat her thataway! Slight her and flaunt her before her very eyes! Even if she had loved him—not much! At first I felt like laughin'; but, from my end, it was no laughin'-matter. Rube had been handlin' her as if she was a soft, easy lass, with no more come-back than a fly. The double thickskull! Anna was just the same as all the rest.

I enters at the very moment when she's tellin' him their engagement is at an end. I hear her announcin' that he's offended and wounded her so deep she's not goin' to stand it a minute longer; nor give him another chance to wink at and belittle her, or to so much as look on her young and trustin' face again. When she's gone, he'll have heaps of time to think over his pe'fidy, and go triflin' and deceivin' in any quarter he has a mind to!

Well, you and I know women, and the manner in which, by arts and tricks, they flabbergast and stupefy men longer in the head than the Rube from Prairie Dog. Just one short hour before, he had been treatin' Anna lightly, thinkin' he had her

tamed and trained so he could go sky-larkin' at will, and that she'd come obed'ent to heel whenever he cared to whistle. But now, when the shoe was on the other foot and it was pinchin', he was all fuss and fe'vor; wantin' in a swift, surgin' rush of mushy, cont'ary feelin' to crush her to his faithless breast as the most lov'ble and ado'able young thing that ever set a man nutty.

But no use. Miss Anna made known that for long she had been dreamin' of seein' the big city—that same day she starts on a visit to her aunt in Harlem. "How long will the visit last?" asks Rube. "Maybe forever," says Anna. Not even her dad could stop or delay her. Who knows, I think, but it may be a blessin' in disguise. Rube was that meek and chas'ened he bore her grip out to the flivver. As Ted gets the wheels turnin', she reaches out a hand to me. Then she sits back, lookin' straight ahead, givin' the fuddled Rube the cold shoulder. You've got to pin a rose on Anna!

Was hard luck at an end? It was not. Ted came home with the news that Miss Letitia Van Nest had traveled back to the city by the same train, and that, after talkin' in her usual pleasin' way to him, she had climbed aboard, confabbin' with Anna as if they were members of the same lodge.

Gee whillikens! Bricks were comin' at the Rube from every point of the compass. Still worse, he wasn't tryin' to duck them. I had a mope on my hands. The Rube's proud spirit was as flat as a pro'bition cocktail. He was wilted as a wet rag. Him, the illust'ious and renow'ed lady-killer, and now not one but two had run off and left him without even wavin' good-by! He was cast down as if his only solace and comfort was a watery grave.

I found his ridin'-togs flung under his bed. I stormed and I coaxed, but he wouldn't train. He was deep and pat'etic in gloom; he nursed a baneful fit of sulks. He done everythin' he oughtn't except go off his feed. No matter if he was turned down by one and every girl, sour- and good-lookin', over the face of the world, you couldn't get Rube to pass up the ham and eggs. And right there was more trouble—he was takin' on weight so fast you could see him grow.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" I rails one mornin', when he near broke the scales. "Instead of gettin' down to your nat'ral one thirty-three, the limit for the light-weight crown, I'll be matchin' you soon at two hun'red pounds, and round as a bar'l, for the heavy-weight title."

But that didn't change him, and the Garden mill only two weeks away! I talked it over with Ted Durkee, but what did that clam-digger know? I talked it over with myself—wakin' and sleepin' I chinned and ponde'd it by my lonesome.

I GOT the address from Ted, and called on Anna in her aunt's flat in Harlem. She's very atten'ive when I'm recitin' how the Rube is fast pinin' to death. But after that she talks nothin' only the grand sights of the city and the way she's enjoyin' herself. No good pleadin' and beggin' her to do somethin'—I didn't know what. I'm close to despe'ate; I races over to the East Side and wailed my tale of woe to that old fox, Paddy Madigan.

Paddy runs a feed store and stable; and dabbles in fighters as a side-line. Where he went to school or picked it up, I don't know; but, anyway, he bears rep'tation for containin' all the knowledge and wisdom of the un'verse in the small space under his red thatch. He cocks his head sideways and watches me with that knowin' look in his squinty eyes when I'm givin' him the details.

Then he rolls his tongue around, wettin' his cracked lips, and waves one bony fin, with red bristles traced on the back of it, in an offhand way, as if settlin' my destiny.

"From your ramblin' story," he tolls off, "I gather there's not one but two women mixed up in it. If that be so, then it's a hopeless case. My advice to you is to fling your Rube far out into the Atlantic Ocean, with a stout rope encirclin' his neck and its other end weighted with a bulky stone. After that"— and he pauses—"you go follow him."

I wonder what he's really drivin' at, when, all of a sudden, he jumps up as if to bite me. "What's come over you?" he bellows. "Callin' yourself a fight manager, and unable to manage a love-sick yahoo. Comin' here and botherin' me with the moon-calf blitherin' business in which every boy and girl indulges, just as they do in chocolate cake and nut sundaes. Why don't you do the fit and proper thing and

take the Rube across your knee and spank him good and put him back to work."

Little Paddy Madigan knew about it! How witless of me, in the first place, to think one of his hard nature and ugly disp'sition could know aught of the dire real'ties of the love-bug. Preach and prate as he might, the fact remained that I had on my hands an imbecile romancer next door to givin' up the ghost. I don't care what Smart-Alec Madigan thought, Rube's vain heart lay smashed and bleedin' from the double turn-down.

He was mopin' the same as ever when I got back; he was goin' fast from bad to worse. Twice I lured him into action, and his sparrin' partners made a show of him. He would have been soft pickin' for any prelim bum.

But then—then one nice mornin' came the great and glo'ious change.

His niblets got a letter—a pink and dainty-smellin' missive. He opened it with his fish-eyes stickin' half out of his pin-head. He shouted loud and long in glee; he danced madly up and down; his chest-measure grew six inches in just six seconds. Then he waved the tinted sheet round and round and shook it, gloatin', at me.

"I've got a secret on you," he calls, prouder'n Luc'fer. "What do you think of Miss Van Nest writin' to me?"

"Go on!" I says. "I don't believe it."

"You don't, eh?" jeers the Rube. "She writes wishin' me success; and she hopes I'll train hard and give myself every chance to win the big fight." He tosses the letter over. "Read that, and quit your thinkin' she handed me the icy mitten."

I flung it back. "What kind of a man do you take me for? You don't think, I hope, I'd be readin' a girl's private words to the man she adores?"

The Rube pitched right in. He worked his waist-line back to normal inside four days. He was goin' that hard I now had to hold him in check. He was the jolliest, most willin' scrapper I ever see in a trainin" camp. Not alone because of that first sweet message, but for the reason he's gettin' a letter every day. All expressin' faith in him to win, and adjurin' him to carry on.

Oh, yes, indeedy—it was a wonde'ful in-cen'ive. Nothin' now could hold the Rube. He's strivin' every hour; he's ready to work his fool head off. He gets to goin' such big guns he pounds his sparrin' partners without mercy. I warn him to let up; but one mornin' he takes after one of them and knocks him dead to the world for ten full minutes, makin' him so sore he quits clean and clears out. But the Rube didn't care, and I couldn't complain. Anyhow, a wire brought us another and better man by the next train.

Then the cruel strain of the last few days, with the bitter dryin'-out process, goes to the finish in merry style, the Rube performin' prod'gies in every partic'lar, all on account of the encouragin' words penned to him by his lady-love.

THERE was a monster mob in the Garden that night. All the Big Town was on hand; the East Side boys and the gang from the gas-house dist'ict up around the glass roof; the del'catessen men, the office clerks and the West Side cliff-dwellers in the balconies, and the merchant princes, the Wall Street bankers and the actors in the ring-side seats. It was one of them unive'sal and represent'ive gatherin's which turns out for the feast of champions, and which makes the likes of me think there must be somethin' in the doin's of the ring that calls strong and deep to the human breast.

Rube came into the big arena with a swaggerin' air. You'd never take him for a stranger there. He was all stuck up and wrapped in smiles as he shoved his way down the jammed, crammed aisles. Why not? Rube had a secret that crowd could never guess. He wasn't goin' in there to fight and win just to please them, not just to cop the light-weight crown. Oh, no! He was goin' to show all his wares and hand a good boy a trimmin' for the sake of one girl in the mile-long list that paid homage to his manly charms.

He got a hearty round of hand-claps and calls; but it was as nothin' when Jimmy Kelly appea'ed. Jimmy was the great and pop'lar champ. As dandy a little gloveman as ever stepped through the ropes; in all his career no one had ever sent him down for the ten-count. That seethin' mass of fight-lovin' human'ty rose right up and howled its lungs out in greetin' to that classy Irish pippin.

Any other time I'd be frettin' over the effect on the Rube. But not now—he wasn't thinkin' of public acclaim. The one

and only thought animatin' his peanut was Miss Letitia Van Nest—before he'd quit fightin' for her they'd stretch him full length on a shutter in the middle of the ring and carry him gently away.

When they peeled off and stood up listenin' to the ref'ree's inst'uctions, they were as shapely a pair as the eye of man would wish to see. They were trained to the pink of pe'fection; they stood the same height, and tipped the beam at an even one thirty-three.

You might search the country over and not find a match for one or both of them. Then—*bang!*—goes the gong, and they're away.

That first stanza was a humdinger. They didn't waste no time fiddlin'. Kelly's game was to rush and try and pin Rube in his corner. But the Rube wasn't nappin'; he wasn't fallin' for that old trick. He met him out in the middle, toe to toe.

Then there comes the first exchange and—*zowie!* Rube is beatin' him to the punch. I felt that there thrill run up my spine; I felt like risin' up and tossin' my bonnet in the air. My Rube had the edge in speed, and there lies vict'ry!

But don't you think Champ Kelly was an easy mark. They were both of them masters—which is to say they'd got the live spirit and fine ways of an artist. It was scrappin' to make one with red blood stand up and yell. Watchin' them, I says to myself this is the stuff that made man the prize animal and put the fightin' nations in the van.

I have a chance to let my thoughts go wanderin', you see, for my entry is showin' the best form. Yes; Rube was makin' it clear as sunshine that Jimmy Kelly had gone to the well once too often, that hereafter he would go stumblin' down the dark and stony road, waitin' for all champs, and for the rest of us, I reckons.

WELL, the round is over, and Rube trots back to me full of the joy of approachin' vict'ry. The fickle crowd already is shoutin' his name; I pat his tow top fondly as he takes his squatty stool. I'm still praisin' him when I catches sight of a famil'ar face pushin' along by the ring platform, with eyes only for the Rube.

It's the sparrin' partner that had been handed the sore poundin' and packed his duds and left us flat. I'd spotted him over in the far corner, workin' behind Jimmy Kelly.

But I thinks the poor chap had a good right to swing into the enemy's camp, for Rube sure had treated him rough. Now he's close up behind my lightweight.

"What are you after here?" I asks. "Another sound trimmin'?"

"Rube!" he calls, never mindin' me; and waits till my boy turns and they're lookin' straight at each other. "You know them pink and scenty love-letters, Rube? Breslin put one over on you—he wrote them all!"

Snakes alive! I made a fierce swipe, but too late. The villian was gone, and the damage was done. Already Rube is on his feet, facin' me in murde'ous rage. He looks as if he's goin' to pepper me with hot shot; but I take the risk and hold my ground. I shouts and swears I'm not the author of no such foul, dirty trick. I'm in the middle of it, tryin' in vain to make that wild Injun listen to reason when the bell bings again and it's the second round.

I climb down with fire in my eye. But that mon'mental crook and knave of a sparrin' partner is nowhere to be seen. I turns about and finds what I well know is sure to come off. Tears of wrath and bitte'ness dim Rube's fish-eyes. He's been stung often and often, but never so terrible and ghastly as this. His pewee think-tank is everywhere except where it ought to be. He's racked with dismay and frenzy. What was this that had befell him? Thinkin' he had won the gran'est lady in the land, only to have it turn out a fraud and fake of his own fight manager! He's sizzlin' over with hate of me; he's rent with anguish and despair to the deep depths of his sloppy-love self. Oh, aye, that he was—and what else? Oh, nothin' much, only—Rube was a cinch target for the flyin' fists of Jimmy Kelly.

There in one second was the big bout goin' blooey. But the fightin' instinct in the Rube was strong. When jabs and jolts began to shower on him, he tried to fight back. He strained and strove, but he couldn't get his muddled nut and muscles to timin' together in the same old way. Where he had been sendin' them in nifty and straight before, he now was missin' by a mile. The girl and them pink notes, likewise the despic'ble treach'ry involved, was

occupyin' every nook and cranny of his pin-head, and Jimmy Kelly was crowdin' him faster and faster all the time.

I bobs up and down, tryin' to send my shriekin' voice to the spoony galoot from Prairie Dog; but what use to shout against a gale? That mighty crowd was trampin' down the chairs and joinin' in a vicious roar of sound for a knock-out.

I feels my heart sinkin'; that hick was sure headed for a down-and-out. Just then Kelly clips him with a short-arm upper cut on the chin, and the Rube flops on his hands and knees. He's up against the ropes and close to me. His tow locks are tossed and streaked with red. The sweat of dazed agony is on his face. His lips are quiverin' and his jaw is tremblin'; there's a far-away look in his eyes, as if dreamin' of one that had played him false. The count has begun. I crawls up and shouts in his ear:

"She didn't throw you down, Rube! Look! Look where I'm pointin'!"

He fights his head up and gazes out into the haze of smoke. Then he starts and then stares, his fish-eyes stickin' out when he sees some one wavin', when he makes out a face he knows so well—the face of a horseback girl topped with a hat, trim and jaunty, jet-black and shiny and stuck on at a saucy angle.

Say, why do you and me like this fight game? Isn't it for the thrills it brings? Of course, of course; but now I know there are thrills and thrills, and that never again will I stir to the same thrillin' climax that broke for us then. Rube waves one hand back, lifts the other and rubs across his face, clearin' the mists away. The count stops at nine, and——

Rube is on his feet and fightin' like all the furies let loose. He's a ding-dong, slashin', slam-bang, rip-snortin' bone-crusher for fair! He tears into Kelly like a swarm of wildcats. He was goin' through him like he was a mill'on dollars. He was handin' out solid punches with both hands faster'n you could count. Jimmy Kelly was runnin' a race backward from post to post; bullets were shootin' through his guard; he was bein' exposed to all the world as a rank amatoor.

There was nothin' to it now one way or the other, as that throng of crazy rooters could plainly see. Rube danced rings around the boasted champ; he threw gloves at him from every possible angle; he bent him double with body-wallops, straightened him up with a pop on the beezer, and then—then—*bingo!*—comes over the old hay-maker, and the light-weight crown was his.

THE great manager paused, and for a lengthy space we were silent there in the silvery moonlight. I fell to reflecting on the odd follies of men with maids, and of the Rube Henshaws among us most of all. Then my mind took another turn.

"But what came out of it all?"

"Little did I worry once the fight was won," granted my genial companion. "Let the Rube find out what he may, and talk vengeance against me all day long. I'd got the title. The trick was turned."

"So you did write those letters?" I made suggestion boldly.

"What are you talkin' about?" returned Tim Breslin, sharp rebuke in his tone. "I play the game. The day when Anna held aloof in her wise woman's way, and when Paddy Madigan turned me down, I called on Miss Letitia Van Nest. And let me tell you somethin': There's one reg'lar girl. She listened to my tale of woe. She wrote them letters. She supplied me the ridin'-clothes which fitted a bantam fighter neat, and won my lady-killer the title of all the world."

"But the Rube—did he mope and pine?"

"He wasn't built that way. Next day I handed him a paper with news of Miss Van Nest's engagement. Soon he got up, sayin' he was bound for Harlem."

"What?" I exclaimed.

"There's where he belonged," the great manager briefly affirmed.

Before I could begin again, a man came round the corner of the ramshackle hostelry, leading a husky young lad by the hand. I sat up taking keen notice; but Tim leaned back, puffing complacently. The stranger came straight and, stopping before us, struck a fighter's pose, making passes as if to quicken the fight-spirit in the tow-headed boy.

"What do you think, Tim?" asked the newcomer. "Will he turn out a scrapper?"

"The answer to that question lies in the future," answered Sage Breslin. "But one thing certain and sure: If he grows up like his dad it's himself will be the wholesale terror and conquerin' hero with all women, far and wide."

"Next!"

These Suburbanites Didn't Like Newspapers, Bananas or Peanuts, or the Music of the Hand-Organ. Well, What Could Giovanni Do for a Living?

By Lucille Van Slyke

IT WAS an angel in a middy blouse who told me about Giovanni. He was a very special protégé of hers. Or, possibly, she said that she was a very special protégée of his. Only, that seemed so incoherent to me that I assumed she meant it the other way round. She did not pretend to have discovered him. A certain young doctor had come upon him hunched on the hospital steps, rather like a worried monkey—a persistent monkey, who wouldn't move until he had decided what to do next. He was sitting outside the hospital because the authorities wouldn't let him inside with Giuseppe. In his fright he had inadvertantly admitted the truth—that he was no relation of Giuseppe's; while Giuseppe, a shy little bachelor who never looked at a woman if he could avoid it, lay within and cheerfully lied and claimed Giovanni as his son. Their stories simply did not fit at all.

The doctor tried to fathom the mystery by questioning Giovanni, but that beautifully dirty youth became suddenly crafty and would not talk at all. He merely insisted that he was fourteen and opened his shirt-throat to prove it. He was such a small fourteen that he had cautiously glued his stolen working-certificate to his bosom.

He boasted that he was a "damafin' bootblack."

He was. He was a perfect bootblack, for he gloried in his art.

Like most youthful artists, he was not overpaid. But until the doctor discovered him, the question of pay hadn't entered into his calculations because of Giuseppe. Giuseppe had taught him his art; Giuseppe had pocketed his income, fed him, clothed him.

So Giovanni had never worried about the income; he had merely given himself up to the joys of creation.

From the thrilling moment when Giovanni knelt before the dusty, unkempt, roughened blob of dirty leather until the triumphant second when he threw back his beautiful head and let the alluring splendor of his smile light up the olive pallor of his adolescent skin as he unconsciously demanded the tribute of one who had achieved, Giovanni's heart beat with the pride of the artist. Proud that, with mere brushes and rags and pastes—and saliva—he could impart to mere leather the exquisite gloss of carved jet. With what deft movements, with what swift caresses, with what delicate flirts of his brush did he attain his shining ends!

The supreme test of his greatness was that his patrons' eyes never left his busy fingers. Forgotten, their after-breakfast cigars smoldered away; neglected, their morning papers slipped from their hands as their fascinated eyes watched Giovanni's slightest move. His customers stepped forth from his ministrations with the strutting pride of connoisseurs. They possessed, when they left Giovanni, something perfect of its kind, something that let them contemplate their feet rapturously and murmur:

"A-a-a-ah! That's a peach of a shine!"

Of his art, then, Giovanni was sure. His emotions, moreover, were well in hand again, although for some six weeks past

they had endured an upheaval that had at times threatened to impair his art. Tears had frequently assisted the saliva at the crowning moment of perfection.

For Giuseppe had been sick unto death, and although one white-haired Neapolitan barber more or less doesn't affect the census perceptibly, this particular one made all the difference in the world to Giovanni. So he sat on the hospital steps and murmured despairingly:

"Mother of God! And I can only shine shoes!"

WHEN Giovanni said, "Mother of God!" he didn't mean it for profanity. Not but what he could and did swear—and lie and cheat, for that matter, for he had no code of morals whatever—but when he said, "Mother of God!" he meant the mother of God. He meant a distinct person. He meant a young woman riding on a donkey with a *bambino* in her arms.

The curious part of the picture was that he knew exactly how her eyes would look if she would only lift them. He felt that only the mother of God could understand how helpless he was to do anything in this world except shine shoes.

You see, until Giuseppe fell sick of the typhoid, things had gone very well. Theoretically, while things were going well, they should have provided for such an exigency as typhoid. But actually, as they hadn't been in America very long, they had barely made up the deficit that travel had eaten into the exchequer.

The ecstatic fact that Giuseppe was alive had been established. He was alive, and he was going to stay alive. Vanni had kissed the doctor's hands and retired to the hospital steps to dream over the miracle. Giuseppe had been snatched away by the devil and returned by God.

But neither the devil nor God had yet shown any further concern about the matter.

And Vanni could only shine boots!

Moreover, Giuseppe was blissfully unaware that another Neapolitan had permanently annexed chair number four in the tonsorial palace which he had been gracing with his presence, and that the new barber had a "lil' boy" who had likewise annexed the bootblacking concession.

As a free lance, Giovanni had been doing very well, everything considered. But he was not doing well enough to finance a typhoid convalescence. The doctor had put things up to him squarely; man to man.

"Got to get him out in the country. Got to have nice, fresh country air."

Vanni nodded.

"West'chest' Count'?" he asked, with a gleam of intelligence.

The doctor did not smile.

"Sure! That's fine!" he agreed. "Know somebody?"

"Tony gotta da cous'. He speaka me one time. Say nice air." Already his grimy hands were exploring his pockets. He brought forth his all—two dimes, two nickels, some coppers.

He frowned.

"I thinka da tick' forty five cen's. I come to-morrow. I see Tony and I shina da shoe."

The doctor's hand went out to the boy's shoulder. Vanni suddenly looked very little to be grappling with transportation problems.

"Suppose I lend you a couple dollars to get you up to West'chest'?"

The glory of Vanni's smile radiated to the farthest corner of the doctor's tired heart.

"Sure!" agreed Vanni cordially. "I senda back in a let'."

This time it was the doctor who smiled. He didn't think there was a possible chance of Vanni's sending it back, and he couldn't really afford to let it go—he was such a very young doctor—but he luxuriated in an occasional extravagance.

The loan was concluded with the formality that should go with such a stupendous transaction.

With the two dollars, Vanni pocketed a "tick," a neatly graved card embellished with the doctor's name and address, and then he went forth to ponder over the problem of providing Giuseppe with country air.

Unsophisticated as he was, he realized that Giuseppe could not subsist on air alone, however revivifying it might prove, and he suspected that opportunities for plying his one talent would not exist in the air. So, chin on hands, he pondered for a full hour before he sought Tony. And when

he had seen Tony, he felt less confident than before.

But of three things he was certain: That Giuseppe must have the air, that he had two dollars wherewith to get Giuseppe into the air, and that Tony's cousin lived in the air.

Up to the very hour when he led Giuseppe forth, trembling greatly, from the hospital, did Vanni faithfully pursue his art.

The last shine of all was a veritable masterpiece—a labor of love, a parting gift to the doctor.

Gratitude welled in the boy's eyes; his lips could form no adequate expression of his feelings, but the smile spoke eloquently. Though the shoes were so old and porous that Vanni's heart smote him, that shine shone. It was the triumph of hope *and* experience.

"Gooda-by!" Vanni's smile reassured the doctor's wavering faith for he had looked terribly little kneeling. "You waita one mont'; I senda back—" He tapped his pocket secretively. Giuseppe wasn't to know that they were traveling on borrowed funds; Giovanni had lied profusely on that point. "You waita—you see what I do next."

THE particular suburb to which Giovanni piloted Giuseppe had been an old-time summer resort before electricity changed it to a suburb. That was why it was placed, with such charming inconvenience, a full mile from the station. It was a rather nice mile. A hilly stretch of road edged with elderberries and sumacs, an occasional glimpse of the Sound, and the pleasant murmur of an almost hidden brook.

And at the northern bend of the road, about half-way to the suburb, was "the Dumps."

In a hollow a hundred yards or so back from the road, almost hidden by the underbrush, are a score of disgracefully picturesque shacks—nice, weather-beaten shacks, huddled incongruously together, their crazy little stovepipes poking impudently above the sky-line. A pleasant babble of women's laughter above the splash of water as they wash their gaudy garments on the flat stones beside the spring, the babies' voices, the cooing of doves, the plaintive cries of wee goats—a disgraceful kind of settlement to wedge itself into a discreet and proper suburb!

Yet by the power of injunctions oft postponed and by the magic of the law's delays did the Dumps flourish gloriously, as they always had flourished in the eight years since one adroit A. Luigi, *padrone*, had leased unto himself some three scraggly acres "to mak' lil' garden" and, incidentally, to let numerous compatriots, who had been lured thither to "dig da cell' and carry mort'" in the suburb, build tar-paper roofs for their own heads.

Perfectly disgraceful! Yet, if you stand at the top of the hill, you will notice a very pronounced path from the neat little suburb to those same disgraceful Dumps. For the confrères of A. Luigi are delightful persons to know when you want a furnace-assistant or somebody to bury your Pomeranian. The truth of the matter is that, though collectively the denizens of the Dumps are disgraceful, individually they are indispensable.

Least to be spared is the newsboy. He is a variable creature. There is a monotony about delivering papers in the golden dawn that does not appeal to the Italian temperament.

The older residents of the Dumps are prone to pass this job to any newcomer.

Now, Giovanni knew only how to shine boots; he merely pretended that he knew how to deliver papers. He knew how they were delivered in Spring Street. So one placid May morning a small comet tore through the suburban sky with shrill howls of: "Coma da pape'! Moider! Fire!"

Each whoop was punctuated by a sort of bomblike explosion as a tightly rolled missive hit the door of its destination.

Loud howls of protests brought forth diplomatic apologies from Mike, the news-dealer.

"Excusa. This lil' boy comes off my broth' Tony in Macdoug' Street. He no knowa you no lika da pape' come like N'Yoik."

Assured that the residents did not like the paper to "come like New York," Vanni learned to creep from house to house like a disembodied spirit.

For some three days he was a silent Mercury.

Then he appeared one afternoon with

winning smiles and waved a graceful hand toward a wabbling push-cart loaded with mottled, decaying fruit, the same presided over by a trembling, white-haired man.

"You lika buya da banan' off Seppe?"

The suburb did not like. Not even the sight of that crumpled-up little vendor could move their flinty hearts. The Dumps and its denizens must be perforce endured, but hucksters on their sacred streets—*never!*

Giovanni retreated in complete defeat. For nearly a week he remained merely the newsboy.

Then, one bright afternoon—the afternoon, in fact, of the Thursday Porch Bridge, with two extra guest-tables from the other side of the railroad station, Vanni appeared, again accompanied by the white-haired one, this time with a wheezing barrel-organ and a decrepit monkey, who strove in vain to waltz to the doleful strains of an off-key "Il Trovatore."

"You no lika *music?*" Giovanni exclaimed in horror.

Emphatically they did not. What they said anent that music they were still saying after the five-forty-eight train came in. They continued to say it throughout the evening. For what do health officers and justices of peace and deputy sheriffs and town boards have telephones if not for hearing that folks do not move twenty miles from New York to listen to barrel-organs?

The organ was promptly confiscated because it hadn't a license. Vanni hid the monkey. The papers were delivered in positively moribund silence—especially on Sundays.

Sundays were pleasant days. The suburbanites were wont to gather round the edges of a sacred tennis-court for tea. They always looked and felt all to the Belasco on Sunday. Especially when they had week-end visitors. They felt that they must look awfully impressive to week-end visitors.

But at the most *al-fresco* moment there arrived on the side of the tennis-court Giovanni—Giovanni accompanied again by the white-haired one. With music, too—the plaintive, reedy music of a second-hand peanut-roaster.

The president of the club and the master of the courts rose up and told Vanni what they thought of him. They thought altogether too much of him for his size.

Giovanni gave up at last. You are to remember that he had been under weeks of emotional strain and that the position of newsboy to that sort of suburb is not highly lucrative. He sank to the roadside. He wept; he beat off the feeble comforting of the white-haired one, who somehow seemed to resemble their simian friend. He wailed forth a passionate Iliad of his woes.

"You no lika da banan',; you no lika da music; you no lika da' peanut; we no can eat this air! Seppe, he must got to stay in this air. We no gotta da strong arm to dig. You no buya what we sell. We no gotta one damn thing to do next. Only to tak' da pape'. Mother of God! You must gotta have a heart! Me, I no know what we do next!"

IN THE general confusion that followed, the master of the courts thoughtfully choked off the plaintive whistle of the stand with a peanut. That helped some. And while most of the members of the tennis club and their distinguished guests shook with Homeric laughter, one human being, the tempestuous angel in the middy blouse, lifted her racket and flung it into the net. In an unsteady voice, with tears streaming down her cheeks she admits that she cried:

"Oh, look at his eyes! Can't you see that he's starving?"

It seems there was a silence then, a silence broken only by the moan of Vanni's unabashed sobbing and the whir of a bird's tiny wings.

I believe most of those present watched the bird.

The angel in the middy blouse ran out into the dusty road and knelt beside Giovanni, who, somehow or other, looked awfully little to her, just as he had to the doctor.

"What did you do before you came here?" she asked him quietly. "Don't be frightened—we won't hurt you—stop crying and tell me what you did——"

"Me, I shina da boot. Seppe, he giva da smooth shave——"

The angel had a moment of inspiration. She rose and glared at the tennis club.

"There are a lot of slobs"—she admits she said "slobs"—"sitting round here who need shoes shined. A lot who need shaves."

She eyed her own staring father contemplatively. "I know one poor old man whose shoes are always dusty and who cuts himself when he shaves—he lives in that white house over there, and you can come and shave and shine him to-morrow morning at half-past seven. Now then, who's next?"

"I'm next," said the president of the club meekly. "Make it seven for mine."

"Next! Next!"

It became an exciting game. Giovanni alone kept his head in the thrilling ten minutes that followed. By finally discriminating judically between those who shaved every day and those whom kind nature allowed a two days' respite, and those who took early trains and those who took earlier ones, and those who always had Sunday guests and those who actually went to church, the angel made out some sort of schedule which she presented to Vanni.

"Mother of God!" shrilled the child, after a wild computing. "Seppe, you are a rich mans!"

He sent the doctor his two dollars by June. He sent him a dollar beside and a peremptory message to "come up." The doctor came. I told you, I think, that he was a very young doctor. And after Seppe had been examined the full dollar's worth and, incidentally, several other residents of the Dumps had been sized up a bit, Vanni led his guests proudly through his domain.

He still had the rheumatic monkey and a goat besides—a lame, retired gentleman of a goat, but a very good goat for all that. There were three or four kittens that somebody had hired him to drown—only, he hadn't gotten round to drowning them yet—and there was a dog. At least, Giovanni assured the doctor that it was a dog, but the doctor privately suspected it was going to be a zebra when it grew up. Anyhow, it was named "Doc." The shanty had a new tar-paper shell, and over the doorway Vanni had proudly pounded big tin studs into a glittering announcement of:

NEXT!

After the Dumps had been duly admired, Giovanni shined the doctor's shoes and then he shined his own. He inspected the doctor's chin critically and royally commanded Seppe to shave him. And while Seppe was stirring the lather grandly, Vanni delicately lathered his own beaming countenance in the brook. And then with much ceremony did he lead Dr. J. Arnold Cambridge to the tennis club and present him with much dignity to everybody assembled, ending adroitly with the tempestuous angel in the middy blouse.

THE angel makes no excuses for what happened next. Indeed, she sometimes acts rather proud of the whole proceeding. She shamelessly enjoyed being the protégée of the bootblack. She will tell you herself if you ask her about the cool, clear, starlight summer evening, a month or so later, whereon Vanni waited patiently on her door-step, nodding drowsily to the hum of the crickets.

A mile down the road, on gleaming rails, the warning purr of the up train roused him to his Sunday-evening duties, and he stood erect and called,

"Doc, you goin' miss da ten-fort'-eight you don' hurry!"

The angel says the doctor was talking and didn't hear him. The angel's father says they had neither of them said a word for an hour. But, at any rate, Giovanni knew his duty.

He went up the steps and strode into the darkened porch.

"*Scusa!*" he stammered a moment later, his heart almost breaking as he pulled off his cap. "*Mi scusa!*" And he would have slipped away if the doctor's arm hadn't caught his. The angel admits that the doctor's other arm was round her. She shamelessly says she doesn't care what anybody says; she couldn't help what happened next.

"He was so awfully little for fourteen, and he always washed his face in the brook before he came to see me——"

It seems that she suddenly realized how much she owed to Giovanni. She leaned down impulsively and kissed him. He shivered exquisitely. He crossed himself. He fell on his knees.

"Mother of God," he whispered wistfully, "you maka me rich mans."

Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor
Gather to Talk Things Over

SOME OF THE THINGS WE SHALL PUBLISH IN 1923

MISS ZONA GALE, best known as the author of "Miss Lulu Bett," says that the whole world is dying for something it cannot name. And that something, she declares, while not named, is shown in action in a novel by Will Levington Comfort called "The *Public Square*." She continues:

The story is strong and absorbing, and its people are living and endearing, if you want no more. But there is much more. There is reflected here, though very little is said about it, that which alone could make life, instead of a thirst, a fulfilment. Through these pages moves a figure of to-day that will be a living figure down all time. A great public is ready for this book.

"THE *Public Square*" will begin serially in EVERYBODY'S in the February issue. Of Mr. Comfort and his story, Edgar Lee Masters, known the world over for his "Spoon River Anthology," says:

Will Levington Comfort is one of the few men of fundamental vision in America, and he has done a book in "The *Public Square*" into which he has put the riches of long thought and a high consecration to the definite philosophy of the soul's triumph. No one else could have written this book. The novel, as fiction, is of a very high order of creative art. It is realism in the sense that the natures of his characters are unfolded with a genius which fuses his materials and guides the literary style with a rhythmical flowing and a deep and enchanting music. Mr. Comfort has a great message to America. Here is a book to be read first for its story-interest, for it is a novel that will hold the reader from first to last. Then its philosophy will come to the mind ready for it, and it will sustain and build upon contemplation. I wish this book could come to the hands of our bewildered youth and age of this land, and that either before or after reading it, they would go through "Midstream," to see what manner of man Will Levington Comfort is, and how, after a great experience and much suffering, he has evolved a love-story that will guide the young and renew and strengthen the old.

"The *Public Square*" is a novel of importance, of more importance than anything published since "If Winter Comes," which also appeared serially in EVERYBODY'S. "The *Public Square*" will begin in February.

EVERYBODY'S published serially "Judith of the Godless Valley" by Honoré Willsie under the title of "Godless Valley." Before book-publication, the advance orders were larger than for any of Mrs. Willsie's previous works. When you consider that her novels sell into the hundred thousand, this means something.

Mrs. Willsie is an author who has developed steadily. Each work has been an improvement upon its predecessor. And now she has written a novel, "The Lariat," which, for sheer human interest coupled with sound, ripe philosophy, is the best thing she has done. The story is laid in the West, as its title suggests. It begins at about the time when woman's influence was beginning to be felt politically, and the central figure is a man—a fossil-hunter—who had dedicated his life to the reclamation of the history of the past. And this strong man—Hugh—who had finished with sex forever, was meeting in Miriam that which he had not known a woman could possess. Hugh was disturbed, bewildered, fascinated. He was meeting sex-attraction in one of its most subtle, most intoxicating forms.

And Miriam! She could not endure the thought that such imagination, such loyalty, such vividness of perception should be given by Hugh to so remote a profession as paleontology. Her resolve was taken. Neither Jessie (his wife) nor paleontology

Louis Lee Arms and Miss Mary Arms. For further particulars see Mr. Arms' "Chimney Corner" contribution on this page.

were to claim him longer. He was to belong to her, and to that larger place in the world to which his talents and his personality entitled him.

So the struggle begins, and goes on through a story that is as illuminating in its searchings into life's fundamentals as it is absorbing as reading-matter. "The Lariat" will begin in March EVERYBODY'S.

OTHER features contemplated for 1923, of which there will be more extended announcements in later issues, are as follows:

Serial novels—by Beldon Duff, Mrs. Wilson Woodrow, Harold Titus, Arthur D. Howden Smith.

Complete novels in one issue—by Will Levington Comfort, William Almon Wolff, Elizabeth Irons Folsom, Inez Haynes Irwin, Della MacLeod, Ferdinand Reyher, and Katherine and Robert Pinkerton.

Short stories—by Dana Burnet, Louis Lee Arms, Edison Marshall, H. C. Bailey, William Bullock, Stephen Vincent Benét, Walter De Leon, Ralph Durand, Garet Garrett, Beth B. Gilchrist, Burton Kline, Frederic Arnold Kummer, William C. McCloy, Stanley Olmsted, James Oppenheim, E. R. Punshon, Sampson Raphaelson, Harrison Rhodes, Vingie E. Roe, John Russell, T. L. Sappington, Fannye Jordan Treaster, Lucille Van Slyke, Barrett Willoughby and W. Carey Wonderly.

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

THE key to Louis Lee Arms' (On and On," page 5) "Chimney Corner" introductory speech is to be found in the picture of Miss Arms and Mr. Arms which appears on this page. Look at it first and then read:

Reading from left to right are the husband and daughter of "the famous motion-picture star" who very seldom get any publicity on their own hook. While Mary Marsh Arms has not yet seen her mother, Mae Marsh, in "The Birth of a Nation," "Intolerance," "Polly of the Circus," "The Cinderella Man" or other screen-plays, and, indeed, set up a lusty wail the only time she was taken to a motion-picture theatre, her life has already been affected, if not influenced, by the celluloid drama.

Before she was two years old she had traveled six times across the country from Hollywood to New York in the interest of art. She has a wide acquaintance among Pullman porters, Fred Harvey dining-car conductors, train-butchers and Albuquerque Indians. She is a good mixer, and during the course of a journey will invariably bring her mother the gold watch and fob with the Elk's tooth belonging to the affable gentleman in Compartment C.

THEY are already making plans for Mary:

When her mother declares that Mary is going to be a writer, her father maintains a deceptive calm. He is convinced, however, that, on the basis of heredity, she could conceivably do better as an actress. This could be arranged after she has executed her mother's plans for her, which, it seems, will take up the first forty or fifty years. Before Mary arrived, and even after, her father managed to get around a bit. He had worked in Park Row and Wall Street, played college and professional baseball, followed Mexican revolutions, drilled for oil in Oklahoma, gone South with Big League ball clubs as a correspondent, worked in motion-picture studios in Hollywood and Fort Lee, and been one of the many unimportant men in service who "didn't get across." There have been other things, among them a theatrical tour last fall with an English comedy in which Mary's mother was starred. He is not an actor. He likes to read better than write, and divides his reading-hours between "Mother Goose" and old English novelists. Mary's home is in California in a little community known as Flintridge. But she has been there so seldom it is doubtful if she knows it.

THROUGH with college, James L. Hutchison, who wrote "A Matter of Face," page 125, hopped out to China and remained there for nearly seven years.

Started in China [he tells us] as a salesman and ended up as an advertising man. Returned when

we entered the war, joined the navy, never saw a boat during the term of my enlistment, now with an advertising agency. My vocation (save the word!) and my avocation is writing. Advertising I consider to be the most exacting and fascinating work in the world. I hope to grow with the infant as it grows. It took me just ten years to get a running-start at my first story; I managed to take the plunge last October. Don't believe I know of a harder job; but it's satisfying as nothing else is. Have intended to write since I was a kid; now never expect to stop. Only kick against life is the limited number of hours in the day—yes, and the difficulty of making enough money to buy all the books I want.

"CHIMNEY CORNER" welcomes Lucille Van Slyke, author of "Next," page 168. She introduces herself thus:

Like the vacuous-faced young thing who sucked a flossy quill penholder in scared desperation on a recent cover design, my out-to-biography stops perforce after a biological, "I was born." Mostly, I'm glad I was. Because there are more things in this life to like than there are to dislike. Moonlight to sail and swim in, rain to tramp through, snow to ski in, dirt to garden in, and—shades of wild bunkers I have met!—to golf in, dogs to trail at our heels, currants to jell, old farmhouses to restore, old trees to adore, borrowed babies to bathe, symphonies, camp-fires to broil steaks on, paper to read from and scribble on—oh, there's more than enough to compensate for wars, cutworms, taxes, curdled tomato soup, professional uplifters, humid subways, adenoidy actresses and poison-ivy.

AND now something about the use of words:

I wish I had a "pet opinion to express." I have to struggle along instead with an unruly mob of almost-ideas. Every day I grow more and more appalled with the realization of how futile it is to try to tuck so big a thing as the littlest life in the world into—just words. Remember how Alice Through the Looking Glass puzzled over "how you can make words mean so many different things"? Humpty Dumpty explained to her "that the question was simply, which is to be master—they've a temper, some of them—particularly verbs; they're the proudest. Adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs! Impenetrability! That's what I say!"

And when Alice asked him what he meant, he said,

"I mean we'd had enough of the subject, and it would be just as well if you'd mention what you meant to do next, as I don't suppose you mean to stop here all the rest of your life."

"That's a great deal for one work to mean," Alice said in a thoughtful tone.

"When I make a word do a lot of work like that," said Humpty, "I always pay it extra—ah, but you should see 'em coming around me of a Saturday night—for to get their wages."

Think what a pay-roll some authors must have to meet!

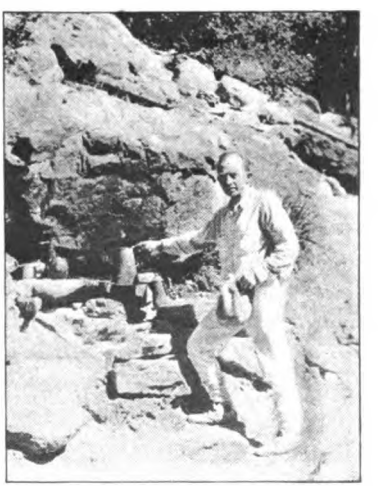
ONE OF the diversions of the editing game is the consideration of criticisms upon statements of fact made by authors in their stories. Sometimes the complainants win their point, and sometimes they don't, but at all events the aroused controversy, in which the writer almost always has a part, rarely fails to bring out some piece of information or record of experience that is worthy of wider circulation for the interest it contains.

Honoré Willsie, in her EVERYBODY'S story, "Breaking the Blue Roan," made the hero struggle for fifty-two minutes with this rambunctious animal, when it ceased its bucking and became docile.

This incident brought forth a somewhat sharp criticism from a reader, who imagined that the performance was a continuous one, although if he had read the story carefully, he would have seen very well that it wasn't.

However, Mrs. Willsie had this to say about it:

I didn't say that the blue roan "bucked straight



Will Levington Comfort, author of "Facing the East," in this issue and of an absorbing and powerful love-story, "The *Public Square*," whose serial publication begins in the next (February) number.

Stanley Olmsted, whose "Mountain Farmers" and "Granny Hooper" elicited from our readers a noteworthy unanimity of praise and appreciation, will contribute more of his vivid stories of life among the quaint folk of the North Carolina mountains to *Everybody's* during 1923.

through for fifty-two minutes." Nor did I say that the hero sat her straight through for fifty-two minutes. The first time I recall hearing a discussion as to how long it took to bring a mean bronco to terms was ten years ago in a camp in Arizona—in Cerbat, Arizona, to be exact. I had been having a struggle with a little Indian horse, in which I had been worsted, of course. Two old cow-men, an Indian and a couple of old Silver City miners sat in our tent that night and talked horse—the breaking of horses. Looking back through my diary of that time, I find that one of the cow-men said he had fought a bronco without dismounting for two hours, and that it had during that period "sunfished," jumped, bucked and so forth with only short periods for rest and inspiration. The Indian told a fine story of a horse with Arabian strain that had died after he had fought with it all day—intermittently, of course.

This conversation started me on a new scent, and from that time on whenever I was in cow-country or with men who rode Western horses, I made them talk horse. Of course, in the ten years' interval, I have seen many horse-breaking exhibitions. The longest I ever saw a man fight a "bad actor" as my hero fought the blue roan was an hour and five minutes. Last winter, in Wyoming, I saw a boy of fourteen fight an unbroken mule for forty minutes, smoking every minute (the boy, not the mule).

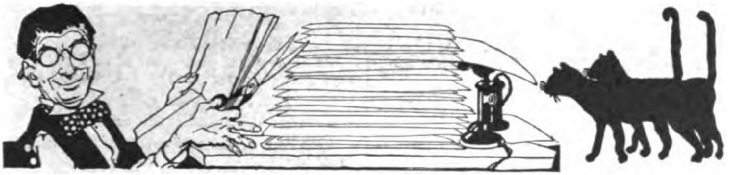
IN THE "Chimney Corner" a few numbers back, Harold E. Porter (Holworthy Hall) said that a degree had been given him by Wake Forest College, Wake Forest, North Carolina.

A search of the records shows the statement to be correct.

Mr. Porter also declared that the president of that institution said of him in substance, if not in these words, "I am firmly convinced that if he (Porter) hadn't abandoned himself to fiction, he might have made an honest living." And forthwith Porter did again abandon himself to fiction and more so. He said that the Wake Forest College was a Methodist institution. The records show that it is Baptist.

IN EXTENUATION, it must be said for Mr. Porter that when he wrote to the "Chimney Corner" he was in Paris, and in his own words had "been out of touch with the world for some weeks." He is sorry for the error. So are we. And we hope that the officials of Wake Forest College are charitable. SEWELL HAGGARD.

***Everybody's*, as its name implies, is designed to entertain both the young and the old. We present here a charming and gracious maiden of Sterling, Illinois, who, as far as we know, is the magazine's youngest admirer. Can any one dispute this claim?**



Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

On milliner's shop in Buffalo: "*I. Bezall.*" (DR. F. W. L.)

In Philadelphia: "*Dr. Phillip Cyng Physick.*"

In Tampa, Fla.: "*Limpus & Limpus, Chiropractors.*" (J. A. V.)

In Burlington, N. J.: "*Tryon & Tryon, Suits, $19.75.*" (L. M. M.)

On church bulletin-board, Binghamton, N. Y.: "*Sermon, 7.30. P.M. 'Tis Folly to Suppose.' You are invited.*" (L. M. M.)

In Baltimore: "*Fairweather & Rain.*"

Tin Lizzie passed me on the street,
All painted up and looking sweet,
And this the sign the darned thing bore
(Lettered in gilt on its forward door):
"*White & Finck, Painters.*" (DR. F. W. L.)

In N. Y. *World*: "*Mitchell the Tailor. Trousers ready to wear out.*"

In Chicago: "*Viohl, Tailor.*"

In Hartford *Times*: "*Two Ex-Soldiers Commit Suicide Daily.*"

In Mobile, Ala.: "*Rippa & Rippa, Gentleman's Clothiers.*" (T. B. L.)

In Battle Creek, Mich.: "*Miss Iva Sweit.*"

In Larchmont, N. Y.: "*Lock & Kay.*"

(*Denver Post*)

Ray Chapman was shot through the stomach and probably wounded.

His vanity, probably.

(*Overheard in elevator of professional building*)

"You never know what it will cost. When ours came, we had three doctors and two nurses and I paid out a thousand dollars. But it was a spencerian birth."

Write-o! They do come high.

(*Sign on Main Street, Oshkosh, Wis.*)

Buttons sewed on up-stairs.

But it's the buttons on my cellar stairs that trouble *me* most.

(*Head-lines in New York Tribune*)

UNTERMYER QUITS AS COUNSEL FOR DAUGHERTY'S FOES.

Scoresshrdlu aun hno O uWag.

Well, I'd stand anything but being called *that* kind of a wag.

(*Davenport, Ia., Times*)

Mutilation of horses by docking, so that they suffer, offend the eye, and are defenseless against the attacks of flies that would drive men, so treated, crazy.

Gee! I would go *mad!*

(*St. Paul Dispatch*)

WANTED—Live Jewish salesman to sell Ford cars. Address Box 652, *Dispatch.*

Why not advertise *that* in the Dearborn *Independent?*

(*Reply from man who received from his congressman a package of free seeds, in an envelope marked with the usual: "Penalty for private use, $300"*)

I don't know what to do about those garden-seeds you sent me. I notice it is $300 fine for private use. I don't want to use them for the public. I want to plant them in my private garden. I can't afford to pay $300 for the privilege. Won't you see if you can't fix it so I can use them privately? I am a law-abiding citizen and do not want to commit any crime.

Oh, plant 'em; they'll never come up, anyway.

(Head-line in Lander, Wyo., Post)

DRESSBAKING IN HOMES. (L. V. A.)

Sprigdime has cub again.

(Asbury Park, N. J. Press)

WHITE—Couple; in good mechanical condition; $275. 104 Third Avenue, Bradley Beach. (J. A. H.)

I'll go halves with somebody.

(Everybody's for October)

He set off immediately after breakfast, arrayed in helmet and mosquito-boots. (S. T. B.)

Thank goodness, the moskeets fly low in the fall.

(U. S. Rubber Co.'s. advt. in Sat. Eve. Post)

What do you look for when you buy a raincoat?

Why, sunstroke, you poor fish!

(Hartford Times)

Twelve barrels of high-grade liquor, the value of which is conservatively estimated by the police at above fifteen thousand dollars, were stolen this morning from a large brick garage owned by Myer Yellin.

***I'll* bet he is.**

(Long Island City, N. Y. Daily Star)

Bierman was killed instantly by a shot from a 38-caliber revolver which entered his heart. He lived for 10 minutes after. (H. C. J.)

Oh, *Co*-nan?

(St. Paul Daily News)

DENVER, COLO.: Mrs. M. M. Dickerson, until yesterday owner of the Buckingham Hotel here, killed herself by taking poison in her room to-day just before leaving for a visit with relatives in St. Paul, Minn.

Well, boy, if you can't get Conan, then try Sir Oliver Lodge, but be *quick!*

(Farmington, Minn., Tribune)

Guy Christie writes that he is enjoying army life in Warridden, France.

Boy, bring me the atlas—quick!

(Muncie, Ind., Star)

With much reluctance the management of the Bliss Hotel is forced to announce that no more rowdyism will be tolerated in or about this hotel.

Excrutiatingly humiliating, but he just had to do it.

(Overheard motoring through in a Penn. Dutch town)

"Come in here and eat yourself once. Ma and I are on the table now, and pa's half et already."

(Tampa, Fla., Tribune)

WANTED—White single man to milk and drive Ford truck. 'Phone 71096. (E. H. T., JR.)

(And in Sag Harbor, N. Y., Express)

WANTED—Man to milk and drive a Ford.

Well, Ford's getting the cream of the business, hain't he?

(Duquesne, Pa., Times)

Mr. and Mrs. J. Q. Barnes have returned out in uniform for the funeral points in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Michigan. The county is badly in need of moisture, according to the report of Mr. Barnes. (C. E. W.)

Yes; *I* couldn't get any when I went through there, either.

(New York Tribune)

Mrs. GoGldberg said she observed the growing coldness of Mr. GoGldberg toward her and was convinced that another woman had come into the life of her husband. Prior to that time, Mrs. Goldberg said that her husband used to make frequent business trips and that she accompanied him, but later he made these trips alone. While ostensibly on one of these trips, related Mrs. GoGldGGbeGrg, she took——

Oh, stop your blubbering and tell your story!

(Los Angeles Times)

FOR SALE—At sacrifice, 7-room California house, partly furnished, lot 40 x 160. Price, $3000 (including 4 lady boarders). $1000 cash, bal. easy terms. Take Garvanza car, off York Blvd. (C. D.)

Take nothing; boy, get out my aeroplane. *Hurry!*

(Hartford Times)

TRINITY MEN HEAR OF PHILIPPINES.

Next you know, these college students will hear of the Civil War.

(Dixon, Ill., Leader)

Signor Salvi is an inspiration—his marvelous technique and shading brought out wonders of the harp that had seemed impossible, orchestral effects and his crescendos and diminuendos were as the dream of a storm-swept soul passing through tumultuous wind-driven space and gradually coming through the light of heaven. A glorious climax, and then the fading-away to the sound of a hundred Æolian harps echoing their joy on breath of a zephyr, rest and peace at last this music seemed to say from the master hand of Salvi. He is the soul of his harp, and his harp is the soul of him.

O my Gawd, I just can't stand it!

(Overheard in a high-class grocery, Chicago)

WOMAN CUSTOMER: I want some California olives.
SALESWOMAN: I only wait on prunes.

Everybody's Chestnut Tree

EDITOR'S NOTE: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

A NEGRO not particularly noted for his religious convictions stopped his minister at the church door at the conclusion of a sermon on the Prodigal Son.

"Look here, parson," he said; "Ah wants to talk to you 'bout dat Poddigul Son tale what you been 'spoundin' to de congregation."

"Whut 'bout it, brudder?"

"Didn't you say dat young feller was a right ornery boy, an' nobody didn't have no use fer him, an' ev'ybody was joyful when he run 'way from home?"

"Dat's what de Bible 'lows, brudder."

"Well den, hit 'pears to me dat you done put de wrong 'terpretation on dat bizness. Seems to me dat when dat boy's pa sees his no-'count son amblin' back home fer free rations, he got so mad he up an' took a shot at dat boy an' missed him an' killed dat fat calf instead."

HE LOOKED a sorry sight as he limped into the insurance office. Bandages were numerous, and he walked with the aid of a crutch.

"I have called to make application for the amount due on my accident policy," he said. "I fell down a long flight of stairs the other evening, sustaining damages that will disable me for some time to come."

The manager looked him over and answered firmly:

"Young man, I have investigated your case, and find that you are not entitled to anything. It could not be called an accident, for you certainly knew that the young lady's father was at home."

TWO men were on a train in the Far West one day when it was held up by masked bandits.

They sat aghast as the robbers made their way down the aisle, "frisking" each passenger thoroughly and with despatch. There seemed no way to save their money. Suddenly one of them was struck with an idea. He fumbled hurriedly in his pocket, drew out the only bill he had and thrust it into his friend's hands.

"Here, Sam," he whispered; "here's that ten dollars I owe you."

DR. EDWARDS had gotten fresh paint on his white-flannel trousers. Jim, the man of all work, had tried in vain to clean them.

"Dr. Bob, I cain't git dis here paint off."

"Have you tried gasoline?" asked the physician.

"Yas, suh."

"Have you tried benzine?"

"Yas, suh."

"How about turpentine?"

"Yas, suh."

"Well, have you tried ammonia?"

"Naw, suh, Dr. Bob," answered Jim, with a grin that lighted up his entire face; "I ain't tried 'em on me yit, but I'se sure dey fits."

A CHINESE tailor followed the soldiers. The chaplain said to him one day,

"John, do you know who God is?"

And the Chinaman answered,

"Yes; me hears soldiers talk about him to the mules."

A PARTY of young men were on a hunting-trip in a backwoods district. They had stopped at the home of a mountaineer to inquire for directions and information about the game of the country. Only women members of the household were found at home, but all questions were answered freely. As the party was about to move on, a young theological student of their number, wide awake to matters of Church advancement, flung out this inquiry to the talkative housewife:

"Can you tell us if there are any Presbyterians in this part of the country?"

"Land sakes alive, mister, I ain't never heard of no such animule as dat! Yo' might look out in de smoke-house, whar my husband has got a lot o' hides nailed on de wall an' see if yo' fin' any o' dat kin'."

A MAN traveling through the Ozarks of southern Missouri went into a small country store. The only man in sight, presumably the proprietor, was enjoying his ease at the back of the store, chair tilted back and feet on the counter, and made no move to come forward.

The prospective customer waited a few minutes and then called:

"Can't you come and wait on me? I am in a hurry to get started home."

The proprietor shifted his position slightly and drawled,

"Couldn't you come in some time when I'm standin' up?"

A LITTLE girl, woefully sad because her pet canary had died, put the remains in a cigar-box and was digging a grave when her father came up.

"Father," she said, "will my little birdie go to heaven?"

"I think so," he replied. "In fact, I know so."

Whereupon the child, forgetting her grief, gave a loud laugh and clapped her hands.

"Oh," she cried, "how cross St. Peter will be when he opens it and finds it isn't cigars after all!"

MRS. JONES (*convalescent, to doctor*): And now that I'm feeling a bit stronger, you'll have to send me your bill.

DOCTOR: Oh no, Mrs. Jones; you'll have to be feeling very much stronger before I do that.

MOTHER was just about to leave the house when little Lilian entered the room. For a moment she stood perfectly still, gazing at her mother. When finally she did speak, it was to say:

"Mamma, do you know what I am going to give you for Christmas when it comes again?"

"No," said her mother smilingly; "but I should like to."

"Why, a fine dressing-table tray with flowers painted on it," said the child.

"But, Lilian," was the reply, "you know I have a nice tray of that sort already."

"No, you haven't, mother," said Lilian. "I've just dropped it on the floor."

A LOS ANGELES oil-promoter who had to leave on a trip East before the end of suit brought by another company gave orders to his lawyer to let him know the result by telegraph. After several days he received the following:

Right has triumphed.

He at once wired back:

Appeal immediately.

A CLERGYMAN, taking occasional duty for a friend in a remote country parish, was greatly scandalized on observing the old verger, who had been collecting the offertory, quietly abstract a fifty-cent piece before presenting the plate at the altar-rail.

After service he called the old man into the vestry and told him with some emotion that his crime had been discovered.

The verger looked puzzled for a moment. Then a sudden light dawned on him.

"Why, sir, you don't mean that old half-dollar of mine? Why, I've led off with that for the last fifteen years!"

"NOW, Jimmy," said the teacher, "what is the difference between 'human' and 'humane?' "

Jimmy thought deeply for a moment.

"Well," he said, at length, "suppose you had two pieces of candy and a hungry little dog grabbed one from you. If you gave him the other piece, you would be humane; but if you threw a stone at him, you would be human."