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NUMBER 1

APRIL
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The Contents of this Issue

THE GREAT GATSBY <i>A Novel</i>	F. Scott Fitzgerald	14
THE WOMAN AT SEVEN BROTHERS <i>A Story</i>	Wilbur Daniel Steele	30
BEAU NASH AT BATH <i>An Incident</i>		41
THE BATTLE OF SEDAN <i>A Story</i>	Octavus Roy Cohen	42
MY FIRST VISIT TO THE LOUVRE	Jean Francois Millet	52
THE DUEL <i>An Episode</i>	Robert Louis Stevenson	53
HOME GIRL <i>A Story</i>	Edna Ferber	56
THE KASIDAH <i>Selections</i>	Sir Richard F. Burton	69
THE MATCH <i>A Story</i>	James Oliver Curwood	70
THE QUEST OF HUMANITY	Thomas A. Edison	77
THE SHADOWY THIRD <i>A Story</i>	Ellen Glasgow	78
THE MATADOR OF THE FIVE TOWNS <i>A Story</i>	Arnold Bennett	91
THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE ROSE <i>A Fantasy</i>	Oscar Wilde	104
FALL FLIGHT <i>A Story</i>	George F. Hummel	107
SOME INTERESTING GHOSTS		116
THE END OF THE TETHER <i>Part Four</i>	Joseph Conrad	118
THE HATCHETMAN <i>A Story</i>	Achmed, Abdullah	131
REVERIE <i>A Poem</i>	Zona Gale	137
THE SILENT SPRING <i>A Story</i>	Will Levington Comfort	138
BEAUTY <i>A Poem</i>	Clinton Scollard	144

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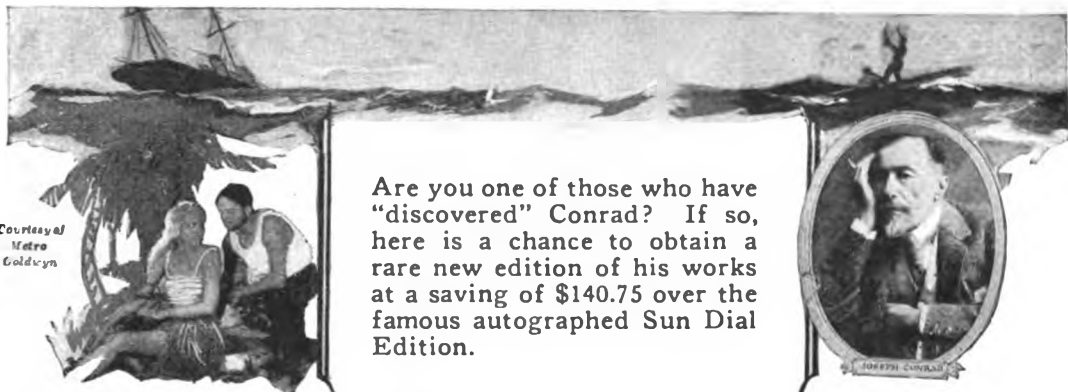
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"He is a discovery" — Irvin Cobb

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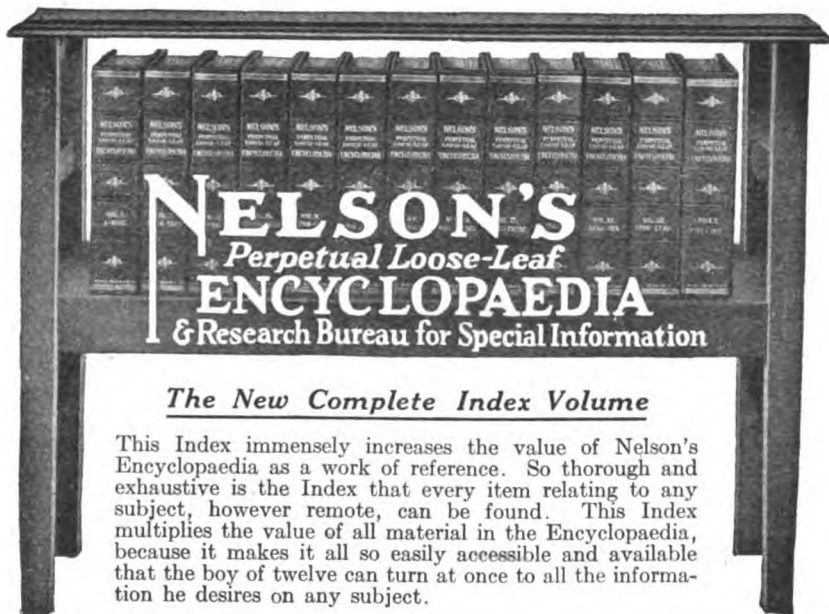
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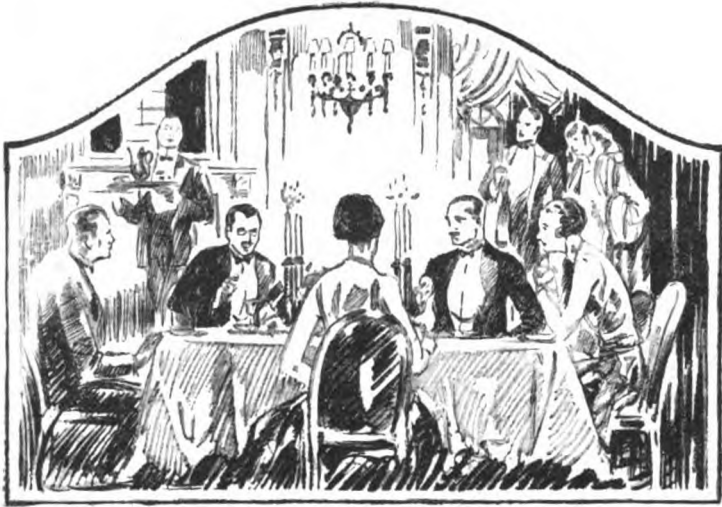
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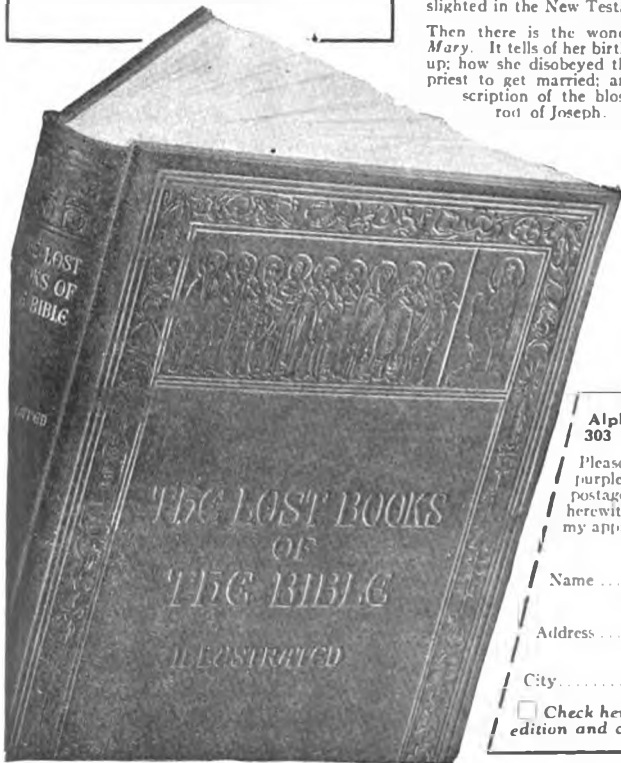
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The GREAT GATSBY

By F. Scott Fitzgerald



IN my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since.

"Whenever you feel like criticising any one," he told me, "just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had."

He didn't say any more, but we've al-

ways been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that. In consequence, I'm inclined to reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not a few veteran bores. The abnormal mind is quick to detect and attach itself to this quality when it appears



Daisy leaned forward and laughed—an absurd, charming little laugh. "I'm p-paralyzed with happiness," she said.

in a normal person, and so it came about that in college I was unjustly accused of being a politician, because I was privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men. Most of the confidences were unsought—frequently I have feigned sleep, preoccupation, or a hostile levity when I realized by some unmistakable sign that an intimate revelation was quivering on the horizon; for the intimate revelations of young

men, or at least the terms in which they express them, are usually plagiaristic and marred by obvious suppressions. Reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope. I am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that, as my father snobbishly suggested, and I snobbishly repeat, a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth.

And, after boasting this way of my toler-

ance, I come to the admission that it has a limit. Conduct may be founded on the hard rock or the wet marshes, but after a certain point I don't care what it's founded on. When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart. Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction—Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn. If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. This responsiveness had nothing to do with that flabby impressionability which is dignified under the name of the "creative temperament"—it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again. No—Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men.

My family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this Middle Western city for three generations. The Carraways are something of a clan, and we have a tradition that we're descended from the Dukes of Buccleuch, but the actual founder of my line was my grandfather's brother, who came here in fifty-one, sent a substitute to the Civil War, and started the wholesale hardware business that my father carries on to-day.

I never saw this great-uncle, but I'm supposed to look like him—with special reference to the rather hard-boiled painting that hangs in father's office. I graduated from New Haven in 1915, just a quarter of a century after my father, and a little later I participated in that delayed Teutonic migration known as the Great War. I enjoyed the counter-raid so thoroughly that I came back restless. Instead of being the warm centre of the world, the Middle West now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe—so I decided to go East and learn the bond business. Every-

body I knew was in the bond business, so I supposed it could support one more single man. All my aunts and uncles talked it over as if they were choosing a prep school for me, and finally said, "Why—ye-es," with very grave, hesitant faces. Father agreed to finance me for a year, and after various delays I came East, permanently, I thought, in the spring of twenty-two.

The practical thing was to find rooms in the city, but it was a warm season, and I had just left a country of wide lawns and friendly trees, so when a young man at the office suggested that we take a house together in a commuting town, it sounded like a great idea. He found the house, a weather-beaten cardboard bungalow at eighty a month, but at the last minute the firm ordered him to Washington, and I went out to the country alone. I had a dog—at least I had him for a few days until he ran away—and an old Dodge and a Finnish woman, who made my bed and cooked breakfast and muttered Finnish wisdom to herself over the electric stove.

IT was lonely for a day or so until one morning some man, more recently arrived than I, stopped me on the road.

"How do you get to West Egg village?" he asked helplessly.

I told him. And as I walked on I was lonely no longer. I was a guide, a pathfinder, an original settler. He had casually conferred on me the freedom of the neighborhood.

And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees, just as things grow in fast movies, I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer.

There was so much to read, for one thing, and so much fine health to be pulled down out of the young breath-giving air. I bought a dozen volumes on banking and credit and investment securities, and they stood on my shelf in red and gold like new money from the mint, promising to unfold the shining secrets that only Midas and Morgan and Mæcenæus knew. And I had the high intention of reading many other books besides. I was rather literary in college—one year I wrote a series of very solemn and obvious editorials for the Yale News—and now I was going to bring back all such things into my life and become again that most limited of all specialists, the "well-rounded man." This isn't just

an epigram—life is much more successfully looked at from a single window, after all.

It was a matter of chance that I should have rented a house in one of the strangest communities in North America. It was on that slender riotous island which extends itself due east of New York—and where there are, among other natural curiosities, two unusual formations of land. Twenty miles from the city a pair of enormous eggs, identical in contour and separated only by a courtesy bay, jut out into the most domesticated body of salt water in the Western hemisphere, the great wet barnyard of Long Island Sound. They are not perfect ovals—like the egg in the Columbus story, they are both crushed flat at the contact end—but their physical resemblance must be a source of perpetual wonder to the gulls that fly overhead. To the wingless a more interesting phenomenon is their dissimilarity in every particular except shape and size.

I lived at West Egg, the—well, the less fashionable of the two, though this is a most superficial tag to express the bizarre and not a little sinister contrast between them. My house was at the very tip of the egg, only fifty yards from the Sound, and squeezed between two huge places that rented for twelve or fifteen thousand a season. The one on my right was a colossal affair by any standard—it was a factual imitation of some Hôtel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden. It was Gatsby's mansion. Or, rather, as I didn't know Mr. Gatsby, it was a mansion inhabited by a gentleman of that name. My own house was an eyesore, but it was a small eyesore, and it had been overlooked, so I had a view of the water, a partial view of my neighbor's lawn, and the consoling proximity of millionaires—all for eighty dollars a month.

Across the courtesy bay the white palaces of fashionable East Egg glittered along the water, and the history of the summer really begins on the evening I drove over there to have dinner with the Tom Buchanans. Daisy was my second cousin once removed, and I'd known Tom in college. And just after the war I spent two days with them in Chicago.

Her husband, among various physical accomplishments, had been one of the most powerful ends that ever played football at

New Haven—a national figure in a way, one of those men who reach such an acute limited excellence at twenty-one that everything afterward savors of anti-climax. His family were enormously wealthy—even in college his freedom with money was a matter for reproach—but now he'd left Chicago and come East in a fashion that rather took your breath away: for instance, he'd brought down a string of polo ponies from Lake Forest. It was hard to realize that a man in my own generation was wealthy enough to do that.

Why they came East I don't know. They had spent a year in France for no particular reason, and then drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together. This was a permanent move, said Daisy over the telephone, but I didn't believe it—I had no sight into Daisy's heart, but I felt that Tom would drift on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game.

And so it happened that on a warm windy evening I drove over to East Egg to see two old friends whom I scarcely knew at all. Their house was even more elaborate than I expected, a cheerful red-and-white Georgian Colonial mansion, overlooking the bay. The lawn started at the beach and ran toward the front door for a quarter of a mile, jumping over sundials and brick walks and burning gardens—finally when it reached the house drifting up the side in bright vines as though from the momentum of its run. The front was broken by a line of French windows, glowing now with reflected gold and wide open to the warm windy afternoon, and Tom Buchanan in riding clothes was standing with his legs apart on the front porch.

HE had changed since his New Haven years. Now he was a sturdy straw-haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and a supercilious manner. Two shining arrogant eyes had established dominance over his face and gave him the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward. Not even the effeminate swank of his riding clothes could hide the enormous power of that body—he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing, and you could see a great pack of muscle shifting when his shoulder moved under his coat. It was a body capable of enormous leverage—a cruel body.

His speaking voice, a gruff husky tenor, added to the impression of fractiousness he conveyed. There was a touch of paternal contempt in it, even toward people he liked—and there were men at New Haven who had hated his guts.

"Now, don't think my opinion on these matters is final," he seemed to say, "just because I'm stronger and more of a man than you are." We were in the same senior society, and while we were never intimate I always had the impression that he approved of me and wanted me to like him with some harsh, defiant wistfulness of his own.

We talked for a few minutes on the sunny porch.

"I've got a nice place here," he said, his eyes flashing about restlessly.

Turning me around by one arm, he moved a broad flat hand along the front vista, including in its sweep a sunken Italian garden, a half acre of deep, pungent roses, and a snub-nosed motor-boat that bumped the tide offshore.

"It belonged to Demaine, the oil man." He turned me around again, politely and abruptly. "We'll go inside."

We walked through a high hallway into a bright rosy-colored space, fragilely bound into the house by French windows at either end. The windows were ajar and gleaming white against the fresh grass outside that seemed to grow a little way into the house. A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at one end and out the other like pale flags, twisting them up toward the frosted wedding-cake of the ceiling, and then rippled over the wine-colored rug, making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea.

The only completely stationary object in the room was an enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. They were both in white, and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house. I must have stood for a few moments listening to the whip and snap of the curtains and the groan of a picture on the wall. Then there was a boom as Tom Buchanan shut the rear windows and the caught wind died out about the room, and the curtains and the rugs and the two young women ballooned slowly to the floor.

The younger of the two was a stranger to me. She was extended full length at

her end of the divan, completely motionless, and with her chin raised a little, as if she were balancing something on it which was quite likely to fall. If she saw me out of the corner of her eyes she gave no hint of it—indeed, I was almost surprised into murmuring an apology for having disturbed her by coming in.

The other girl, Daisy, made an attempt to rise—she leaned slightly forward with a conscientious expression—then she laughed, an absurd, charming little laugh, and I laughed too and came forward into the room.

"I'm p-paralyzed with happiness."

She laughed again, as if she said something very witty, and held my hand for a moment, looking up into my face, promising that there was no one in the world she so much wanted to see. That was a way she had. She hinted in a murmur that the surname of the balancing girl was Baker. (I've heard it said that Daisy's murmur was only to make people lean toward her; an irrelevant criticism that made it no less charming.)

At any rate, Miss Baker's lips fluttered, she nodded at me almost imperceptibly, and then quickly tipped her head back again—the object she was balancing had obviously tottered a little and given her something of a fright. Again a sort of apology arose to my lips. Almost any exhibition of complete self-sufficiency draws a stunned tribute from me.

I looked back at my cousin, who began to ask me questions in her low, thrilling voice. It was the kind of voice that the ear follows up and down, as if each speech is an arrangement of notes that will never be played again. Her face was sad and lovely with bright things in it, bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth, but there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered "Listen," a promise that she had done gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour.

I TOLD her how I had stopped off in Chicago for a day on my way East, and how a dozen people had sent their love through me.

"Do they miss me?" she cried ecstatically.

"The whole town is desolate. All the cars have the left rear wheel painted black

as a mourning wreath, and there's a persistent wail all night along the north shore."

"How gorgeous! Let's go back, Tom. To-morrow!" Then she added irrelevantly: "You ought to see the baby."

"I'd like to."

"She's asleep. She's three years old. Haven't you ever seen her?"

"Never."

"Well, you ought to see her. She's——"

Tom Buchanan, who had been hovering restlessly about the room, stopped and rested his hand on my shoulder.

"What you doing, Nick?"

"I'm a bond man."

"Who with?"

I told him.

"Never heard of them," he remarked decisively.

This annoyed me.

"You will," I answered shortly. "You will if you stay in the East."

"Oh, I'll stay in the East, don't you worry," he said, glancing at Daisy and then back at me, as if he were alert for something more. "I'd be a God damned fool to live anywhere else."

At this point Miss Baker said: "Absolutely!" with such suddenness that I started—it was the first word she had uttered since I came into the room. Evidently it surprised her as much as it did me, for she yawned and with a series of rapid, deft movements stood up into the room.

"I'm stiff," she complained, "I've been lying on that sofa for as long as I can remember."

"Don't look at me," Daisy retorted, "I've been trying to get you to New York all afternoon."

"No, thanks," said Miss Baker to the four cocktails just in from the pantry, "I'm absolutely in training."

Her host looked at her incredulously.

"You are!" He took down his drink as if it were a drop in the bottom of a glass. "How you ever get anything done is beyond me."

I looked at Miss Baker, wondering what it was she "got done." I enjoyed looking at her. She was a slender, small-breasted girl, with an erect carriage, which she accentuated by throwing her body backward at the shoulders like a young cadet. Her gray sun-strained eyes looked back at me with polite reciprocal curiosity out of a wan, charming, discontented face. It

occurred to me now that I had seen her, or a picture of her, somewhere before.

"You live in West Egg," she remarked contemptuously. "I know somebody there."

"I don't know a single——"

"You must know Gatsby."

"Gatsby?" demanded Daisy. "What Gatsby?"

Before I could reply that he was my neighbor dinner was announced; wedging his tense arm imperatively under mine, Tom Buchanan compelled me from the room as though he were moving a checker to another square. Slenderly, languidly, their hands set lightly on their hips, the two young women preceded us out onto a rosy-colored porch, open toward the sunset, where four candles flickered on the table in the diminished wind.

"Why *candles?*" objected Daisy, frowning. She snapped them out with her fingers. "In two weeks it'll be the longest day in the year." She looked at us all radiantly. "Do you always watch for the longest day of the year and then miss it? I always watch for the longest day in the year and then miss it."

"We ought to plan something," yawned Miss Baker, sitting down at the table as if she were getting into bed.

"All right," said Daisy. "What'll we plan?" She turned to me helplessly: "What do people plan?"

Before I could answer her eyes fastened with an awed expression on her little finger.

"Look!" she complained; "I hurt it."

We all looked—the knuckle was black and blue.

"You did it, Tom," she said accusingly. "I know you didn't mean to, but you *did* do it. That's what I get for marrying a brute of a man, a great, big, hulking physical specimen of a——"

"I hate that word hulking," objected Tom crossly, "even in kidding."

"Hulking," insisted Daisy.

SOMETIMES she and Miss Baker talked at once, unobtrusively and with a bantering inconsequence that was never quite chatter, that was as cool as their white dresses and their impersonal eyes in the absence of all desire. They were here, and they accepted Tom and me, making only a polite pleasant effort to entertain or to be entertained. They knew that presently dinner would be over and a little

later the evening too would be over and casually put away. It was sharply different from the West, where an evening was hurried from phase to phase toward its close, in a continually disappointed anticipation or else in sheer nervous dread of the moment itself. :

"You make me feel uncivilized, Daisy," I confessed on my second glass of corky but rather impressive claret. "Can't you talk about crops or something?"

I meant nothing in particular by this remark, but it was taken up in an unexpected way.

"Civilization's going to pieces," broke out Tom violently. "I've gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things. Have you read 'The Rise of the Colored Empires' by this man Goddard?"

"Why, no," I answered, rather surprised by his tone.

"Well, it's a fine book, and everybody ought to read it. The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be—will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved."

"Tom's getting very profound," said Daisy, with an expression of unthoughtful sadness. "He reads deep books with long words in them. What was that word we—"

"Well, these books are all scientific," insisted Tom, glancing at her impatiently. "This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things."

"We've got to beat them down," whispered Daisy, winking ferociously toward the fervent sun.

"You ought to live in California—" began Miss Baker, but Tom interrupted her by shifting heavily in his chair.

"This idea is that we're Nordics. I am, and you are, and you are, and—" After an infinitesimal hesitation he included Daisy with a slight nod, and she winked at me again. "—And we've produced all the things that go to make civilization—oh, science and art, and all that. Do you see?"

There was something pathetic in his concentration, as if his complacency, more acute than of old, was not enough to him any more.

When, almost immediately, the telephone rang inside and the butler left the porch Daisy seized upon the momentary interruption and leaned toward me.

"I'll tell you a family secret," she whis-

pered enthusiastically. "It's about the butler's nose. Do you want to hear about the butler's nose?"

"That's why I came over to-night."

"Well, he wasn't always a butler; he used to be the silver polisher for some people in New York that had a silver service for two hundred people. He had to polish it from morning till night, until finally it began to affect his nose—"

"Things went from bad to worse," suggested Miss Baker.

"Yes. Things went from bad to worse, until finally he had to give up his position."

For a moment the last sunshine fell with romantic affection upon her glowing face; her voice compelled me forward breathlessly as I listened—then the glow faded, each light deserting her with lingering regret, like children leaving a pleasant street at dusk.

The butler came back and murmured something close to Tom's ear, whereupon Tom frowned, pushed back his chair, and without a word went inside. As if his absence quickened something within her, Daisy leaned forward again, her voice glowing and singing.

"I love to see you at my table, Nick. You remind me of a—of a rose, an absolute rose. Doesn't he?" She turned to Miss Baker for confirmation: "An absolute rose?"

This was untrue. I am not even faintly like a rose. She was only extemporizing, but a stirring warmth flowed from her, as if her heart was trying to come out to you concealed in one of those breathless, thrilling, words. Then suddenly she threw her napkin on the table and excused herself and went into the house.

Miss Baker and I exchanged a short glance consciously devoid of meaning. I was about to speak when she sat up alertly and said "Sh!" in a warning voice. A subdued impassioned murmur was audible in the room beyond, and Miss Baker leaned forward unashamed, trying to hear. The murmur trembled on the verge of coherence, sank down, mounted excitedly, and then ceased altogether.

"This Mr. Gatsby you spoke of is my neighbor—" I began.

"Don't talk. I want to hear what happens."

"Is something happening?" I inquired innocently.

"You mean to say you don't know?"

said Miss Baker, honestly surprised. "I thought everybody knew."

"I don't."

"Why—" she said hesitantly, "Tom's got some woman in New York."

"Got some woman?" I repeated blankly.

Miss Baker nodded.

"She might have the decency not to telephone him at dinner time."

ALMOST before I had grasped her meaning there was the flutter of a dress and the crunch of leather boots, and Tom and Daisy were back at the table.

"It couldn't be helped!" cried Daisy with tense gayety.

She sat down, glanced searchingly at Miss Baker and then at me, and continued: "I looked outdoors for a minute, and it's very romantic outdoors. There's a bird on the lawn that I think must be a nightingale come over on the Cunard or White Star Line. He's singing away—" Her voice sang: "It's romantic, isn't it, Tom?"

"Very romantic," he said and then miserably to me: "If it's light enough after dinner, I want to take you down to the stables."

The telephone rang inside, startlingly, and as Daisy shook her head decisively at Tom the subject of the stables, in fact all subjects, vanished into air. Among the broken fragments of the last five minutes at table I remember the candles being lit again, pointlessly, and I was conscious of wanting to look squarely at every one, and yet to avoid all eyes. I couldn't guess what Daisy and Tom were thinking, but I doubt if even Miss Baker, who seemed to have mastered a certain hardy scepticism, was able utterly to put this fifth guest's shrill metallic urgency out of mind. To a certain temperament the situation might have seemed intriguing—my own instinct was to telephone immediately for the police.

The horses, needless to say, were not mentioned again. Tom and Miss Baker, with several feet of twilight between them, strolled back into the library, as if to a vigil beside a perfectly tangible body, while, trying to look pleasantly interested and a little deaf, I followed Daisy around a chain of connecting verandas to the porch in front. In its deep gloom we sat down side by side on a wicker settee.

Daisy took her face in her hands as if feeling its lovely shape, and her eyes

moved gradually out into the velvet dusk. I saw that turbulent emotions possessed her, so I asked what I thought would be some sedative questions about her little girl.

"We don't know each other very well, Nick," she said suddenly. "Even if we are cousins. You didn't come to my wedding."

"I wasn't back from the war."

"That's true." She hesitated. "Well, I've had a very bad time, Nick, and I'm pretty cynical about everything."

Evidently she had reason to be. I waited but she didn't say any more, and after a moment I returned rather feebly to the subject of her daughter.

"I suppose she talks, and—eats, and everything."

"Oh, yes." She looked at me absently. "Listen, Nick; let me tell you what I said when she was born. Would you like to hear?"

"Very much."

"It'll show you how I've gotten to feel about—things. Well, she was less than an hour old and Tom was God knows where. I woke up out of the ether with an utterly abandoned feeling, and asked the nurse right away if it was a boy or girl. She told me it was a girl, and so I turned my head away and wept. 'All right,' I said, 'I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool.'

"You see I think everything's terrible anyhow," she went on in a convinced way. "Everybody thinks so—the most advanced people. And I *know*. I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything." Her eyes flashed around in a defiant way, rather like Tom's, and she laughed with thrilling scorn. "Sophisticated—God, I'm sophisticated!"

The instant her voice broke off, ceasing to compel my attention, my belief, I felt the basic insincerity of what she had said. It made me uneasy, as though the whole evening had been a trick of some sort to exact a contributory emotion from me. I waited, and sure enough, in a moment she looked at me with an absolute smirk on her lovely face, as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged.

Inside, the crimson room bloomed with light. Tom and Miss Baker sat

at either end of the long couch and she read aloud to him from the Saturday Evening Post—the words, murmurous and uninflected, running together in a soothing tune. The lamp-light, bright on his boots and dull on the autumn-leaf yellow of her hair, glinted along the paper as she turned a page with a flutter of slender muscles in her arms.

When we came in she held us silent for a moment with a lifted hand.

"To be continued," she said, tossing the magazine on the table, "in our very next issue."

Her body asserted itself with a restless movement of her knee, and she stood up.

"Ten o'clock," she remarked, apparently finding the time on the ceiling. "Time for this good girl to go to bed."

"Jordan's going to play in the tournament to-morrow," explained Daisy, "over at Westchester."

"Oh—you're Jordan Baker."

I knew now why her face was familiar—its pleasing contemptuous expression had looked out at me from many rotogravure pictures of the sporting life at Asheville and Hot Springs and Palm Beach. I had heard some story of her too, a critical, unpleasant story, but what it was I had forgotten long ago.

"Good night," she said softly. "Wake me at eight, won't you?"

"If you'll get up."

"I will. Good night, Mr. Carraway. See you anon."

"Of course you will," confirmed Daisy. "In fact I think I'll arrange a marriage. Come over often, Nick, and I'll sort of—oh—fling you together. You know—lock you up accidentally in linen closets and push you out to sea in a boat, and all that sort of thing——"

"Good night," called Miss Baker from the stairs. "I haven't heard a word."

"She's a nice girl," said Tom after a moment. "They oughtn't to let her run around the country this way."

"Who oughtn't to?" inquired Daisy coldly.

"Her family."

"Her family is one aunt about a thousand years old. Besides, Nick's going to look after her, aren't you, Nick? She's going to spend lots of week-ends out here this summer. I think the home influence will be very good for her."

Daisy and Tom looked at each other for a moment in silence.

"Is she from New York?" I asked quickly.

"From Louisville. Our white girlhood was passed together there. Our beautiful white——"

"Did you give Nick a little heart to heart talk on the veranda?" demanded Tom suddenly.

"Did I?" She looked at me. "I can't seem to remember, but I think we talked about the Nordic race. Yes, I'm sure we did. It sort of crept up on us and first thing you know——"

"Don't believe everything you hear, Nick," he advised me.

I said lightly that I had heard nothing at all, and a few minutes later I got up to go home. They came to the door with me and stood side by side in a cheerful square of light. As I started my motor Daisy peremptorily called: "Wait!"

"I forgot to ask you something, and it's important. We heard you were engaged to a girl out West."

"That's right," corroborated Tom kindly. "We heard that you were engaged."

"It's a libel. I'm too poor."

"But we heard it," insisted Daisy, surprising me by opening up again in a flower-like way. "We heard it from three people, so it must be true."

Of course I knew what they were referring to, but I wasn't even vaguely engaged. The fact that gossip had published the banns was one of the reasons I had come East. You can't stop going with an old friend on account of rumors, and on the other hand, I had no intention of being rumored into marriage.

THEIR interest rather touched me and made them less remotely rich—nevertheless, I was confused and a little disgusted as I drove away. It seemed to me that the thing for Daisy to do was to rush out of the house, child in arms—but apparently there were no such intentions in her head. As for Tom, the fact that he, "had some woman in New York" was really less surprising than he had been depressed by a book. Something was making him nibble at the edge of stale ideas as if his sturdy physical egotism no longer nourished his peremptory heart.

Already it was deep summer on road-house roofs and in front of wayside garages, where new red gas-pumps sat out in pools of light, and when I reached my estate at West Egg I ran the car under its

shed and sat for a while on an abandoned grass roller in the yard. The wind had blown off, leaving a loud, bright night, with wings beating in the trees and a persistent organ sound as the full bellows of the earth blew the frogs full of life. The silhouette of a moving cat wavered across the moonlight, and turning my head to watch it, I saw that I was not alone—fifty feet away a figure had emerged from the shadow of my neighbor's mansion and was standing with his hands in his pockets regarding the silver pepper of the stars. Something in his leisurely movements and the secure position of his feet upon the lawn suggested that it was Mr. Gatsby himself, come out to determine what share was his of our local heavens.

I decided to call to him. Miss Baker had mentioned him at dinner, and that would do for an introduction: But I didn't call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone—he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, as far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward—and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock. When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness.

About half way between West Egg and New York the motor road hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile, so as to shrink away from a certain desolate area of land. This is a valley of ashes—a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of ash-grey men, who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. Occasionally a line of gray cars crawls along an invisible track, gives out a ghastly creak, and comes to rest, and immediately the ash-grey men swarm up with leaden spades and stir up an impenetrable cloud, which screens their obscure operations from your sight.

But above the gray land and the spasms of bleak dust which drift endlessly over it, you perceive, after a moment, the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. The eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg are blue and gigantic—their retinas are one

yard high. They look out of no face, but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a non-existent nose. Evidently some wild wag of an oculist set them there to fatten his practice in the borough of Queens, and then sank down himself into eternal blindness, or forgot them and moved away. But his eyes, dimmed a little by many countless days, under sun and rain, brood on over the solemn dumping ground.

The valley of ashes is bounded on one side by a small foul river, and, when the drawbridge is up to let barges through, the passengers on waiting trains can stare at the dismal scene for as long as half an hour. There is always a halt there of at least a minute, and it was because of this that I first met Tom Buchanan's mistress.

The fact that he had one was insisted upon wherever he was known. His acquaintances resented the fact that he turned up in popular cafés with her and, leaving her at a table, sauntered about, chattering with whomsoever he knew. Though I was curious to see her, I had no desire to meet her—but I did. I went up to New York with Tom on the train one afternoon, and when we stopped by the ashheaps he jumped to his feet and, taking hold of my elbow, literally forced me from the car.

"We're getting off," he insisted. "I want you to meet my girl."

I think he'd tanked up a good deal at luncheon, and his determination to have my company bordered on violence. The supercilious assumption was that on Sunday afternoon I had nothing better to do.

I followed him over a low whitewashed railroad fence, and we walked back a hundred yards along the road under Doctor Eckleburg's persistent stare. The only building in sight was a small block of yellow brick sitting on the edge of the waste land, a sort of compact Main Street ministering to it, and contiguous to absolutely nothing. One of the three shops it contained was for rent and another was an all-night restaurant, approached by a trail of ashes; the third was a garage—*Repairs*. GEORGE B. WILSON. *Cars bought and sold*.— and I followed Tom inside.

THE interior was unprosperous and bare; the only car visible was the dust-covered wreck of a Ford which

crouched in a dim corner. It had occurred to me that this shadow of a garage must be a blind, and that sumptuous and romantic apartments were concealed overhead, when the proprietor himself appeared in the door of an office, wiping his hands on a piece of waste. He was a blond, spiritless man, anæmic, and faintly handsome. When he saw us a damp gleam of hope sprang into his light blue eyes.

"Hello, Wilson, old man," said Tom, slapping his jovially on the shoulder.

"How's business?"

"I can't complain," answered Wilson unconvincingly. "When are you going to sell me that car?"

"Next week; I've got my man working on it now."

"Works pretty slow, don't he?"

"No, he doesn't," said Tom coldly. "And if you feel that way about it, maybe I'd better sell it somewhere else after all."

"I don't mean that," explained Wilson quickly. "I just meant——"

His voice faded off and Tom glanced impatiently around the garage. Then I heard footsteps on a stairs, and in a moment the thickish figure of a woman blocked out the light from the office door. She was in the middle thirties, and faintly stout, but she carried her flesh sensuously as some women can. Her face, above a spotted dress of dark blue crêpe-de-chine, contained no facet or gleam of beauty,



but there was an immediately perceptible vitality about her as if the nerves of her body were continually smouldering. She smiled slowly and, walking through her husband as if he were a ghost, shook hands with Tom, looking him flush in the eye. Then she wet her lips, and without turning around spoke to her husband in a soft, coarse voice:

"Get some chairs, why don't you, so somebody can sit down."

"I'll meet you by the news-stand on the lower level."

She nodded and moved away from him just as George Wilson emerged with two chairs from his office door.

We waited for her down the road and out of sight. It was a few days before the Fourth of July, and a gray, scrawny Italian child was setting torpedoes in a row along the railroad track.

"Terrible place, isn't it," said Tom, ex-



Catherine leaned close to me and whispered in my ear: "Neither of them can stand the person they're married to."

"Oh, sure," agreed Wilson hurriedly, and went toward the little office, mingling immediately with the cement color of the walls. A white ashen dust veiled his dark suit and his pale hair as it veiled everything in the vicinity—except his wife, who moved close to Tom.

"I want to see you," said Tom intently. "Get on the next train."

"All right."

changing a frown with Doctor Eckleburg.

"Awful."

"It does her good to get away."

"Doesn't her husband object?"

"Wilson? He thinks she goes to see her sister in New York. He's so dumb he doesn't know he's alive."

So Tom Buchanan and his girl and I went up together to New York—or not quite together, for Mrs. Wilson sat dis-

creetly in another car. Tom deferred that much to the sensibilities of those East Eggers who might be on the train.

She had changed her dress to a brown figured muslin, which stretched tight over her rather wide hips as Tom helped her to the platform in New York. At the news-stand she bought a copy of *Town Tattle* and a moving-picture magazine, and in the station drug-store some cold cream and a small flask of perfume. Up-stairs, in the solemn echoing drive she let four taxicabs drive away before she selected a new one, lavender-colored with gray upholstery, and in this we slid out from the mass of the station into the glowing sunshine. But immediately she turned sharply from the window and, leaning forward, tapped on the front glass.

"I want to get one of those dogs," she said earnestly. "I want to get one for the apartment. They're nice to have—a dog."

We backed up to a gray old man who bore an absurd resemblance to John D. Rockefeller. In a basket swung from his neck covered a dozen very recent puppies of an indeterminate breed.

"What kind are they?" asked Mrs. Wilson eagerly, as he came to the taxi-window.

"All kinds. What kind do you want?"

"I'd like to get one of those police dogs; I don't suppose you got that kind?"

THE man peered doubtfully into the basket, plunged in his hand and drew one up, wriggling, by the back of the neck.

"That's no police dog," said Tom.

"No, it's not exactly a *police* dog," said the man with disappointment in his voice. "It's more of an Airedale." He passed his hand over the brown washrag of a back. "Look at that coat. Some coat. That's a dog that'll never bother you with catching cold."

"I think it's cute," said Mrs. Wilson enthusiastically. "How much is it?"

"That dog?" He looked at it admiringly. "That dog will cost you ten dollars."

The Airedale—undoubtedly there was an Airedale concerned in it somewhere, though its feet were startling white—changed hands and settled down into Mrs. Wilson's lap, where she fondled the weather-proof coat with rapture.

"Is it a boy or a girl?" she asked delicately.

"That dog? That dog's a boy."

"It's a bitch," said Tom decisively. "Here's your money. Go and buy ten more dogs with it."

We drove over to Fifth Avenue, warm and soft, almost pastoral, on the summer Sunday afternoon. I wouldn't have been surprised to see a great flock of white sheep turn the corner.

"Hold on," I said, "I have to leave you here."

"No, you don't," interposed Tom quickly. "Myrtle'll be hurt if you don't come up to the apartment. Won't you, Myrtle?"

"Come on," she urged. "I'll telephone my sister Catherine. She's said to be very beautiful by people who ought to know."

"Well, I'd like to, but——"

We went on, cutting back again over the Park toward the West Hundreds. At 158th Street the cab stopped at one slice in a long white cake of apartment-houses. Throwing a regal homecoming glance around the neighborhood, Mrs. Wilson gathered up her dog and her other purchases, and went haughtily in.

"I'm going to have the McKees come up," she announced as we rose in the elevator. "And, of course, I got to call up my sister, too."

The apartment was on the top floor—a small living-room, a small dining-room, a small bedroom, and a bath. The living-room was crowded to the doors with a set of tapestried furniture entirely too large for it, so that to move about was to stumble continually over scenes of ladies swinging in the gardens of Versailles. The only picture was an over-enlarged photograph, apparently a hen sitting on a blurred rock. Looked at from a distance, however, the hen resolved itself into a bonnet, and the countenance of a stout old lady beamed down into the room. Several old copies of *Town Tattle* lay on the table together with a copy of "Simon Called Peter," and some of the small scandal magazines of Broadway. Mrs. Wilson was first concerned with the dog. A reluctant elevator-boy went for a box full of straw and some milk, to which he added on his own initiative a tin of large, hard dog-biscuits—one of which decom-

posed apathetically in the saucer of milk all afternoon. Meanwhile Tom brought out a bottle of whiskey from a locked bureau drawer.

I have been drunk just twice in my life, and the second time was that afternoon; so everything that happened has a dim, hazy cast over it, although until after eight o'clock the apartment was full of cheerful sun. Sitting on Tom's lap Mrs. Wilson called up several people on the telephone; then there were no cigarettes, and I went out to buy some at the drug-store on the corner. When I came back they had both disappeared, so I sat down discreetly in the living-room and read a chapter of "Simon Called Peter"—either it was terrible stuff or the whiskey distorted things, because it didn't make any sense to me.

Just as Tom and Myrtle (after the first drink Mrs. Wilson and I called each other by our first names) reappeared, company commenced to arrive at the apartment-door. The sister, Catherine, was a slender, worldly girl of about thirty, with a solid, sticky bob of red hair, and a complexion powdered milky white. Her eye-brows had been plucked and then drawn on again at a more rakish angle, but the efforts of nature toward the restoration of the old alignment gave a blurred air to her face. When she moved about there was an incessant clicking as innumerable pottery bracelets jingled up and down upon her arms. She came in with such a proprietary haste, and looked around so possessively at the furniture that I wondered if she lived here. But when I asked her she laughed immoderately, repeated my question aloud, and told me she lived with a girl friend at a hotel.

Mr. McKee was a pale, feminine man from the flat below. He had just shaved, for there was a white spot of lather on his cheekbone, and he was most respectful in his greeting to every one in the room. He informed me that he was in the "artistic game," and I gathered later that he was a photographer and had made the dim enlargement of Mrs. Wilson's mother which hovered like an ectoplasm on the wall. His wife was shrill, languid, handsome, and horrible. She told me with pride that her husband had photographed her a hundred and twenty-seven times since they had been married.

MRS. WILSON had changed her costume some time before, and was now attired in an elaborate afternoon dress of cream-colored chiffon, which gave out a continual rustle as she swept about the room. With the influence of the dress her personality had also undergone a change. The intense vitality that had been so remarkable in the garage was converted into impressive hauteur. Her laughter, her gestures, her assertions became more violently affected moment by moment, and as she expanded the room grew smaller around her, until she seemed to be revolving on a noisy, creaking pivot through the smoky air.

"My dear," she told her sister in a high, mincing shout, "most of these fellas will cheat you every time. All they think of is money. I had a woman up here last week to look at my feet, and when she gave me the bill you'd of thought she had my appendicitis out."

"What was the name of the woman?" asked Mrs. McKee.

"Mrs. Eberhardt. She goes around looking at people's feet in their own homes."

"I like your dress," remarked Mrs. McKee, "I think it's adorable."

Mrs. Wilson rejected the compliment by raising her eyebrow in disdain.

"It's just a crazy old thing," she said. "I just slip it on sometimes when I don't care what I look like."

"But it looks wonderful on you, if you know what I mean," pursued Mrs. McKee. "If Chester could only get you in that pose I think he could make something of it."

We all looked in silence at Mrs. Wilson, who removed a strand of hair from over her eyes and looked back at us with a brilliant smile. Mr. McKee regarded her intently with his head on one side, and then moved his hand back and forth slowly in front of his face.

"I should change the light," he said after a moment. "I'd like to bring out the modelling of the features. And I'd try to get hold of all the back hair."

"I wouldn't think of changing the light," cried Mrs. McKee. "I think it's——"

Her husband said "*Sh!*" and we all looked at the subject again, whereupon Tom Buchanan yawned audibly and got to his feet.

"You McKees have something to drink,"

he said. "Get some more ice and mineral water, Myrtle, before everybody goes to sleep."

"I told that boy about the ice." Myrtle raised her eyebrows in despair at the shiftlessness of the lower orders. "These people! You have to keep after them all the time."

She looked at me and laughed pointlessly. Then she flounced over to the dog, kissed it with ecstasy, and swept into the kitchen, implying that a dozen chefs awaited her orders there.

"I've done some nice things out on Long Island," asserted Mr. McKee.

Tom looked at him blankly.

"Two of them we have framed downstairs."

"Two what?" demanded Tom.

"Two studies. One of them I call 'Montauk Point—The Gulls,' and the other I call 'Montauk Point—The Sea.'"

The sister Catherine sat down beside me on the couch.

"Do you live down on Long Island, too," she inquired.

"I live at West Egg."

"Really? I was down there at a party about a month ago. At a man named Gatsby's. Do you know him?"

"I live next door to him."

"Well, they say he's a nephew or a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm's. That's where all his money comes from."

"Really?"

She nodded.

"I'm scared of him. I'd hate to have him get anything on me."

THIS absorbing information about my neighbor was interrupted by Mrs. McKee's pointing suddenly at Catherine:

"Chester, I think you could do something with *her*," she broke out, but Mr. McKee only nodded in a bored way, and turned his attention to Tom.

"I'd like to do more work on Long Island, if I could get the entry. All I ask is that they should give me a start."

"Ask Myrtle," said Tom, breaking into a short shout of laughter as Mrs. Wilson entered with a tray. "She'll give you a letter of introduction, won't you, Myrtle?"

"Do what?" she asked, startled.

"You'll give McKee a letter of introduction to your husband, so he can do some studies of him." His lips moved silently for a moment as he invented.

"George B. Wilson at the Gasoline Pump, or something like that."

Catherine leaned close to me and whispered in my ear:

"Neither of them can stand the person they're married to."

"Can't they?"

"Can't stand them." She looked at Myrtle and then at Tom. "What I say is, why go on living with them if they can't stand them? If I was them I'd get a divorce and get married to each other right away."

"Doesn't she like Wilson either?"

The answer to this was unexpected. It came from Myrtle, who had overheard the question, and it was violent and obscene.

"You see," cried Catherine triumphantly. She lowered her voice again. "It's really his wife that's keeping them apart. She's a Catholic, and they don't believe in divorce."

Daisy was not a Catholic, and I was a little shocked at the elaborateness of the lie.

"When they do get married," continued Catherine, "they're going West to live for a while until it blows over."

"It'd be more discreet to go to Europe."

"Oh, do you like Europe?" she exclaimed surprisingly. "I just got back from Monte Carlo."

"Really?"

"Just last year. I went over there with another girl."

"Stay long?"

"No, we just went to Monte Carlo and back. We went by way of Marseilles. We had over twelve hundred dollars when we started, but we got gyped out of it all in two days in the private rooms. We had an awful time getting back, I can tell you. God, how I hated that town!"

The late afternoon sky bloomed in the window for a moment like the blue honey of the Mediterranean—then the shrill voice of Mrs. McKee called me back into the room.

"I almost made a mistake, too," she declared vigorously, "I almost married a little kyke who'd been after me for years. I knew he was below me. Everybody kept saying to me: 'Lucille, that man's 'way below you!' But if I hadn't met Chester, he'd of got me sure."

"Yes, but listen," said Myrtle Wilson, nodding her head up and down, "at least you didn't marry him."

"I know I didn't."

"Well, I married him," said Myrtle, am-

biguously. "And that's the difference between your case and mine."

"Why did you, Myrtle?" demanded Catherine. "Nobody forced you to."

Myrtle considered.

"I married him because I thought he was a gentleman," she said finally. "I thought he knew something about breeding, but he wasn't fit to lick my shoe."

"You were crazy about him for a while," said Catherine.

"Crazy about him!" cried Myrtle incredulously. "Who said I was crazy about him? I never was any more crazy about him than I was about that man there."

SHE pointed suddenly at me, and every one looked at me accusingly. I tried to show by my expression that I expected no affection.

"The only *crazy* I was when I married him. I knew right away I made a mistake. He borrowed somebody's best suit to get married in, and never even told me about it, and the man came after it one day, when he was out: 'Oh, is that your suit?' I said. 'This is the first I ever heard about it.' But I gave it to him and then I lay down and cried to beat the band all afternoon."

"She really ought to get away from him," resumed Catherine to me. "They've been living over that garage for eleven years. And Tom's the first sweetie she ever had."

Myrtle pulled her chair close to mine, and suddenly her warm breath poured over me the story of her first meeting with Tom.

"It was on the two little seats facing each other that are always the last ones left on the train. I was going up to New York to see my sister and spend the night. He had on a dress suit and patent leather shoes, and I couldn't keep my eyes off him, but every time he looked at me I had to pretend to be looking at the advertisement over his head. When we came into the station he was next to me, and his white shirt-front pressed against my arm, and so I told him I'd have to call a policeman, but he knew I lied. I was so excited that when I got into a taxi with him I didn't hardly know I wasn't getting into a subway train. All I kept thinking about, over and over, was 'You can't live forever; you can't live forever.'"

It was nine o'clock—almost immediately afterward I looked at my watch and found it was ten. Mr. McKee was asleep on a chair with his fists clenched in his lap, like a photograph of a man of action. Taking out my handkerchief I wiped from his cheek the spot of dried lather that had worried me all the afternoon.

The little dog was sitting on the table looking with blind eyes through the smoke, and from time to time groaning faintly. People disappeared, reappeared, made plans to go somewhere, and then lost each other, searched for each other, found each other a few feet away. Some time toward midnight Tom Buchanan and Mrs. Wilson stood face to face discussing, in impassioned voices, whether Mrs. Wilson had any right to mention Daisy's name.

"Daisy! Daisy! Daisy!" shouted Mrs. Wilson. "I'll say it whenever I want to! Daisy! Dai—"

Making a short deft movement, Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand.

Then there were bloody towels upon the bathroom floor, and women's voices scolding, and high over the confusion a long broken wail of pain. Mr. McKee awoke from his doze and started in a daze toward the door. When he had gone half way he turned around and stared at the scene—his wife and Catherine scolding and consoling as they stumbled here and there among the crowded furniture with articles of aid, and the despairing figure on the couch, bleeding fluently, and trying to spread a copy of *Town Tattle* over the tapestry scenes of Versailles. Then Mr. McKee turned and continued on out the door. Taking my hat from the chandelier, I followed.

"Come to lunch some day," he suggested, as we groaned in the elevator.

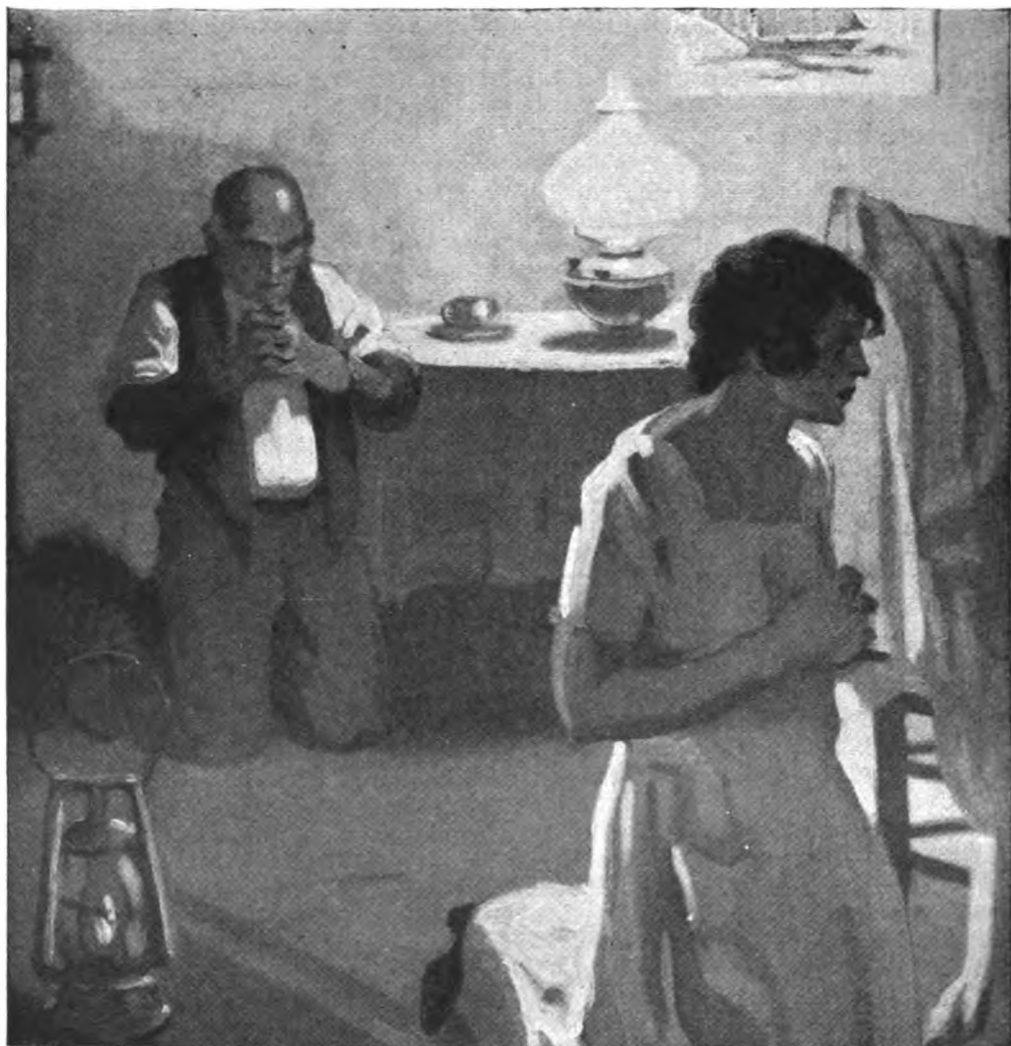
"All right," I agreed, "I'll be glad to."

. . . I was standing beside his bed and he was sitting up between the sheets, clad in his underwear, with a great portfolio in his hands.

"Beauty and the Beast . . . Loneliness . . . Old Grocery Horse . . . Brook'n Bridge. . ."

Then I was lying half asleep in the cold lower level of the Pennsylvania Station staring at the morning *Tribune*, and waiting for the four o'clock train.

The second part of Mr. Fitzgerald's absorbing novel will appear in the next issue of The Famous Story Magazine.



By Wilbur Daniel Steele

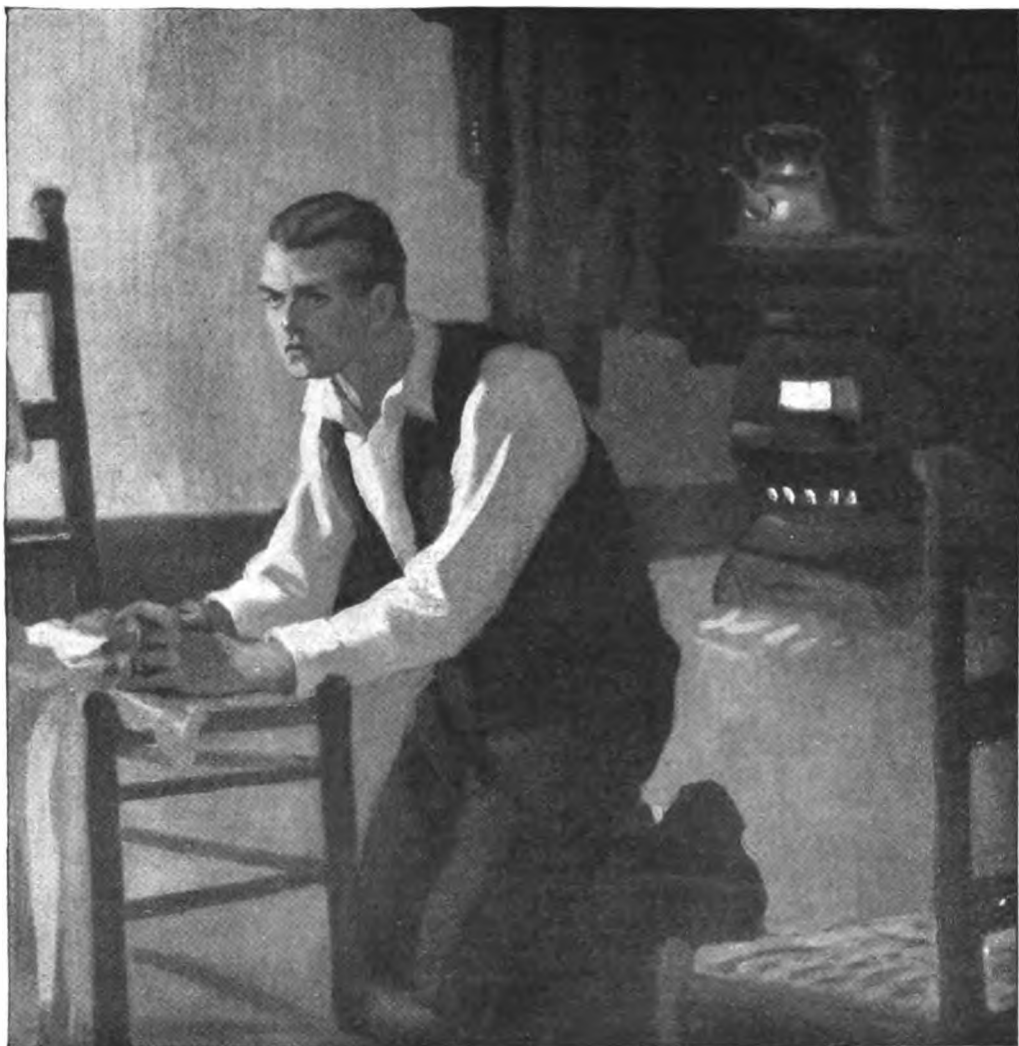
The Woman At



TELL you, sir, I was innocent. I didn't know any more about the world at twenty-two than some do at twelve. My uncle and aunt in Duxbury brought me up strict; I studied hard in high school, I worked hard after hours, and I went to church twice on Sundays, and I can't see it's right to put me in a place like this, with crazy people. Oh, yes, I know they're crazy—you can't tell *me*. As for what

they said in court about finding her with her husband, that's the Inspector's lie, sir, because he's down on me, and wants to make it look like my fault.

No, sir, I can't say as I thought she was handsome—not at first. For one thing, her lips were too thin and white, and her color was bad. I'll tell you a fact, sir; that first day I came off to the Light I was sitting on my cot in the store-room (that's where the assistant keeper sleeps at the



The woman was looking at me, her two eyes hunting mine between the spindles in the shadows. I tell you I felt like jumping to my feet and running out of the room—it was so queer.

Seven Brothers

Seven Brothers), as lonesome as I could be, away from home for the first time and the water all around me, and, even though it was a calm day, pounding enough on the ledge to send a kind of a *woom-woom-woom* whining up through all that solid rock of the tower. And when old Fed-derson poked his head down from the living-room with the sunshine above making a kind of bright frame around his hair and whiskers, to give me a cheery, "Make your-

self to home, son!" I remember I said to myself: "*He's* all right. I'll get along with *him*. But his wife's enough to sour milk." That was queer, because she was so much under him in age—'long about twenty-eight or so, and him nearer fifty. But that's what I said, sir.

Of course that feeling wore off, same as any feeling will wear off sooner or later in a place like the Seven Brothers. Cooped up in a place like that you come to know

folks so well that you forget what they *do* look like. There was a long time I never noticed her, any more than you'd notice the cat. We used to sit of an evening around the table, as if you were Fedderson there, and me here, and her somewhere back there, in the rocker, knitting. Fedderson would be working on his Jacob's-ladder, and I'd be reading. He'd been working on that Jacob's-ladder a year, I guess, and every time the Inspector came off with the tender he was so astonished to see how good that ladder was that the old man would go to work and make it better. That's all he lived for.

If I was reading, as I say, I daren't take my eyes off the book, or Fedderson had me. And then he'd begin—what the Inspector said about him. How surprised the member of the board had been, that time, to see everything so clean about the light. What the Inspector had said about Fedderson's being stuck here in a second-class light—best keeper on the coast. And so on and so on, till either he or I had to go aloft and have a look at the wicks.

He'd been there twenty-three years, all told, and he'd got used to the feeling that he was kept down unfair—so used to it, I guess, that he fed on it, and told himself how folks ashore would talk when he was dead and gone—best keeper on the coast—kept down unfair. Not that he said that to me. No, he was far too loyal and humble and respectful, doing his duty without complaint, as anybody could see.

And all that time, night after night, hardly ever a word out of the woman. As I remember it, she seemed more like a piece of furniture than anything else—not even a very good cook, nor over and above tidy. One day, when he and I were trimming the lamp, he passed the remark that his *first* wife used to dust the lens and take a pride in it. Not that he said a word against Anna though. He never said a word against any living mortal; he was too upright.

I don't know how it came about; or, rather, I *do* know, but it was so sudden, and so far away from my thoughts, that it shocked me, like the world turned over. It was at prayers. That night I remember, Fedderson was uncommon long-winded. We'd had a batch of newspapers out by the tender, and at such times the old man always made a long watch of it, getting the world straightened out. For one thing, the United States minister to Turkey was dead. Well, from him and his soul, Fed-

derson got on to Turkey and the Presbyterian college there, and from that to heathen in general. He rambled on and on, like the surf on the ledge, *woom-woom-woom*, never coming to an end.

You know how you'll be at prayers sometimes. My mind strayed. I counted the canes in the chair-seat where I was kneeling; I plaited a corner of the tablecloth between my fingers for a spell, and by and by my eyes went wandering up the back of the chair.

The woman, sir, was looking at me. Her chair was back to mine, close, and both our heads were down in the shadow under the edge of the table, with Fedderson clear over on the other side by the stove. And there were her two eyes hunting mine between the spindles in the shadow. You won't believe me, sir, but I tell you I felt like jumping to my feet and running out of the room—it was so queer.

I don't know what her husband was praying about after that. His voice didn't mean anything, no more than the seas on the ledge away down there. I went to work to count the canes in the seat again, but all my eyes were in the top of my head. It got so I couldn't stand it. We were at the Lord's prayer, saying it singsong together, when I had to look up again. And there her two eyes were, between the spindles, hunting mine. Just then all of us were saying, "Forgive us our trespasses—" I thought of it afterward.

WHEN we got up she was turned the other way, but I couldn't help seeing her cheeks were red. It was terrible. I wondered if Fedderson would notice, though I might have known he wouldn't—not him. He was in too much of a hurry to get at his Jacob's-ladder, and then he had to tell me for the tenth time what the Inspector 'd said that day about getting him another light—Kingdom Come, maybe, he said.

I made some excuse or other and got away. Once in the store-room, I sat down on my cot and stayed there a long time, feeling queerer than anything. I read a chapter in the Bible, I don't know why. After I'd got my boots off I sat with them in my hands for as much as an hour, I guess, staring at the oil-tank and its lopsided shadow on the wall. I tell you, sir, I was shocked. I was only twenty-two remember and I was shocked and horrified.

And when I did turn in, finally, I didn't

sleep at all well. Two or three times I came to, sitting straight up in bed. Once I got up and opened the outer door to have a look. The water was like glass, dim, without a breath of wind, and the moon just going down. Over on the black shore I made out two lights in a village, like a pair of eyes watching. Lonely? My, yes! Lonely and nervous. I had a horror of her, sir. The dinghy-boat hung on its davits just there in front of the door, and for a minute I had an awful hankering to climb into it, lower away, and row off, no matter where. It sounds foolish.

Well, it seemed foolish next morning, with the sun shining and everything as usual—Fedderson sucking his pen and wagging his head over his eternal "log," and his wife down in the rocker with her head in the newspaper, and her breakfast work still waiting. I guess that jarred it out of me more than anything else—sight of her slouched down there, with her stringy, yellow hair and her dusty apron and the pale back of her neck, reading the *Society Notes*. *Society Notes!* Think of it! For the first time since I came to Seven Brothers I wanted to laugh.

I guess I did laugh when I went aloft to clean the lamp and found everything so free and breezy, gulls flying high and little whitecaps making under a westerly. It was like feeling a big load dropped off your shoulders. Fedderson came up with his dust-rag and cocked his head at me.

"What's the matter, Ray?" said he.

"Nothing," said I. And then I couldn't help it. "Seems kind of out of place for society notes," said I, "out here at Seven Brothers." He was the other side of the lens, and when he looked at me he had a thousand eyes, all sober. For a minute I thought he was going on dusting but then he came out and sat down on a sill.

"Sometimes," said he, "I get to thinking it may be a mite dull for her out here. She's pretty young, Ray. Not much more'n a girl, hardly."

"Not much more'n a *girl!*" It gave me a turn, sir, as though I'd seen my aunt in short dresses.

"It's a good home for her, though," he went on slow. "I've seen a lot worse ashore, Ray. Of course if I could get a shore light——"

"Kingdom Come's a shore light."

He looked at me out of his deep-set eyes, and then he turned them around the light-room, where he'd been so long.

"No," said he, wagging his head. "It ain't for such as me."

I never saw so humble a man.

"But look here," he went on, more cheerful. "As I was telling her just now, a month from yesterday's our fourth anniversary, and I'm going to take her ashore for the day and give her a holiday—new hat and everything. A girl wants a mite of excitement now and then, Ray."

There it was again, that "girl." It gave me the fidgets, sir. I had to do something about it. It's close quarters for last names in a light, and I'd taken to calling him Uncle Matt soon after I came. Now, when I was at table that noon, I spoke over to where she was standing by the stove, getting him another help of chowder.

"I guess I'll have some, too, *Aunt Anna*," said I, matter of fact.

She never said a word nor gave a sign—just stood there kind of round-shouldered, dipping the chowder. And that night at prayers I hitched my chair around the table, with its back the other way.

You get awful lazy in a lighthouse, some ways. No matter how much tinkering you've got, there's still a lot of time and there's such a thing as too much reading. The changes in weather get monotonous, too, by and by; the light burns the same on a thick night as it does on a fair one. Of course there's the ships, north-bound, south-bound—wind-jammers, freighters, passenger-boats full of people. In the watches at night you can see their lights go by, and wonder what they are, how they're laden, where they'll fetch up, and all. I used to do that almost every evening when it was my first watch, sitting out on the walk-around up there with my legs hanging over the edge and my chin propped on the railing—lazy. The Boston boat was the prettiest to see, with her three tiers of port-holes lit, like a string of pearls wrapped round and round a woman's neck—well away, too, for the ledge must have made a couple of hundred fathoms off the Light, like a white dog-tooth of a breaker, even on the darkest night.

WELL, I was lolling there one night, as I say, watching the Boston boat go by, not thinking of anything special, when I heard the door on the other side of the tower open and footsteps coming around to me.

By and by I nodded toward the boat and passed the remark that she was fetching in uncommon close to-night. No answer.

I made nothing of that, for oftentimes Fedderson wouldn't answer, and after I'd watched the lights crawling on through the dark a spell, just to make conversation I said I guessed there'd be a bit of weather before long.

"I've noticed," said I, "when there's weather coming on, and the wind in the northeast, you can hear the orchestra playing aboard of her just over there. I make it out now. Do you?"

"Yes. Oh—yes! *I hear it all right!*"

You can imagine I started. It wasn't him, but *her*. And there was something in the way she said that speech, sir—something—well—unnatural. Like a hungry animal snapping at a person's hand.

I turned and looked at her sidewise. She was standing by the railing, leaning a little outward, the top of her from the waist picked out bright by the lens behind her. I didn't know what in the world to say, and yet I had a feeling I ought not to sit there mum.

"I wonder," said I, "what that captain's thinking of, fetching in so handy to-night. It's no way. I tell you, if 'twasn't for this light, she'd go to work and pile up on the ledge some thick night——"

She turned at that and stared straight into the lens. I didn't like the look of her face. Somehow, with its edges cut hard all around and its two eyes closed down to slits, like a cat's, it made a kind of mask.

"And then," I went on, uneasy enough—"and then where'd all their music be of a sudden, and their goings-on and their singing——"

"And dancing!" She clipped me off so quick it took my breath.

"D-d-dancing?" said I.

"That's dance-music," said she. She was looking at the boat again.

"How do you know?" I felt I had to keep on talking.

Well, sir—she laughed. I looked at her. She had on a shawl of some stuff or other that shone in the light; she had it pulled tight around her with her two hands in front at her breast, and I saw her shoulders swaying in tune.

"How do I *know?*" she cried. Then she laughed again, the same kind of a laugh. It was queer, sir, to see her, and to hear her. She turned, as quick as that, and leaned toward me. "Don't you know how to dance, Ray?" said she.

"N-no," I managed, and I was going to say "*Aunt Anna,*" but the thing choked in

my throat. I tell you she was looking square at me all the time with her two eyes and moving with the music as if she didn't know it. By heavens, sir, it came over me of a sudden that she wasn't so bad-looking, after all. I guess I must have sounded like a fool.

"You—you see," said I, "she's cleared the rip there now, and the music's gone. You—you—hear?"

"Yes," said she, turning back slow. "That's where it stops every night—night after night—it stops just there—at the rip."

When she spoke again her voice was different. I never heard the like of it, thin and taut as a thread. It made me shiver, sir.

"I hate 'em!" That's what she said. "I hate 'em all. I'd like to see 'em dead. I'd love to see 'em torn apart on the rocks, night after night. I could bathe my hands in their blood, night after night."

And do you know, sir, I saw it with my own eyes, her hands moving in each other above the rail. But it was her voice, though. I didn't know what to do, or what to say, so I poked my head through the railing and looked down at the water. I don't think I'm a coward, sir, but it was like a cold—ice-cold—hand, taking hold of my beating heart.

When I looked up finally, she was gone. By and by I went in and had a look at the lamp, hardly knowing what I was about. Then, seeing by my watch it was time for the old man to come on duty, I started to go below. In the Seven Brothers, you understand, the stair goes down in a spiral through a well against the south wall, and first there's the door to the keeper's room, and then you come to another, and that's the living-room, and then down to the store-room. And at night, if you don't carry a lantern, it's as black as the pit.

WELL, down I went, sliding my hand along the rail, and as usual I stopped to give a rap on the keeper's door, in case he was taking a nap after supper. Sometimes he did.

I stood there, blind as a bat, with my mind still up on the walk-around. There was no answer to my knock. I hadn't expected any. Just from habit, and with my right foot already hanging down for the next step, I reached out to give the door one more tap for luck.

Do you know, sir, my hand didn't fetch

up on anything. The door had been there a second before, and now the door wasn't there. My hand just went on going through the dark, on and on, and I didn't seem to have sense or power enough to stop it. There didn't seem any air in the well to breathe, and my ears were drumming to the surf—that's how scared I was. And then my hand touched the flesh of a face, and something in the dark said, "Oh!" no louder than a sigh.

Next thing I knew, sir, I was down in the living-room, warm and yellow-lit, with Fedderson cocking his head at me across the table, where he was at that eternal Jacob's-ladder of his.

"What's the matter, Ray?" said he. "Lord's sake, Ray?"

"Nothing," said I. Then I think I told him I was sick. That night I wrote a letter to A. L. Peters, the grain-dealer in Duxbury, asking for a job—even though it wouldn't go ashore for a couple of weeks, just the writing of it made me feel better.

It's hard to tell you how those two weeks went by. I don't know why, but I felt like hiding in a corner all the time. I had to come to meals. But I didn't look at her, though, not once, unless it was by accident. Fedderson thought I was still ailing and nagged me to death with advice and so on. One thing I took care not to do, I can tell you, and that was to knock on his door till I'd made certain he wasn't below in the living-room—though I was tempted to.

Yes, sir; that's a queer thing, and I wouldn't tell you if I hadn't set out to give you the truth. Night after night, stopping there on the landing in that black pit, the air gone out of my lungs and the surf drumming in my ears and sweat standing cold on my neck—and one hand lifting up in the air—God forgive me, sir! Maybe I did wrong not to look at her more, drooping about her work in her gingham apron, with her hair stringing.

When the Inspector came off with the tender, that time, I told him I was through. That's when he took the dislike to me, I guess, for he looked at me kind of sneering and said, soft as I was, I'd have to put up with it till next relief. And then, said he, there'd be a whole housecleaning at Seven Brothers, because he'd gotten Fedderson the berth at Kingdom Come. And with that he slapped the old man on the back.

I wish you could have seen Fedderson, sir. He sat down on my cot as if his knees

had given 'way. Happy? You'd think he'd be happy, with all his dreams come true. Yes, he was happy, beaming all over—for a minute. Then, sir, he began to shrivel up. It was like seeing a man cut down in his prime before your eyes. He began to wag his head.

"No," said he. "No, no; it's not for such as me. I'm good enough for Seven Brothers, and that's all, Mr. Bayliss. That's all."

And for all the Inspector could say, that's what he stuck to. He'd figured himself a martyr so many years, nursed that injustice like a mother with her first-born, sir; and now in his old age, so to speak, they weren't to rob him of it. Fedderson was going to wear out his life in a second-class light, and folks would talk—that was his idea. I heard him hailing down as the tender was casting off:

"See you to-morrow, Mr. Bayliss. Yep. Coming ashore with the wife for a spree. Anniversary. Yep."

BUT he didn't sound much like a spree. They *had* robbed him, partly, after all. I wondered what she thought about it. I didn't know till night. She didn't show up to supper, which Fedderson and I got ourselves—had a headache, he said. It was my early watch. I went and lit up and came back to read a spell. He was finishing off the Jacob's-ladder, and thoughtful, like a man that's lost a treasure. Once or twice I caught him looking about the room on the sly. It was pathetic, sir.

Going up the second time, I stepped out on the walk-around to have a look at things. She was there on the seaward side, wrapped in that silky thing. A fair sea was running across the ledge and it was coming on a little thick—not too thick. Off to the right the Boston boat was blowing, *whroom-whroom!* Creeping up on us, quarter-speed. There was another fellow behind her, and a fisherman's conch farther offshore.

I don't know why, but I stopped beside her and leaned on the rail. She didn't appear to notice me, one way or another. We stood and we stood, listening to the whistles, and the longer we stood the more it got on my nerves, her not noticing me. I suppose she'd been too much on my mind lately. I began to be put out. I scraped my feet. I coughed. By and by I said out loud:

"Look here, I guess I better get out the

foghorn and give those fellows a toot."

"Why?" said she, without moving her head—calm as that.

"Why?" It gave me a turn, sir. For a minute I stared at her. "Why? Because if she don't pick up this light before very many minutes she'll be too close in to wear—tide 'll have her on the rocks—that's why!"

I couldn't see her face, but I could see one of her silk shoulders lift a little, like a shrug. And there I kept on staring at her, a dumb one, sure enough. I know what brought me to was hearing the Boston boat's three sharp toots as she picked up the light—mad as anything—and swung her helm a-port. I turned away from her, sweat stringing down my face, and walked around to the door. It was just as well, too, for the feedpipe was plugged in the lamp and the wicks were popping. She'd have been out in another five minutes, sir. When I'd finished, I saw that woman standing in the doorway. Her eyes were bright. I had a horror of her, sir, a living horror.

"If only the light had been out," said she, low and sweet.

"God forgive you," said I. "You don't know what you're saying."

She went down the stair into the well, winding out of sight, and as long as I could see her, her eyes were watching mine. When I went, myself, after a few minutes, she was waiting for me on that first landing, standing still in the dark. She took hold of my hand, though I tried to get it away.

"Good-by," said she in my ear.

"Good-by?" said I. I didn't understand.

"You heard what he said to-day—about Kingdom Come? Be it so—on his own head. I'll never come back here. Once I set foot ashore—I've got friends in Brightonboro, Ray."

I got away from her and started on down. But I stopped. "Brightonboro?" I whispered back. "Why do you tell *me*?" My throat was raw to the words, like a sore.

"So you'd know," said she.

Well, sir, I saw them off next morning, down that new Jacob's-ladder into the dinghy-boat, her in a dress of blue velvet and him in his best cutaway and derby—rowing away, smaller and smaller, the two of them. And then I went back and sat on my cot, leaving the door open and the ladder still hanging down the wall, along with the boat-falls.

I don't know whether it was relief, or what. I suppose I must have been worked up even more than I'd thought those past weeks, for now it was all over I was like a rag. I got down on my knees, sir, and prayed to God for the salvation of my soul, and when I got up and climbed to the living-room it was half past twelve by the clock. There was rain on the windows and the sea was running blue-black under the sun. I'd sat there all that time not knowing there was a squall.

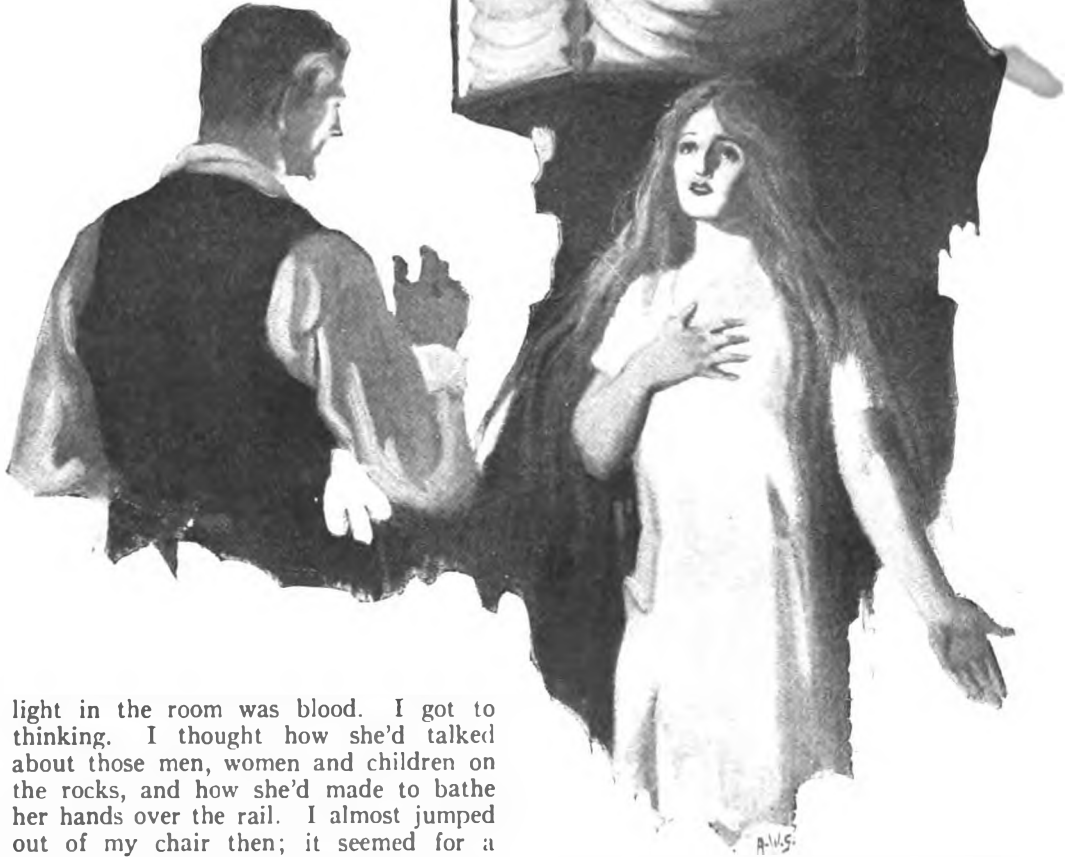
IT was funny; the glass stood high, but those black squalls kept coming and going all afternoon, while I was at work up in the light-room. And I worked hard, to keep myself busy. First thing I knew it was five, and no sign of the boat yet. It began to get dim and kind of purplish-gray over the land. The sun was down. I lit up, made everything snug, and got out the night-glasses to have another look for that boat. He'd said he intended to get back before five. No sign. And then, standing there, it came over me that of course he wouldn't be coming off—he'd be hunting *her*, poor old fool. It looked like I had to stand two men's watches that night.

Never mind. I felt like myself again, even if I hadn't had any dinner or supper. Pride came to me that night on the walk-around, watching the boats go by—little boats, big boats, the Boston boat with all her pearls and her dance-music. They couldn't see me; they didn't know who I was; but to the last of them, they depended on *me*. They say a man must be born again. Well, I was born again. I breathed deep in the wind.

Dawn broke hard and red as a dying coal. I put out the light and started to go below. Born again; yes, sir. I felt so good I whistled in the well, and when I came to that first door on the stair I reached out in the dark to give it a rap for luck. And then, sir, the hair prickled all over my scalp, when I found my hand just going on and on through the air, the same as it had gone once before, and all of a sudden I wanted to yell, because I thought I was going to touch flesh. It's funny what their just forgetting to close their door did to me, isn't it?

Well, I reached for the latch and pulled it to with a bang and ran down as if a ghost was after me. I got up some coffee and bread and bacon for breakfast. I drank the coffee. But somehow I couldn't eat, all along of that open door. The

A cold horror took me. I knew now why she had come back. She wasn't a woman—she was a devil!



light in the room was blood. I got to thinking. I thought how she'd talked about those men, women and children on the rocks, and how she'd made to bathe her hands over the rail. I almost jumped out of my chair then; it seemed for a wink she was there beside the stove watching me with that queer half-smile—really, I seemed to see her for a flash across the red table-cloth in the red light of dawn.

"Look here!" said I to myself, sharp enough; and then I gave myself a good

laugh and went below. There I took a look out of the door, which was still open, with the ladder hanging down. I made sure to see the poor old fool come pulling around the point before very long now.

My boots were hurting a little, and, taking them off, I lay down on the cot to rest, and somehow I went to sleep. I had horrible dreams. I saw her again standing in that blood-red kitchen, and she seemed to be washing her hands, and the surf on the ledge was whining up the tower, louder and louder all the time, and what it whined was, "Night after night—night after night." What woke me was cold water in my face.

The store-room was in gloom. That scared me at first; I thought night had come, and remembered the light. But then I saw the gloom was of a storm. The floor was shining wet, and the water in my face was spray, flung up through the open door. When I ran to close it it almost made me dizzy to see the gray-and-white breakers marching past. The land was gone; the sky shut down heavy overhead; there was a piece of wreckage on the back of a swell, and the Jacob's-ladder was carried clean away. How that sea had picked up so quick I can't think. I looked at my watch and it wasn't four in the afternoon yet.

WHEN I closed the door, sir, it was almost dark in the store-room. I'd never been in the Light before in a gale of wind. I wondered why I was shivering so, till I found it was the floor below me shivering, and the walls and stair. Horrible crunchings and grindings ran away up the tower, and now and then there was a great thud somewhere, like a cannon-shot in a cave. I tell, you, sir, I was alone, and I was in a mortal fright for a minute or so. And yet I had to get myself together. There was the light up there not tended to, and an early dark coming on and a heavy night and all, and I had to go. And I had to pass that door.

You'll say it's foolish, sir, and maybe it *was* foolish. Maybe it was because I hadn't eaten. But I began thinking of that door up there the minute I set foot on the stair, and all the way up through that howling dark, well I dreaded to pass it. I told myself I wouldn't stop. I didn't stop. I felt the landing underfoot and I went on, four steps, five—and then I couldn't. I turned and went back. I put out my hand and it went on into nothing. That door, sir, was open again.

I left it be; I went on up to the light-room and set to work. It was Bedlam there, sir, screeching Bedlam, but I took no notice. I kept my eyes down. I trimmed

those seven wicks, sir, as neat as ever they were trimmed; I polished the brass till it shone, and I dusted the lens. It wasn't till that was done that I let myself look back to see who it was standing there, half out of sight in the well. It was her, sir.

"Where'd you come from?" I asked. I remember my voice was sharp.

"Up Jacob's-ladder," said she, and hers was like the syrup of flowers.

I shook my head. I was savage, sir. "The ladder's carried away."

"I cast it off," said she, with a smile.

"Then," said I, "you must have come while I was asleep." Another thought came on me heavy as a ton of lead. "And where's *he*?" said I. "Where's the boat?"

"He's drowned," said she, as easy as that. "And I let the boat go adrift. You wouldn't hear me when I called."

"But look here," said I. "If you came through the store-room, why didn't you wake me up? Tell me that!" It sounds foolish enough, me standing like a lawyer in court, trying to prove she *couldn't* be there.

She didn't answer for a moment. I guess she sighed, though I couldn't hear for the gale, and her eyes grew soft, sir, so soft.

"I couldn't," said she. "You looked so peaceful—dear one."

My cheeks and neck went hot, sir, as if a warm iron was laid on them. I didn't know what to say. I began to stammer, "What do you mean—" but she was going back down the stair, out of sight. My God! sir, and I used not to think she was good-looking!

I started to follow her. I wanted to know what she meant. Then I said to myself, "If I don't go—if I wait here—she'll come back." And I went to the weather side and stood looking out of the window. Not that there was much to see. It was growing dark, and the Seven Brothers looked like the mane of a running horse, a great, vast, white horse running into the wind. The air was a-welter with it. I caught one peep of a fisherman, lying down flat trying to weather the ledge, and I said, "God help them all to-night," and then I went hot at sound of that "God."

I was right about her, though. She was back again. I wanted her to speak first, before I turned, but she wouldn't. I didn't hear her go out; I didn't know what she was up to till I saw her coming outside on the walk-around, drenched wet already. I pounded on the glass for her to come in; if she heard she gave no sign of it.

There she stood, and there I stood watching her. Lord, sir—was it just that I'd never had eyes to see? Or are there women who bloom? Her clothes were shining on her, like a carving, and her hair was let down like a golden curtain tossing and streaming in the gale, and there she stood with her lips half open, drinking, and her eyes half closed, gazing straight away over the Seven Brothers, and her shoulders swaying, as if in tune with the wind and water and all the ruin. And when I looked at her hands over the rail, sir, they were moving in each other as if they bathed, and then I remembered, sir.

A cold horror took me. I knew now why she had come back again. She wasn't a woman—she was a devil. I turned my back on her. I said to myself: "It's time to light up. You've got to light up"—like that, over and over, out loud. My hand was shivering so I could hardly find a match; and when I scratched it, it only flared a second and then went out in the back draught from the open door. She was standing in the doorway, looking at me. It's queer, sir, but I felt like a child caught in mischief.

"I—I—was going to light up," I managed to say, finally.

"Why?" said she. No. I can't say it as she did.

"*Why?*" said I. "*My God!*"

SHE came nearer, laughing, as if with pity, low, you know. "Your God? And who is your God? What is God? What is anything on a night like this?"

I drew back from her. All I could say anything about was the light.

"Why not the dark?" said she. "Dark is softer than light—tenderer—dearer than light. From the dark up here, away up here in the wind and storm, we can watch the ships go by, you and I. And you love me so. You've loved me so long, Ray."

"I never have!" I struck out at her. "I don't! I don't!"

Her voice was lower than ever, but there was the same laughing pity in it. "Oh yes, you have." And she was near me again.

"I have?" I yelled. "I'll show you! I'll show you if I have!"

I got another match, sir, and scratched it on the brass. I gave it to the first wick, the little wick that's inside all the others. It bloomed like a yellow flower. "I *have?*" I yelled, and gave it to the next.

Then there was a shadow, and I saw she

was leaning beside me, her two elbows on the brass, her two arms stretched out above the wicks, her bare forearms and wrists and hands. I gave a gasp:

"Take care! You'll burn them! For God's sake—"

She didn't move or speak. The match burned my fingers and went out, and all I could do was stare at those arms of hers, helpless. I'd never noticed her arms before. They were rounded and graceful and covered with a soft down, like a breath of gold. Then I heard her speaking, close to my ear:

"Pretty arms," she said. "Pretty arms!"

I turned. Her eyes were fixed on mine. They seemed heavy, as if with sleep, and yet between their lids they were two wells, deep and deep, and as if they held all the things I'd ever thought or dreamed in them. I looked away from them, at her lips. Her lips were red as poppies, heavy with redness. They moved, and I heard them speaking:

"Poor boy, you love me so, and you want to kiss me—don't you?"

"No," said I. But I couldn't turn around. I looked at her hair. I'd always thought it was stringy hair. Some hair curls naturally with damp, they say, and perhaps that was it, for there were pearls of wet on it, and it was thick and shimmering around her face, making soft shadows by the temples. There was green in it, queer strands of green like braids.

"What is it?" said I.

"Nothing but weed," said she, with that slow, sleepy smile.

Somehow or other I felt calmer than I had any time. "Look here," said I. "I'm going to light this lamp." I took out a match, scratched it, and touched the third wick. The flame ran around, bigger than the other two together. But still her arms hung there. I bit my lip. "By God, I will!" said I to myself, and I lit the fourth.

It was fierce, sir, fierce! And yet those arms never trembled. I had to look around at her. Her eyes were still looking into mine, so deep and deep, and her red lips were still smiling with that queer sleepy droop; the only thing was that tears were raining down her cheeks—big, glowing, round, jewel tears. It wasn't human, sir. It was like a dream.

"Pretty arms," she sighed, and then, as if those words had broken something in her heart, there came a great sob bursting from her lips. To hear it drove me mad.

I reached to drag her away, but she was too quick, sir; she cringed from me and slipped out from between my hands. It was like she faded away, sir, and went down in a bundle, nursing her poor arms and mourning over them with those terrible, broken sobs. The sound of them took the manhood out of me—you'd have been the same, sir. I knelt down beside her on the floor and covered my face.

"Please," I moaned. "Please! Please!" That's all I could say. I wanted her to forgive me. I reached out a hand, blind, for forgiveness, and I couldn't find her anywhere. I had hurt her so, and she was afraid of me, of *me*, sir, who loved her so deep it drove me crazy.

I could see her down the stair, though it was dim and my eyes were filled with tears. I stumbled after her, crying, "Please! Please!" The little wicks I'd lit were blowing in the wind from the door and smoking the glass beside them black. One went out. I pleaded with them, the same as I would plead with a human being. I said I'd be back in a second. I promised. And I went on down the stair crying like a baby because I'd hurt her, and she was afraid of me—of *me*, sir.

She had gone into her room. The door was closed against me and I could hear her sobbing beyond it, broken-hearted. My heart was broken too. I beat on the door with my palms. I begged her to forgive me. I told her I loved her. And all the answer was that sobbing in the dark.

And then I lifted the latch and went in, groping, pleading. "Dearest—please! Because I love you!"

I HEARD her speak down near the floor. There wasn't any anger in her voice; nothing but sadness and despair.

"No," said she. "You don't love me, Ray. You never have."

"I do! I have!"

"No, no," said she, as if she was tired out.

"Where are you?" I was groping for her. I thought, and lit a match. She had got to the door and was standing there as if ready to fly. I went toward her, and she made me stop. She took my breath away. "I hurt your arms," said I, in a dream.

"No," said she, hardly moving her lips. She held them out to the match's light for me to look, and there was never a scar on them—not even that soft, golden down was singed, sir. "You can't hurt my body,"

said she, sad as anything. "Only my heart, Ray; my poor heart."

I tell you again, she took my breath away. I lit another match. "How can you be so beautiful?" I wondered.

She answered in riddles—but oh, the sadness of her, sir.

"Because," said she, "I've always so wanted to be."

"How come your eyes so heavy?" said I.

"Because I've seen so many things I never dreamed of," said she.

"How come your hair so thick?"

"It's the seaweed makes it thick," said she smiling queer, queer.

"How come seaweed there?"

"Out of the bottom of the sea."

She talked in riddles, but it was like poetry to hear her, or a song.

"How come your lips so red?" said I.

"Because they've wanted so long to be kissed."

Fire was on me, sir. I reached out to catch her, but she was gone, out of the door and down the stair. I followed, stumbling. I must have tripped on the turn, for I remember going through the air and fetching up with a crash, and I didn't know anything for a spell—how long I can't say. When I came to, she was there, somewhere, bending over me, crooning, "My love—my love—" under her breath like, a song.

But then when I got up, she was not where my arms went; she was down the stair again, just ahead of me. I followed her. I was tottering and dizzy and full of pain. I tried to catch up with her in the dark of the store-room, but she was too quick for me, sir, always a little too quick for me. Oh, she was cruel to me, sir. I kept bumping against things, hurting myself still worse, and it was cold and wet and a horrible noise all the while, sir; and then, sir, I found the door was open, and a sea had parted the hinges.

I don't know how it all went, sir. I'd tell you if I could, but it's all so blurred—sometimes it seems more like a dream. I couldn't find her any more; I couldn't hear her; I went all over, everywhere. Once, I remember, I found myself hanging out of that door between the davits, looking down into those big black seas and crying like a baby. It's all riddles and blur. I can't seem to tell you much, sir. It was all—all—I don't know.

I was talking to somebody else—not her. It was the Inspector. I hardly knew it was the Inspector. His face was

as gray as a blanket, and his eyes were bloodshot, and his lips were twisted. His left wrist hung down, awkward. It was broken coming aboard the Light in that sea. Yes, we were in the living-room. Yes, sir, it was daylight—gray daylight. I tell you, sir, the man looked crazy to me. He was waving his good arm toward the weather windows, and what he was saying, over and over, was this:

"Look what you done, damn you! Look what you done!"

And what I was saying was this:

"I've lost her!"

I didn't pay any attention to him, nor him to me. By and by he did, though. He stopped his talking all of a sudden, and his eyes looked like the devil's eyes. He put them up close to mine. He grabbed my arm with his good hand, and I cried, I was so weak. "Johnson," said he, "is that it? By the living God—have you got a woman out here, Johnson!"

"No," said I. "I've lost her."

"What do you mean—lost her?"

"It was dark," said I—and it's funny how my head was clearing up—and the door was open—the store-room door—and I was after her—and I guess she stumbled, maybe—and I lost her."

"Johnson," said he, "what do you mean? You sound crazy—downright crazy. Who?"

"Her," said I. "Fedderson's wife."

"Who?"

"Her," said I. And with that he gave my arm another jerk.

"Listen," said he, like a tiger. "Don't try that on me. It won't do any good—that kind of lies—not where *you're* going to. Fedderson and his wife, too—the both of 'em's drowned deader 'n a door-nail."

"I know," said I, nodding my head. I was so calm it made him wild.

"You're crazy! Crazy as a loon, Johnson!" And he was chewing his lip red. "I know, because it was me that found the old man laying on Back Water Flats yesterday morning—*me!* And she'd been with him in the boat, too, because he had a piece of her jacket tore off, tangled in his arm."

"I know," said I, nodding again, like that.

"You know *what*, you *crazy, murdering fool?*" Those were his words to me, sir.

"I know," said I, "what I know."

"And *I* know," said he, "what *I* know."

"And there you are, sir. He's Inspector. I'm—nobody."



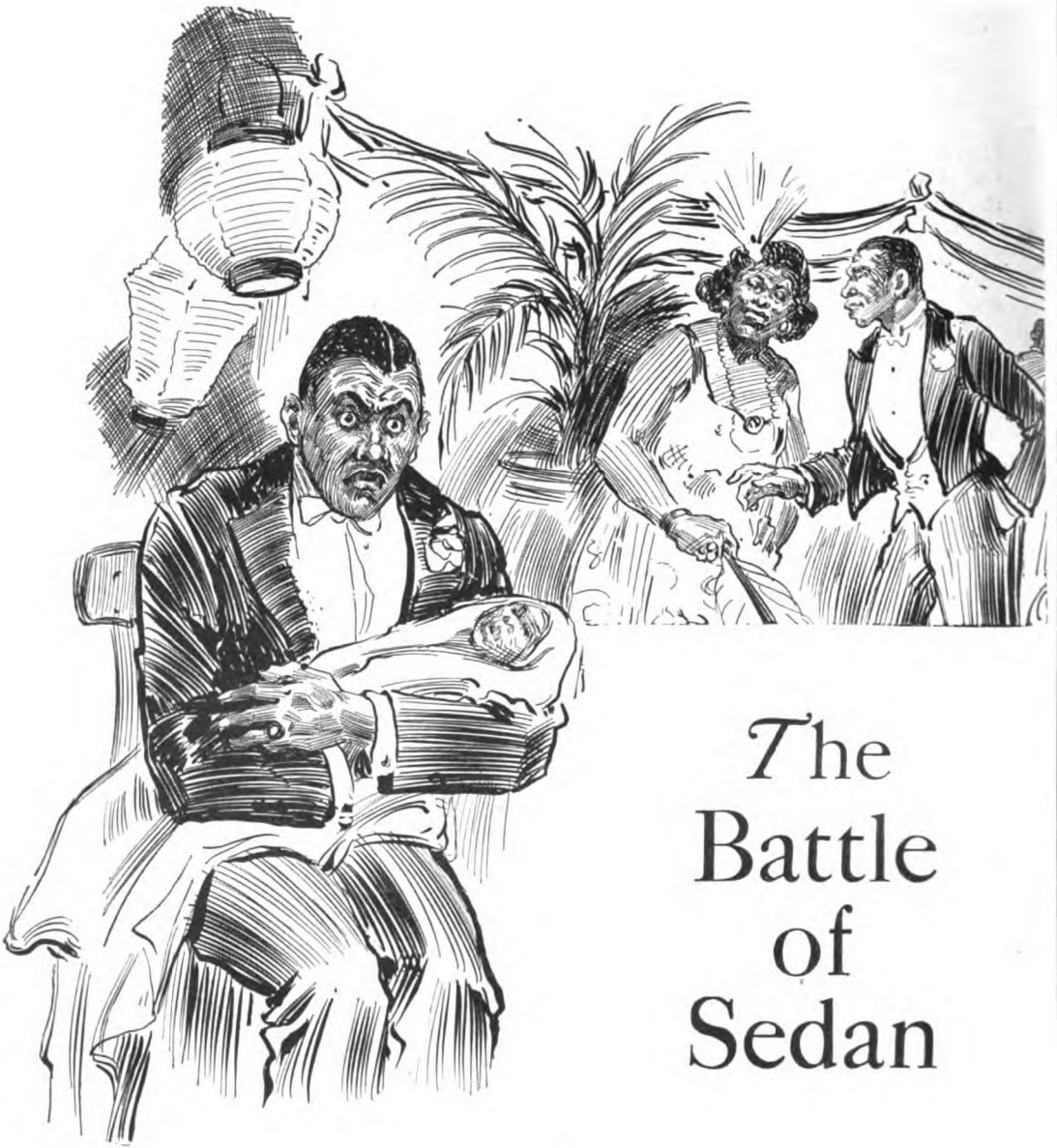
Beau Nash at Bath

STEPPING one morning to see who was at, and who was in, the Cross-Bath, I observed a beautiful young lady up to her chin, whose head being much adorned with flowers, as was the fashion at that time, and whose cheeks being enlivened with the heat of the Bath, looked a very goddess. At this instant, a young gentleman elegantly dressed came in, who proved to be the lady's husband, and who exclaimed, "My dearest life, you look like an angel! I wish I was with you."

Upon this, I took him by the shoulder and waistband of the breeches, and threw him over the balustrades; telling him, as he went over, his wish would be instantly fulfilled.

At this time, though there was but one Surgeon, one apothecary, and no physician, at Bath, the gentleman recovered his fright, and the lady her health!

For this frolic, however, I got an ugly wound in the Sword-arm, the remains of which were very visible; and this it was which determined me to issue my edict (for I do not love fighting) that no person should wear a sword at Bath.



The Battle of Sedan

MR. JUNIPER WATTS, who was diminutive of stature and exceedingly unbleached as to complexion, paced nervously up and down before the odorous portals of The Metropolis City Drive-It-Yourself Company, Colored Only. Occasionally Mr. Watts paused to consult the dial of a flagrantly dollar watch, following which ceremonial he would glance up and down Seventeenth Street, then walk to the

corner and survey Fourth Avenue for a glimpse of the long overdue sedan.

Mr. Watts was upon amour bent and on this night of nights he had no intention of piking. Through many days of internal turmoil he had fought and vanquished the murmurings of a rather avaricious soul and determined upon an evening of reckless extravagance, to the end that he had entered the offices of The Metropolis City company, planked down a ten dollar de-



Washington was a mean footshaker, and the itch to dance was upon him. He told himself in no uncertain terms what he thought of the butterfly wife who had so maliciously deserted him for the lure of terpsichore.

By
OCTAVUS
ROY
COHEN

posit and regally demanded that the one sedan of that organization's fleet be gasolined for his personal use.

Mr. Acey Upshaw, president of the company, was quite regretful. He explained that at six o'clock Mr. Florian Slappey had rented the sedan, although, as Mr. Upshaw suavely explained, Mr. Slappey had appeared rather short of cash and quite certain that he would return not later than seven-thirty. Mr. Watts could have a touring car or a roadster, but if he insisted upon the sedan, he'd have to wait.

Juniper waited. "I craves that sedan, Acey. An' when I craves somethin' I don't mind waitin' fo' same."

It was now five minutes before eight o'clock. In the servants' quarters of a Milner Heights' mansion Miss Parafine Parks was expectantly awaiting the arrival

of Mr. Watts. Parafine was excessively emotional, for there had been a promising tremolo in the voice of Mr. Watts when he extended his telephonic invitation for a moonlight drive. "You can look out fo' me a li'l befo' eight o'clock," proclaimed Juniper. "I'se gwine be in a limmysine."

"A limmysine?" Parafine was thrilled.

"Suttinly. A real gemmun don't take his gal ridin' in no towering car these days."

And so the die had been cast. It was now patently impossible for Juniper to ascend the Heights in anything short of a closed car. But tempus was rapidly fugiting and Mr. Watts was restive in the knowledge that the delectable Parafine was not a lady who tolerated tardiness.

Juniper had already made all arrangements to reduce that waiting period to a minimum. His deposit was paid, the sedan all signed for. He had received permission to meet Mr. Slappey at the curb and usurp that gentleman's place at the wheel, provided, of course, that Mr. Slappey appeared within a reasonable time.

"Dawg-gone his hide," anathematized Juniper. "Heah I has got Parafine all tuned up fo' love an' kisses an' Florian Slappey goes an' does me dirt. No consideration is the one thing that cullud boy ain't got nothin' else but."

And so Miss Parafine Parks stared through the window of her modest room down the slopes of Red Mountain and across the furnace-studded expanse of Jones Valley. The lights of Birmingham winked jovially at her. Her big, brown eyes, directed by a joyously thumping heart, discerned the Rainbow Viaduct, the Terminal Station, the tall and gaunt Jefferson County Bank Building, and, three blocks westward, the more modest eminence of that focal point for negro gentlemen of parts, the Penny Prudential Bank. Less than a block from that structure was Juniper Watts—Parafine's Juniper. . . .

Miss Parks awaited him, envisioning his southward progress in the shiny sedan, eyes intent upon the road, thoughts busy with her. She thought of all of that—

And she waited.

Juniper, too, waited; but far less patiently. Once he sought Acey Upshaw. "Is you posolutely shuah Florian Slappey said he'd git back by seven-thirty?"

"Absotively."

Juniper shook his head. "Seems like to me somethin' must of happened."

Nor was Juniper's conclusion very grossly in error. Many things had occurred before, and since, the departure of Florian Slappey in the rented sedan—events more or less unrelated at the outset, but which now were knitting closely into a web of circumstance of which the impatient Mr. Juniper Watts was mercifully unaware.

The real starting point may have been the moonlight picnic of the Junior Beautifying Society or it might be said to have commenced with the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Washington Smalls. Certainly the fact of their marriage is of vital importance, for as a direct result thereof a baby, one Genesis Smalls, was duly born. And now, slightly less than one year from the date of the advent of Genesis, the parents had quarreled severely before finally concluding, that they would attend the annual picnic of the Junior Beautifying Society.

LITTLE Genesis had started something in his family. Before his arrival, the to-be parents had inclined more than a little to social butterflying. Mrs. Smalls was there nine ways from the ace in the matter of pulchritude and Mr. Smalls was a social lion with no mean roar. In the annum which had elapsed since the first plaintive wail of Genesis had been lifted to the roof of the comfortable cottage on Twenty-third Street the parents had learned to love the youngster dearly and to regret keenly that he had been born at so tender an age. They longed for the time when he should be twelve or thirteen years of age—old enough to permit them the untrammled social enjoyment to which they had long been used.

As a matter of fact Washington had relinquished the martyrdom of fatherhood many months before, deliberately and with malice aforethought passing the parental buck to Mrs. Smalls. Within her breast a great resentment had grown up; a resentment unrelated to personal jealousy but decidedly based upon envy of his newly undertaken social activities.

With the result that three days previously she had announced in no uncertain terms that she intended to attend the annual picnic of the Junior Beautifying Society which was to be held in the pine grove near Everybody Come Inn. Washington protested. Argument—bitter and acrimonious—ensued, as the result of which it was suggested by Mr. Smalls, and

agreed to by Mrs. Smalls, that Genesis accompany them to the picnic.

"Shuh!" Mrs. Smalls was not overly enthusiastic. "Picnics ain't no places to take no baby to. Seems like to me you could stay home one night an' tend to him."

"I ain't cravin' such," said he. "Us fetches him along."

"You is gwine have to look after him."

"Us takes turns."

"Hmm! If we does I'se gwine see that you takes the most turns."

His eyes narrowed. "You ain't no kind of a Ma."

"I'se a better one than you is, Washington Smalls. An' the sooner you shuts yo' mouf, the less you is gwine say."

That night, just before dusk, the Smalls trio had driven southward across Red Mountain in their new flivver sedan. They were persons of ample means, as this same sedan publicly attested. Washington bulked hugely behind the wheel. Beside him sat his comely wife and in her arms a brightly cooing little baby. They attained the picnic grounds—a great grove of stately pines sloping away to the shores of a tiny lake of gleaming silver. The level stretches under the trees were already crowded with automobiles which ranged in type from the battered and second-hand cut-down flivver to new and scintillant twin-six sedans. The inn was ablaze with light and from its open doors spurted the toe-tickling, quiver-enticing dance music of Professor Aleck Champagne's Jazzphony Orchestra.

Young couples strolled hand in hand through the shadowy recesses of the grove, a few hardy souls defied the chill winds of early autumn as they splashed around the tiny swimming pool, laughter surged into the night from the interior of the inn. Altogether an extremely large evening was in prospect.

Mr. and Mrs. Smalls parked their sedan under the trees about a hundred paces from the inn. Then, carrying their infant, they entered the palace of merriment.

Less than five minutes later another sedan, a twin to theirs, drove into the grove and parked beside them. From this sedan Mr. Florian Slappey alighted. If the manner of Mr. Washington Smalls had been charged with pride through ownership of a sedan, the bearing of Mr. Slappey in the rented possession of one was no less shot with elegance.

Florian's business at the picnic was per-

sonal—and should have been brief. But this was a function in which Mr. Slaphey fitted as perfectly as gasoline fits an automobile tank. Quite naturally, and with a magnificent disdain for the passage of time and the depleted state of his finances, he allowed himself to be urged into dancing with certain fair young damsels. And so, temporarily, Florian was lost.

At the edge of the floor sat the Smalls family. But they did not remain inactive for long. Certain ex-suitors of Mrs. Smalls, welcoming her into society after a long absence, swooped down upon her and demanded her partnership in the next dance. She responded eagerly and for the next hour Washington got no chance to speak with her. He was stranded with little Genesis.

Washington's toes beat a tattoo upon the floor. He, himself, was a mean foot-shaker and the itch to dance was upon him. He had no relish for this summary stranding of himself upon the sidelines of joy. He yearned to participate, and he told himself in no uncertain terms what he thought of the butterfly wife who had so maliciously deserted him for the lure of terpsichore.

The first hour dragged wearily away. A few conventionally gushing colored ladies drifted by and remarked that Genesis was cute and beautiful and cunning. Other members of the feminine gender, more frank than their matronly sisters, openly scoffed at Mr. Smalls' parental ball and chain. And eventually little Genesis wearied of the merriment and dropped off to sleep, chocolate thumb in ruby mouth.

Thereupon an idea was born in the brain of Mr. Washington Smalls. He called to his side a portly friend. "You know my sedan?"

"Uh-huh."

"It's parked right out yonder. You go out an' in it you finds a basket filled with blankets an' such-like. Bring it in heah."

In due time the friend returned shamefacedly toting the colorful little basket which Mr. and Mrs. Smalls used as a tonneau crib for their son and heir on the occasions of long rides together. Washington placed this basket on the veranda and tucked Genesis within. Then he tiptoed into the dance hall.

Less than three minutes later there was a loud imprecation from the veranda immediately followed by a protesting shriek from the lips of Genesis. Frantic investiga-

tion disclosed the fact that a stroller had accidentally stubbed his toe on the basket. Washington picked up basket and child and Genesis immediately dropped off into peaceful slumber again.

Washington was worried. He knew that his original idea was a good one. Genesis was sleepy—obviously it was correct to permit him to sleep. But it was equally obvious that the veranda of Everybody Come Inn was no bedroom. Out of the corner of his eye Washington saw his wife waft past in the arms of a graceful, hipless young man. Too, he visioned several young ladies whose undulating grace upon the floor exercised an irresistible fascination.

TREADING very softly, then, so as not to disturb the slumbers of his young son, Washington Smalls made his way through the grove. His car was the end one—the shiny sedan. He opened the door and placed the basket—with its precious content—inside. Then he closed the door with even more scrupulous care, stood listening for an infant protest, and, hearing none, swung happily back toward the merriment. Knowing Genesis, the father was willing to lay odds that the youngster was good for not less than four hours of uninterrupted sleep—barring earthquakes.

The orchestra jerked to one of those cacophonous halts which characterizes the modern taste in dance music. Across the floor the debonair Mr. Florian Slaphey was suddenly reminded of time by a languid glance at his watch. Then Mr. Slaphey lost his insouciance; he had overstayed his pocketbook and found himself threatened by financial embarrassment of the keenest sort. He excused himself hurriedly and swept out into the night.

Meanwhile, during the intermission, Mrs. Smalls suffered an attack of conscience. Somewhere in that hall was her husband gently nursing their baby. She determined to relieve him of the priceless burden for one or two dances—but her search for him was fruitless for the first few moments, until she saw him in the center of an openly admiring circle of bob-haired flappers.

Mrs. Smalls' lips tightened to a thin red line as she swooped down upon the group. Washington's first knowledge of her accusing presence was gained by the acrid voice which cut through the gaiety.

"Washington! Where Genesis is at?"

He flushed a dark lavender: his dignity had been shattered and he was inclined to be resentful of her tone. "Genesis is all right."

"Who's got him?"

"Ain't nobody got him."

"What's that you says with yo' mouf, cullud man? Ain't nobody got him?"

"Uh-uh."

"What you mean?"

"He went to sleep, so I put him in his basket in the back of the car."

Mrs. Smalls emitted a protesting wail. "Oh! my goodness Godness! Li'l Genesis out yonder in the woods all by hisse'f." She surged through and clutched the shoulders of her mammoth husband. "Git you out an' bring that precious lamb to his Ma."

"But, honey——"

"You quit honeyin' me an' do like I says. Go git Genesis."

Protesting profanely, Washington stumbled into the night. At first his eyes, unaccustomed to the gloom, were unable to distinguish objects, so that he did not see the figure of Florian Slappey as that dusky Beau Brummel hastily mounted to the driver's seat of his rented sedan and started the motor. It was not until the sedan swung into the road, Birmingham-bound, that Washington sensed something wrong. And even then he did not quite understand.

HE STARTED forward with a roar. The car he saw bounding over the rather rough roadbed was apparently his. At least it was a flivver sedan and it was the end car. . . .

"My Gawd! somebody's stealin' my car an' my baby!"

Six leaps and he brought up short against his own car. For a moment he stared in puzzlement and then slowly the right of things commenced to penetrate his brain. He clutched wildly at his forehead and leaned limply against the car.

"Sufferin' Tripe!" he groaned, "the car what I put li'l Genesis in wa'n't my car at all. It was that other feller's own!"

He was convulsed with horror. There was no doubt remaining in his mind. His friend had obtained the basket from the correct car and he—the baby's father—had, through gross carelessness, delivered that little one over to the doubtful mercies of the wild-driving gentleman who was piloting the other sedan down the road at

a nerve-racking and decidedly dangerous pace.

For only a few seconds did Washington remain motionless. Then, suddenly, he was galvanized into action. With a bull-like roar he tore open the door of his sedan, satisfied himself that Genesis had indeed been placed in the wrong car, and started his motor. He whirled backward into the driveway, slammed his foot down on the clutch pedal and sent his car hurtling through the night in pursuit of the other sedan.

But Florian Slappey, driving his car against time, was no mean hurtler himself. Florian had long been curious as to the maximum speed latent in a flivver and he was out to satisfy that curiosity. Fortunately for him little Genesis, comfortably tucked away in his fleece-lined basket and covered with a down quilt, slept blissfully on so that the fashion-plate of Birmingham's Darktown had no hint of the human freight carried in the rear.

Within a half mile he swung onto the wide road of glistening concrete which wriggled across Shades Valley into Birmingham. And there Florian advanced the throttle to the limit, pushed the spark lever well down and settled to the thrill of a rapid journey townward.

A considerable distance in the rear Washington Smalls was doing all in his power to overhaul the flying and unsuspecting Florian. The enormous figure of the baby's father was hunched over the wheel, eyes focused on the road, lips working——

"Come on, autymobile, show yo' daddy how much speeds you has got. . . . Git you up with that ol' ice-wagon ahaid. . . . S'posin' that idjit goes an' piles hisse'f up in a ditch? . . . What he ain't got is no sense, drivin' that fas'—specially with Genesis ridin' in the back. . . . All my fault, tha's what it is. . . . N'r neither Mis' Smalls ain't gwine forgit that. . . . Oh! Lawsy! what I is gwine catch is hell. . . . A-plenty. . . . Move on, car, you is standin' still. . . ."

He was gaining, but he was gaining with maddening slowness. Florian, intoxicated by the powerful surge of the car beneath him, was letting her out to the fullest. But at that he was dropping back by inches toward the careening sedan in the rear. In the latter car was a frantic parent who was also an expert automobile man. And

Washington knew the personal eccentricities of the car he drove, so that he obtained from it a trifle more than its maximum speed.

THEY shot through Rosedale and up the tortuous Red Mountain climb, both making it on high. Then down the crest road and so into Twentieth Street. There Florian reduced his speed slightly. But not so Washington. He gave his car added gas—the chase was apparently at an end. At the Thirteenth Avenue curve Washington clearly made out the license number of the car he was pursuing. . . .

And then he became conscious of the roar of a motorcycle and there appeared over his left shoulder the angry face of a motorcycle policeman. Washington waved him away—

“Leave me be, white man! Leave me be.”

The traffic officer refused to leave him be. And something in his narrow, steel-gray eyes prompted the frantic father to halt for explanations.

They were made quickly and lucidly, but even as he talked Washington saw the other car careen round the little park at Five Points and disappear down Eleventh Avenue. He pleaded with the motorcycle policeman . . . fortunately for him the officer was intensely human. He not only did not arrest Washington for speeding but agreed to assist him in the search for the joyriding baby and so, together, they swung into Eleventh Avenue—then paused to speculate upon the route the other car had taken.

It became immediately apparent that whatever decision they reached was pure gamble. Westward stretched the tree-canopied expanse of Eleventh Avenue, its semi-gloom split by automobile headlights and an officious little trolley car of the Loop line. The pursued might have taken that route out of the city again, or he might have turned south at Fifteenth Street and lost himself in the mazes of the Glen Iris section. Then, too, there was the possibility that he had spun down Cottonwood Avenue and thence via Eighteenth Street to the heart of the city or to the exclusive negro residence section along Avenue F.

Washington was bewildered. Somewhere in the city of Birmingham his one and only child slept peacefully in the rear of some one's else sedan. He thanked the solicitous police officer and rolled mournfully down

Eighteenth Street toward town where he made fruitless inquiry of Bud Parker as to whether that gentleman had discerned a colored person who looked as though he might have been driving a flivver sedan. And then, sadly, Mr. Smalls returned to Five Points where he parked his car.

There was a semblance of method to Washington's maneuver. Chances were that if the owner of the baby-filled sedan was contemplating any further rides that night he would strike out on the concrete pike over Red Mountain, a route which was virtually certain to carry him past Five Points. And so Washington stood at the curb in solitary melancholy, a prey to thoughts which were fraught with supreme misery.

Meanwhile Mr. Florian Slappey had whizzed down-town and pulled up short before The Metropolis City Drive-It-Yourself Company. He was immediately victim of an onslaught from a wizened and scrupulously dressed young gentleman who demanded immediate possession of the sedan.

“How come you is in sech a hurry, Juniper?”

“Don't waste my breff, Florian Slappey. Hurry is slow compared to what I is in.”

“Huh! Nothin' never hurries me.”

“I reckon you'd hurry was you dated up to take my gal out ridin'.”

Florian licked his lips. “You said it, Brother Watts. I mos' likely would.”

Juniper stood no further upon the order of his going. He reached Twentieth Street just as the traffic officer flashed the green light of passage and then he turned southward. He was already late—and fortunately ignorant of the precious burden which yet slept with infantile beatitude in the rear of the car.

Juniper had worked himself into a ferment of impatience. He had a vivid mental picture of Parafine Parks awaiting him. Parafine was not disposed to be lenient with suitors who were tardy, no matter how imposing the elegance of their coming. Juniper shaved the city speed limit a mile or so on the wrong side, and it was at a fair rate of speed that he swung around the little park at Five Points and headed for Highland Avenue.

At the curb, solitary sentinel beside a sedan similar to the one Juniper drove, stood a mammoth figure. Mr Small's vigilance had relaxed not one whit although his optimism had received a severe shock. He

had never before believed that there were as many flivver sedans in the world as had passed that south-side focal point within the past ten minutes. His mind was busy with his domestic future even should he be successful in recovering his child, and so it was that he turned hopeless eyes toward the sedan which blazed nobly by.

And then his eye lighted upon the license tag, and like magic the lethargy dropped from his muscular figure. His deep voice boomed through the night.

"Hey! You! In the limmysine!"

Juniper ordinarily would not have heard the summons. But he had suspected that he was speeding a trifle more than the law allows and his first thought was that he had run foul of a member of the traffic squad. He slowed down mechanically and flashed an apprehensive glance over his shoulder. He saw no khaki-uniformed motorcycle policeman. But what he did see was far more disconcerting.

HE glimpsed the leaping figure of a gigantic negro man; a figure which sprang with space-eating strides through the night; a figure which waved its fists in the air and emitted fierce bass bellows from between flashing white teeth.

The mind of Mr. Juniper Watts did some quick functioning. Himself unconscious of the proximity of little Genesis Smalls, it never occurred to him that the vengeful figure meant other than trouble. Even as his foot touched the clutch pedal his mouth formed the words of a brief self-apology.

"Somethin' tells me," soliloquized he, "that does I stay heah I is gwine wish I hadn't. Strikes me I had better ooze away fum that feller."

He oozed. And with the first forward movement of his car it became decidedly apparent that he had made no mistake; for, if Washington Smalls had appeared menacing before, he seemed now to be metamorphosed into a demon.

He sprang toward the car with superhuman speed. His hoarse voice was howling words unintelligible to Mr. Watts. All he knew was that the stranger desired to come in immediate contact with him, and Juniper had no desire to grant that wish. "I don't know what's ailin' that cullud man," he reflected as he sent his car plunging forward, "but I does know that when he arrives where I is at I ain't gwine be there."

Sight of the sedan leaping away from him brought the first real thrill of terror to the paternal heart of Washington Smalls. For the first time that night there seemed to be something sinister in the affair. His spurt of pointed vituperation rattled insistently against Juniper's eardrums. That gentleman shook his head.

"He ain't got no call sayin' them sort of things about me when we ain't even been introduced."

Washington doubled in his tracks and fled back to his own sedan. It was the work of only a moment to get it started. And once again he flung out in pursuit of his child. He swung up Highland Avenue after the ill-starred rented car and it happened that as he did so the still apprehensive Juniper Watts turned his head.

The figure of Mr. Smalls was limned bulkily in the glow of a corner arc and a sensation closely akin to terror smote Juniper Watts. Even as he accelerated his mind flashed back over the events of the past year. He strove mightily to recall any overt act of his which might inspire a gentleman to perform murder upon him and the fact that he could recall no major transgression merely added to his bewilderment and terror. He shoved his gas down to the limit: "Does that crazy man catch me he is gwine to have flew."

Fortunately for traffic there was none of it on the magnificent avenue which curves gracefully about the foot of Red Mountain. Juniper attained the twin lamp-posts which mark the entrance to Milner Crescent and negotiated the turn on two wheels. The fact that his pursuer was pursuing at full tilt did not ease his apprehension materially. The very fact that the motive for the chase was incomprehensible accentuated his horror. He found himself bathed in perspiration which had nothing to do with the temperature of the car. He made the decided acclivity on high and flashed past the quarters of Miss Parafine Parks without giving a thought to that irate young lady's irateness.

Beyond Milner the road drops abruptly down into Shades Valley and Juniper took full advantage of the considerable grade. Thought of a demise by means of wreck was preferable to contemplation of what would happen should the fiend in the rear car wrap those big fingers around Mr. Watts' innocent throat. And it was fortunate alike for Juniper and little Genesis Smalls that Washington retained a small

portion of sanity; it was fortunate for both of them that Mr. Smalls suddenly realized that in forcing the pursued to a breakneck speed he was jeopardizing the life of his wandering child.

Whereupon Washington discreetly slackened his pace. But not so Juniper. He made the down grade at slightly more than maximum speed, flashing dizzily around curves, negotiating steep grades on high and splitting the quietude of evening with mournful wails of his siren.

Shades Valley is a criss-cross of roads connecting little towns and settlements. Mr. Watts knew not whither these tiny roads led, but he did know that his best strategy was to forsake the main highways. This he did to the queen's taste. Somewhere near Oxmoor he slipped from a smooth roadbed onto a trail which was decidedly bumpy. He slowed down and glanced over his shoulder. There was nothing to be seen but night and a suave full moon which beamed benignly over the pastoral scene.

Juniper breathed a profound sigh. "Don't let nobody never tell me these flivvers cain't run," mused he. And he kept going because the events of the immediate past had impressed upon him the desirability of distance.

The car bumped protestingly across a tree root. And as it did so there arose from the rear a plaintive shriek.

THE top of the car prevented Juniper from departing immediately. He returned to his seat and crouched in cold horror as the howlings continued. At first he thought he had brought along a wild animal—until gradually he became aware of the fact that he was joyriding with a baby.

Inspection verified this belief. Juniper was immediately all solicitude and contrition. He lifted Genesis and efficiently soothed that healthy youngster. Then, far out in the country, Mr. Watts reflected upon the situation.

Many things were clarifying in his mind with the discovery of Genesis. Juniper was no fool and the proximity of defunctness had keened his perceptions. It was plain to him now that the avenging gentleman in the other car was related in some manner to the dusky infant. There was a sensation of infinite relief in the knowledge that there had been nothing of personal animosity in the chase.

Of course Juniper had no idea as to how Genesis came to be with him, but that didn't matter. The situation worried Juniper only in its essentials and the vital fact was that Genesis was here. The solution of the difficulty was absurdly simple—"All I got to do is to return this baby back to his Pa."

That was all. Juniper suddenly scratched his head in puzzlement. "After I 'scovers who his Pa is."

The only personal knowledge Juniper had of the other gentleman was that he occupied an unduly large portion of landscape. And that he possessed a great temper and a flivver sedan. Too, upon reflection, there was born in the breast of Mr. Watt's a grave doubt. Suppose he should find the baby's father and suppose that gentleman should act first and question later? Suppose Juniper's flight had made the other fellow believe that kidnapping was intended? Juniper shuddered. He didn't know how Genesis got there . . . and now that he was there it was equally difficult to conclude how he might best be disposed of.

He turned his car slowly toward Birmingham. "They is on'y two things I can do," he reflected mournfully, "an' bofe of them is wrong."

He determined finally to risk a meeting with Washington along the road. But now that he was not unwilling to run across that gentleman, there was nothing to be seen of him. He progressed slowly back along the Oxmoor road and came eventually to the broad concrete surface of the Montgomery pike. Genesis had snuggled off again into slumber and was reposing contentedly in the padded basket. Juniper attained the crest of the mountain and dipped down toward the city. Discretion born of association prompted him to avoid Five Points. He parked the car on Second Avenue a half block off Eighteenth Street and after making sure that Genesis still slumbered, he alighted.

He was reasonably certain that the baby's father would not recognize him, minus automobile. If, therefore, he could meet that gentleman incognito and pacify him in advance, there was every likelihood that the latter's gratitude would forestall any annihilation which might have been planned.

Fortune played into his hands. Washington Smalls, dour and depressed, had returned to Bud Peaglar's Barbecue Lunch

Room and Billiard Parlor in the faint hope that someone might have reported to Bud the finding of a colored baby.

Washington was excessively unhappy. He had plumbed the nadir of despair. Nor did the prospect of explaining things to his wife add to the joys of the future.

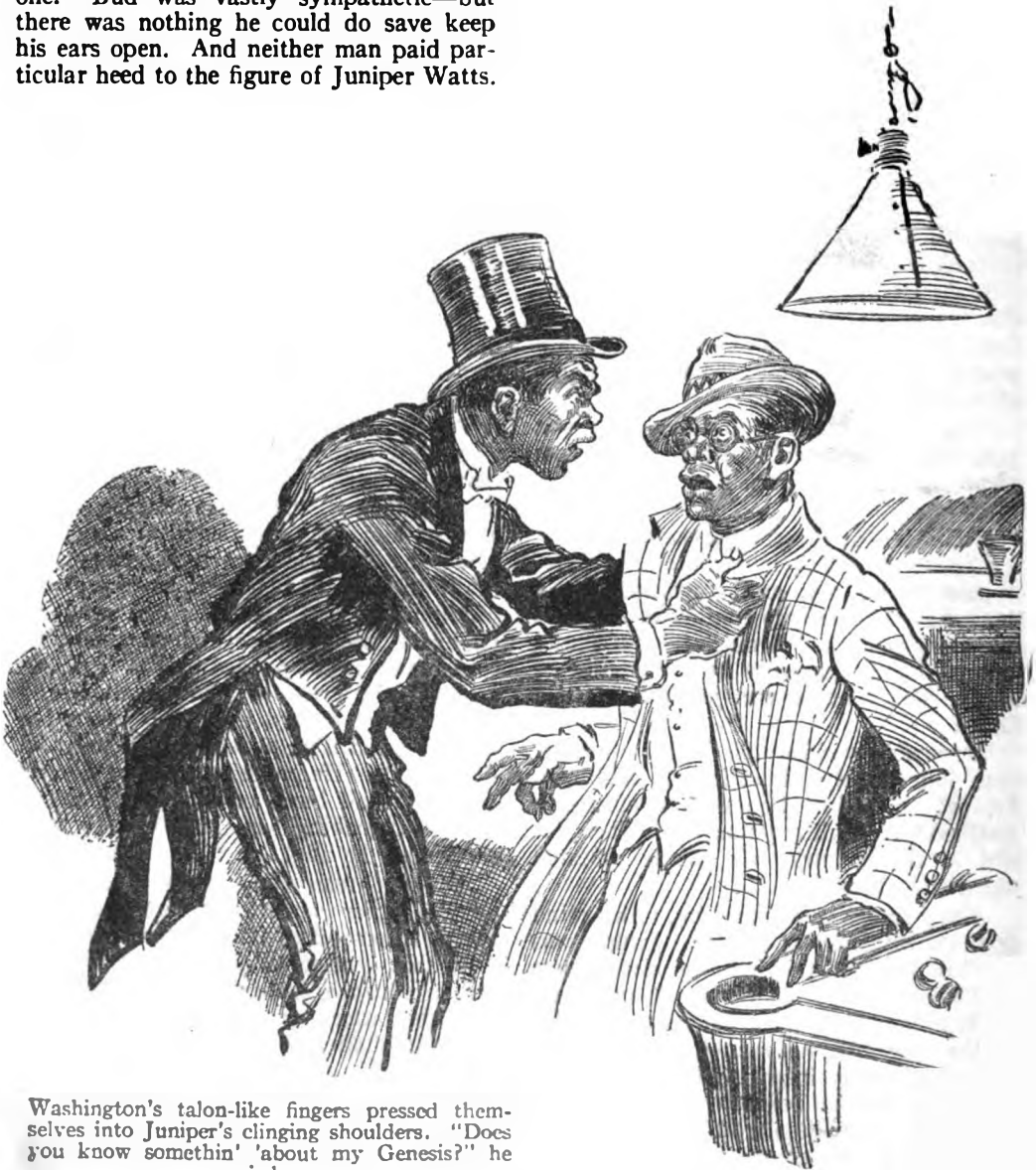
He was to blame: he admitted that in advance of the inevitable tirade. He had been grossly careless and negligent. "An' as fo' that cullud boy which run off with Genesis; does I git my han's on him, he is gwine be ain't."

Bud Peaglar, it seemed, had not seen a stray colored baby, nor had he heard of one. Bud was vastly sympathetic—but there was nothing he could do save keep his ears open. And neither man paid particular heed to the figure of Juniper Watts.

Juniper had slid into Bud's place and was leaning warily against a pool table drinking in the dialogue.

"What I is in is a mess," explained Washington lugubriously. "I has got to find that baby an' I'se sayin' right heah an' now that does I do so, I'se willin' to pay a fifty dollar reward."

Juniper straightened suddenly. Fifty dollars was considerable money—quite too much, Juniper reflected, for one child. Of course his perspective was not a parental one and he didn't know that the distraught



Washington's talon-like fingers pressed themselves into Juniper's clinging shoulders. "Does you know somethin' 'bout my Genesis?" he cried.

father would be willing to pay a great deal more than that.

Fifty dollars—cash money—was brilliantly alluring to Juniper. It would enable him to finish paying for the engagement ring which he was surreptitiously buying on the instalment plan for Parafine and give him a sizable surplus with which to make the initial payment on house furnishings. It seemed entirely too good to be true. He conscripted what was left of his shattered nerves and drew Washington to one side.



"Has you lost somethin'?" he inquired.

"Uh-huh."

"What?"

"A baby. What you think else?"

"An' you says you is willin' to pay fifty dollars can you git him back?"

"Yassuh. Cheerful." Washington's talon-like fingers pressed themselves into Juniper's clinging shoulder. "Does you know somethin' 'bout my Genesis?"

"S-s-says which?"

"What you know 'bout my baby?"

"I ain't said I knowed nothin'."

"Does you does or does you don't?"

IT was plain to Juniper that he was unsuspected. "Lemme see has you got fifty dollars."

Washington had thirty-two in cash and Bud Peaglar proffered a loan of the other eighteen. Juniper looked at the money in amazement. "You must love that baby a heap."

"He's the fondest pusson I is of."

"Well—" Juniper lowered his voice discreetly. "I was jes' driftin' 'roun' when I passed a limmysine parked against a curb an' in it there was soun's like a baby cryin'—"

Washington Smalls unleashed a howl of delight. "Where at, cullud boy; where at?"

"Nemmin' where at less'n you gives me that fifty."

The money was paid without further parley and Juniper led the way around the corner. At sight of the sedan, Washington departed Juniper's side. He tore open the door and a second later was cuddling in his arms the erstwhile lost infant. Then, when the joy of the moment had passed and a semblance of sanity had superseded it, he turned to Mr. Watts.

"Brother, you has done me noble this night. I asts you: is you ma'ied?"

"No-o. Not yit."

"You don't know how lucky you is not to be ma'ied n'r neither no father. The reason I ast was because was you ma'ied you'd understan' how much I craves that my wife don't never know nothin' 'bout me losin' this honey chile. I asts you now; is you willin' to keep that fifty dollars fo' yo'se'f an' never say nothin' to nobody 'bout what has happened t'night? Did my wife know, what I would catch is hell. Does you promise to keep yo' mouf shut or shall I beat you up until you is willin'?"

Juniper gave a single glance at the Gargantuan figure. "I ain't no loose talker. I keeps mum."

"Good." Washington walked slowly down the street, Genesis and the basket in his arms, Juniper trotting alongside. And finally bitterness assailed Mr. Smalls.

"I'd give another fifty dollars cash money to know the name of the feller which was drivin' that car. Was I to meet up with him there wouldn't be nobody around in two minutes but I an' a corpse. Yassuh—I'd give fifty mo' dollars to know his name."

He turned accusing eyes upon the cowering Juniper. Mr. Watts ducked apprehensively—

"Don't you go lookin' at me thataway, big boy. I never was no hand to gamble double-or-nothin'."

Eventually Mr. Washington Smalls departed in his own car. After waiting a proper length of time Mr. Watts mounted the seat of his rented car and set out for Milner Heights. In his heart was noble resolve to placate Miss Parafine Parks, his lady-in-waiting. The fifty dollars in his pocket appeared to make that task much easier.

And while Juniper proceeded upon his delayed courtship, Mr. Washington Smalls made his way slowly over the mountain and across the valley to Everybody Come Inn. As he parked under the trees the figure of his wife detached itself from a crowd on the veranda and sped forward. Her voice was slightly hysterical—

"Washington! Where li'l Genesis is at?"

Mr. Smalls favored her with a supercilious glance. "Where you reckon?"

"I dunno. . . ."

He stepped from the car, carrying basket and baby. "Heah my son is."

She clutched the precious burden. "Where has he been, Washington?"

"Oh!" explained the husband grandiosely. "He got to frettin' a li'l. Seemed like he was cravin' action, so I give him some. I been ridin' him around a bit."

She favored him with a look of radiant love and pride. "You is the noblessest husban', Washington. You makes me feel plumb ashamed of myse'f—dancin' aroun' in there an' leavin' you to nuss Genesis. Fum now on you dances an' I takes care of him. You see," contritely, "I was all excited 'cause I thought mebbe somethin' had happened to him."

Mr. Washington Smalls responded with quiet and persuasive dignity—

"Shuh! What you talks is foolishment. Nothin' couldn't happen to no baby which I was takin' care of."



My First Visit to the Louvre

By JEAN FRANCOIS MILLET

I FOUND myself on the Pont Neuf, where a magnificent pile, which from the descriptions that had been given me, I supposed to be the Louvre. I climbed the great staircase with a beating heart and the hurried steps of a man whose one great wish of his life is about to be fulfilled.

My hopes were not disappointed. I seemed to find myself in a world of friends, in the midst of my own kinsfolk. For the next month the Old Masters were my only occupation. I devoured them all: studied them, analyzed them. The Primitives attracted me by their admirable expression of sweetness, holiness and fervor. The great Italians fascinated me by their mastery and charm of composition. There were moments when the arrows of St. Sebastian seemed to pierce me as I looked at the martyr of Mantegna. The masters of that age have an incomparable power. They make you feel in turn the joys and the pains which thrill their souls. But when I saw that drawing of Michael Angelo's representing a man in a swoon, I felt that was a different thing. I felt as if tormented by the same pains. I had compassion upon him. I suffered in his body with his limbs. I saw that the man who had done this was able, in a single figure, to represent all the good and evil of humanity. It was Michael Angelo! Here I touched the heart and heard the voice of him who has haunted me with such power during my whole life.



The Duel

An Episode

By ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON



We had set ourselves of late to pass the evening with a game of cards; another mark that our visitor was wearying mightily of the life at Durrisdeer; and we had not been long at this when my old lord slipped from his place beside the fire, and was off without a word to seek the warmth of bed. The three thus left together had neither love nor courtesy to share; not one of us would have sat up one instant to oblige another; yet from the influence of custom, and as the cards had just been dealt, we continued the form of playing out the round. I should say we were late sitters; and though my lord had departed earlier than was his custom, twelve was already gone some time upon the clock, and the servants long ago in bed. Another thing I should say, that although I never saw the Master anyway affected with liquor, he had been drinking freely, and was perhaps (although he showed it not) a trifle heated.

Anyway, he now practised one of his transitions; and so soon as the door closed behind my lord, and without the smallest change of voice, shifted from ordinary civil talk into a stream of insult.

"My dear Henry, it is yours to play," he had been saying, and now continued: "it is a very strange thing how, even in so small a matter as a game of cards, you display your rusticity. You play, Jacob, like a bonnet-laird, or a sailor in a tavern. The same dullness, the same petty greed, *cette lenteur d'hébéte qui me fait rager*; it is strange I should have such a brother. Even Square-toes has a certain vivacity when his stake is imperilled; but the dreariness of a game with you I positively lack language to depict."

Mr. Henry continued to look at his cards, as though very maturely considering some play; but his mind was elsewhere.

"Dear God, will this never be done?" cries the Master. "*Quel lourdeau!* But why do I trouble you with French expressions, which are lost on such an ignoramus? A *lourdeau*, my dear brother, is as we might say a bumpkin, a clown, a clodpole: a fellow without grace, lightness, quickness; any gift of pleasing, any natural brilliancy: such a one as you shall see, when you desire, by looking in the mirror. I tell you these things for your good, I assure you; and besides, Square-toes" (looking at me and stifling a yawn), "it is one of my diversions in this very dreary spot to toast you and your master at the fire like chestnuts. I have great pleasure in your case, for I observe the nickname (rustic as it is) has always the power to make you writhe. But sometimes I have more trouble with this dear fellow here, who seems to have gone to sleep upon his cards. Do you not see the applicability of the epithet I have just explained, dear Henry? Let me show you. For instance, with all those solid qualities which I delight to recognise in you, I never knew a woman who did not prefer me—nor, I think," he continued, with the most silken deliberation, "I think—who did not continue to prefer me."



MR. HENRY laid down his cards. He rose to his feet very softly, and seemed all the while like a person in deep thought. "You coward!" he said gently, as if to himself. And then, with neither hurry nor any particular violence, he struck the Master in the mouth.

The Master sprang to his feet like one transfigured; I had never seen the man so beautiful. "A blow!" he cried. "I would not take a blow from God Almighty!"

"Lower your voice," said Mr. Henry. "Do you wish my father to interfere for you again?"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," I cried, and sought to come between them.

The Master caught me by the shoulder, held me at arm's length, and still addressing his brother: "Do you know what this means?" said he.

"It was the most deliberate act of my life," says Mr. Henry.

"I must have blood, I must have blood for this," says the Master.

"Please God it shall be yours," said Mr. Henry; and he went to the wall and took down a pair of swords that hung there with others, naked. These he presented to the Master by the points. "Mackellar shall see us play fair," said Mr. Henry. "I think it very needful."

"You need insult me no more," said the Master, taking one of the swords at random. "I have hated you all my life."

"My father is but newly gone to bed," said Mr. Henry. "We must go somewhere forth of the house."

"There is an excellent place in the long shrubbery," said the Master."

"Gentlemen," said I, "shame upon you both! Sons of the same mother, would you turn against the life she gave you?"

"Even so, Mackellar," said Mr. Henry, with the same perfect quietude of manner he had shown throughout.

"It is what I will prevent," said I.

And now here is a blot upon my life. At these words of mine the Master turned his blade against my bosom; I saw the light run along the steel; and I threw up my arms and fell to my knees before him on the floor. "No, no," I cried, like a baby.

"We shall have no more trouble with him," said the Master. "It is a good thing to have a coward in the house."

"We must have light," said Mr. Henry, as though there had been no interruption.

"This trembler can bring a pair of candles," said the Master.

To my shame be it said, I was still so blinded with the flashing of that bare sword that I volunteered to bring a lantern.

"We do not need a l-l-lantern," says the Master, mocking me. "There is no breath of air. Come, get to your feet, take a pair of lights, and go before. I am close behind with this"—making the blade glitter as he spoke.

I took up the candlesticks and went before them, steps that I would give my hand to recall; but a coward is a slave at the best; and even as I went, my teeth smote each other in my breath. It was as he had said: there was no breath stirring; a windless stricture of frost had bound the air; and as we went forth in the shine of the candles, the blackness was like a roof over our heads. Never a word was said; there was never a sound but the creaking of our steps along the frozen path. The cold of the night fell about me like a bucket of water; I shook as I went with more than terror; but my companions, bare-headed like myself, and fresh from the warm hall, appeared not even conscious of the change.

"Here is the place," said the Master. "Set down the candles."



I DID as he bid me, and presently the flames went up, as steady as in a chamber, in the midst of the frosted trees, and I beheld these two brothers take their places.

"The light is something in my eyes," said the Master.

"I will give you every advantage," replied Mr. Henry, shifting his ground, "for I think you are about to die." He spoke rather sadly than otherwise, yet there was a ring in his voice.

"Henry Durie," said the Master, "two words before I begin. You are a fencer, you can hold a foil; you little know what a change it makes to hold a sword! And

by that I know you are to fall. But see how strong is my situation! If you fall, I shift out of this country to where my money is before me. If I fall, where are you? My father, your wife—who is in love with me, as you very well know—your child even, who prefers me to yourself:—how will these avenge me! Had you thought of that, dear Henry?" He looked at his brother with a smile; then made a fencing-room salute. Never a word said Mr. Henry, but saluted too, and the swords rang together.

I am no judge of the play; my head, besides, was gone with cold and fear and horror; but it seems that Mr. Henry took and kept the upper hand from the engagement, crowding in upon his foe with a contained and glowing fury. Nearer and nearer he crept upon the man, till of a sudden the Master leaped back with a little sobbing oath; and I believe the movement brought the light once more against his eyes. To it they went again, on the fresh ground; but now methought closer, Mr. Henry pressing more outrageously, the Master beyond doubt with shaken confidence. For it is beyond doubt he now recognised himself for lost, and had some taste of the cold agony of fear; or he had never attempted the foul stroke. I cannot say I followed it, my untrained eye was never quick enough to seize details, but it appears he caught his brother's blade with his left hand, a practice not permitted. Certainly Mr. Henry only saved himself by leaping on one side; as certainly the Master, lunging in the air, stumbled on his knee, and before he could move the sword was through his body.

I cried out with a stifled scream, and ran in; but the body was already fallen to the ground, where it writhed a moment like a trodden worm, and then lay motionless.

"Look at his left hand," said Mr. Henry.

"It is all bloody," said I.

"On the inside?" said he.

"It is cut on the inside," said I.

"I thought so," said he, and turned his back.

I opened the man's clothes; the heart was quite still, it gave not a flutter.

"God forgive us, Mr. Henry!" said I. "He is dead."

"Dead?" he repeated, a little stupidly; and then with a rising tone, "Dead? Dead?" says he, and suddenly cast his bloody sword upon the ground.

He showed me his face with the same stupid stare. "Do?" says he. And with that his eye fell on the body. And "Oh!" he cries out, with his hand to his brow, as if he had never remembered; and, turning from me, made off towards the house of Durrisdeer at a strange stumbling run.

I stood a moment mused; then it seemed to me my duty lay most plain on the side of the living; and I ran after him, leaving the candles on the frosty ground and the body lying in their light under the trees. But run as I pleased, he had the start of me, and was got into the house, and up to the hall, where I found him standing before the fire with his face once more in his hands, and as he stood he visibly shuddered.

"Mr. Henry, Mr. Henry," I said "this will be the ruin of us all."

"What is this that I have done?" cries he, and then looking upon me with a countenance that I shall never forget, "Who is to tell the old man?" he said.

The word knocked at my heart; but it was no time for weakness. I went and poured him out a glass of brandy. "Drink that," said I, "drink it down." I forced him to swallow it like a child; and, being still perished with the cold of the night, I followed his example.

"It has to be told, Mackellar," said he. "It must be told." And he fell suddenly in a seat—my old lord's seat by the chimney-side—and was shaken with dry sobs.

Dismay came upon my soul: it was plain there was no help in Mr. Henry.

"Well," said I, "sit there, and leave all to me." And taking a candle in my hand, I set forth out of the room in the dark house. There was no movement; I must suppose that all had gone unobserved; and I was now to consider how to smuggle through the rest with the like secrecy. It was no hour for scruples; and I opened my lady's door without so much as a knock, and passed boldly in.



EDNA FERBER'S

Home Girl



WILSON AVENUE, Chicago, is not merely an avenue but a district; not only a district but a state of mind; not a state of mind alone but a condition of morals. For that matter, it is none of these things so much as a mode of existence. If you know your Chicago—which you probably don't—(*sotto voce* murmur, Heaven forbid!)—you are aware that, long ago, Wilson Avenue proper crept slyly around the corner and achieved a clandestine alliance with big glittering Sheridan Road; which escapade changed the demure thoroughfare into Wilson Avenue improper.

When one says "A Wilson Avenue girl," the mind—that is, the Chicago mind—pictures immediately a slim, daring, scented, exotic creature dressed in next week's fashions; wise-eyed; doll-faced; rapacious. When chiffon stockings are worn Wilson Avenue's hosiery is but a film over the flesh. Aigrettes and mink coats are its winter uniform. A feverish district this,



Out of the stuff of common everyday folks' lives, Edna Ferber has woven her living tapestries of human joys and griefs. "Home Girl" is one of these.

all plate glass windows and delicatessen dinners and one-room-and-kitchenette apartments, where light housekeepers take their housekeeping too lightly.

At six o'clock you are likely to see Wilson Avenue scurrying about in its mink coat and its French heels and its crêpe frock, assembling its haphazard dinner. Wilson Avenue food, as displayed in the ready-cooked shops, resembles in a startling degree the Wilson Avenue ladies themselves: highly coloured, artificial, chemically treated, tempting to the eye, but unnutritious. In and out of the food emporia these dart, buying dabs of this and bits of that. Chromatic viands. Vivid scarlet, orange, yellow, green. A strip of



There were times when Ray rebelled. "I don't want to go out to eat. My God, I'm tired! I want to eat at home."

pimento here. A mound of mayonnaise there. A green pepper stuffed with such burden of deceit as no honest green pepper ever was meant to hold. Two eggs. A quarter-pound of your best creamery butter. An infinitesimal bottle of cream. "And what else?" says the plump woman in the white bib-apron, behind the counter. "And what else?" Nothing. I guess that'll be all. Mink coats prefer to dine out.

As a cripple displays his wounds and sores, proudly, so Wilson Avenue throws open its one-room front door with a grandiloquent gesture as it boasts, "Two hundred and fifty a month!" Shylock, purchasing a paper-thin slice of pinky ham in Wilson Avenue, would know his own early Venetian transaction to have been pure philanthropy.

It took Raymond and Cora Atwater twelve years to reach this Wilson Avenue, though they carried it with them all the way. They had begun their married life in this locality before it had become a definite district. Twelve years ago the neighbourhood had shown no signs of mushrooming into its present opulence. Twelve years ago Raymond, twenty-eight, and Cora, twenty-four, had taken a six-room flat at Racine and Sunnyside. Six rooms. Modern. Light. Rental, \$28.50 per month.

"But I guess I can manage it, all right," Raymond had said. "That isn't so terrible—for six rooms."

Cora's full under lip had drawn itself into a surprisingly thin straight line. Later, Raymond came to recognize the meaning of that labial warning. "We don't need all those rooms. It's just that much more work."

"I don't want you doing your own work. Not unless you want to. At first, maybe, it'd be sort of fun for you. But after a while you'll want a girl to help. That'll take the maid's room off the kitchen."

"Well, supposing? That leaves an extra room, anyway."

A look came into Raymond's face. "Maybe we'll need that, too—later. Later on." He actually could have been said to blush, then, like a boy. There was much of the boy in Raymond at twenty-eight.

Cora did not blush.

RAYMOND had married Cora because he loved her; and because she was what is known as a "home girl." From the first, business girls—those alert, pert, confident little sparrows of office and shop

and the street at lunch hour—rather terrified him. They gave you as good as you sent. They were always ready with their own nickel for carfare. You never knew whether they were laughing at you or not. There was a little girl named Calhoun in the binoculars (Raymond's first Chicago job was with the Erwin H. Nagel Optical Company on Wabash). The Calhoun girl was smart. She wore those plain white waists. Tailored, Raymond thought they called them. They made her skin look fresh and clear and sort of downy-blooming like the peaches that grew in his own Michigan state back home. Or perhaps only girls with clear fresh skins could wear those plain white waist things. Raymond had heard that girls thought and schemed about things that were becoming to them, and then stuck to those things. He wondered how the Calhoun girl might look in a fluffy waist. But she never wore one down to work. When business was dull in the motor and sun-glasses (which was where he held forth) Raymond would stroll over to Laura Calhoun's counter and talk. He would talk about the Invention. He had no one else to talk to about it. No one he could trust, or who understood.

The Calhoun girl, polishing the great black eyes of a pair of field glasses, would look up brightly to say, "Well, how's the Invention coming on?" Then he would tell her.

The Invention had to do with spectacles. Not only that, if you are a wearer of spectacles of any kind, it has to do with you. For now, twelve years later, you could not well do without it. The little contraption that keeps the side-piece from biting into your ears—that's Raymond's.

Knowing, as we do, that Raymond's wife is named Cora we know that the Calhoun girl of the fresh clear skin, the tailored white shirtwaists, and the friendly interest in the Invention, lost out. The reason for that was Raymond's youth, and Raymond's vanity, and Raymond's unsophistication, together with Lucy Calhoun's own honesty and efficiency. These last qualities would handicap any girl in love, no matter how clear her skin or white her shirtwaist.

Of course, when Raymond talked to her about the Invention she should have looked adoringly into his eyes and said, "How perfectly wonderful! I don't see how you think of such things."

What she said, after studying its details

thoughtfully for a moment, was: "Yes, but look. If this little tiny wire had a spring underneath—just a little bit of spring—it'd take all the pressure off when you wear a hat. Now women's hats are worn so much lower over their ears, d'you see? That'd keep it from pressing. Men's hats, too, for that matter."

She was right. Grudgingly, slowly, he admitted it. Not only that, he carried out her idea and perfected the spectacle contrivance as you know it today. Without her suggestion it would have had a serious flaw. He knew he ought to be grateful. He told himself that he was grateful. But in reality he was resentful. She was a smart girl, but—well—a fella didn't feel comfortable going with a girl that knew more than he did. He took her to the theatre—it was before the motion picture had attained its present-day virulence. She enjoyed it. So did he. Perhaps they might have repeated the little festivity and the white shirtwaist might have triumphed in the end. But that same week Raymond met Cora.

Though he had come to Chicago from Michigan almost a year before, he knew few people. The Erwin H. Nagel Company kept him busy by day. The Invention occupied him at night. He read, too, books on optometry. Don't think that he was a Rollo. He wasn't. But he was naturally somewhat shy, and further handicapped by an unusually tall lean frame which he handled awkwardly. If you had a good look at his eyes you forgot his shyness, his leanness, his awkwardness, his height. They were the keynote of his gentle, studious, kindly, humorous nature. But Chicago, Illinois, is too busy looking to see anything. Eyes are something you see with, not into.

Two of the boys at Nagel's had an engagement for the evening with two girls who were friends.

On the afternoon of that day one of the boys went home at four with a well-developed case of grippe. The other approached Raymond with his plea.

"Say, Atwater, help me out, will you? I can't reach my girl because she's downtown somewheres for the afternoon with Cora. That's her girl friend. And me and Harvey was to meet 'em for dinner, see? And a show. I'm in a hole. Help me out, will you? Go along and fuss Cora. She's a nice girl. Pretty, too, Cora is. Will you, Ray? Huh?"

RAY went. By nine-thirty that evening he had told Cora about the Invention. And Cora had turned sidewise in her seat next to him at the theatre and had looked up at him adoringly, awe-struck. "Why, how perfectly *wonderful!* I don't see how you think of such things."

"Oh, that's nothing. I got a lot of ideas. Things I'm going to work out. Say, I won't always be plugging down at Nagel's, believe me. I got a lot of ideas."

"Really! Why, you're an inventor, aren't you! Like Edison and those. My, it must be wonderful to think of things out of your head. Things that nobody's ever thought of before."

Ray glowed. He felt comfortable, and soothed, and relaxed and stimulated. And too large for his clothes. "Oh, I don't know. I just think of things. That's all there is to it. That's nothing."

"Oh, isn't it! No, I guess not. I've never been out with a real inventor before. . . . I bet you think I'm a silly little thing."

He protested, stoutly. "I should say not." A thought struck him. "Do you do anything? Work downtown somewheres, or anything?"

She shook her head. Her lips pouted. Her eyebrows made painted twin crescents. "No. I don't do anything. I was afraid you'd ask that." She looked down at her hands—her white, soft hands with little dimples at the finger-bases. "I'm just a home girl. That's all. A home girl. Now you *will* think I'm a silly stupid thing." She flashed a glance at him, liquid-eyed, appealing.

He was surprised (she wasn't) to find his hand closed tight and hard over her soft dimpled one. He was terror-stricken (she wasn't) to hear his voice saying, "I think you're wonderful. I think you're the most wonderful girl I ever saw, that's what." He crushed her hand and she winced a little. "Home girl."

Cora's name suited her to a marvel. Her hair was black and her colouring a natural pink and white, which she abetted expertly. Cora did not wear plain white tailored waists. She wore thin, fluffy, transparent things that drew your eyes and fired your imagination. Raymond began to call her Coral in his thoughts. Then, one evening, it slipped out. Coral. She liked it. He denied himself all luxuries and most necessities and bought her a strand of beads of that name, presenting them to her stam-

meringly, clumsily, tenderly. Tender pink and cream, they were, like her cheeks, he thought.

"Oh, Ray, for me! How darling! You naughty boy! . . . But I'd rather have had those clear white ones, without any colouring. They're more stylish. Do you mind?" He had minded, but the corals disappeared in favor of a white translucent string.

When he told Laura Calhoun she said, "I hope you'll be very happy. She's a lucky girl. Tell me about her, will you?"

Would he! His home girl! He spoke proudly for thirty minutes.

When he had finished she said, quietly, "Oh, yes."

And so Raymond and Cora were married and went to live in six-room elegance at Sunnyside and Racine. The flat was furnished sumptuously in Mission and those red and brown soft leather cushions with Indian heads stamped on them. There was a wooden rack on the wall with six monks' heads in coloured plaster, very life-like, stuck on it. This was a pipe-rack, though Raymond did not smoke a pipe. He liked a mild cigar. Then there was a print of Gustave Richter's Queen Louise coming down that broad marble stair, one hand at her breast, her great girlish eyes looking out at you from the misty folds of her scarf. What a lot of the world she has seen from her stairway! The shelf that ran around the dining room wall on a level with your head was filled with steins in such shapes and colours as would have curdled their contents—if they had ever had any contents.

They planned to read a good deal, evenings. Improve their minds. It was Ray's idea, but Cora seconded it heartily. This was before their marriage.

"Now, take history alone," Ray argued: "American history. Why, you can read a year and hardly know the half of it. That's the trouble. People don't know the history of their own country. And it's interesting, too, let me tell you. Darned interesting. Better'n novels, if folks only knew it."

"My, yes," Cora agreed. "And French. We could take up French, evenings. I've always wanted to study French. They say if you know French you can travel anywhere. It's all in the accent; and goodness knows I'm quick at picking up things like that."

"Yeh," Ray had said, a little hollowly, "yeh, French. Sure."

BUT, somehow, these literary evenings never did materialize. It may have been a matter of getting the books. You could borrow them from the public library, but that made you feel so hurried. History was something you wanted to take your time over. Then, too, the books you wanted never were in. You could buy them. But buying books like that! Cora showed her first real display of temper. Why, they came in sets and cost as much as twelve or fifteen dollars. Just for books! The literary evenings degenerated into Ray's thorough scanning of the evening paper, followed by Cora's skimming of the crumpled sheets that carried the department store ads, the society column, and the theatrical news. Raymond began to use the sixth room—the unused bedroom—as a workshop. He had perfected the spectacle contrivance and had made the mistake of selling his rights to it. He got a good sum for it.

"But I'll never do that again," he said, grimly. "Somebody'll make a fortune on that thing." He had unwisely told Cora of this transaction. She never forgave him for it. On the day he received the money for it he had brought her home a fur set of baum marten. He thought the stripe in it beautiful. There was a neckpiece known as a stole, and a large muff.

"Oh, honey!" Cora had cried. "Aren't you *fun-ny!*" She often said that, always with the same accent. "Aren't you *fun-ny!*"

"What's the matter?"

"Why didn't you let me pick it out? They're wearing Persian lamb sets."

"Oh. Well, maybe the feller'll change it. It's all paid for, but maybe he'll change it."

"Do you mind? It may cost a little bit more. You don't mind my changing it though, do you?"

"No. No-o-o-o! Not a bit."

They had never furnished the unused bedroom as a bedroom. When they moved out of the flat at Racine and Sunnyside into one of those new four-room apartments on Glengyle the movers found only a long rough work-table and a green-shaded lamp in that sixth room. Ray's delicate tools and implements were hard put to it to find a resting place in the new four-room apartment. Sometimes Ray worked in the bathroom. He grew rather to like the white-tiled place, with its look of a laboratory. But then, he didn't have as much time to work at home as he formerly had had. They went out more evenings.

The new four-room flat rented at sixty dollars. "Seems the less room you have the more you pay," Ray observed.

"There's no comparison. Look at the neighbourhood! And the living room's twice as big."

It didn't seem to be. Perhaps this was due to its furnishings. The Mission pieces had gone to the second-hand dealer. Ray was assistant manager of the optical department at Nagel's now and he was getting royalties on a new smoked glass device. There were large over-stuffed chairs in the new living room, and a seven-foot davenport, and oriental rugs, and lamps and lamps and lamps. The silk lamp-shade conflagration had just begun to smoulder in the American household. The dining room had one of those built-in Chicago buffets. It sparkled with cut glass. There was a large punch bowl in the centre, in which Cora usually kept receipts, old bills, moth balls, buttons, and the tarnished silver top to a syrup jug that she always meant to have repaired. Queen Louise was banished to the bedroom where she surveyed a world of cretonne.

CORA was a splendid cook. She had almost a genius for flavouring. Roast or cheese soufflé or green apple pie—your sense of taste never experienced that disappointment which comes of too little salt, too much sugar, a lack of shortening. Expert as she was at it, Cora didn't like to cook. That is, she didn't like to cook day after day. She rather liked doing an occasional meal and producing it in a sort of red-cheeked triumph. When she did this it was an epicurean thing, savoury, hot, satisfying. But as a day-after-day programme Cora would not hear of it. She had banished the maid. Four rooms could not accommodate her. A woman came in twice a week to wash and iron and clean. Often Cora did not get up for breakfast and Ray got his at one of the little lunch rooms that were springing up all over that section of the North Side. Eleven o'clock usually found Cora at the manicure's, or the dressmaker's, or shopping, or telephoning luncheon arrangements with one of the Crowd. Ray and Cora were going out a good deal with the Crowd. Young married people like themselves, living royally just a little beyond their income. The women were well-dressed, vivacious, somewhat shrill. They liked stories that were a little off-colour. "Blue," one of the men

called these stories. He was in the theatrical business. The men were, for the most part, a rather drab-looking lot. Colourless, good-natured, open-handed. Almost imperceptibly the Crowd began to use Ray as a target for a certain raillery. It wasn't particularly ill-natured, and Ray did not resent it.

"Oh, come on, Ray! Don't be a wet blanket. . . . Look it him! I bet he's thinking about those smoked glasses again. Eh, Atwater? He's in a daze about that new rim that won't show on the glasses. Come out of it! First thing you know you'll lose your little Cora."

There was little danger of that. Though Cora flirted mildly with the husbands of the other girls in the Crowd (they all did) she was true to Ray.

Ray was always talking of building a little place of their own. People were beginning to move farther and farther north, into the suburbs.

"Little place of your own," Ray would say, "that's the only way to live. Then you're not paying it all out in rent to the other feller. Little place of your own. That's the right ideal."

But as the years went by, and Ray earned more and more money, he and Cora seemed to be getting farther and farther away from the right ideal. In the \$28.50 apartment Cora's morning marketing had been an orderly daily proceeding. Meat, vegetables, fruit, dry groceries. But now the maidless four-room apartment took on, in spite of its cumbersome furnishings, a certain air of impermanence.

"Ray, honey, I haven't a scrap in the house. I didn't get home until almost six. Those darned old street cars. I hate 'em. Do you mind going over to Bauer's to eat? I won't go, because Myrtle served a regular spread at four. I couldn't eat a thing. D'you mind?"

"Why, no." He would get into his coat again and go out into the bleak November wind-swept street to Bauer's restaurant.

Cora was always home when Raymond got there at six. She prided herself on this. She would say, primly, to her friends, "I make a point of being there when Ray gets home. Even if I have to cut a round of bridge. If a woman can't be there when a man gets home from work I'd like to know what she's good for, anyway."

The girls in the Crowd said she was spoiling Raymond. She told Ray this. "They think I'm old-fashioned. Well,

maybe I am. But I guess I never pretended to be anything but a home girl."

"That's right," Ray would answer. "Say, that's the way you caught me. With that home-girl stuff."

"Caught you!" The thin straight line of the mouth. "If you think for one minute——"

"Oh, now, dear. You know what I mean, sweetheart. Why, say, I never could see any girl until I met you. You know that."

He was as honestly in love with her as he had been nine years before. Perhaps he did not feel now, as then, that she had conferred a favour upon him in marrying him. Or if he did he must have known that he had made fair return for such favour.

Cora had a Hudson seal coat now, with a great kolinsky collar. Her vivid face bloomed rosily in this soft frame. Cora was getting a little heavier. Not stout, but heavier, somehow. She tried, futilely, to reduce. She would starve herself at home for days, only to gain back the vanished pounds at one afternoon's orgy of whipped-cream salad, and coffee, and sweets at the apartment of some girl in the Crowd. Dancing had come in and the Crowd had taken it up vociferously. Raymond was not very good at it. He had not filled out with the years. He still was lean and tall and awkward. The girls in the crowd tried to avoid dancing with him. That often left Cora partnerless unless she wanted to dance again and again with Raymond.

"How can you expect the boys to ask me to dance when you don't dance with their wives! Good heavens, if they can learn, you can. And for pity's sake *don't count!* You're so *jun-ny!*"

HE tried painstakingly to heed her advice, but his long legs made a sorry business of it. He heard one of the girls refer to him as "that giraffe." He had put his foot through an absurd wisp of tulle that she insisted on calling a train.

They were spending a good deal of money now, but Ray jostled the landlord, the victualler, the furrier, the milliner, the hosiery maker, valiantly and still came off the victor. He did not have as much time as he would have liked to work on the new invention. The invisible rim. It was calculated so to blend with the glass of the lens as to be, in appearance, one with it, while it still protected the eyeglass from break-

age. "Fortune in it, girlie," he would say, happily, to Cora. "Million dollars, that's all."

He had been working on this invisible rim for five years. Familiarity with it had bred contempt in Cora. Once, in a temper, "Invisible is right," she had said, slangily.

They had occupied the four-room apartment for five years. Cora declared it was getting beyond her. "You can't get any decent help. The wash-woman acts as if she was doing me a favour coming from eight to four, for four dollars and eighty-five cents. And yesterday she said she couldn't come to clean any more on Saturdays. I'm sick and tired of it."

Raymond shook a sympathetic head. "Same way down at the store. Seems everything's that way now. You can't get help and you can't get goods. You ought to hear our customers. Yesterday I thought I'd go clear out of my nut, trying to pacify them."

Cora inserted the entering wedge, deftly. "Goodness knows I love my home. But the way things are now . . ."

"Yeh," Ray said, absently. When he spoke like that Cora knew that the invisible rim was revolving in his mind. In another moment he would be off to the little cabinet in the bathroom where he kept his tools and instruments.

She widened the opening. "I noticed as I passed to-day that those new one-room kitchenette apartments on Sheridan will be ready for occupancy October first." He was going toward the door. "They say they're wonderful."

"Who wants to live in one room, anyway?"

"It's really two rooms—and the kitchenette. There's the living room—perfectly darling—and a sort of combination breakfast room and kitchen. The breakfast room is partitioned off with sort of cupboards so that it's really another room. And so handy!"

"How'd you know?"

"I went in—just to look at them—with one of the girls."

Until then he had been unconscious of her guile. But now, suddenly, struck by a hideous suspicion—"Say, looka here. If you think——"

"Well, it doesn't hurt to look at 'em, does it!"

A week later. "Those kitchenette apartments on Sheridan are almost all gone."

One of the girls was looking at one on the sixth floor. There's a view of the lake. The kitchen's the sweetest thing. All white enamel. And the breakfast room thing is done in Italian."

"What d'you mean—done in Italian?"

"Why—uh—Italian period furniture, you know. Dark and rich. The living room's the same. Desk, and table, and lamps."

"Oh, they're furnished?"

"Complete. Down to the kettle covers and the linen and all. The work there would just be play. All the comforts of a home, with none of the terrible aggravations."

"Say, look here, Coral, we don't want to go to work and live in any one room. You wouldn't be happy. Why, we'd feel cooped up. No room to stretch. . . . Why, say, how about the beds? If there isn't a bedroom how about the beds? Don't people sleep in those places?"

"There are Murphy beds, silly."

"Murphy? Who's he?"

"Oh, goodness, I don't know! The man who invented 'em, I suppose. Murphy."

Raymond grinned in anticipation of his own forthcoming joke. "I should think they'd call 'em Morphy beds." Then, at her blank stare. "You know—short for Morpheus, god of sleep. Learned about him at high school."

Cora still looked blank. Cora hardly ever understood Ray's jokes, or laughed at them. He would turn, chuckling, to find her face a blank. Not even bewildered, or puzzled, or questioning. Blank. Unheeding. Disinterested as a slate.

Three days later Cora developed an acute pain in her side. She said it was nothing. Just worn out with the work, and the worry and the aggravation, that's all. It'll be all right.

Ray went with her to look at the Sheridan Road apartment. It was one hundred and fifty dollars. "Phew!"

"But look at what you save? Gas. Light. Maid service. Laundry. It's really cheaper in the end."

CORA was amazingly familiar with all the advantages and features of the sixth-floor apartment. "The sun all morning." She had all the agent's patter. "Harvey-Dickson ventilated double-spring mattresses. Dressing room off the bathroom. No, it isn't a closet. Here's the closet. Range, refrigerator, combination

sink and laundry tub. Living room's all panelled in ivory. Shower in the bathroom. Buffet kitchen. Breakfast room has folding-leaf Italian table. Look at the chairs. Aren't they darlings! Built-in book shelves—"

"Book shelves?"

"Oh, well, we can use them for fancy china and ornaments. Or—oh, look!—you could keep your stuff there. Tools and all. Then the bathroom wouldn't be mussy all the time."

"Beds?"

"Right here. Isn't that wonderful. Would you ever know it was there? You can work it with one hand. Look."

"Do you really like it, Coral?"

"I love it. It's heavenly."

He stood in the centre of the absurd living room, a tall, lank, awkward figure, a little stooped now. His face was beginning to be furrowed with lines—deep lines that yet were softening, and not unlovely. He made you think, somehow, as he stood there, one hand on his own coat lapel, of Saint-Gaudens' figure of Lincoln, there in the park, facing the Drive. Kindly, thoughtful, harried.

They moved in October first.

The over-stuffed furniture of the four-room apartment was sold. Cora kept a few of her own things—a rug or two, some china, silver, bric-à-brac, lamps. Queen Louise was now permanently dethroned. Cora said her own things—"pieces"—would spoil the effect of the living room. All Italian.

"No wonder the Italians sit outdoors all the time, on the steps and in the street"—more of Ray's dull humour. He surveyed the heavy gloomy pieces, so out of place in the tiny room. One of the chairs was black velvet. It was the only really comfortable chair in the room but Ray never sat in it. It reminded him, vaguely, of a coffin. The corridors of the apartment house were long, narrow, and white-walled. You traversed these like a convict, speaking to no one, and entered your own cubicle. A toy dwelling for toy people. But Ray was a man-size man. When he was working downtown his mind did not take temporary refuge in the thought of the feverish little apartment to which he was to return at night. It wasn't a place to come back to, except for sleep. A roost. Bedding for the night. As permanent-seeming as a hay-mow.

Cora, too, gave him a strange feeling of

impermanence. He realized one day, with a shock, that he hardly ever saw her with her hat off. When he came in at six or six-thirty Cora would be busy at the tiny sink, or the toy stove, her hat on, a cigarette dangling limply from her mouth. Ray did not object to women smoking. That is, he had no moral objection. But he didn't think it became them. But Cora said a cigarette rested and stimulated her. "Doctors say all nervous women should smoke," she said. "Soothes them." But Cora, cooking in the little kitchen, squinting into a kettle's depths through a film of cigarette smoke outraged his sense of fitness. It was incongruous, offensive. The time, and occupation, and environment, together with the limply dangling cigarette, gave her an incredibly rowdy look.

When they ate at home they had steak or chops, and, perhaps, a chocolate éclair for dessert; and a salad. Raymond began to eat mental meals. He would catch himself thinking of breaded veal chops, done slowly, simmeringly, in butter, so that they came out a golden brown on a parsley-decked platter. With this mashed potatoes with brown butter and onions that have just escaped burning; creamed spinach with egg grated over the top; a rice pudding, baked in the oven, and served with a tart crown of grape jelly. He sometimes would order these things in a restaurant at noon, or on the frequent evenings when they dined out. But they never tasted as he had thought they would.

THEY dined out more and more as spring drew on and the warm weather set in. The neighbourhood now was aglitter with eating places of all sorts and degrees from the humble automat to the proud plush of the Sheridan Plaza dining room. There were tea-rooms, cafeterias, Hungarian cafés, chop suey restaurants. At the table d'hôte places you got a soup, followed by a lukewarm plateful of meat, vegetables, salad. The meat tasted of the vegetables, the vegetables tasted of the meat, and the salad tasted of both. Before ordering Ray would sit down and peer about at the food on the near-by tables as one does in a dining car when the digestive fluids have dried in your mouth at the first whiff through the doorway. It was on one of these evenings that he noticed Cora's hat.

"What do you wear a hat for all the time?" he asked, testily.

"Hat?"

"Seems to me I haven't seen you without a hat in a month. Gone bald, or something?" He was often cross like this lately. Grumpy, Cora called it. Hats were one of Cora's weaknesses. She had a great variety of them. These added to Ray's feeling of restlessness and impermanence. Sometimes she wore a hat that came down over her head, covering her forehead and her eyes, almost. The hair he used to love to touch was concealed. Sometimes he dined with an ingénue in a poke bonnet; sometimes with a señorita in black turban and black lace veil, mysterious and provocative; sometimes with a demure miss in a wistful little turned-down brim. It was like living with a stranger who was always about to leave.

When they ate at home, which was rarely, Ray tried, at first, to dawdle over his coffee and his mild cigar, as he liked to do. But you couldn't dawdle at a small, inadequate table that folded its flaps and shrank into a corner the minute you left it. Everything in the apartment folded, or flapped, or doubled, or shot in, or shot out, or concealed something else, or pretended to be something it was not. It was very irritating. Ray took his cigar and his evening paper and wandered uneasily into the Italian living room, doubling his lean length into one of his queer, angular hard chairs.

Cora would appear in the doorway, hatted. "Ready?"

"Hub? Where you going?"

"Oh, Ray, aren't you *fun-ny*! You know this is the Crowd's poker night at Lil's."

The Crowd began to say that old Ray was going queer. Honestly, didja hear him last week? Talking about the instability of the home, and the home being the foundation of the state, and the country crumbling? Cora's face was a sight! I wouldn't have wanted to be in his boots when she got him home. What's got into him, anyway?

Cora was a Wilson Avenue girl now. You saw her in and out of the shops of the district, expensively dressed. She was almost thirty-six. Her legs, beneath the absurdly short skirt of the day, were slim and shapely in their chiffon hose, but her upper figure was now a little prominent. The scant, brief skirt fore-shortened her; gave her a stork-like appearance; a combination of girlishness and matronliness not pleasing.

There were times when Ray rebelled. A peace-loving man, and gentle. But a man. "I don't want to go out to eat. My God, I'm tired! I want to eat at home."

"Honey, dear, I haven't a thing in the house. Not a scrap."

"I'll go out and get something, then. What d'you want?"

"Get whatever looks good to you. I don't want a thing. We had tea after the *matinée*. That's what made me so late. I'm always nagging the girls to go home. It's getting so they tease me about it."

He would go foraging amongst the delicatessen shops of the neighbourhood. He saw other men, like himself, scurrying about with moist paper packets and bags and bundles, in and out of Leviton's, in and out of the Sunlight Bakery. A bit of ham. Some cabbage salad in a wooden boat. A tiny broiler, lying on its back, its feet neatly trussed, its skin crackly and tempting-looking, its white meat showing beneath the brown. But when he cut into it at home it tasted like sawdust and gutapercha. "And what else?" said the plump woman in the white bib-apron behind the counter. "And what else?"

IN the new apartment you rather prided yourself on not knowing your next-door neighbours. The paper-thin walls permitted you to hear them living the most intimate details of their lives. You heard them laughing, talking, weeping, singing, scolding, caressing. You didn't know them. You did not even see them. When you met in the halls or elevators you did not speak. Then, after they had lived in the new apartment about a year Cora met the woman in 618 and Raymond met the woman in 620, within the same week. The Atwaters lived in 619.

There was some confusion in the delivery of a package. The woman in 618 pressed the Atwaters' electric button for the first time in their year's residence there.

A plump woman, 618; blonde; in black. You felt that her flesh was expertly restrained in tight pink satin brassières and long-hipped corsets and many straps.

"I hate to trouble you, but did you get a package for Mrs. Hoyt? It's from Field's."

It was five-thirty. Cora had her hat on. She did not ask the woman to come in. "I'll see. I ordered some things from Field's to-day, too. I haven't opened them yet. Perhaps yours . . . I'll look."

The package with Mrs. Hoyt's name on it was there. "Well, thanks so much. It's some georgette *crêpe*. I'm making myself one of those new two-tone slip-over negligees. Field's had a sale. Only one sixty-nine a yard."

Cora was interested. She sewed rather well when she was in the mood. "Are they hard to make?"

"Oh, land, no! No trick to it at all. They just hang from the shoulder, see? Like a slipover. And then your cord comes round—"

She stepped in. She undid the box and shook out the vivid folds of the filmy stuff, vivid green and lavender. "You wouldn't think they'd go well together but they do. Makes a perfectly stunning negligee."

Cora fingered the stuff. "I'd get some. Only I don't know if I could cut the—"

"I'll show you. Glad to." She was very friendly. Cora noticed she used expensive perfume. Her hair was beautifully *marcelled*. The woman folded up the material and was off, smiling. "Just let me know when you get it. I've got a lemon cream pie in the oven and I've got to run." She called back over her shoulder. "Mrs. Hoyt."

Cora nodded and smiled. "Mine's Atwater." She saw that the woman's simple-seeming black dress was one she had seen in a Michigan Avenue shop, and had coveted. Its price had been beyond her purse.

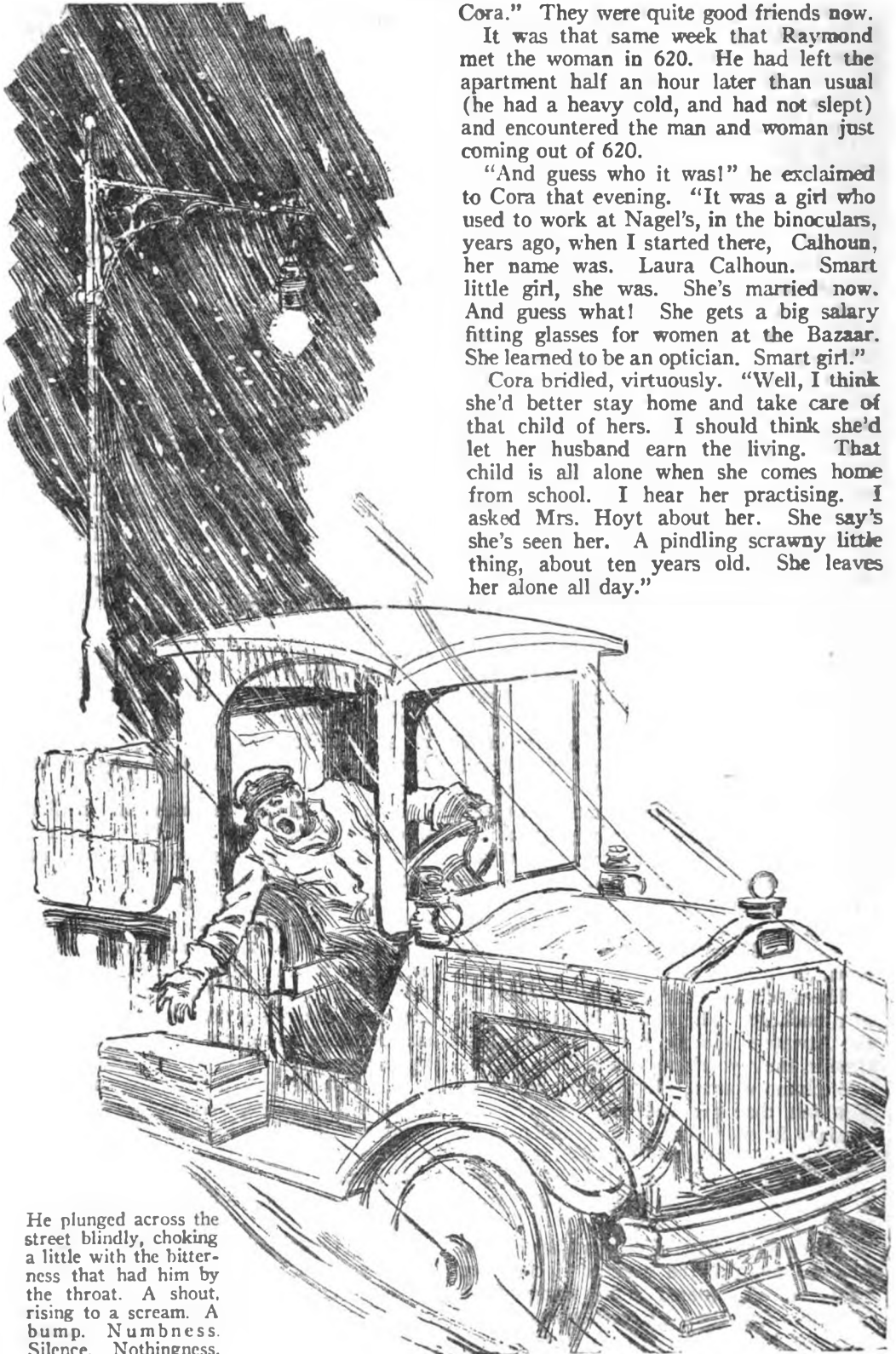
Cora mentioned the meeting to Ray when he came home. "She seems real nice. She's going to show me how to cut out a new negligee."

"What'd you say her name was?" She told him. He shrugged. "Well, I'll say this: she must be some swell cook. Whenever I go by that door at dinner time my mouth just waters. One night last week there was something must have been baked spare-ribs and sauerkraut. I almost broke in the door."

The woman in 618 did seem to cook a great deal. That is, when she cooked. She explained that Mr. Hoyt was on the road a lot of the time and when he was home she liked to fuss for him. This when she was helping Cora cut out the georgette negligee.

"I'd get coral colour if I was you, honey. With your hair and all," Mrs. Hoyt had advised her.

"Why, that's my name! That is, it's what Ray calls me. My name's really



He plunged across the street blindly, choking a little with the bitterness that had him by the throat. A shout, rising to a scream. A bump. Numbness. Silence. Nothingness.

Cora." They were quite good friends now.

It was that same week that Raymond met the woman in 620. He had left the apartment half an hour later than usual (he had a heavy cold, and had not slept) and encountered the man and woman just coming out of 620.

"And guess who it was!" he exclaimed to Cora that evening. "It was a girl who used to work at Nagel's, in the binoculars, years ago, when I started there, Calhoun, her name was. Laura Calhoun. Smart little girl, she was. She's married now. And guess what! She gets a big salary fitting glasses for women at the Bazaar. She learned to be an optician. Smart girl."

Cora bridled, virtuously. "Well, I think she'd better stay home and take care of that child of hers. I should think she'd let her husband earn the living. That child is all alone when she comes home from school. I hear her practising. I asked Mrs. Hoyt about her. She say's she's seen her. A pindling scrawny little thing, about ten years old. She leaves her alone all day."

RAY encountered the Calhoun girl again, shortly after that, in the way encounters repeat themselves, once they have started.

"She didn't say much but I guess her husband is a nit-wit. Funny how a smart girl like that always marries one of these sap-heads that can't earn a living. She said she was working because she wanted her child to have the advantages she'd missed. That's the way she put it."

One heard the long-legged, melancholy child next door practising at the piano daily at four. Cora said it drove her crazy. But then, Cora was rarely home at four. "Well," she said now, virtuously, "I don't know what she calls advantages. The way she neglects that kid. Look at her! I guess if she had a little more mother and a little less education it'd be better for her."

"Guess that's right," Ray agreed.

It was in September that Cora began to talk about the mink coat. A combination anniversary and Christmas gift. December would mark their twelfth anniversary. A mink coat.

Raymond remembered that his mother had had a mink coat, back there in Michigan, years ago. She always had taken it out in November and put it away in moth balls and tar paper in March. She had done this for years and years. It was a cheerful yellow mink, with a slightly darker marking running through it, and there had been little mink tails all around the bottom edge of it. It had spread comfortably at the waist. Women had had hips in those days. With it his mother had carried a mink muff; a small yellow-brown cylinder

just big enough for her two hands. It had been her outdoor uniform, winter after winter, for as many years as he could remember of his boyhood. When she had died the mink coat had gone to his sister Carrie, he remembered.

A mink coat. The very words called up in his mind sharp winter days; the pungent moth-bally smell of his mother's fur-coated bosom when she had kissed him good-bye that day he left for Chicago; comfort; womanliness. A mink coat.

"How much could you get one for? A mink coat."

Cora hesitated a moment. "Oh—I guess you could get a pretty good one for three thousand."

"You're crazy," said Ray, unemotionally. He was not angry. He was amused.

But Cora was persistent. Her coat was a sight. She had to have something. She never had had a real fur coat.

"How about your Hudson seal?"

"Hudson seal! Did you ever see any seals in the Hudson! Fake fur. I've never had a really decent piece of fur in my life. Always some mangy make-believe. All the girls in the Crowd are getting new coats this year. The woman next door—Mrs. Hoyt—is talking of getting one. She says Mr. Hoyt—"

"Say, who are these Hoyts, anyway?"

Ray came home early one day to find the door to 618 open. He glanced in, involuntarily. A man sat in the living room—a large, rather red-faced man, in his shirt-sleeves, relaxed, comfortable, at ease. From the open door came the most tantalizing and appetizing smells of candied sweet potatoes, a browning roast, steaming vegetables.

Mrs. Hoyt had run in to bring a slice of fresh-baked chocolate cake to Cora. She often brought in dishes of exquisitely prepared food thus, but Raymond had never before encountered her. Cora introduced them. Mrs. Hoyt smiled, nervously, and said she must run away and tend to her dinner. And went. Ray looked after her. He strode into the kitchenette where Cora stood, hatted, at the sink.

"Say, looka here, Cora. You got to quit seeing that woman, see?"

"What woman?"

"One calls herself Mrs. Hoyt. That woman. Mrs. Hoyt! Ha!"

"Why, Ray, what in the world are you talking about! Aren't you *fun-ny!*"

"Yeh; well, you cut her out. I won't



have you running around with a woman like that. Mrs. Hoyt! Mrs. Fiddlesticks!"

They had a really serious quarrel about it. When the smoke of battle cleared away Raymond had paid the first instalment on a three thousand dollar mink coat. And, "If we could sub-lease," Cora said, "I think it would be wonderful to move to the Shoreham. Lil and Harry are going there in January. You know yourself this place isn't half respectable."

Raymond had stared. "Shoreham! Why, it's a hotel. Regular hotel."

THEY looked at the Shoreham rooms on the afternoon of their anniversary. They were having the crowd to dinner, downtown, that evening. Cora thought the Shoreham rooms beautiful, though she took care not to let the room-clerk know she thought so. Ray, always a silent, inarticulate man, was so wordless that Cora took him to task for it in a sibilant aside.

"Ray, for heaven's sake say something. You stand there! I don't know what the man'll think."

"A hell of a lot I care what he thinks." Ray was looking about the garish room—plush chairs, heavy carpets, brocade hangings, shining table-top, silly desk.

"Two hundred and seventy-five a month," the clerk was saying. "With the yearly lease, of course. Otherwise it's three twenty-five." He seemed quite indifferent.

Ray said nothing. "We'll let you know," said Cora.

The man walked to the door. "I can't hold it for you, you know. Our apartments are practically gone. I've a party who practically has closed for this suite already. I'd have to know."

Cora looked at Ray. He said nothing. He seemed not to have heard. His face was gaunt and haggard. "We'll let you know—to-morrow," Cora said. Her full under lip made a straight thin line.

When they came out it was snowing. A sudden flurry. It was already dark. "Oh, dear," said Cora. "My hat!" Ray summoned one of the hotel taxis. He helped Cora into it. He put money into the driver's hand.

"You go on, Cora. I'm going to walk."

"Walk! Why! But it's snowing. And you'll have to dress for dinner."

"I've got a little headache. I thought I'd walk. I'll be home. I'll be home."

He slammed the door then, and turned

away. He began to walk in the opposite direction from that which led toward the apartment house. The snow felt cool and grateful on his face. It stung his cheeks. Hard and swift and white it came, blinding him. A blizzard off the lake. He plunged through it, head down, hands jammed into his pockets.

So. A home girl. Home girl. God, it was funny. She was a selfish, idle, silly, vicious woman. She was nothing. Nothing. It came over him in a sudden blinding crashing blaze of light. The woman in 618 who wasn't married to her man, and who cooked and planned to make him comfortable; the woman in 620 who blindly left her home and her child every day in order to give that child the thing she called advantages—either of these was better than his woman. Honester. Helping someone. Trying to, anyway. Doing a better job than she was.

He plunged across the street, blindly, choking a little with the bitterness that had him by the throat. Hey! Watcha! —A shout rising to a scream. A bump. Numbness. Silence. Nothingness.

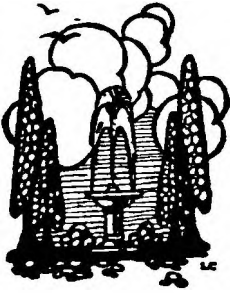
"Well, anyway, Cora," said the girls in the Crowd, "you certainly were a wonderful wife to him. You can always comfort yourself with that thought. My! the way you always ran home so's to be there before he got in."

"I know it," said Cora, mournfully. "I always was a home girl. Why, we always had planned we should have a little home of our own some day. He always said that was the right idear—idea."

Lil wiped her eyes. "What are you going to do about your new mink coat, Cora?"

Cora brushed her hair away from her forehead with a slow, sad gesture.

"Oh, I don't know. I've hardly thought of such trifling things. The woman next door said she might buy it. Hoyt, her name is. Of course I couldn't get what we paid for it, though I've hardly had it on. But money'll count with me now. Ray never did finish that invisible rim he was working on all those years. Wasting his time. Poor Ray. . . . I thought if she took it, I'd get a caracul, with a black fox collar. After I bought it I heard mink wasn't so good anyway, this year. Everything's black. Of course, I'd never have said anything to Raymond about it. I'd just have worn it. I wouldn't have hurt Ray for the world."



The Kasidah

By

SIR RICHARD F. BURTON

The hour is nigh; the waning Queen
walks forth to rule the later night;
Crown'd with the sparkle of a Star, and
throned on orb of ashen light:

Friends of my youth, a last adieu! haply
some day we meet again;
Yet ne'er the selfsame men shall meet;
the years shall make us other men:

The light of morn has grown to noon,
has paled with eve, and now farewell!
Go, vanish from my Life as dies the
tinkling of the Camel's bell.

"Eat, drink, and sport; the rest of life's
not worth a fillip," quoth the King;
Methinks the saying saith too much: the
swine would say the selfsame thing!

But you of finer, nobler stuff, ye, whom
to Higher leads the High,
What binds your hearts in common bond
with creatures of the stall and sty?

Still wond'ring how the Marvel came be-
cause two coupling mammals chose
To slake the thirst of fleshly love, and
thus the "Immortal Being" rose;

And—oh, the Pity!—hardly conned the
lesson comes its fatal term;
Fate bids us bundle up our books, and
bear them bod'ly to the worm:

Hardly we learn to wield the blade be-
fore the wrist grows stiff and old;
Hardly we learn to ply the pen ere
Thought and Fancy faint with cold:

Hardly we find the path of love, to sink
the Self, forget the "I,"
When sad suspicion grips the heart, when
Man, the Man begins to die:

Cease, Man, to mourn, to weep, to wail;
enjoy thy shining hour of sun;
We dance along Death's icy brink, but
is the dance less full of fun?

The "moral sense," your Zahid-phrase, is
but the gift of latest years;
Conscience was born when man had shed
his fur, his tail, his pointed ears.

We know the Genesis of the Soul; we
trace the Soul to hour of birth;
We mark its growth as grew mankind to
boast himself sole Lord of Earth:

The race of Being from dawn of Life in
an unbroken course was run;
What men are pleased to call their souls
was in the hog and dog begun:

And if your Heav'en and Hell be true,
and Fate that forced me to be born
Forced me to Heav'en or Hell—I go, and
hold Fate's insolence in scorn.

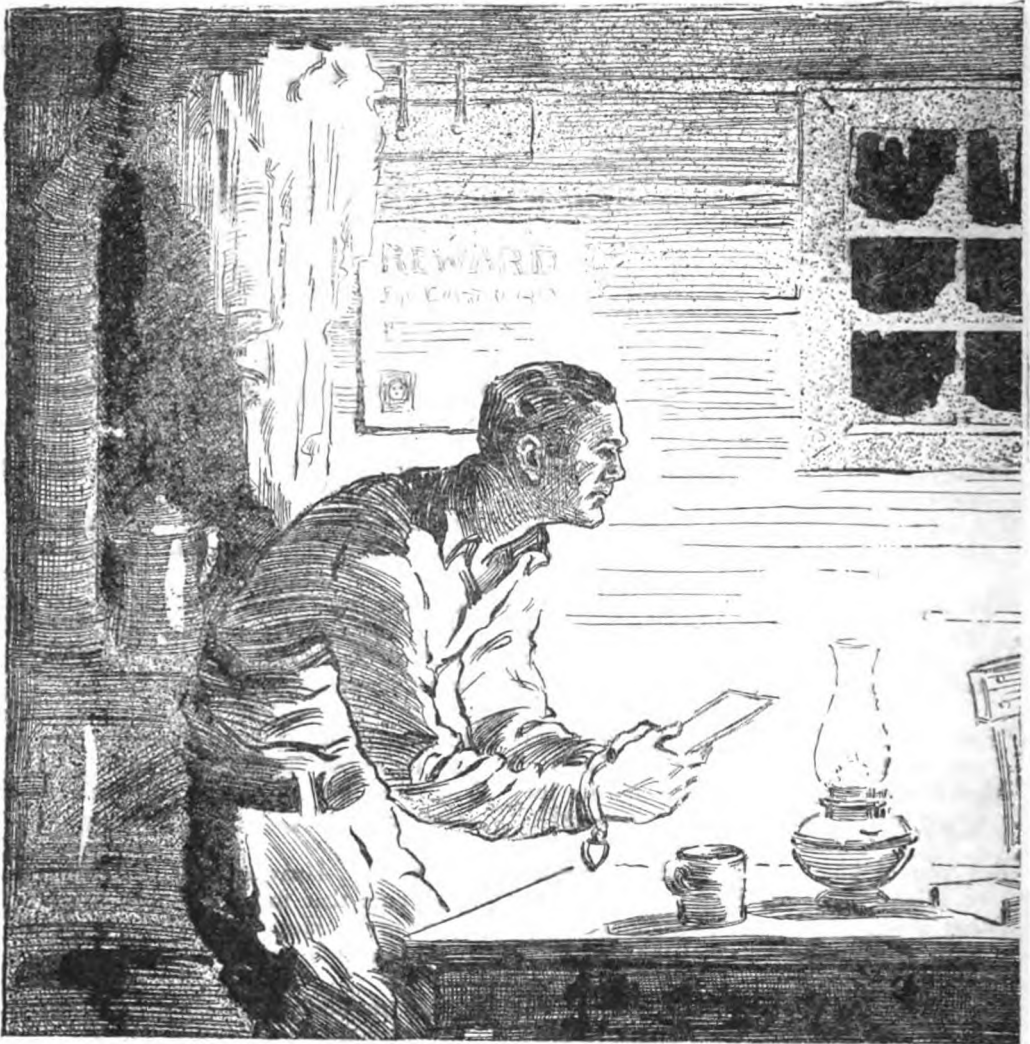
Enough to think such things may be: to
say they are not or they are
Were folly: leave them all to Fate, nor
wage on shadows useless war.

I want not this, I want not that, already
sick of Me and Thee;
And if we're both transform'd and changed,
what then becomes of Thee and Me?

Do what thy manhood bids thee do, from
none but self expect applause;
He noblest lives and noblest dies who
makes and keeps his self-made laws.

All other Life is living Death, a world
where none but Phantoms dwell,
A breath, a wind, a sound, a voice, a
tinkling of the camel bell.



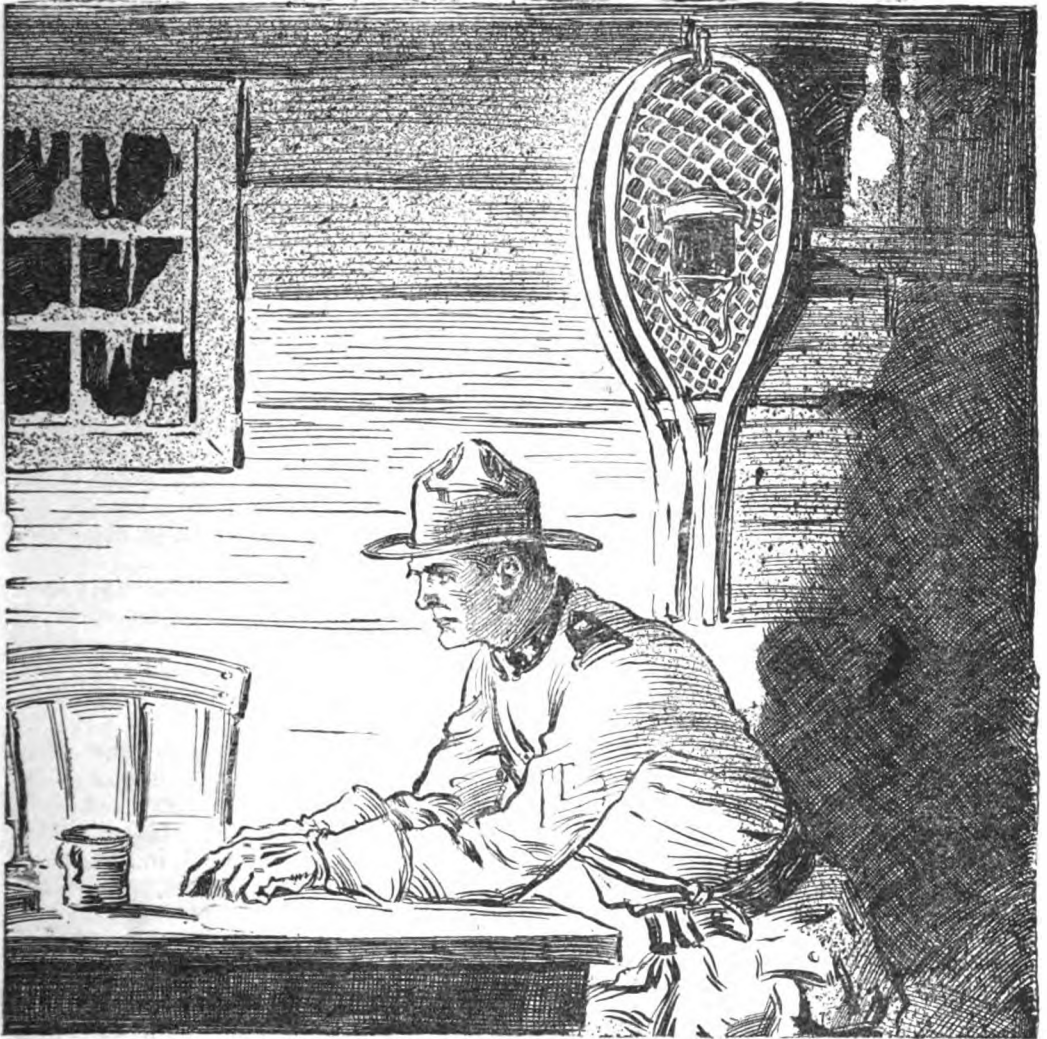


"What would you have done, Brokaw," he said huskily, "if your wife had told you that another man was forcing his attentions on her?"

THE MATCH

BERGEANT BROKAW was hatched-faced, with shifting pale blue eyes that had a glint of cruelty in them. He was tall, and thin, and lithe as a cat. He belonged to the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, and was one of the best men on the trail that had ever gone into the North. His business was man hunting. Ten years of seeking after human prey had given to him many of

the characteristics of a fox. For six of those ten years he had represented law north of fifty-three. Now he had come to the end of his last hunt, close up to the Artic Circle. For one hundred and eighty-seven days he had been following a man. The hunt had begun in mid-summer, and it was now midwinter. Billy Loring, who was wanted for murder, had been a hard man to find. But he was caught at last, and Brokaw was keenly



*A powerful story of the frozen-hearted
northland wild*

By James Oliver Curwood

exultant. It was his greatest achievement. It would mean a great deal for him down at headquarters.

In the rough and dimly lighted cabin his man sat opposite him, on a bench, his manacled hands crossed over his knees. He was a younger man than Brokaw—thirty, or a little better. His hair was long, reddish, and untrimmed. A stubble of reddish beard covered his face. His eyes, too, were blue—of the deep, honest blue that one remembers, and most fre-

quently trusts. He did not look like a criminal. There was something almost boyish in his face, a little hollowed by long privation. He was the sort of man that other men liked. Even Brokaw, who had a heart like flint in the face of crime, had melted a little.

"Ugh!" he shivered. "Listen to that beastly wind! It means three days of storm." Outside a gale was blowing straight down from the Arctic. They could hear the steady moaning of it in the spruce

tops over the cabin, and now and then there came one of those raging blasts that filled the night with strange shrieking sounds. Volleys of fine, hard snow beat against the one window with a rattle like shot. In the cabin it was comfortable. It was Billy's cabin. He had built it deep in a swamp, where there were lynx and fisher cat to trap, and where he had thought that no one could find him. The sheet-iron stove was glowing hot. An oil lamp hung from the ceiling. Billy was sitting so that the glow of this fell in his face. It scintillated on the rings of steel about his wrists. Brokaw was a cautious man, as well as a clever one, and he took no chances.

"I like storms—when you're inside, an' close to a stove," replied Billy. "Makes me feel sort of—safe." He smiled a little grimly. Even at that it was not an unpleasant smile.

Brokaw's snow-reddened eyes gazed at the other.

"There's something in that," he said. "This storm will give you at least three days more of life."

"Won't you drop that?" asked the prisoner, turning his face a little, so that it was shaded from the light.

"You've got me now, an' I know what's coming as well as you do." His voice was low and quiet, with the faintest trace of a broken note in it, deep down in his throat. "We're alone, old man, and a long way from anyone. I ain't blaming you for catching me. I haven't got anything against you. So let's drop this other thing—what I'm going down to—and talk something pleasant. I know I'm going to hang. That's the law. It'll be pleasant enough when it comes, don't you think? Let's talk about—about—home. Got any kids?"

Brokaw shook his head, and took his pipe from his mouth.

"Never married," he said shortly.

"Never married," mused Billy, regarding him with a curious softening of his blue eyes. "You don't know what you've missed, Brokaw. Of course, it's none of my business, but you've got a home—somewhere——" Brokaw shook his head again.

"Been in the service ten years," he said. "I've got a mother living with my brother somewhere down in York State. I've sort of lost track of them. Haven't seen them in five years. I don't suppose they know whether I'm dead or alive now."

BILLY was looking at him steadily. Slowly he rose to his feet, lifted his manacled hands, and turned down the light.

"Hurts my eyes," he said, and he laughed frankly as he caught the suspicious glint in Brokaw's eyes. He seated himself again, and leaned over toward the other. "I haven't talked to a white man for three months," he added, a little hesitatingly. "I've been hiding—close. I had a dog for a time, but he died, an' I didn't dare go hunting for another. I knew you fellows were pretty close after me. But I wanted to get enough fur to take me to South America. Had it all planned, an' she was going to join me there—with the kid. Understand? If you'd kept away another month——"

There was a husky break in his voice, and he coughed to clear it.

"You don't mind if I talk, do you—about her, an' the kid? I've got to do it, or bust, or go mad. I've got to because—to-day—she was twenty-four—at ten o'clock in the morning—an' it's our wedding day——"

The half gloom hid from Brokaw what was in the other's face. And then Billy laughed almost joyously. "Say, but she's been a true little pardner," he whispered proudly, as there came a lull in the storm. "She was just born for me, an' everything seemed to happen on her birthday, an' that's why I can't be downhearted even now. It's her birthday, you see, an' this morning, before you came, I was just that happy that I set a plate for her at the table, an' put her picture and a curl of her hair beside it—set the picture up so it was looking at me—an' we had breakfast together. Look here——"

He moved to the table, with Brokaw watching him like a cat, and brought something back with him, wrapped in a soft piece of buckskin. He unfolded the buckskin tenderly, and drew forth a long curl that rippled a dull red and gold in the lamp-glow, and then he handed a photograph to Brokaw.

"That's her!" he whispered.

Brokaw turned so that the light fell on the picture. A sweet, girlish face smiled at him from out of a wealth of flowing, disheveled curls.

"She had it taken that way just for me," explained Billy, with the enthusiasm of a boy in his voice. "She's always wore her hair in curls—an' a braid—for me, when

we're home. I love it that way. Guess I may be silly but I'll tell you why, *that* was down in York State, too. She lived in a cottage, all grown over with honeysuckle an' morning glory, with green hills and valleys and all about it—and the old apple orchard just behind. That day we were in the orchard, all red an' white with bloom, and she dared me to a race. I let her beat me, and when I came up she stood under one of the trees, her cheeks like the pink blossoms, and her hair all tumbled about her like an armfull of gold, shaking the loose apple blossoms down on her head. I forgot everything then, and I didn't stop until I had her in my arms, an'—an' she's been my little pardner ever since. After the baby came we moved up into Canada, where I had a good chance in a new mining town. An' then——” A furious blast of the storm sent the overhanging spruce tops smashing against the top of the cabin. Straight overhead the wind shrieked almost like human voices, and the one window rattled as though it were shaken by human hands. The lamp had been burning lower and lower. It began to flicker now, the quick sputter of the wick lost in the noise of the gale. Then it went out. Brokaw leaned over and opened the door of the big box stove, and the red glow of the fire took the place of the lamplight. He leaned back and relighted his pipe, eyeing Billy. The sudden blast, the going out of the light, the opening of the stove door, had all happened in a minute, but the interval was long enough to bring a change in Billy's voice. It was cold and hard when he continued. He leaned over toward Brokaw, and the boyishness had gone from his voice.

“Of course, I can't expect you to have any sympathy for this other business, Brokaw,” he went on. “Sympathy isn't in your line, an' you wouldn't be the big man you are in the service if you had it. But I'd like to know what *you* would have done. We were up there six months, and we'd both grown to love the big woods, and she was growing prettier and happier every day—when Thorne, the new superintendent, came up. One day she told me that she didn't like Thorne, but I didn't pay much attention to that, and laughed at her, and said he was a good fellow. After that I could see that something was worrying her, and pretty soon I couldn't help from seeing what it was,

and everything came out. It was Thorne. He was persecuting her. She hadn't told me, because she knew it would make trouble and I'd lose my job. One afternoon I came home earlier than usual, and found her crying. She put her arms round my neck, and just cried it all out, with her face snuggled in my neck, an' kissin' me——”

BROKAW could see the cords in Billy's neck. His manacled hands were clenched.

“What would you have done, Brokaw?” he asked huskily. “What if *you* had a wife, an' she told you that another man had insulted her, and was forcing his attentions on her, and she asked you to give up your job and take her away? Would you have done it, Brokaw? No, you wouldn't. You'd have hunted up the man. That's what I did. He had been drinking—just enough to make him devilish, and he laughed at me—I didn't mean to strike so hard. But it happened. I killed him. I got away. She and the baby are down in the little cottage again—down in York State—an' I know she's awake this minute—our wedding day—thinking of me, an' praying for me, and counting the days between now and spring. We were going to South America then.”

Brokaw rose to his feet, and put fresh wood into the stove.

“I guess it must be pretty hard,” he said, straightening himself. “But the law up here doesn't take them things into account—not very much. It may let you off with manslaughter—ten or fifteen years. I hope it does. Let's turn in.”

Billy stood up beside him. He went with Brokaw to a bunk built against the wall, and the sergeant drew a fine steel chain from his pocket. Billy lay down, his hands crossed over his breast, and Brokaw deftly fastened the chain about his ankles.

“And I suppose you think *this* is hard, too,” he added. “But I'd guess you'd do it if you were me. Ten years of this sort of work learns you not to take chances. If you want anything in the night just whistle.” It had been a hard day with Brokaw, and he slept soundly. For an hour Billy lay awake, thinking of home, and listening to the wail of the storm. Then he, too, fell into sleep—a restless, uneasy slumber filled with troubled visions. For a time there had come a lull in the

storm, but now it broke over the cabin with increased fury. A hand seemed slapping at the window, threatening to break it. The spruce boughs moaned and twisted overhead, and a volley of wind and snow shot suddenly down the chimney, forcing open the stove door, so that a shaft of ruddy light cut like a red knife through the dense gloom of the cabin. In varying ways the sounds played a part in Billy's dreams. In all those dreams, and segments of dreams, the girl—his wife—was present. Once they had gone for wild flowers and had been caught in a thunderstorm, and had run to an old and disused barn in the middle of a field for shelter. He was back in that barn again, with *her*—and he could feel her trembling against him, and he was stroking her hair, as the thunder crashed over them and the lightning filled her eyes with fear. After that there came to him a vision of the early autumn nights when they had gone corn roasting, with other young people. He had always been afflicted with a slight nasal trouble, and smoke irritated him. It set him sneezing, and kept him dodging about the fire, and she had always laughed when the smoke persisted in following him about, like a young scamp of a boy bent on tormenting him. The smoke was unusually persistent tonight. He tossed in his bunk, and buried his face in the blanket that answered for a pillow. The smoke reached him even there, and he sneezed chokingly. In that instant the girl's face disappeared. He sneezed again—and awoke.

A startled gasp broke from his lips, and the handcuffs about his wrists clanked as he raised his hands to his face. In that moment his dazed senses adjusted themselves. The cabin was full of smoke. It partly blinded him, but through it he could see tongues of fire shooting toward the ceiling. He could hear the crackling of burning pitch, and he yelled wildly to Brokaw. In an instant the sergeant was on his feet. He rushed to the table, where he had placed a pail of water the evening before, and Billy heard the hissing of the water as it struck the flaming wall.

"Never mind that," he shouted. "The shack's built of pitch cedar. We've got to get out!" Brokaw groped his way to him through the smoke and began fumbling at the chain about his ankles.

"I can't—find—the key——" he gasped

chokingly. "Here grab hold of me!"

He caught Billy under the arms and dragged him to the door. As he opened it the wind came in with a rush and behind them the whole cabin burst into a furnace of flame. Twenty yards from the cabin he dropped Billy in the snow, and ran back. In that seething room of smoke and fire was everything on which their lives depended. Food, blankets, even their coats and caps and snowshoes. But he could go no farther than the door. He returned to Billy, found the key in his pocket, and freed him from the chain about his ankles. Billy stood up. As he looked at Brokaw the glass in the window broke and a sea of flame sprouted through. It lighted up their faces. The sergeant's jaw was set hard. His leathery face was curiously white. He could not keep from shivering. There was a strange smile on Billy's face, and a strange look in his eyes. Neither of the two men had undressed for sleep, but their coats, and caps, and heavy mittens were in the flames.

BILLY rattled his handcuffs. Brokaw looked him squarely in the eyes.

"You ought to know this country," he said. "What'll we do?"

"The nearest post is sixty miles from here," said Billy.

"I know that," replied Brokaw. "And I know that Thoreau's cabin is only twenty miles from here. There must be some trapper or Indian shack nearer than that. Is there?" In the red glare of the fire Billy smiled. His teeth gleamed at Brokaw. It was in a lull of the wind, and he went close to Brokaw, and spoke quietly, his eyes shining more and more with that strange light that had come into them.

"This is going to be a big sight easier than hanging, or going to jail for half my life, Brokaw—an' you don't think I'm going to be fool enough to miss the chance, do you? It ain't hard to die of cold. I've almost been there once or twice. I told you last night why I couldn't give up hope—that something good for me always came on her birthday, or near to it. An' it's come. It's forty below, an' we won't live the day out. We ain't got a mouthful of grub. We ain't got clothes enough on to keep us from freezing inside the shanty, unless we had a fire. Last night I saw you fill your match bottle and put it in your coat pocket. Why, man, *we ain't even got a match!*"

In his voice there was a thrill of triumph. Brokaw's hands were clenched, as if someone had threatened to strike him.

"You mean——" he gasped.

"Just this," interrupted Billy, and his voice was harder than Brokaw's now. "The God you used to pray to when you was a kid has given me a choice, Brokaw, an' I'm going to take it. If we stayed by this fire, an' keep it up, we won't die of cold, but of starvation. We'll be dead before we get half way to Thoreau's. There's an Indian shack that we could make, but you'll never find it—not unless you unlock these irons and give me that revolver at your belt. Then I'll take you over there as my prisoner. That'll give me another chance for South America—an' the kid an' home." Brokaw was buttoning the thick collar of his shirt close up about his neck. On his face, too, there came for a moment a grim and determined smile.

"Come on," he said, "we'll make Thoreau's or die."

"Sure," said Billy, stepping quickly to his side. "I suppose I might lie down in the snow, an' refuse to budge. I'd win my game then, wouldn't I? But we'll play it—on the square. It's Thoreau's, or die. And it's up to you to find Thoreau's."

He looked back over his shoulder at the burning cabin as they entered the edge of the forest, and in the gray darkness that was preceding dawn he smiled to himself. Two miles to the South, in a thick swamp, was Indian Joe's cabin. They could have made it easily. On their way to Thoreau's they would pass within a mile of it. But Brokaw would never know. And they would never reach Thoreau's. Billy knew that. He looked at the man hunter as he broke the trail ahead of him—at the pugnacious hunch of his shoulders, his long stride, the determined clench of his hands, and wondered what the soul and the heart of a man like this must be, who in such an hour would not trade life for life. For almost three-quarters of an hour Brokaw did not utter a word. The storm had broke. Above the spruce tops the sky began to clear. Day came slowly and it was growing steadily colder. The swing of Brokaw's arms and shoulders kept the blood in them circulating, while Billy's manacled wrists held a part of his body almost rigid. He knew that his hands were already frozen. His arms were numb, and when at last Brokaw paused for

a moment on the edge of a frozen stream Billy thrust out his hands, and clanked the steel rings.

"It must be getting colder," he said. "Look at that."

THE cold steel had seared his wrists like hot iron, and had pulled off patches of skin and flesh. Brokaw looked, and hunched his shoulders. His lips were blue. His cheeks, ears, and nose were frost-bitten. There was a curious thickness in his voice when he spoke.

"Thoreau lives on this creek," he said. "How much farther is it?"

"Fifteen or sixteen miles," replied Billy. "You'll last just about five, Brokaw. I won't last that long unless you take these things off and give me the use of my arms."

"To knock out my brains when I ain't looking," growled Brokaw. "I guess—before long—you'll be willing to tell where the Indian's shack is."

He kicked his way through a drift of snow to the smoother surface of the stream. There was a breath of wind in their faces, and Billy bowed his head to it. In the hours of his greatest loneliness and despair Billy had kept up his fighting spirit by thinking of pleasant things, and now, as he followed in Brokaw's trail, he began to think of home. It was not hard for him to bring up visions of the girl wife who would probably never know how he had died. He forgot Brokaw. He followed in the trail mechanically, failing to notice that his captor's pace was growing steadily slower, and that his own feet were dragging more and more like leaden weights. He was back among the old hills again, and the sun was shining, and he heard laughter and song. He saw Jeanne standing at the gate in front of the little white cottage, smiling at him, and waving Baby Jeanne's tiny hand at him as he looked back over his shoulder from down the dusty road. His mind did not often travel as far as the mining camp, and he had completely forgotten it now. He no longer felt the sting and pain of the intense cold. It was Brokaw who brought him back into the reality of things. The sergeant stumbled and fell in a drift, and Billy fell over him. For a moment the two men sat half buried in the snow, looking at each other without speaking. Brokaw moved first. He rose to his feet with an effort. Billy made an

attempt to follow him. After three efforts he gave it up, and blinked up into Brokaw's face with a queer laugh. The laugh was almost soundless. There had come a change in Brokaw's face. Its determination and confidence were gone. At last the iron mask of the Law was broken, and there shone through it something of the emotions and the brotherhood of man. He was fumbling in one of his pockets, and drew out the key to the handcuffs. It was a small key, and he held it between his stiffened fingers with difficulty. He knelt down beside Billy. The keyhole was filled with snow. It took a long time—ten minutes—before the key was fitted in and the lock clicked. He helped to tear off the cuffs. Billy felt no sensation as bits of skin and flesh came with them. Brokaw gave him a hand, and assisted him to rise. For the first time he spoke.

"Guess you've got me beat, Billy," he said. "Where's the Indian's?"

He drew his revolver from its holster and tossed it in the snowdrift. The shadow of a smile passed grimly over his face. Billy looked about him. They had stopped where the frozen path of a smaller stream joined the creek. He raised one of his stiffened arms and pointed to it.

"Follow that creek—four miles—and you'll come to Indian Joe's shack," he said.

"And a mile is just about our limit."

"Just about—yours," replied Billy. "I can't make another half. If we had a fire——"

"If——" wheezed Brokaw.

"If we had a fire," continued Billy. "We could warm ourselves, an' make the Indian's shack easy, couldn't we?"

Brokaw did not answer. He had turned toward the creek when one of Billy's pulseless hands fell heavily on his arm.

"Look here, Brokaw."

Brokaw turned. They looked into each other's eyes.

"I guess maybe you're a man, Brokaw," said Billy quietly. "You've done what you thought was your duty. You've kept your word to the law, an' I believe you'll keep your word with me. If I say the word that'll save us now will you go back to headquarters an' report me dead?" For a full half minute their eyes did not waver.

Then Brokaw said:

"No."

Billy dropped his hand. It was Brokaw's hand that fell on his arm now.

"I can't do that," he said. "In ten years I ain't run out the white flag once. It's something that ain't known in the service. There ain't a coward in it, or a man who's afraid to die. But I'll play you square. I'll wait until we're both on our feet again, and then I'll give you twenty-four hours the start of me."

BILLY was smiling now. His hand reached out. Brokaw's met it, and the two joined in a grip that their numb fingers scarcely felt.

"Do you know," said Billy softly, "there's been somethin' runnin' in my head ever since we left the burning cabin. It's something my mother taught me: 'Do unto others as you'd have others do unto you.' I'm a d—— fool, ain't I? But I'm goin' to try the experiment, Brokaw, an' see what comes of it. I could drop in a snowdrift an' let you go on—to die. Then I could save myself. But I'm going to take your word—an' do the other thing. *I've got a match.*"

"A match!"

"Just one. I remember dropping it in my pants pocket yesterday when I was out on the trail. It's in *this* pocket. Your hand is in better shape than mine. Get it." Life had leaped into Brokaw's face. He thrust his hand into Billy's pocket, staring at him as he fumbled, as if fearing that he had lied. When he drew his hand out the match was between his fingers.

"Ah!" he whispered excitedly.

"Don't get nervous," warned Billy. "It's the only one."

Brokaw's eyes were searching the low timber along the shore.

"There's a birch tree," he cried. "Hold it—while I gather a pile of bark!"

He gave the match to Billy, and staggered through the snow to the bank. Strip after strip of the loose bark he tore from the tree. Then he gathered it in a heap in the shelter of a low-hanging spruce, and added dry sticks, and still more bark, to it. When it was ready he stood with his hands in his pockets, and looked at Billy.

"If we had a stone, an' a piece of paper——" he began.

Billy thrust a hand that felt like lifeless lead inside his shirt, and fumbled in a pocket he had made there. Brokaw watched him with red, eager eyes. The hand reappeared, and in it was the buckskin wrapped photograph he had seen the night before. Billy took off the buckskin.

About the picture there was a bit of tissue paper. He gave this and the match to Brokaw.

"There's a little gun-file in the pocket the match came from," he said. "I had it mending a trapchain. You can scratch the match on that."

He turned so that Brokaw could reach into the pocket, and the man hunter thrust in his hand. When he brought it forth he held the file. There was a smile on Billy's frostbitten face as he held the picture for a moment under Brokaw's eyes. Billy's own hands had ruffled up the girl's shining curls an instant before the picture was taken, and she was laughing at him when the camera clicked.

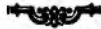
"It's all up to her, Brokaw," Billy said gently. "I told you that last night. It was she who woke me up before the fire got us. If you ever prayed—pray a little now. *For she's going to strike that match!*"

He still looked at the picture as Brokaw knelt beside the pile he had made. He heard the scratch of the match on the file, but his eyes did not turn. The living, breathing face of the most beautiful thing in the world was speaking to him from out of that picture. His mind was dazed. He swayed a little. He heard a voice, low and sweet, and so distant that it came to him like the faintest whisper. "I am coming—I am coming, Billy—coming—com-

ing—coming——" A joyous cry surged up from his soul, but it died on his lips in a strange gasp. A louder cry brought him back to himself for a moment. It was from Brokaw. The sergeant's face was terrible to behold. He rose to his feet, swaying, his hands clutched at his breast. His voice was thick—hopeless.

"The match—went out——" He staggered up to Billy, his eyes like a madman's. Billy swayed dizzily. He laughed, even as he crumpled down in the snow. As if in a dream he saw Brokaw stagger off on the frozen trail. He saw him disappear in his hopeless effort to reach the Indian's shack. And then a strange darkness closed him in, and in that darkness he heard still the sweet voice of his wife. It spoke his name against and again, and it urged him to wake up—wake up—*wake up!* It seemed a long time before he could respond to it. But at last he opened his eyes. He dragged himself to his knees and looked first to find Brokaw. But the man hunter had gone—forever. The picture was still in his hand. Less distinctly than before he saw the girl smiling at him. And then—at his back—he heard a strange and new sound. With an effort he turned to discover what it was.

The match had hidden an unseen spark from Brokaw's eyes. From out of the pile of fuel was rising a pillar of smoke and flame.



The Quest of Humanity

By THOMAS A. EDISON

IT is unquestionably the great quest of humanity . . . happiness! But was the world created to be happy? How many are truly happy? I've studied people in all classes and conditions, and everywhere I have found, when you get below the surface, that it is mostly the insincere individual who says, "I am happy." Nearly everybody wants something he hasn't got, and as things are constructed, what he wants is money, more money than he has in his pocket.

But after all, money can buy only a few things. Why should one envy the captains of industry? Their lives are made up of those vast, incessant worries from which the average individual is happily spared. Worry, worry, that is the evil of life.

What do I consider the nearest approximation to happiness of which the present human nature is capable? Why, living on a farm which is one's own, far from the hectic, artificial conditions of the city—a farm where one gets directly from one's own soil what one needs to sustain life, with a garden in front, and a healthy, normal family to contribute those small domestic joys which relieve a man from business strain.

The Shadowy Third



WHEN the call came I remember that I turned from the telephone in a romantic flutter. Though I had spoken only once to the great surgeon, Roland Maradick, I felt on that Decem-



The scream of warning died in my throat as I watched him pitch forward down the long flight of stairs.

By ELLEN GLASGOW

ber afternoon that to speak to him only once—to watch him in the operating-room for a single hour—was an adventure which drained the color and the excitement from the rest of life. After all these years of work on typhoid and pneumonia cases, I can still feel the delicious tremor of my young pulses; I can still see the winter sunshine slanting through the hospital windows over the white uniforms of the nurses.



"He didn't mention me by name. Can there be a mistake?" I stood, incredulous yet ecstatic, before the superintendent of the hospital.

"No, there isn't a mistake. I was talking to him before you came down." Miss Hemphill's strong face softened while she looked at me. She was a big, resolute woman, a distant Canadian relative of my mother's, and the kind of nurse I had discovered in the month since I had come up from Richmond, that Northern hospital boards, if not Northern patients, appear instinctively to select. From the first, in spite of her hardness, she had taken a liking—I hesitate to use the word "fancy" for a preference so impersonal—to her Virginia cousin. After all, it isn't every Southern nurse, just out of training, who can boast a kinswoman in the superintendent of a New York hospital.

"And he made you understand positively that he meant me?" The thing was so wonderful that I simply couldn't believe it.

"He asked particularly for the nurse who was with Miss Hudson last week when he operated. I think he didn't even remember that you had a name. When I asked if he meant Miss Randolph, he repeated that he wanted the nurse who had been with Miss Hudson. She was small, he said, and cheerful-looking. This, of course, might apply to one or two of the others, but none of these was with Miss Hudson."

"Then I suppose it is really true?" My pulses were tingling. "And I am to be there at six o'clock?"

"Not a minute later. The day nurse goes off duty at that hour, and Mrs. Maradick is never left by herself for an instant."

"It is her mind, isn't it? And that makes it all the stranger that he should select me, for I have had so few mental cases."

"So few cases of any kind," Miss Hemphill was smiling, and when she smiled I wondered if the other nurses would know her. "By the time you have gone through

the treadmill in New York, Margaret, you will have lost a good many things besides your inexperience. I wonder how long you will keep your sympathy and your imagination? After all, wouldn't you have made a better novelist than a nurse?"

"I can't help putting myself into my cases. I suppose one ought not to?"

"It isn't a question of what one ought to do, but of what one must. When you are drained of every bit of sympathy and enthusiasm, and have got nothing in return for it, not even thanks, you will understand why I try to keep you from wasting yourself."

"But surely in a case like this—for Doctor Maradick?"

"Oh, well, of course—for Doctor Maradick." She must have seen that I implored her confidence, for, after a minute, she let fall carelessly a gleam of light on the situation: "It is a very sad case when you think what a charming man and a great surgeon Doctor Maradick is."

Above the starched collar of my uniform I felt the blood leap in bounds to my cheeks. "I have spoken to him only once," I murmured, "but he is charming, and so kind and handsome, isn't he?"

"His patients adore him."

"Oh, yes, I've seen that. Everyone hangs on his visits." Like the patients and the other nurses, I also had come by delightful, if imperceptible, degrees to hang on the daily visits of Doctor Maradick. He was, I suppose, born to be a hero to women. From my first day in his hospital, from the moment when I watched, through closed shutters, while he stepped out of his car, I have never doubted that he was assigned to the great part in the play. If I had been ignorant of his spell—of the charm he exercised over his hospital—I should have felt it in the waiting hush, like a drawn breath, which followed his ring at the door and preceded his imperious footstep on the stairs. My first impression of him, even after the terrible events of the next year, records a memory that is both careless and splendid. At that moment, when, gazing through the chinks in the shutters, I watched him, in his coat of dark fur, cross the pavement over the pale streaks of sunshine, I knew beyond any doubt—I knew with a sort of infallible prescience—that my fate was irretrievably bound up with his in the future. I knew this, I repeat, though Miss Hemphill would still insist

that my foreknowledge was merely a sentimental gleanings from indiscriminate novels. But it wasn't only first love, impressionable as my kinswoman believed me to be. It wasn't only the way he looked. Even more than his appearance—more than the shining dark of his eyes, the silvery brown of his hair, the dusky glow in his face—even more than his charm and his magnificence, I think, the beauty and sympathy in his voice won my heart. It was a voice, I heard someone say afterwards, that ought always to speak poetry.

SO you will see why—if you do not understand at the beginning, I can never hope to make you believe impossible things!—so you will see why I accepted the call when it came as an imperative summons. I couldn't have stayed away after he sent for me. However much I may have tried not to go, I know that in the end I must have gone. In those days, while I was still hoping to write novels, I used to talk a great deal about "destiny" (I have learned since then how silly all such talk is), and I suppose it was my "destiny" to be caught in the web of Roland Maradick's personality. But I am not the first nurse to grow love-sick about a doctor who never gave her a thought.

"I am glad you got the call, Margaret. It may mean a great deal to you. Only try not to be too emotional." I remember that Miss Hemphill was holding a bit of rose-geranium in her hand while she spoke—one of the patients had given it to her from a pot she kept in her room, and the scent of the flower is still in my nostrils—or my memory. Since then—oh, long since then—I have wondered if she also had been caught in the web.

"I wish I knew more about the case." I was pressing for light. "Have you ever seen Mrs. Maradick?"

"Oh, dear, yes. They have been married only a little over a year, and in the beginning she used to come sometimes to the hospital and wait outside while the doctor made his visits. She was a very sweet-looking woman then—not exactly pretty, but fair and slight, with the loveliest smile, I think, I have ever seen. In those first months she was so much in love that we used to laugh about it among ourselves. To see her face light up when the doctor came out of the hospital and crossed the pavement to his car, was as

good as a play. We never tired of watching her—I wasn't superintendent then, so I had more time to look out of the window while I was on day duty. Once or twice she brought her little girl in to see one of the patients. The child was so much like her that you would have known them anywhere for mother and daughter."

I had heard that Mrs. Maradick was a widow, with one child, when she first met the doctor, and I asked now, still seeking an illumination I had not found, "There was a great deal of money, wasn't there?"

"A great fortune. If she hadn't been so attractive, people would have said, I suppose, that Doctor Maradick married her for her money. Only," she appeared to make an effort of memory, "I believe I've heard somehow that it was all left in trust away from Mrs. Maradick if she married again. I can't, to save my life, remember just how it was; but it was a queer will, I know, and Mrs. Maradick wasn't to come into the money unless the child didn't live to grow up. The pity of it——"

A young nurse came into the office to ask for something—the keys, I think, of the operating-room, and Miss Hemphill broke off inconclusively as she hurried out of the door. I was sorry that she left off just when she did. Poor Mrs. Maradick! Perhaps I was too emotional, but even before I saw her I had begun to feel her pathos and her strangeness.

My preparations took only a few minutes. In those days I always kept a suitcase packed and ready for sudden calls; and it was not yet six o'clock when I turned from Tenth Street into Fifth Avenue, and stopped for a minute, before ascending the steps, to look at the house in which Doctor Maradick lived. A fine rain was falling, and I remember thinking, as I turned the corner, how depressing the weather must be for Mrs. Maradick. It was an old house, with damp-looking walls (though that may have been because of the rain) and a spindle-shaped iron railing which ran up the stone steps to the black door, where I noticed a dim flicker through the old-fashioned fanlight. Afterwards I discovered that Mrs. Maradick had been born in the house—her maiden name was Calloran—and that she had never wanted to live anywhere else. She was a woman—this I found out when I knew her better—of strong attachments to both persons and places; and though Doctor Maradick had tried to persuade her to move

uptown after her marriage, she had clung, against his wishes, to the old house in lower Fifth Avenue. I dare say she was obstinate about it in spite of her gentleness and her passion for the doctor. Those sweet, soft women, especially when they have always been rich, are sometimes amazingly obstinate. I have nursed so many of them since—women with strong affections and weak intellects—that I have come to recognize the type as soon as I set eyes upon it.

MY ring at the bell was answered after a little delay, and when I entered the house I saw that the hall was quite dark except for the waning glow from an open fire which burned in the library. When I gave my name, and added that I was the night nurse, the servant appeared to think my humble presence unworthy of illumination. He was an old negro butler, inherited perhaps from Mrs. Maradick's mother, who, I learned afterwards, was from South Carolina; and while he passed me on his way up the staircase, I heard him vaguely muttering that he "wa'n't gwinter tu'n on dem lights twel de chile had done playin'."

To the right of the hall, the soft glow drew me into the library, and crossing the threshold timidly, I stooped to dry my wet coat by the fire. As I bent there, meaning to start up at the first sound of a footstep, I thought how cosy the room was after the damp walls outside to which some bared creepers were clinging; and I was watching the strange shapes and patterns the firelight made on the old Persian rug, when the lamps of a slowly turning motor flashed on me through the white shades at the window. Still dazzled by the glare, I looked round in the dimness and saw a child's ball of red and blue rubber roll towards me out of the gloom of the adjoining room. A moment later, while I made a vain attempt to capture the toy as it spun past me, a little girl darted airily, with peculiar lightness and grace, through the doorway, and stopped quickly, as if in surprise at the sight of a stranger. She was a small child—so small and slight that her footsteps made no sound on the polished floor of the threshold; and I remember thinking while I looked at her that she had the gravest and sweetest face I had ever seen. She couldn't—I decided this afterwards—have been more than six or seven years old, yet she stood there with

a curious prim dignity, like the dignity of an elderly person, and gazed up at me with enigmatical eyes. She was dressed in Scotch plaid, with a bit of red ribbon in her hair, which was cut in a fringe over her forehead and hung very straight to her shoulders. Charming as she was, from her uncurled brown hair to the white socks and black slippers on her little feet, I recall most vividly the singular look in her eyes, which appeared in the shifting light to be of an indeterminate color. For the odd thing about this look was that it was not the look of childhood at all. It was the look of profound experience, of bitter knowledge.

"Have you come for your ball?" I asked; but while the friendly question was still on my lips, I heard the servant returning. In my confusion I made a second ineffectual grasp at the plaything, which had rolled away from me into the dusk of the drawing-room. Then, as I raised my head, I saw that the child also had slipped from the room; and without looking after her I followed the old negro into the pleasant study above, where the great surgeon awaited me.

Ten years ago, before hard nursing had taken so much out of me, I blushed very easily, and I was aware at the moment when I crossed Doctor Maradick's study that my cheeks were the colour of peonies. Of course, I was a fool—no one knows this better than I do—but I had never been alone, even for an instant, with him before, and the man was more than a hero to me, he was—there isn't any reason now why I should blush over the confession—almost a god. At that age I was mad about the wonders of surgery, and Roland Maradick in the operating-room was magician enough to have turned an older and more sensible head than mine. Added to his great reputation and his marvelous skill, he was, I am sure of this, the most splendid-looking man, even at forty-five, that one could imagine. Had he been ungracious—had he been positively rude to me, I should still have adored him; but when he held out his hand, and greeted me in the charming way he had with women, I felt that I would have died for him. It is no wonder that a saying went about the hospital that every woman he operated on fell in love with him. As for the nurses—well, there wasn't a single one of them who had escaped his spell—not even Miss Hemphill, who could have been scarcely a day under fifty.

"I am glad you could come, Miss Randolph. You were with Miss Hudson last week when I operated?"

I bowed. To save my life I couldn't have spoken without blushing the redder.

"I noticed your bright face at the time. Brightness, I think, is what Mrs. Maradick needs. She finds her day nurse depressing." His eyes rested so kindly upon me that I have suspected since that he was not entirely unaware of my worship. It was a small thing, heaven knows, to flatter his vanity—a nurse just out of a training-school—but to some men no tribute is too insignificant to give pleasure.

"You will do your best, I am sure." He hesitated an instant—just long enough for me to perceive the anxiety beneath the genial smile on his face—and then added gravely, "We wish to avoid, if possible, having to send her away."

I COULD only murmur in response, and after a few carefully chosen words about his wife's illness, he rang the bell and directed the maid to take me upstairs to my room. Not until I was ascending the stairs to the third story did it occur to me that he had really told me nothing. I was as perplexed about the nature of Mrs. Maradick's malady as I had been when I entered the house.

I found my room pleasant enough. It had been arranged—at Doctor Maradick's request, I think—that I was to sleep in the house, and after my austere little bed at the hospital, I was agreeably surprised by the cheerful look of the apartment into which the maid led me. The walls were papered in roses, and there were curtains of flowered chintz at the window, which looked down on a small formal garden at the rear of the house. This the maid told me, for it was too dark for me to distinguish more than a marble fountain and a fir-tree, which looked old, though I afterwards learned that it was replanted almost every season.

In ten minutes I had slipped into my uniform and was ready to go to my patient; but for some reason—to this day I have never found out what it was that turned her against me at the start—Mrs. Maradick refused to receive me. While I stood outside her door I heard the day nurse trying to persuade her to let me come in. It wasn't any use, however, and in the end I was obliged to go back to my room and wait until the poor lady got over her

whim and consented to see me. That was long after dinner—it must have been nearer eleven than ten o'clock—and Miss Peterson was quite worn out by the time he came for me.

"I'm afraid you'll have a bad night,"

he said as we went downstairs together. That was her way, I soon saw, to expect the worst of everything and everybody.

"Does she often keep you up like this?"

"Oh, no, she is usually very considerate. I never knew a sweeter character. But she still has this hallucination——"

Here again, as in the scene with Doctor Maradick, I felt that the explanation had only deepened the mystery. Mrs. Maradick's hallucination, whatever form it assumed, was evidently a subject for evasion and subterfuge in the household. It was in the tip of my tongue to ask, "What is her hallucination?"—but before I could get the words past my lips we had reached Mrs. Maradick's door, and Miss Peterson motioned to me to be silent. As the door opened a little way to admit me, I saw that Mrs. Maradick was already in bed, and that the lights were out except for a night-lamp burning on a candle-stand beside a book and a carafe of water.

"I won't go in with you," said Miss Peterson in a whisper; and I was on the point of stepping over the threshold when I saw the little girl, in the dress of Scotch plaid, slip by me from the dusk of the room into the electric light of the hall. She held a doll in her arms, and as she went by she dropped a doll's work-basket in the doorway. Miss Peterson must have picked up the toy, for when I turned in a minute to look for it I found that it was gone. I remember thinking that it was late for a child to be up—she looked delicate, too—but, after all it was no business of mine, and four years in the hospital had taught me never to meddle in things that do not concern me. There is nothing a nurse learns quicker than not to try to put the world to rights in a day.

When I crossed the floor to the chair by Mrs. Maradick's bed, she turned over on her side and looked at me with the sweetest and saddest smile.

"You are the night nurse," she said in a gentle voice; and from the moment she spoke I knew that there was nothing hysterical or violent about her mania—or hallucination, as they called it. "They told me your name, but I have forgotten it."

"Randolph—Margaret Randolph." I

liked her from the start, and I think she must have seen it.

"You look very young, Miss Randolph."

"I am twenty-two, but I suppose I don't look quite my age. People usually think I am younger."

For a minute she was silent, and while I settled myself in the chair by the bed, I thought how strikingly she resembled the little girl I had seen first in the afternoon, and then leaving her room a few moments before. They had the same small, heart-shaped faces, coloured ever so faintly; the same straight, soft hair, between brown and flaxen; and the same large, grave eyes, set very far apart under arched eyebrows. What surprised me most, however, was that they both looked at me with that enigmatical and vaguely wondering expression—only in Mrs. Maradick's face the vagueness seemed to change now and then to a definite fear—a flash, I had almost said, of startled horror.

I sat quite still in my chair, and until the time came for Mrs. Maradick to take her medicine not a word passed between us. Then, when I bent over her with the glass in my hand, she raised her head from the pillow and said in a whisper of suppressed intensity:

"You look kind. I wonder if you could have seen my little girl?"

AS I slipped my arm under the pillow I tried to smile cheerfully down on her. "Yes, I've seen her twice. I'd know her anywhere by her likeness to you."

A glow shone in her eyes, and I thought how pretty she must have been before illness took the life and animation out of her features. "Then I know you're good." Her voice was so strained and low that I could barely hear it. "If you weren't good you couldn't have seen her."

I thought this queer enough, but all I answered was, "She looked delicate to be sitting up so late."

A quiver passed over her thin features, and for a minute I thought she was going to burst into tears. As she had taken the medicine, I put the glass back on the candle-stand, and bending over the bed, smoothed the straight brown hair, which was as fine and soft as spun silk, back from her forehead. There was something about her—I don't know what it was—that made you love her as soon as she looked at you.

"She always had that light and airy way,

though she was never sick a day in her life," she answered calmly after a pause. Then, groping for my hand, she whispered passionately, "You must not tell him—you must not tell any one that you have seen her!"

"I must not tell any one?" Again I had the impression that had come to me first in Doctor Maradick's study, and afterwards with Miss Peterson on the staircase, that I was seeking a gleam of light in the midst of obscurity.

"Are you sure there isn't any one listening—that there isn't any one at the door?" she asked, pushing aside my arm and raising herself on the pillows.

"Quite, quite sure. They have put out the lights in the hall."

"And you will not tell him? Promise me that you will not tell him." The startled horror flashed from the vague wonder of her expression. "He doesn't like her to come back, because he killed her."

"Because he killed her!" Then it was that light burst on me in a blaze. So this was Mrs. Maradick's hallucination! She believed that her child was dead—the little girl I had seen with my own eyes leaving her room; and she believed that her husband—the great surgeon we worshipped in the hospital—had murdered her. No wonder they veiled the dreadful obsession in mystery! No wonder that even Miss Peterson had not dared to drag the horrid thing out into the light! It was the kind of hallucination one simply couldn't stand having to face.

"There is no use telling people things that nobody believes," she resumed slowly, still holding my hand in a grasp that would have hurt me if her fingers had not been so fragile. "Nobody believes that he killed her. Nobody believes that she comes back every day to the house. Nobody believes—and yet you saw her——"

"Yes, I saw her—but why should your husband have killed her?" I spoke soothingly, as one would speak to a person who was quite mad. Yet she was not mad, I could have sworn this while I looked at her.

For a moment she moaned inarticulately, as if the horror of her thoughts were too great to pass into speech. Then she flung out her thin, bare arm with a wild gesture.

"Because he never loved me!" she said. "He never loved me!"

"But he married you," I urged gently while I stroked her hair. "If he hadn't loved you, why should he have married you?"

"He wanted the money—my little girl's money. It all goes to him when I die."

"But he is rich himself. He must make a fortune from his profession."

"It isn't enough. He wanted millions." She had grown stern and tragic. "No, he never loved me. He loved someone else from the beginning—before I knew him."

IT was quite useless, I saw, to reason with her. If she wasn't mad, she was in a state of terror and despondency so black that it had almost crossed the border-line into madness. I thought once that I would go upstairs and bring the child down from her nursery; but, after a moment's hesitation, I realized that Miss Peterson and Doctor Maradick must have long ago tried all these measures. Clearly, there was nothing to do except soothe and quiet her as much as I could; and this I did until she dropped into a light sleep which lasted well into the morning.

By seven o'clock I was worn out—not from work but from the strain on my sympathy—and I was glad, indeed, when one of the maids came in to bring me an early cup of coffee. Mrs. Maradick was still sleeping—it was a mixture of bromide and chloral I had given her—and she did not wake until Miss Peterson came on duty an hour or two later. Then, when I went downstairs, I found the dining-room deserted except for the old housekeeper, who was looking over the silver. Doctor Maradick, she explained to me presently, had his breakfast served in the morning-room on the other side of the house.

"And the little girl? Does she take her meals in the nursery?"

She threw me a startled glance. Was it, I questioned afterwards, one of distrust or apprehension?

"There isn't any little girl. Haven't you heard?"

"Heard? No. Why, I saw her only yesterday." The look she gave me—I was sure of it now—was full of alarm.

"The little girl—she was the sweetest child I ever saw—died just two months ago of pneumonia."

"But she couldn't have died." I was a fool to let this out, but the shock had completely unnerved me. "I tell you I saw her yesterday."

The alarm in her face deepened. "That is Mrs. Maradick's trouble. She believes that she still sees her."

"But don't you see her?" I drove the question home bluntly.

"No." She set her lips tightly. "I never see anything."

So I had been wrong, after all, and the explanation, when it came, only accentuated the terror. The child was dead—she had died of pneumonia two months ago—and yet I had seen her, with my own eyes, playing ball in the library; I had seen her slipping out of her mother's room, with her doll in her arms.

"Is there another child in the house? Could there be a child belonging to one of the servants?" A gleam had shot through the fog in which I was groping.

"No, there isn't any other. The Doctor tried bringing one once, but it threw the poor lady into such a state she almost died of it. Besides, there wouldn't be any other child as quiet and sweet-looking as Dorothea. To see her skipping along in her dress of Scotch plaid used to make me think of a fairy, though they say that fairies wear nothing but white or green."

"Has any one else seen her—the child, I mean—any of the servants?"

"Only old Gabriel, the coloured butler, who came with Mrs. Maradick's mother from South Carolina. I've heard that negroes often have a kind of second sight—though I don't know that that is just what you would call it. But they seem to believe in the supernatural by instinct, and Gabriel is so old and doty—he does no work except answer the door-bell and clean the silver—that nobody pays much attention to anything that he sees—"

"Is the child's nursery kept as it used to be?"

"Oh, no. The doctor had all the toys sent to the children's hospital. That was a great grief to Mrs. Maradick; but Doctor Brandon thought, and all the nurses agreed with him, that it was best for her not to be allowed to keep the room as it was when Dorothea was living."

"Dorothea? Was that the child's name?"

"Yes, it means the gift of God, doesn't it? She was named after the mother of Mrs. Maradick's first husband, Mr. Ballard. He was the grave, quiet kind—not the least like the doctor."

I wondered if the other dreadful obsession of Mrs. Maradick's had drifted down

through the nurses or the servants to the housekeeper; but she said nothing about it, and since she was, I suspected a garrulous person, I thought it wiser to assume that the gossip had not reached her.

A LITTLE later, when breakfast was over and I had not yet gone upstairs to my room, I had my first interview with Doctor Brandon, the famous alienist who was in charge of the case. I had never seen him before, but from the first moment that I looked at him I took his measure almost by intuition. He was, I suppose, honest enough—I have always granted him that, bitterly as I have felt towards him. It wasn't his fault that he lacked red blood in his brain, or that he had formed the habit, from long association with abnormal phenomena, of regarding all life as a disease. He was the sort of physician—every nurse will understand what I mean—who deals instinctively with groups instead of with individuals. He was long and solemn and very round in the face; and I hadn't talked to him ten minutes before I knew he had been educated in Germany, and that he had learned over there to treat every emotion as a pathological manifestation. I used to wonder what he got out of life—what any one got out of life who had analyzed away everything except the bare structure.

When I reached my room at last, I was so tired that I could barely remember either the questions Doctor Brandon had asked or the directions he had given me. I fell asleep, I know, almost as soon as my head touched the pillow; and the maid who came to inquire if I wanted luncheon decided to let me finish my nap. In the afternoon, when she returned with a cup of tea, she found me still heavy and drowsy. Though I was used to night nursing, I felt as if I had danced from sunset to daybreak. It was fortunate, I reflected, while I drank my tea, that every case didn't wear on one's sympathies as acutely as Mrs. Maradick's hallucination had worn on mine.

Through the day I did not see Doctor Maradick; but at seven o'clock when I came up from my early dinner on my way to take the place of Miss Peterson, who had kept on duty an hour later than usual, he met me in the hall and asked me to come into his study. I thought him handsomer than ever in his evening clothes, with a white flower in his buttonhole. He was

going to some public dinner, the house-keeper told me, but then, he was always going somewhere. I believe he didn't dine at home a single evening that winter.

"Did Mrs. Maradick have a good night?" He had closed the door after us, and turning now with the question, he smiled kindly, as if he wished to put me at ease in the beginning.

"She slept very well after she took the medicine. I gave her that at eleven o'clock."

For a minute he regarded me silently, and I was aware that his personality—his charm—was focused upon me. It was almost as if I stood in the centre of converging rays of light, so vivid was my impression of him.

"Did she allude in any way to her—to her hallucination?" he asked.

How the warning reached me—what invisible waves of sense-perception transmitted the message—I have never known; but while I stood there, facing the splendor of the doctor's presence, every intuition cautioned me that the time had come when I must take sides in the household. While I stayed there I must stand either with Mrs. Maradick or against her.

"She talked quite rationally," I replied after a moment.

"What did she say?"

"She told me how she was feeling, that she missed her child, and that she walked a little every day about her room."

His face changed—how I could not at first determine.

"Have you seen Doctor Brandon?"

"He came this morning to give me his directions."

"He thought her less well to-day. He has advised me to send her to Rosedale."

I have never, even in secret, tried to account for Doctor Maradick. He may have been sincere. I tell only what I know—not what I believe or imagine—and the human is sometimes as inscrutable, as inexplicable, as the supernatural.

WHILE he watched me I was conscious of an inner struggle, as if opposing angels warred somewhere in the depths of my being. When at last I made my decision, I was acting less from reason, I knew, than in obedience to the pressure of some secret current of thought. Heaven knows, even then, the man held me captive while I defied him.

"Doctor Maradick," I lifted my eyes

for the first time frankly to his, "I believe that your wife is as sane as I am—or as you are."

He started. "Then she did not talk freely to you?"

"She may be mistaken, unstrung, piteously distressed in mind"—I brought this out with emphasis—"but she is not—I am willing to stake my future on it—a fit subject for an asylum. It would be foolish—it would be cruel to send her to Rosedale."

"Cruel, you say?" A troubled look crossed his face, and his voice grew very gentle. "You do not imagine that I could be cruel to her?"

"No, I do not think that." My voice also had softened.

"We will let things go on as they are. Perhaps Doctor Brandon may have some other suggestion to make." He drew out his watch and compared it with the clock—nervously, I observed, as if his action were a screen for his discomfiture or perplexity. "I must be going now. We will speak of this again in the morning."

But in the morning we did not speak of it, and during the month that I nursed Mrs. Maradick I was not called again into her husband's study. When I met him in the hall or on the staircase, which was seldom, he was as charming as ever; yet, in spite of his courtesy, I had a persistent feeling that he had taken my measure on that evening, and that he had no further use for me.

As the days went by Mrs. Maradick seemed to grow stronger. Never, after our first night together, had she mentioned the child to me; never had she alluded by so much as a word to her dreadful charge against her husband. She was like any woman recovering from a great sorrow, except that she was sweeter and gentler. It is no wonder that everyone who came near her loved her; for there was a loveliness about her like the mystery of light, not of darkness. She was, I have always thought, as much of an angel as it is possible for a woman to be on this earth. And yet, angelic as she was, there were times when it seemed to me that she both hated and feared her husband. Though he never entered her room while I was there, and I never heard his name on her lips until an hour before the end, still I could tell by the look of terror in her face whenever his step passed down the hall that her very soul shivered at his approach.

During the whole month I did not see the child again, though one night, when I came suddenly into Mrs. Maradick's room, I found a little garden, such as children make out of pebbles and bits of box, on the window-sill. I did not mention it to Mrs. Maradick, and a little later, as the maid lowered the shades, I noticed that the garden had vanished. Since then I have often wondered if the child were invisible only to the rest of us, and if her mother still saw her. But there was no way of finding out except by questioning, and Mrs. Maradick was so well and patient that I hadn't the heart to question. Things couldn't have been better with her than they were, and I was beginning to tell myself that she might soon go out for an airing, when the end came so suddenly.

It was a mild January day—the kind of day that brings the foretaste of spring in the middle of winter, and when I came downstairs in the afternoon, I stopped a minute by the window at the end of the hall to look down on the box maze in the garden. There was an old fountain, bearing two laughing boys in marble, in the centre of the graveled walk, and the water, which had been turned on that morning for Mrs. Maradick's pleasure, sparkled now like silver as the sunlight splashed over it. I had never before felt the air quite so soft and springlike in January; and I thought, as I gazed down on the garden, that it would be a good idea for Mrs. Maradick to go out and bask for an hour or so in the sunshine. It seemed strange to me that she was never allowed to get any fresh air except the air that came through her window.

WHEN I went into her room, however, I found that she had no wish to go out. She was sitting, wrapped in shawls, by the open window, which looked down on the fountain; and as I entered she glanced up from a little book she was reading. A pot of daffodils stood on the window-sill—she was very fond of flowers and we tried always to keep some growing in her room.

"Do you know what I am reading, Miss Randolph?" she asked in her soft voice; and she read aloud a verse while I went over to the candlestand to measure out a dose of medicine.

"If thou hast two loaves of bread, sell one and buy daffodils, for bread nourisheth the body, but daffodils delight the

soul.' That is very beautiful, don't you think so?"

I said, "Yes," that it was beautiful; and then I asked her if she wouldn't go downstairs and walk about in the garden.

"He wouldn't like it," she answered; and it was the first time she had mentioned her husband to me since the night I came to her. "He doesn't want me to go out."

I tried to laugh her out of the idea; but it was no use, and after a few minutes I gave up and began talking of other things. Even then it did not occur to me that her fear of Doctor Maradick was anything but a fancy. I could see, of course, that she wasn't out of her head; but sane persons, I knew, sometimes have unaccountable prejudices, and I accepted her dislike as a mere whim or aversion. I did not understand then and—I may as well confess this before the end comes—I do not understand any better to-day. I am writing down the things I actually saw, and I repeat that I have never had the slightest twist in the direction of the miraculous.

The afternoon slipped away while we talked—she talked brightly when any subject came up that interested her—and it was the last hour of day—that grave, still hour when the movement of life seems to droop and falter for a few precious minutes—that brought us the thing I had dreaded silently since my first night in the house. I remember that I had risen to close the window, and was leaning out for a breath of the mild air, when there was the sound of steps, consciously softened, in the hall outside, and Doctor Brandon's usual knock fell on my ears. Then, before I could cross the room, the door opened, and the doctor entered with Miss Peterson. The day nurse, I knew, was a stupid woman; but she had never appeared to me so stupid, so armoured and encased in her professional manner, as she did at that moment.

"I am glad to see that you are taking the air." As Doctor Brandon came over to the window, I wondered maliciously what devil of contradictions had made him a distinguished specialist in nervous diseases.

"Who was the other doctor you brought this morning?" asked Mrs. Maradick gravely; and that was all I ever heard about the visit of the second alienist.

"Someone who is anxious to cure you." He dropped into a chair beside her and

patted her hand with his long, pale fingers. "We are so anxious to cure you that we want to send you away to the country for a fortnight or so. Miss Peterson has come to help you to get ready, and I've kept my car waiting for you. There couldn't be a nicer day for a trip, could there?"

THE moment had come at last. I knew at once what he meant, and so did Mrs. Maradick. A wave of colour flowed and ebbed in her thin cheeks, and I felt her body quiver when I moved from the window and put my arms on her shoulders. I was aware again, as I had been aware that evening in Doctor Maradick's study, of a current of thought that beat from the air around into my brain. Though it cost me my career as a nurse and my reputation for sanity, I knew that I must obey that invisible warning.

"You are going to take me to an asylum," said Mrs. Maradick.

He made some foolish denial or evasion; but before he had finished I turned from Mrs. Maradick and faced him impulsively. In a nurse this was flagrant rebellion, and I realized that the act wrecked my professional future. Yet I did not care—I did not hesitate. Something stronger than I was driving me on.

"Doctor Brandon," I said, "I beg you—I implore you to wait until to-morrow. There are things I must tell you."

A queer look came into his face, and I understood, even in my excitement, that he was mentally deciding in which group he should place me—to which class of morbid manifestations I must belong.

"Very well, very well, we will hear everything," he replied soothingly; but I saw him glance at Miss Peterson, and she went over to the wardrobe for Mrs. Maradick's fur coat and hat.

Suddenly, without warning, Mrs. Maradick threw the shawls away from her, and stood up. "If you send me away," she said, "I shall never come back. I shall never live to come back."

The grey of twilight was just beginning, and while she stood there, in the dusk of the room, her face shone out as pale and flower-like as the daffodils on the window-sill. "I cannot go away!" she cried in a sharper voice. "I cannot go away from my child!"

I saw her face clearly; I heard her voice; and then—the horror of the scene sweeps back over me!—I saw the door

open slowly and the little girl run across the room to her mother. I saw the child lift her little arms, and I saw the mother stoop and gather her to her bosom. So closely locked were they in that passionate embrace that their forms seemed to mingle in the gloom that enveloped them.

"After this can you doubt?" I threw out the words almost savagely—and then, when I turned from the mother and child to Doctor Brandon and Miss Peterson, I knew breathlessly—oh, there was a shock in the discovery!—that they were blind to the child. Their blank faces revealed the consternation of ignorance, not of conviction. They had seen nothing except the vacant arms of the mother and the swift, erratic gesture with which she stooped to embrace some invisible presence. Only my vision—and I have asked myself since if the power of sympathy enabled me to penetrate the web of material fact and see the spiritual form of the child—only my vision was not blinded by the clay through which I looked.

"After this can you doubt?" Doctor Brandon had flung my words back to me. Was it his fault, poor man, if life had granted him only the eyes of flesh? Was it his fault if he could see only half of the thing there before him?

But they couldn't see, and since they couldn't see I realized that it was useless to tell them. Within an hour they took Mrs. Maradick to the asylum; and she went quietly, though when the time came for parting from me she showed some faint trace of feeling. I remember that at the last, while we stood on the pavement, she lifted her black veil, which she wore for the child, and said: "Stay with her, Miss Randolph, as long as you can. I shall never come back."

Then she got into the car and was driven off, while I stood looking after her with a sob in my throat. Dreadful as I felt it to be, I didn't, of course, realize the full horror of it, or I couldn't have stood there quietly on the pavement. I didn't realize it, indeed, until several months afterwards when word came that she had died in the asylum. I never knew what her illness was, though I vaguely recall that something was said about "heart failure"—a loose enough term. My own belief is that she died simply of the terror of life.

To my surprise Doctor Maradick asked me to stay on as his office nurse after his wife went to Rosedale; and when the news

of her death came there was no suggestion of my leaving. I don't know to this day why he wanted me in the house. Perhaps he thought I should have less opportunity to gossip if I stayed under his roof; perhaps he still wished to test the power of his charm over me. His vanity was incredible in so great a man. I have seen him flush with pleasure when people turned to look at him in the street, and I know that he was not above playing on the sentimental weakness of his patients. But he was magnificent, heaven knows! Few men, I imagine, have been the objects of so many foolish infatuations.

THE next summer Doctor Maradick went abroad for two months, and while he was away I took my vacation in Virginia. When we came back the work was heavier than ever—his reputation by this time was tremendous—and my days were so crowded with appointments, and hurried flittings to emergency cases, that I had scarcely a minute left in which to remember poor Mrs. Maradick. Since the afternoon when she went to the asylum the child had not been in the house; and at last I was beginning to persuade myself that the little figure had been an optical illusion—the effect of shifting lights in the gloom of the old rooms—not the apparition I had once believed it to be. It does not take long for a phantom to fade from the memory—especially when one leads the active and methodical life I was forced into that winter. Perhaps—who knows?—(I remember telling myself) the doctors may have been right, after all, and the poor lady may have actually been out of her mind. With this view of the past, my judgment of Doctor Maradick insensibly altered. It ended, I think, in my acquitting him altogether. And then, just as he stood clear and splendid in my verdict of him, the reversal came so precipitately that I grow breathless now whenever I try to live it over again. The violence of the next turn in affairs left me, I often fancy, with a perpetual dizziness of the imagination.

It was in May that we heard of Mrs. Maradick's death, and exactly a year later, on a mild and fragrant afternoon, when the daffodils were blooming in patches around the old fountain in the garden, the housekeeper came into the office, where I lingered over some accounts, to bring me news of the doctor's approaching marriage.

"It is no more than we might have expected," she concluded rationally. "The house must be lonely for him—he is such a sociable man. But I can't help feeling," she brought out slowly after a pause in which I felt a shiver pass over me. "I can't help feeling that it is hard for that other woman to have all the money poor Mrs. Maradick's first husband left her."

"There is a great deal of money, then?" I asked curiously.

"A great deal." She waved her hand, as if words were futile to express the sum. "Millions and millions!"

"They will give up this house, of course?"

"That's done already, my dear. There won't be a brick left of it by this time next year. It's to be pulled down and an apartment-house built on the ground."

Again the shiver passed over me. I couldn't bear to think of Mrs. Maradick's old home falling to pieces.

"You didn't tell me the name of the bride," I said. "Is she someone he met while he was in Europe?"

"Dear me, no! She is the very lady he was engaged to before he married Mrs. Maradick, only she threw him over, so people said, because he wasn't rich enough. Then she married some lord or prince from over the water; but there was a divorce, and now she has turned again to her old lover. He is rich enough now, I guess, even for her!"

It was all perfectly true, I suppose; it sounded as plausible as a story out of a newspaper; and yet while she told me I felt, or dreamed that I felt, a sinister, an impalpable hush in the air. I was nervous, no doubt; I was shaken by the suddenness with which the housekeeper had sprung her news on me; but as I sat there I had quite vividly an impression that the old house was listening—that there was a real, if invisible, presence somewhere in the room or the garden. Yet, when an instant afterwards I glanced through the long window which opened down to the brick terrace, I saw only the faint sunshine over the deserted garden, with its maze of box, its marble fountain, and its patches of daffodils.

The housekeeper had gone—one of the servants, I think, came for her—and I was sitting at my desk when the words of Mrs. Maradick on that last evening floated into my mind. The daffodils brought her back to me; for I thought, as I watched them

growing, so still and golden in the sunshine, how she would have enjoyed them. Almost unconsciously I repeated the verse she had read to me:

"If thou hast two loaves of bread, sell one and buy daffodils"—and it was at this very instant, while the words were still on my lips, that I turned my eyes to the box maze, and saw the child skipping rope along the gravelled path to the fountain. Quite distinctly, as clear as day, I saw her come, with what children call the dancing step, between the low box borders to the place where the daffodils bloomed by the fountain. From her straight brown hair to her frock of Scotch plaid and her little feet, which twinkled in white socks and black slippers over the turning rope, she was as real to me as the ground on which she trod or the laughing marble boys under the splashing water. Starting up from my chair, I made a single step to the terrace. If I could only reach her—only speak to her—I felt that I might at last solve the mystery. But with the first flutter of my dress on the terrace, the airy little form melted into the quiet dusk of the maze. Not a breath stirred the daffodils, not a shadow passed over the sparkling flow of the water; yet, weak and shaken in every nerve, I sat down on the brick step of the terrace and burst into tears. I must have known that something terrible would happen before they pulled down Mrs. Maradick's home.

THE doctor dined out that night. He was with the lady he was going to marry, the housekeeper told me; and it must have been almost midnight when I heard him come in and go upstairs to his room. I was downstairs because I had been unable to sleep, and the book I wanted to finish I had left that afternoon in the office. The book—I can't remember what it was—had seemed to me very exciting when I began it in the morning; but after the visit of the child I found the romantic novel as dull as a treatise on nursing. It was impossible for me to follow the lines, and I was on the point of giving up and going to bed, when Doctor Maradick opened the front door with his latch-key and went up the stair.

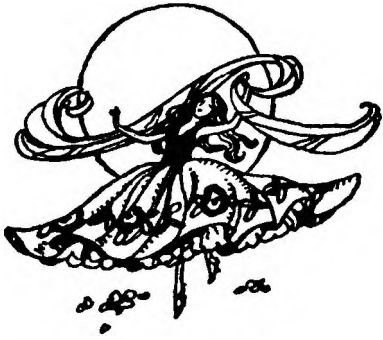
I was still sitting there when the telephone on my desk rang, with what seemed to my overwrought nerves a startling abruptness, and the voice of the superintendent told me hurriedly that Doctor Maradick was needed at the hospital. I had become so accustomed to these emergency calls in the night that I felt reassured when I had rung up the doctor in his room and had heard the hearty sound of his response. He had not yet undressed, he said, and would come down immediately while I ordered back his car, which must just have reached the garage.

"I'll be with you in five minutes!" he called as cheerfully as if I had summoned him to his wedding.

I heard him cross the floor of his room, and before he could reach the head of the staircase, I opened the door and went out into the hall in order that I might turn on the light and have his hat and coat waiting. The electric button was at the end of the hall, and as I moved towards it, guided by the glimmer that fell from the landing above, I lifted my eyes to the staircase, which climbed dimly, with its slender mahogany balustrade, as far as the third story. Then it was, at the very moment when the doctor, humming gaily, began his quick descent of the steps, that I distinctly saw—I will swear to this on my death-bed—a child's skipping-rope lying loosely coiled, as if it had dropped from a careless little hand, in the bend of the staircase. With a spring I had reached the electric button, flooding the hall with light; just as I did so, while my arm was still out-stretched behind me, I heard the humming voice change to a cry of surprise or terror, and the figure on the staircase tripped heavily and stumbled with groping hands into emptiness. The scream of warning died in my throat while I watched him pitch forward down the long flight of stairs to the floor at my feet. Even before I bent over him, before I wiped the blood from his brow and felt for his silent heart, I knew that he was dead.

Something—it may have been, as the world believes, a misstep in the dimness, or it may have been, as I am ready to bear witness, an invisible judgment—something had killed him at the very moment when he most wanted to live.





The Matador of the Five Towns

By ARNOLD BENNETT

MRS. BRINDLEY looked across the lunch-table at her husband with glinting, eager eyes, which showed that there was something unusual in the brain behind them.

"Bob," she said, factitiously calm. "You don't know what I've just remembered!"

"Well?" said he.

"It's only grandma's birthday to-day!"

My friend Robert Brindley, the architect, struck the table with a violent fist, making his little boys blink, and then he said quietly:

"*The deuce!*"

I gathered that grandmamma's birthday had been forgotten and that it was not a festival that could be neglected with impunity. Both Mr. and Mrs. Brindley had evidently a humorous appreciation of crises, contretemps, and those collisions of circumstances which are usually called "junctures" for short. I could have imagined either of them saying to the other: "Here's a funny thing! The house is on fire!" And then yielding to laughter as they ran for buckets. Mrs. Brindley, in particular, laughed now; she gazed at the table-cloth and laughed almost silently to herself; though it appeared that their joint forgetfulness might result in temporary estrangement from a venerable ancestor who was also, birthdays being duly observed, a continual fount of rich presents in specie.

Robert Brindley drew a time-table from his breast-pocket with the rapid gesture of habit. All men of business in the Five Towns seem to carry that timetable in their breast-pockets. Then he examined his watch carefully.

"You'll have time to dress up your progeny and catch the 2:05. It makes the connection at Knype for Axe."

The two little boys, aged perhaps four and six, who had been ladling the messy contents of specially deep plates on to their

oibs, dropped their spoons and began to babble about gray-granny, and one of them insisted several times that he must wear his new gaiters.

"Yes," said Mrs. Brindley to her husband, after reflection. "And a fine old crowd there'll be in the train—with this foot-ball match!"

"Can't be helped! . . . Now you kids, hook it upstairs to nurse."

"And what about you?" asked Mrs. Brindley.

"You must tell the old lady I'm kept by business."

"I told her that last year, and you know what happened."

"Well," said Brindley. "Here Loring's just come. You don't expect me to leave him, do you? Or have you had the beautiful idea of taking him over to Axe to pass a pleasant Saturday afternoon with your esteemed grandmother?"

"No," said Mrs. Brindley, "Hardly that!"

"Well, then?"

The boys, having first revolved on their axes, slid down from their high chairs as though from horses.

"Look here," I said. "You musn't mind me. I shall be all right."

"Ha-ha!" shouted Brindley. "I seem to see you turned loose alone in this amusing town on a winter afternoon. I seem to see you!"

"I could stop in and read," I said, eyeing the multitudinous books on every wall of the dining-room. The house was dadoed throughout with books.

"Rot!" said Brindley.

This was only my third visit to his home and to the Five Towns, but he and I had already become curiously intimate. My first two visits had been occasioned by official pilgrimages as a British Museum expert in ceramics. The third was for a purely friendly week-end, and had no pretext. The fact is, I was drawn to the

astonishing district and its astonishing inhabitants. The Five Towns, to me, was like the East to those who have smelt the East: it "called."

"I'll tell you what we *could* do," said Mrs. Brindley. "We could put him on to Dr. Stirling."

"So we could!" Brindley agreed. "Wife, this is one of your bright, intelligent days. We'll put you on to the doctor, Loring. I'll impress on him that he must keep you constantly amused till I get back, which I fear it won't be early. This is what we call manners, you know—to invite a fellow creature to travel a hundred and fifty miles to spend two days here, and then to turn him out before he's been in the house an hour. It's *us*, that is! But the truth of the matter is the birthday business might be a bit serious. It might easily cost me fifty quid and no end of diplomacy. If you were a married man you'd know that the ten plagues of Egypt are simply nothing in comparison with your wife's relations. And she's over eighty, the old lady."

"I'll give you ten plagues of Egypt!" Mrs. Brindley menaced her spouse, as she wafted the boys from the room. "Mr. Loring, do take some more of that cheese if you fancy it." She vanished.

WITHIN ten minutes Brindley was conducting me to the doctor's, whose house was on the way to the station. In its spacious porch, he explained the circumstances in six words, depositing me like a parcel. The doctor, who had once by mysterious medicaments saved my frail organism from the consequences of one of Brindley's Falstaffian "nights," hospitably protested his readiness to sacrifice patients to my pleasure.

"It'll be a chance for MacIlroy," said he.

"Who's MacIlroy?" I asked.

"MacIlroy is another Scotchman," growled Brindley. "Extraordinary how they stick together! When he wanted an assistant, do you suppose he looked about for some one in the district, some one who understood us and loved us and could take a hand at bridge? Not he! Off he goes to Cupar, or somewhere, and comes back with another stage Scotchman, named MacIlroy. Now listen here, Doc! A charge to keep you have, and mind you keep it, or I'll never pay your confounded bill. We'll knock on the window to-night as we come back. In the meantime you can show Loring your etchings, and pray for me." And to me: "Here's a latchkey." With

no further ceremony, he hurried away to join his wife and children at Bleakridge Station. In such singular manner was I transferred forcibly from host to host.

So we went forth, splashing warily through the rich mud and the dank mist of Trafalgar Road, past all those strange little Indian-red houses, and ragged empty spaces, and poster-boardings, and rounded kilns, and high smoking chimneys, up hill, down hill, and up hill again, encountering and overtaking many electric trams that dipped and rose like ships at sea, into Crown Square, the centre of Hanbridge, the metropolis of the Five Towns. And while the doctor paid his mysterious call, I stared around me at the large shops and the banks and the gilded hotels. Down the radiating street-vistas I could make out the façades of halls, theatres, chapels. Trams rumbled continually in and out of the square. They seemed to enter casually, to hesitate a few moments as if at a loss, and then to decide with a nonchalant clang of bells that they might as well go off somewhere else in search of something more interesting. They were rather like human beings who are condemned to live for ever in a place of which they are sick beyond the expressiveness of words.

And indeed the influence of Crown Square, with its large effects of terra cotta, plate glass, and gold letters, all under a heavy skyscape of drab smoke, was depressing. A few very seedy men (sharply contrasting with the fine delicacy of costly things behind plate-glass) stood doggedly here and there in the mud, immobilized by the gloomy enchantment of the square. Two of them turned to look at Stirling's motor-car and me. They gazed fixedly for a long time, and then one said, only his lips moving:

"Has Tommy stood thee that there quart o' beer as he promised thee?"

No reply, no response of any sort, for a further long period! Then the other said, with grim resignation:

"Ay!"

The conversation ceased, having made a little oasis in the dismal desert of their silent scrutiny of the car. Except for an occasional stamp of the foot they never moved. They just doggedly and indifferently stood, blown upon by all the nipping draughts of the square, and as it might be sinking deeper and deeper into its dejection. As for me, instead of desolating, the harsh disconsolateness of the scene seemed to uplift me; I savoured it with

joy, as one savours the melancholy of a tragic work of art.

"We might go down to the *Signal* offices, and worry Buchanan a bit," said the doctor cheerfully when he came back to the car. This was the second of his inspirations.

BUCHANAN, of whom I had heard, was another Scotchman and the editor of the sole daily organ of the Five Towns, an evening newspaper cried all day in the streets and read by the entire population. Its green sheet appeared to be a permanent waving feature of the main thoroughfares. The offices lay round a corner close by, and as we drew up in front of them a crowd of tattered urchins interrupted their diversions in the sodden road to celebrate our glorious arrival by unanimously yelling at the top of their strident and hoarse voices:

"Hooray! Hoo—bl—dy—ray!"

Abashed, I followed my doctor into the shelter of the building, a new edifice, capacious and considerable, but horribly faced with terra cotta, and quite unimposing, lacking in the spectacular effect; like nearly everything in the Five Towns, carelessly and scornfully ugly! The mean, swinging double-doors returned to the assault when you pushed them, and hit you viciously. In a dark, countered room marked "Enquiries" there was nobody.

"Hi, there!" called the doctor.

A head appeared at a door.

"Mr. Buchanan upstairs?"

"Yes," snapped the head, and disappeared.

Up a dark staircase we went, and at the summit were half flung back again by another self-acting door.

In the room to which we next came an old man and a youngish one were bent over a large, littered table, scribbling on and arranging pieces of grey tissue paper and telegrams. Behind the old man stood a boy. Neither of them looked up.

"Mr. Buchanan in his——" the doctor began to question. "Oh! There you are!"

The editor was standing in hat and muffler at the window, gazing out. His age was about that of the doctor, forty or so; and like the doctor he was rather stout and clean-shaven. Their Scotch accents mingled in greeting, the doctor's being the more marked. Buchanan shook my hand with a certain courtliness, indicating that he was well accustomed to receive strangers. As an expert in small talk, however, he shone

no brighter than his visitors, and the three of us stood there by the window awkwardly, in the heaped disorder of the room, while the other two men scratched and fidgeted with bits of paper at the soiled table.

Suddenly and savagely the old man turned on the boy:

"What the hades are you waiting there for?"

"I thought there was something else, sir."

"Sling your book."

Buchanan winked at Stirling and me as the boy slouched off and the old man blandly resumed his writing.

"Perhaps you'd like to look over the place?" Buchanan suggested politely to me. "I'll come with you. It's all I'm fit for to-day. . . . 'Flu!" He glanced at Stirling, and yawned.

"Ye ought to be in bed," said Stirling.

"Yes. I know. I've known it for twelve years. I shall go to bed as soon as I get a bit of time to myself. Well, will you come? The half-time results are beginning to come in."

A telephone-bell rang impatiently.

"You might just see what that is, boss," said the old man without looking up.

Buchanan went to the telephone and replied: "Yes? What? Oh! Myatt? Yes, he's playing. . . . Of course I'm sure! Good-bye." He turned to the old man: "It's another of 'em wanting to know if Myatt is playing. Birmingham, this time."

"Ah!" exclaimed the old man, still writing.

"It's because of the betting," Buchanan glanced at me. "The odds are on Knype now,—three to two."

"If Myatt is playing, Knype has got me to thank for it," said the doctor, surprisingly.

"You?"

"Me! He fetched me to his wife this morning. She's nearing her confinement. False alarm. I guaranteed him at least another twelve hours."

"Oh! So that's it, is it?" Buchanan murmured.

Both the sub-editors raised their heads.

"That's it," said the doctor.

"Some people were saying he'd quarrelled with the trainer again, and was shamming," said Buchanan. "But I didn't believe that. There's no hanky-panky about Jos Myatt, anyhow."

I learnt in answer to my questions that a great and terrible football match was at that moment in progress at Knype, a couple of miles away, between the Knype Club

and the Manchester Rovers. It was conveyed to me that the importance of this match was almost national, and that the entire district was practically holding its breath till the result should be known. The half-time result was one goal each.

"If Knype loses," said Buchanan explanatorily, "they'll find themselves pushed out of the First League at the end of the season. That's a cert. . . . one of the oldest clubs in England! Semi-finalists for the English Cup in '78."

"'79," corrected the elder sub-editor.

I gathered that the crisis was grave.

"And Myatt's the captain, I suppose?" said I.

"No. But he's the finest full-back in the League."

I then had a vision of Myatt as a great man. By an effort of the imagination I perceived that the equivalent of the fate of nations depended upon him. I recollected, now, large yellow posters on the boardings we had passed, with the names of Knype and of Manchester Rovers in letters a foot high and the legend "League match at Knype" over all. It seemed to me that the heroic name of Jos Myatt, if truly he were the finest full-back in the League, if truly his presence or absence affected the betting as far off as Birmingham, ought also to have been on the posters, together with possibly his portrait. I saw Jos Myatt as a matador, with a long ribbon of scarlet necktie down his breast, and embroidered trousers.

"Why," said Buchanan, "if Knype drops into the Second Division, they'll never pay another dividend! It'll be all up with first class football in the Five Towns!"

The interests involved seemed to grow more complicated. And here I had been in the district nearly four hours without having guessed that the district was quivering in the tense excitement of gigantic issues! And here was this Scotch doctor, at whose word the great Myatt would have declined to play, never saying a syllable about the affair, until a chance remark from Buchanan loosened his tongue. But all doctors are strangely secretive. Secretiveness is one of their chief private pleasures.

"Come and see the pigeons, eh?" said Buchanan.

"Pigeons!" I repeated.

"We give the results over a hundred matches in our Football Edition," said Buchanan, and added: "not counting Rugby."

As we left the room two boys dodged round us into it, bearing telegrams.

IN a moment we were, in the most astonishing manner, on a leaden roof of the *Signal* offices. High factory chimneys rose over the horizon of slates on every side, blowing thick smoke into the general murk of the afternoon sky, and crossing the western crimson with long pennons of black. And out of the murk there came from afar a blue-and-white pigeon which circled largely several times over the offices of the *Signal*. At length it descended, and I could hear the whirr of its strong wings. The wings ceased to beat and the pigeon slanted downwards in a curve, its head lower than its wide tail. Then the little head gradually rose and the tail fell; the curve had changed, the pace slackened; the pigeon was calculating with all its brain; eyes, wings, tail and feet were being co-ordinated to the resolution of an intricate mechanical problem. The pinkish claws seemed to grope—and after an instant of hesitation, the thing was done, the problem solved; the pigeon, with delicious gracefulness, had established equilibrium on the ridge of a pigeoncote, and folded its wings, and was peering about with strange motions of its extremely movable head. Presently it flew down to the leads, waddled to and fro with the ungainly gestures of a fat woman of sixty, and disappeared into the cote. At the same moment the boy who had been dismissed from the sub-editor's room ran forward and entered the cote by a wire-screened door.

"Handy things, pigeons!" said the doctor as we approached to examine the cote. Fifty or sixty pigeons were cooing and strutting in it. There was a protest of wings as the boy seized the last arriving messenger.

"Give it here!" Buchanan ordered.

The boy handed over a thin tube of paper which he had unfastened from the bird's leg. Buchanan unrolled it and showed it to me. I read: "Midland Federation. Axe United, Macclesfield Town. Match abandoned after half-hour's play owing to fog. Three forty-five."

"Three forty-five," said Buchanan, looking at his watch. "He's done the ten miles in half an hour, roughly. Not bad. First time we tried pigeons from as far off as Axe. Here, boy!" And he restored the paper to the boy, who gave it to another boy, who departed with it.

"Man," said the doctor, eyeing Buchanan. "Ye'd no business out here. Ye're not precisely a pigeon."

Down we went, one after another, by

the ladder, and now we fell into the composing room, where Buchanan said he felt warmer. An immense, dirty, white-washed apartment crowded with linotypes and other machines, in front of which sat men in white aprons, tapping, tapping—gazing at documents pinned at the level of their eyes—and tapping, tapping. A kind of cavernous retreat in which monstrous iron growths rose out of the floor and were met half way by electric flowers that had their roots in the ceiling! In this jungle there was scarcely room for us to walk. Buchanan explained the linotypes to me. I watched, as though romantically dreaming, the flashing descent of letter after letter, a rain of letters into the belly of the machine; then, going round to the back, I watched the same letters rising again in a close, slow procession, and sorting themselves by themselves at the top in readiness to answer again to the tapping, tapping of a man in a once-white apron. And while I was watching all that, I could somehow, by a faculty which we have, at the same time see pigeons far overhead, arriving and arriving out of the murk from beyond the verge of chimneys.

"Ingenious, isn't it?" said Stirling.

But I imagine that he had not the faculty by which to see the pigeons.

A reverend, bearded, spectacled man, with his shirt-sleeves rolled up and an apron stretched over his hemispherical paunch, strolled slowly along an alley, glancing at a galley-proof with an ingenuous air just as if he had never seen a galley-proof before.

"It's a stick more than a column already," said he confidentially, offering the long paper, and then gravely looking at Buchanan, with head bent forward, not through his spectacles but over them.

The editor negligently accepted the proof, and I read a series of titles: "Knype v. Manchester Rovers. Record Gate. Fifteen thousand spectators. Two goals in twelve minutes. Myatt in form. Special Report."

BUCHANAN gave the slip back without a word.

"There you are!" said he to me, as another compositor near us attached a piece of tissue paper to his machine. It was the very paper that I had seen come out of the sky, but its contents had been enlarged and amended by the sub-editorial pen. The man began tapping, tapping, and the letters began to flash downwards on

their way to tell a quarter of a million people that *Axe v. Macclesfield* had been stopped by fog.

"I suppose that Knype match is over by now?" I said.

"Oh, no!" said Buchanan. "The second half has scarcely begun."

"Like to go?" Stirling asked.

"Well," I said, feeling adventurous, "it's a notion, isn't it?"

"You can run Mr. Loring down there in five or six minutes," said Buchanan. "And he's probably never seen anything like it before. You might call here as you come home, and see the paper on the machines."

We went on the Grand Stand, which was packed with men whose eyes were fixed, with an unconscious but intense effort, on a common object. Among the men were a few women in furs and wraps, equally absorbed. Nobody took any notice of us as we insinuated our way up a rickety flight of wooden stairs, but when by misadventure we grazed a human being the elbow of that being shoved itself automatically and fiercely outwards, to repel. I had an impression of hats, caps, and woolly overcoats stretched in long parallel lines, and of grimy raw planks everywhere presenting possibly dangerous splinters, save where use had worn them into smooth shininess. Then gradually I became aware of the vast field, which was more brown than green. Around the field was a wide border of infinitesimal hats and pale faces, rising in tiers, and beyond this border fences, hoardings, chimneys, furnaces, gasometers, telegraph-poles, houses, and dead trees. And here and there, perched in strange perilous places, even high up towards the sombre sky, were more human beings clinging. On the field itself, at one end of it, were a scattered handful of doll-like figures, motionless; some had white bodies, others red; and three were in black; all were so small and so far off that they seemed to be mere unimportant casual incidents in whatever recondite affair it was that was proceeding. Then a whistle shrieked, and all these figures began simultaneously to move, and then I saw a ball in the air. An obscure, uneasy murmuring rose from the immense multitude like an invisible but audible vapour. The next instant the vapour had condensed into a sudden shout. Now I saw the ball rolling solitary in the middle of the field, and a single red doll racing towards it; at one end was a confused group

of red and white, and at the other two white dolls, rather lonely in the expanse. The single red doll overtook the ball and scudded along with it at his twinkling toes. A great voice behind me bellowed with an incredible volume of sound:

"Now Jos!"

And another voice, further away, bellowed:

"Now Jos!"

And still more distantly the grim warning shot forth from the crowd:

"Now Jos! Now Jos!"

The nearer of the white dolls, as the red one approached, sprang forward. I could see a leg. And the ball was flying back in a magnificent curve into the skies; it passed out of my sight, and then I heard a bump on the slates of the roof of the grand stand, and it fell among the crowd in the stand-enclosure. But almost before the flight of the ball had commenced, a terrific roar of relief had rolled formidably round the field, and out of that roar, like rockets out of thick smoke, burst acutely ecstatic cries of adoration:

"Bravo Jos!"

"Good old Jos!"

The leg had evidently been Jos's leg. The nearer of these two white dolls must be Jos, darling of fifteen thousand frenzied people.

Stirling punched a neighbour in the side to attract his attention.

"What's the score?" he demanded of the neighbour, who scowled and then grinned.

"Two—one—agen uzi!" The other growled. "It'll take our b——s all their time to draw. They're playing a man short."

"Accident?"

"No! Referee ordered him off for rough play."

Several spectators began to explain, passionately, furiously, that the referee's action was utterly bereft of common sense and justice; and I gathered that a less gentlemanly crowd would undoubtedly have lynched the referee. The explanations died down, and everybody except me resumed his fierce watch on the field.

THE fouling Manchester forward immediately resumed possession of the ball. Experience could not teach him. He parted with the ball and got it again, twice. The devil was in him and in the ball. The devil was driving him towards Myatt. They met. And then came a sound quite new: a cracking sound, somewhat like the

snapping of a bough, but sharper, more decisive.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Stirling. "That's his bone!"

And instantly he was off down the staircase and I after him. But he was not the first doctor on the field. Nothing had been unforeseen in the wonderful organisation of this enterprise. A pigeon sped away and an official doctor and an official stretcher appeared, miraculously, simultaneously. It was tremendous. It inspired awe in me.

"He asked for it!" I heard a man say as I hesitated on the shore of the ocean of mud.

Then I knew that it was Manchester and not Knype that had suffered. The confusion and hubbub were in a high degree disturbing and puzzling. But one emotion emerged clear: pleasure. I felt it myself. I was aware of joy in that the two sides were now levelled to ten men apiece. I was mystically identified with the Five Towns, absorbed into their life. I could discern on every face the conviction that a divine providence was in this affair, that God could not be mocked. I too had this conviction. I could discern also on every face the fear lest the referee might give a foul against the hero Myatt, or even order him off the field, though of course the fracture was a simple accident. I, too, had this fear. It was soon dispelled by the news which swept across the entire enclosure like a sweet smell, that the referee had adopted the theory of a simple accident. I saw vaguely policemen, a stretcher, streaming crowds, and my ears heard a monstrous universal babbling. And then the figure of Stirling detached itself from the moving disorder and came to me.

"Well, Myatt's calf was harder than the other chap's, that's all," he said.

"Which is Myatt?" I asked, for the red and the white dolls had all vanished at close quarters, and were replaced by unrecognisably gigantic human animals, still clad, however, in dolls' vests and dolls' knickerbockers.

Stirling warningly jerked his head to indicate a man not ten feet away from me. This was Myatt, the hero of the host and the darling of populations. I gazed up at him. His mouth and his left knee were red with blood, and he was piebald with thick patches of mud from his tousled crown to his enormous boot. His blue eyes had a heavy, stupid, honest glance; and of the three qualities stupidity predominated. He seemed to be all feet,

knees, hands, and elbows. His head was very small,—the sole remainder of the doll in him.

A little man approached him, conscious—somewhat too obviously conscious—of his right to approach. Myatt nodded.

"Ye'n settled *him*, seemingly, Jos!" said the little man.

"Well," said Myatt, with slow bitterness. "Hadn't he been blooming well begging and praying for it, aw afternoon? Hadn't he now?"

The little man nodded. Then he said in a lower tone:

"How's missis, like?"

"Her's altogether yet," said Myatt. "Or I'd none ha' played!"

"I've bet Watty half-a-crown as it inna' a lad!" said the little man.

Myatt seemed angry.

"Wilt bet me half a *quid* as it inna' a lad?" he demanded, bending down and scowling and sticking out his muddy chin.

"Ay!" said the little man, not blenching.

"Evens?"

"Evens."

"I'll take thee, Charlie," said Myatt, resuming his calm.

The whistle sounded. And several orders were given to clear the field. Eight minutes had been lost over a broken leg, but Stirling said that the referee would surely deduct them from the official time, so that after all the game would not be shortened.

"I'll be up yon, to-morra morning," said the little man.

Myatt nodded and departed. Charlie, the little man, turned on his heel and proudly rejoined the crowd. He had been seen of all in converse with supreme greatness.

Stirling and I also retired; and though Jos Myatt had not even done his doctor the honour of seeing him, neither of us, I think, was quite without a consciousness of glory: I cannot imagine why. The rest of the game was flat and tame. Nothing occurred. The match ended in a draw.

Our automobile had been left at the Haycock Hotel; we went to get it, braving the inundation. Nearly opposite the stable-yard the electric trams started for Hanbridge, Bursley and Turnhill and for Longshaw. Here the crowd was less dangerous, but still very formidable—to my eyes. Each tram as it came up, was savagely assaulted, seized, crammed, and possessed, with astounding rapidity. Its steps were the west-

ern bank of a Beresina. At a given moment the inured conductor, brandishing his leather-shielded arm with a pitiless gesture, thrust aspirants down into the mud and the tram rolled powerfully away. All this in silence.

After a few minutes a bicyclist swished along through the mud, taking the far side of the road, which was comparatively free. He wore grey trousers, heavy boots, and a dark cut-away coat, up the back of which a line of caked mud had deposited itself. On his head was a bowler-hat.

"How do, Jos?" cried a couple of boys, cheekily. And then there were a few adult greetings of respect.

It was the hero, in haste.

"Out of it, there!" he warned impuders, between his teeth, and plugged on with bent head.

"He keeps the Foaming Quart up at Toft End," said the doctor. "It's the highest pub in the Five Towns. He used to be what they call a pot-hunter, a racing bicyclist, you know. But he's got past that, and he'll soon be past football. He's thirty-four if he's a day. That's one reason why he's so independent—that and because he's almost the only genuine native in the team."

"Why?" I asked. "Where do they come from, then?"

"Oh!" said Stirling as he gently started the car. "The club buys 'em, up and down the country. Four of 'em are Scots. A few years ago, an Oldham Club offered Knype £500, for Myatt, a big price—more than he's worth now! But he wouldn't go, though they guaranteed to put him into a first-class pub—a free house. He's never cost Knype anything except his wages and the goodwill of the Foaming Quart."

"What are his wages?"

"Don't know exactly. Not much. The Football Association fix a maximum. I daresay about four pounds a week. *Hi there! Are you deaf?*"

"Thee mind what tha'rt about!" responded a stout loiterer in our path, "or I'll take thy ears home for my tea, mester."

Stirling laughed.

In a few minutes we had arrived at Hanbridge, splashing all the way between two processions that crowded either footpath. And in the middle of the road was a third procession, of trams,—tram following tram, each gorged with passengers, frothing at the step with passengers; not the lackadaisical trams that I had seen earlier in the afternoon in Crown Square! a different

race of trams, eager and impetuous velocities.

We reached the *Signal* offices. No crowd of urchins to salute us this time!

IN a sort of hall on the ground floor was a long counter, and beyond the counter a system of steel railings in parallel lines, so arranged that a person entering at the public door could only reach the counter by passing up or down each alley in succession. These steel lanes, which absolutely insured the triumph of right over might, were packed with boys—the ragged urchins whom we had seen playing in the street. But not urchins now; rather young tigers! Perhaps half a dozen had reached the counter; the rest were massed behind, shouting and quarrelling. Through a hole in the wall, at the level of the counter, bundles of papers shot continuously, and were snatched up by servers, who distributed them in smaller bundles to the hungry boys; who flung down metal discs in exchange and fled, fled madly as though fiends were after them, through a third door, out of the pandemonium into the darkling street. And unceasingly the green papers appeared at the hole in the wall and unceasingly they were plucked away and borne off by those maddened children, whose destination was apparently Aix or Ghent, and whose wings were their tatters.

"What are those discs?" I enquired.

"The lads have to come and buy them earlier in the day," said Buchanan. "We haven't time to sell this edition for cash, you see."

"Well," I said as we left, "I'm very much obliged."

"What on earth for?" Buchanan asked.

"Everything," I said.

We returned through the squares of Hanbridge and by Trafalgar Road to Stirling's house at Bleakridge. And everywhere in the deepening twilight I could see the urchins, often hatless and sometimes scarcely shod, scudding over the lamp-reflecting mire with sheets of wavy green, and above the noises of traffic I could hear the shrill outcry: "*Signal*. Football Edition. Football Edition. *Signal*." The world was being informed of the might of Jos Myatt, and of the averting of disaster from Knype, and of the results of over a hundred other matches—not counting Rugby.

During the course of the evening, when Stirling had thoroughly accustomed himself to the state of being in sole charge of an expert from the British Museum, London,

and the high walls round his more private soul had yielded to my timid but constant attacks, we grew fairly intimate. And in particular the doctor proved to me that his reputation for persuasive raciness with patients was well founded. Yet up to the time of dessert I might have been justified in supposing that that much praised "manner" in a sick-room was nothing but a provincial legend. Such may be the influence of a quite inoffensive and shy Londoner in the country. At half-past ten, Titus being already asleep for the night in an arm-chair, we sat at ease over the fire in the study telling each other stories. We had dealt with the arts, and with medicine; now we were dealing with life, in those aspects of it which cause men to laugh and women uneasily to wonder. Once or twice we had mentioned the Brindleys. The hour for their arrival was come. But being deeply comfortable and content where I was, I felt no impatience. Then there was a tap on the window.

"That's Bobbie!" said Stirling, rising slowly from his chair. "He won't refuse whisky, even if you do. I'd better get another bottle."

The tap was repeated, peevishly.

"I'm coming, laddie!" Stirling protested.

He slipped out through the hall and through the surgery to the side door, I following, and Titus sneezing and snuffing in the rear.

"I say, mester," said the heavy voice as the doctor opened the door. It was not Brindley, but Jos Myatt. Unable to locate the bell-push in the dark, he had characteristically attacked the sole illuminated window. He demanded, or he commanded, very curtly, that the doctor should go up instantly to the Foaming Quart at Toft End.

Stirling hesitated a moment.

"All right, my man," said he calmly.

"Now?" the heavy, suspicious voice on the doorstep insisted.

"I'll be there before ye if ye don't sprint, man. I'll run up in the car." Stirling shut the door. I heard footsteps on the gravel path outside.

"Ye heard?" said he to me. "And what am I to do with ye?"

"I'll go with you, of course," I answered.

"I may be kept up there a while."

"I don't care," I said roisterously. "It's a pub and I'm a traveller."

Stirling's household was in bed, and his assistant gone home. While he and Titus got out the car, I wrote a line for the

Brindleys: "Gone with doctor to see a patient at Toft End. Don't wait up. A. L." This we pushed under Brindley's front door on our way forth. Very soon we were vibrating up a steep street on the first speed of the car, and the yellow reflections of distant furnaces began to shine over house roofs below us. It was exhilaratingly cold, a clear and frosty night, tonic, bracing after the enclosed warmth of the study. I was joyous, but silently. We had quitted the kingdom of the god Pan; we were in Lucina's realm, its consequence, where there is no laughter. We were on a mission.

"I didn't expect this," said Stirling.

"No?" I said. "But seeing that he fetched you this morning——"

"Oh! That was only in order to be sure, for himself. His sister was there, in charge. Seemed very capable. Knew all about everything. Until ye get to the high social status of a clerk or a draper's assistant, people seem to manage to have their children without professional assistance."

"Then do you think there's anything wrong?" I asked.

"I'd not be surprised."

HE changed to the second speed as the car topped the first bluff. We said no more. The night and the mission solemnised us. And gradually, as we rose towards the purple skies, the Five Towns wrote themselves out in fire on the irregular plain below.

"That's Hanbridge Town Hall," said Stirling, pointing to the right. "And that's Bursley Town Hall," he said, pointing to the left. And there were many other beacons, dominating the jewelled street-lines that faded on the horizon into golden-tinted smoke.

The road was never quite free of houses. After occurring but sparsely for half a mile, they thickened into a village—the suburb of Bursley called Toft End. I saw a moving red light in front of us. It was the reverse of Myatt's bicycle lantern. The car stopped near the dark façade of the inn, of which two yellow windows gleamed. Stirling, under Myatt's shouted guidance, backed into an obscure yard under cover. The engine ceased to throb.

"Friend of mine," he introduced me to Myatt. "By the way, Loring, pass me my bag will you? Musn't forget that." Then he extinguished the acetylene lamps, and there was no light in the yard except the ray of the bicycle lantern which Myatt held in his hand. We groped towards the

house. Strange, every step that I take in the Five Towns seems to have the genuine quality of an adventure!

In five minutes I was of no account in the scheme of things at Toft End, and I began to wonder why I had come. Stirling, my sole protector, had vanished up the dark stairs of the house, following a stout, youngish woman in a white apron, who bore a candle. Jos Myatt, behind, said to me: "Happen you'd better go in there, mester," pointing to a half open door at the foot of the stairs. I went into a little room at the rear of the bar-parlour. A good fire burned in a small old-fashioned grate, but there was no other light. The inn was closed to customers, it being past eleven o'clock.

I put my overcoat on the sofa, picked up the candle and glanced at the books in the corner: Lavater's indestructible work, a paper-covered Whitaker, the Licensed Victualler's Almanac, "Johnny Ludlow," the illustrated catalogue of the Exhibition of 1856, Cruden's Concordance, and seven or eight volumes of Knight's Penny Encyclopedia. While I was poring on these titles I heard movements overhead—previously there had been no sound whatever—and with guilty haste I restored the candle to the table and placed myself negligently in front of the fire.

"Now don't let me see ye up here any more till I fetch ye!" said a woman's distant voice—not crossly, but firmly. And then, crossly: "Be off with ye now!"

Reluctant boots on the stairs! Jos Myatt entered to me. He did not speak at first; nor did I. He avoided my glance. He was still wearing the cutaway coat with the line of mud up the back. I took out my watch, not for the sake of information, but from mere nervousness, and the sight of the watch reminded me that it would be prudent to wind it up.

"Better not forget that," I said, winding it.

"Ay!" said he gloomily. "It's a tip." And he wound up his watch; a large, thick, golden one.

This watch-winding established a basis of intercourse between us.

"I hope everything is going on all right," I murmured.

"What dun ye say?" he asked.

"I say I hope everything is going on all right," I repeated louder, and jerked my head in the direction of the stairs, to indicate the place from which he had come.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, as if surprised. "Now what'll ye have, mester?" He stood

waiting. "It's my call, to-night."

I explained to him that I never took alcohol. It was not quite true, but it was as true as most general propositions are.

"Neither me!" he said shortly, after a pause.

"You're a teetotaler too?" I showed a little involuntary astonishment.

He put forward his chin.

"What do *you* think?" he said confidentially and scornfully. It was precisely as if he had said: "Do you think that anybody but a born ass would *not* be a teetotaler, in my position?"

I sat down on a chair.

"Take th' squab, mester," he said, pointing to the sofa. I took it.

HE picked up the candle; then dropped it, and lighted a lamp which was on the mantelpiece between his vases of blue glass. His movements were very slow, hesitating, and clumsy. Blowing out the candle, which smoked for a long time, he went with the lamp to the bookcase. As the key of the bookcase was in his right pocket and the lamp in his right hand he had to change the lamp, cautiously, from hand to hand. When he opened the cupboard I saw a rich gleam of silver from every shelf of it except the lowest, and I could distinguish the forms of ceremonious cups with pedestals and immense handles.

"I suppose these are your pots?" I said. "Ay!"

He displayed to me the fruits of his manifold victories. I could see him straining along endless cinder-paths and high-roads under hot suns, his great knees going up and down like treadles amid the plaudits and howls of vast populations. And all that now remained of that glory were these debased and vicious shapes, magnificently useless, grossly ugly, with their inscriptions lost in a mess of flourishes.

"Ay!" he said again, when I had fingered the last of them.

"A very fine show indeed!" I said, resuming the sofa.

He took a penny bottle of ink and a pen out of the bookcase, and also, from the lowest shelf, a bag of money and a long narrow account book. Then he sat down at the table and commenced accountancy. It was clear that he regarded his task as formidable and complex. To see him reckoning the coins, manipulating the pen, splashing the ink, scratching the page; to hear him whispering consecutive numbers aloud, and muttering mysterious anathemas

against the untamable naughtiness of figures,—all this was painful, and with the painfulness of a simple exercise rendered difficult by inaptitude and incompetence. I wanted to jump up and cry to him: "Get out of the way, man, and let me do it for you! I can do it all while you are wiping hairs from your pen on your sleeve." I was sorry for him because he was ridiculous—and even more grotesque than ridiculous. I felt, quite acutely, that it was a shame that he could not be for ever the central figure of a field of mud, kicking a ball into long and grandiose parabolas higher than gasometers, or breaking an occasional leg, surrounded by the violent affection of hearts whose melting-point was the exclamation, "Good old Jos!" I felt that if he must repose his existence ought to have been so contrived that he could repose in impassive and senseless dignity, like a mountain watching the flight of time. The conception of him tracing symbols in a ledger, counting shillings and sixpences, descending to arithmetic, and suffering those humiliations which are the invariable preliminaries to legitimate fatherhood, was shocking to a nice taste for harmonious fitness. . . . What, this precious and terrific organism, this slave with a specialty—whom distant towns had once been anxious to buy at the prodigious figure of five hundred pounds, obliged to sit in a mean chamber and wait silently while the woman of his choice encountered the supreme peril! And he would "soon be past football!" He was "thirty-four if a day!" It was the verge of senility! He was no longer worth five hundred pounds. Perhaps even now this jointed merchandise was only worth two hundred pounds! And "they"—the shadowy directors, who could not kick a ball fifty feet and who would probably turn sick if they broke a leg—"they" paid him four pounds a week for being the hero of a quarter of a million of people! He was the chief magnet to draw fifteen thousand sixpences and shillings of a Saturday afternoon into a company's cash box, and here he sat splitting his head over fewer six-pences and shillings than would fill a half-pint pot! Jos, you ought in justice to have been José, with a thin red necktie down your breast (instead of a line of mud up your back), and embroidered breeches on those miraculous legs, and an income of a quarter of a million pesetas, and the languishing acquiescence of innumerable mantillas. Every moment you were getting older and stiffer; every

moment was bringing nearer the moment when young men would reply curtly to their doddering elders: "Jos Myatt—who was 'e?"

The putting away of the ledger, the ink, the pen and the money was as exasperating as their taking-out had been. Then Jos, always too large for the room, crossed the tiled floor and mended the fire. A poker was more suited to his capacity than a pen. He glanced about him, uncertain and anxious, and then crept to the door near the foot of the stairs, and listened. There was no sound; and that was curious. The woman who was bringing into the world the hero's child made no cry that reached us below. Once or twice I had heard muffled movements not quite overhead—somewhere above—but naught else. The doctor and Jos's sister seemed to have retired into a sinister and dangerous mystery. I could not dispel from my mind pictures of what they were watching and what they were doing. The vast, cruel, fumbling clumsiness of nature, her lack of majesty in crises that ought to be majestic, her incurable indignity, disgusted me, aroused my disdain. I wanted, as a philosopher of all the cultures, to feel that the present was indeed a majestic crisis, to be so esteemed by a superior man. I could not. Though the crisis possibly intimidated me somewhat, yet on behalf of Jos Myatt, I was ashamed of it. This may be reprehensible, but it is true.

HE sat down by the fire and looked at the fire. I could not attempt to carry on a conversation with him, and to avoid the necessity for any talk at all, I extended myself on the sofa and averted my face, wondering once again why I had accompanied the doctor to Toft End. The doctor was now in another, an inaccessible world. I dozed, and from my doze I was roused by Jos Myatt going to the door on the stairs.

"Jos," said a voice. "It's a girl."

Then a silence.

I admit there was a flutter in my heart. Another soul, another formed and unchangeable temperament, tumbled into the world! Whence? Whither? . . . As for the quality of majesty,—yes, if silver trumpets had announced the advent, instead of a stout, aproned woman, the moment could not have been more majestic in its sadness. I say "sadness": which is the inevitable and sole effect of these eternal and banal question, "Whence?"

"Is her bad?" Jos whispered.

"Her's pretty bad," said the voice, but cheerily. "Bring me up another scuttle o' coal."

When he returned to the parlour, after being again dismissed, I said to him:

"Well, I congratulate you."

"I thank ye!" he said, and sat down.

Presently I could hear him muttering to himself, mildly: "Hell! Hell! Hell!"

I thought: "Stirling will not be very long now, and we can depart home." I looked at my watch. It was quarter to two. But Stirling did not appear, nor was there any message from him or sign. I had to resign myself to the predicament. As a faint chilliness from the window affected my back I drew my overcoat up to my shoulders as a counterpane. Through a gap between the red curtains of the window I could see a star blazing. It passed behind the curtain with disconcerting rapidity. The universe was swinging and whirling as usual.

Sounds of knocking disturbed me. In the few seconds that elapsed before I could realise just where I was and why I was there, the summoning knocks were repeated. The early sun was shining through the red blind. I sat up and straightened my hair, involuntarily composing my attitude so that nobody who might enter the room should imagine that I had been other than patiently wideawake all night. The second door of the parlour—that leading to the barroom of the Foaming Quart—was open, and I could see the bar itself, with shelves rising behind it and the upright handles of a beer-engine at one end. Some one whom I could not see was evidently unbolting and unlocking the principal entrance to the inn. Then I heard the scraping of a creaky portal on the floor.

"Well, Jos, lad!"

It was the voice of the little man, Charlie, who had spoken with Myatt on the football field.

"Come in quick, Charlie. It's cowl [cold]," said the voice of Jos Myatt gloomily.

"Ay! Cowl it is, lad! It's above three mile as I've walked, and thou knows it, Jos. Give us a quartern o' gin."

The door grated again, and a bolt was drawn.

The two men passed together behind the bar, and so within my vision. Charlie had a grey muffler round his neck; his hands were far in his pockets and seemed to be at strain, as though trying to prevent his up-

per and his lower garments from flying apart. Jos Myatt was extremely dishevelled. In the little man's demeanour towards the big one, there was now none of the self-conscious pride in the mere fact of acquaintance that I had noticed on the field. Clearly the two were intimate friends, perhaps relatives. While Jos was dispensing the gin, Charlie said in a low tone:

"Well, what luck, Jos?"

This was the first reference, by either of them, to the crisis.

Jos deliberately finished pouring out the gin. Then he said:

"There's two on 'em, Charlie."

"Two on 'em? What mean'st tha', lad?"

"I mean as it's twins."

Charlie and I were equally startled.

"Thou never says!" he murmured, incredulous.

"Ay! One o' both sorts," said Jos.

"Thou never says!" Charlie repeated, holding his glass of gin steady in his hand.

"One come at summat after one o'clock, and th' other between five and six. I had for fetch old woman Eardley to help. It were more than a handful for Susannah and th' doctor."

Astonishing, that I should have slept through these events!

"How is her?" asked Charley quietly, as it were casually. I think this appearance of casualness was caused by the stoic suppression of the symptoms of anxiety.

"Her's bad," said Jos briefly.

"And I am na' surprised," said Charlie. And he lifted the glass. "Well—here's luck." He sipped the gin, savouring it on his tongue like a connoisseur and gradually making up his mind about its quality. Then he took another sip.

"Hast seen her?"

"I seed her for a minute, but our Susannah wouldna' let me stop i' th' room. Her was raving like."

"Missis?"

"Ay!"

"And th' babbies—hast seen *them*?"

"Ay! But I can make nowt out of 'em. Mrs. Eardley says as her's never seen no finer."

"Doctor gone?"

"That he has na'! He's bin up there all the blessed night, in his shirt-sleeves. I give him a stiff glass o' whisky at five o'clock and that's all as he's had."

Charlie finished his gin. The pair stood silent.

"Well," said Charlie, striking his leg.

"Swelp me bob! It fair beats me! Twins! Who'd ha' thought it? Jos, lad, thou may'st be thankful as it isna' triplets. Never did I think, as I was footing it up here this morning, as it was twins I was coming to!"

"Hast got that half quid in thy pocket?"

"What half quid?" said Charlie defensively.

"Now then. Chuck us it over!" said Jos, suddenly harsh and overbearing.

"I laid thee half quid as it 'ud be a wench," said Charlie doggedly.

"Thou'rt a liar, Charlie!" said Jos. "Thou laid'st half a quid as it wasna' a boy."

"Nay, nay!" Charlie shook his head.

"And a boy it is!" Jos persisted.

"It being a lad *and* a wench," said Charlie, with a judicial air, "and me 'aving laid as it 'ud be a wench, I wins." In his accents and his gestures I could discern the mean soul, who on principle never paid until he was absolutely forced to pay. I could see also that Jos Myatt knew his man.

"Thou laidst me as it wasna' a lad," Jos almost shouted. "And a lad it is, I tell thee."

"*And a wench!*" said Charlie; then shook his head.

THE wrangle proceeded monotonously, each party repeating over and over again the phrases of his own argument. I was very glad that Jos did not know me to be a witness of the making of the bet; otherwise I should assuredly have been summoned to give judgment.

"Let's call it off, then," Charlie suggested at length. "That'll settle it. And it being twins——"

"Nay, thou old devil, I'll none call it off. Thou owes me half a quid, and I'll have it out of thee."

"Look ye here," Charlie said more softly. "I'll tell thee what'll settle it. Which on 'em come first, th' lad or th' wench?"

"Th' wench come first," Jos Myatt admitted, with resentful reluctance, duly aware that defeat was awaiting him.

"Well, then! Th' wench is thy eldest child. That's law, that is. And what was us betting about, Jos lad? Us was betting about thy eldest and no other. I'll admit as I laid it wasna' a lad, as thou sayst. And it *wasna'* a lad. First come is eldest, and us was betting about eldest."

Charlie stared at the father in triumph. Jos Myatt pushed roughly past him in the narrow space behind the bar, and came

into the parlour. Nodding to me curtly, he unlocked the bookcase and took two crown pieces from a leathern purse which lay next to the bag. Then he returned to the bar, and banged the coins on the counter with fury.

"Take thy brass!" he shouted angrily. "Take thy brass! But thou'rt a damned shark, Charlie, and if anybody 'ud give me a plug o' bacca for doing it, I'd bash thy face in."

The other sniggered contentedly as he picked up his money.

"A bet's a bet," said Charlie.

He was clearly accustomed to an occasional violence of demeanour from Jos Myatt, and felt no fear. But he was wrong in feeling no fear. He had not allowed, in his estimate of the situation, for the exasperated condition of Jos Myatt's nerves under the unique experiences of the night.

Jos's face twisted into a hundred wrinkles and his hand seized Charlie by the arm whose hand held the coins.

"Drop 'em!" he cried loudly, repenting his naive honesty. "Drop 'em! Or I'll—"

The stout woman, her apron all soiled, now came swiftly and scarce heard into the parlour, and stood at the door leading to the bar-room.

"What's up, Susannah?" Jos demanded in a new voice.

"Well may ye ask what's up!" said the woman. "Shouting and brangling there, ye sots!"

"What's up?" Jos demanded again, losing Charlie's arm.

"Her's gone!" the woman feebly whimpered, "Like that!" with a vague movement of the hand indicating suddenness. Then she burst into wild sobs, and rushed madly back whence she had come, and the sound of her sobs diminished as she ascended the stairs, and expired altogether in the distant shutting of a door.

The men looked at each other.

Charlie restored the crown-pieces to the counter, and pushed them towards Jos.

"Here!" he murmured faintly.

Jos flung them savagely to the ground. Another pause followed.

"As God is my witness," he exclaimed solemnly, his voice saturated with feeling, "As God is my witness," he repeated, "I'll ne'er touch a footba' again!"

Little Charlie gazed up at him sadly,

plaintively, for what seemed a long while.

"It's good-bye to th' First League, then, for Knype!" he tragically muttered, at length.

THE natural humanity of Jos Myatt and Charlie, their fashion of comporting themselves in a sudden stress pleased me. How else should they have behaved? I could understand Charlie's prophetic dirge over the ruin of the Knype Football Club. It was not that he did not feel the tragedy in the house. He had felt it, and because he had felt it he had uttered at random, foolishly, the first clear thought that ran into his head.

Stirling was quiet. He appeared to be absorbed in steering, and looked straight in front, yawning now and again. He was much more fatigued than I was. Indeed I had slept pretty well. He said as we swerved into Trafalgar Road and overtook the aristocracy on its way to chapel and church:

"Well, ye let yerself in for a night, young man. No mistake!"

"What's going to occur up there?" I asked, indicating Toft End.

"What do you mean?"

"A man like that—left with two babies!"

"Oh!" he said. "They'll manage that all right. His sister's a widow. She'll go and live with him. She's as fond of those infants already as if they were her own."

"Be sure ye explain to Brindley," he said, as I left him, "that it isn't my fault ye've had a night out of bed. It was your own doing. I'm going to get a bit of sleep now. See you this evening. Bob's asked me to supper."

A servant was sweeping Bob Brindley's porch, and the front door was open. I went in. The sound of the piano guided me to the drawing-room. Brindley, the morning cigarette between his lips, was playing one of Maurice Ravel's "Miroirs." He held his head back so as to keep the smoke out of his eyes. His children in their blue jerseys were building bricks on the carpet. Without ceasing to play, he addressed me calmly:

"You're a nice chap! Where the devil have you been?"

And one of the little boys glancing up, said with roguish imitative innocence, in his high shrill voice:

"Where the del you been?"



The Nightingale and the Rose

By OSCAR WILDE

SHE said that she would dance with me if I brought her red roses," cried the young Student; "but in all my garden there is no red rose."

From her nest in the holm-oak tree the Nightingale heard him, and she looked out through the leaves, and wondered.

"No red rose in all my garden!" he cried, and his beautiful eyes filled with tears. "Ah, on what little things does happiness depend! I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched."

"Here at last is a true lover," said the Nightingale. "Night after night have I sung of him, though I knew him not: night after night have I told his story to the stars, and now I see him. His hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire; but passion has made his face like pale ivory, and sorrow has set her seal upon his brow."

"The Prince gives a ball to-morrow night," murmured the young Student, "and my love will be of the company. If I bring her a red rose she will dance with me till dawn. If I bring her a red rose, I shall hold her in my arms, and she will lean her head upon my shoulder, and her hand will be clasped in mine. But there is no red rose in my garden, so I shall sit lonely, and she will pass me by. She will have no heed of me, and my heart will break."

"Here indeed is the true lover," said the Nightingale. "What I sing of, he suffers; what is joy to me, to him is pain. Surely Love is a wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds, and dearer than fine opals. Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the market-place. It may not be weighed out in the balance for gold."

"The musicians will sit in their gallery," said the young Student, "and play upon their stringed instruments, and my love will dance to the sound of the harp and the violin. She will dance so lightly that her feet will not touch the floor, and the courtiers in their gay dresses will throng round her. But with me she will not dance, for I have no red rose to give her;" and he flung himself down on the grass, and buried his face in his hands, and wept.

"Why is he weeping?" asked a little Green Lizard, as he ran past him with his tail in the air.

"Why, indeed?" said a Butterfly, who was fluttering about after a sunbeam.

"Why, indeed?" whispered a Daisy to his neighbour, in a soft, low voice.

"He is weeping for a red rose," said the Nightingale.

"For a red rose!" they cried; "how very ridiculous!" and the little Lizard, who was something of a cynic, laughed outright.

But the Nightingale understood the secret of the Student's sorrow, and she sat silent in the oak-tree, and thought about the mystery of Love.

Suddenly she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She passed through the grove like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed across the garden.

In the centre of the grass-plot was standing a beautiful Rose-tree, and when she saw it, she flew over to it, and lit upon a spray.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are white," it answered; "as white as the foam of the sea, and whiter than the snow upon the mountain. But go to my brother who grows round the old sun-dial, and perhaps he will give you what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing round the old sundial.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are yellow," it answered; "as yellow as the hair of the mermaid who sits upon an amber throne, and yellower than the daffodil that blooms in the meadow before the mower comes with his scythe. But go to my brother who grows beneath the Student's window, and perhaps he will give you what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing beneath the Student's window.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are red," it answered; "as red as the feet of the dove, and redder than the great fans of coral that wave and wave in the ocean cavern. But the winter has chilled my veins, and the frost has nipped my buds, and the storm has broken my branches, and I shall have no roses at all this year."

"One red rose is all I want," cried the Nightingale. "Only one red rose! Is there any way by which I can get it?"

"There is a way," answered the Tree; "but it is so terrible that I dare not tell it to you."

"Tell it to me," said the Nightingale, "I am not afraid."

"If you want a red rose," said the Tree, "you must build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with your own heart's-blood. You must sing to me with your breast against a thorn. All night long you must sing to me, and the thorn must pierce your heart, and your life-blood must flow into my veins and become mine."

"Death is a great price to pay for a red rose," cried the Nightingale, "and Life is very dear to all. It is pleasant to sit in the green wood, and to watch the Sun in his chariot of gold, and the Moon in her chariot of pearl. Sweet is the scent of the hawthorn, and sweet are the bluebells that hide in the valley, and the heather that blows on the hill. Yet Love is better than Life, and what is the heart of a bird compared to the heart of a man?"

So she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She swept over the garden like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed through the grove.

THE young Student was still lying on the grass, where she had left him, and the tears were not yet dry in his beautiful eyes.

"Be happy," cried the Nightingale, "be happy; you shall have your red rose. I will build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with my own heart's-blood. All that I ask of you in return is that you will be a true lover, for Love is wiser than Philosophy, though she is wise, and mightier than Power, though he is mighty. Flame-coloured are his wings, and coloured like flame is his body. His lips are sweet as honey, and his breath is like frankincense."

The Student looked up from the grass, and listened, but he could not understand what the Nightingale was saying to him, for he only knew the things that are written down in books.

But the Oak-tree understood, and felt sad, for he was very fond of the little Nightingale who had built her nest in his branches.

"Sing me one last song," he whispered; "I shall feel very lonely when you are gone."

So the Nightingale sang to the Oak-tree, and her voice was like water bubbling from a silver jar.

When she had finished her song the Student got up, and pulled a note-book and a lead-pencil out of his pocket.

"She has form," he said to himself, as he walked away through the grove—"that cannot be denied her; but has she got feeling? I am afraid not. In fact, she is like most artists; she is all style, without any sincerity. She would not sacrifice herself for others. She thinks merely of music, and everybody knows that the arts are selfish. Still, it must be admitted that she has some beautiful notes in her voice. What a pity it is that they do not mean anything, or do any practical good." And he went into his room, and lay down on his little pallet-bed, and began to think of his love; and, after a time, he fell asleep.

And when the Moon shone in the heavens the Nightingale flew to the Rose-tree, and set her breast against the thorn. All night long she sang with her breast against the thorn, and the cold crystal Moon leaned down and listened. All night long she sang, and the thorn went deeper and deeper into her breast, and her life-blood ebbed away from her.

She sang first of the birth of love in

the heart of a boy and a girl. And on the topmost spray of the Rose-tree there blossomed a marvellous rose, petal followed petal, as song followed song. Pale was it, at first, as the mist that hangs over the river—pale as the feet of the morning, and silver as the wings of the dawn. As the shadow of a rose in a mirror of silver, as the shadow of a rose in a water-pool, so was the rose that blossomed on the topmost spray of the Tree.

But the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and louder and louder grew her song, for she sang of the birth of passion in the soul of a man and a maid.

And a delicate flush of pink came into the leaves of the rose, like the flush in the face of the bridegroom when he kisses the lips of the bride. But the thorn had not yet reached her heart, so the rose's heart remained white, for only a Nightingale's heart's-blood can crimson the heart of a rose.

And the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and the thorn touched her heart, and a fierce pang of pain shot through her. Bitter, bitter was the pain, and wilder and wilder grew her song, for she sang of the Love that is perfected by Death, of the Love that dies not in the tomb.

And the marvellous rose became crimson, like the rose of the eastern sky. Crimson was the girdle of petals, and crimson as a ruby was the heart.

But the Nightingale's voice grew fainter, and her little wings began to beat, and a film came over her eyes. Fainter and fainter grew her song, and she felt something choking her in her throat.

Then she gave one last burst of music. The white Moon heard it, and she forgot the dawn, and lingered on in the sky. The red rose heard it, and it trembled all over with ecstasy, and opened its petals to the cold morning air. Echo bore it to her purple cavern in the hills, and woke the sleeping shepherds from their dreams. It

floated through the reeds of the river, and they carried its message to the sea.

"Look, look!" cried the Tree, "the rose is finished now;" but the Nightingale made no answer for she was lying dead in the long grass, with the thorn in her heart.

And at noon the Student opened his window and looked out.

"Why, what a wonderful piece of luck!" he cried; "here is a red rose! I have never seen any rose like it in all my life. It is so beautiful that I am sure it has a long Latin name;" and he leaned down and plucked it.

Then he put on his hat, and ran up to the Professor's house with the rose in his hand. The daughter of the Professor was sitting in the doorway winding blue silk on a reel, and her little dog was lying at her feet.

"You said that you would dance with me if I brought you a red rose," cried the Student. "Here is the reddest rose in all the world. You will wear it to-night next your heart, and as we dance together it will tell you how I love you."

BUT the girl frowned. "I am afraid it will not go with my dress," she answered; "and, besides, the Chamberlain's nephew has sent me some real jewels, and everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers."

"Well, upon my word, you are very ungrateful," said the Student angrily; and he threw the rose into the street, where it fell into the gutter, and a cart-wheel went over it.

"Ungrateful!" said the girl. "I tell you what, you are very rude; and, after all, who are you? Only a Student. Why, I don't believe you have even got silver buckles to your shoes as the Chamberlain's nephew has;" and she got up from her chair and went into the house.

"What a silly thing Love is," said the Student as he walked away. "It is not half as useful as Logic, for it does not prove anything, and it is always telling one of things that are not going to happen, and making one believe things that are not true. In fact, it is quite unpractical, and, as in this age to be practical is everything, I shall go back to Philosophy and study Metaphysics."

So he returned to his room and pulled out a great book, and began to read:





Fall Flight

By George F. Hummel



THE first of November invariably found French Charley's three-room shack bolted and empty, and its owner off in a general southerly direction for parts unknown.

It was in this same shack that Ollie B. had once lived and gathered about him the village spiritualists. Ollie Ben, the town crank, owned the place now. Ollie Ben always took an odd interest in French Charley and kept him in old clothes and fuel. There was no accounting for Ollie Ben's taste.

Just previous to Charley's bi-monthly shave a stubby beard, rapidly graying, covered a face, plump and tinged with a Baldwin-apple red, from which two wide-open, blue eyes gazed out unseeingly into a world ever puzzling, ever strange. His strong yellow teeth, beginning here and there to decay, had never made the acquaintance either of toothbrush or dentist. A shambling man of forty-odd with the mind, perhaps, of a boy of fifteen.

There was something odd—perhaps pathetic—in his love for children, who either ran from him if they were shy, or tormented him if they were bold. His awkward advances had the same characteristics as those of a stray mongrel which meets a group of mutually well-acquainted and aristocratic house-dogs on the corner of a street.

In former years he had read for hours at a stretch from a faded set of Chambers' Encyclopedia purchased for a few cents at Ollie B.'s auction and taken home in his wheelbarrow. His head was stored with a curious and totally irrelevant jumble of isolated facts and events. Of late he had formed the habit of tumbling into bed immediately after his rude night meal while still the twilight lingered under the fir trees crowding close about his shack on the south bank of Corey's Creek. In bed, in his flannel shirt and underdrawers, he talked—talk aloud, vivaciously—to

himself. Not always coherently—never with regard for any single train of ideas.

Sometimes he muttered. That was when some farmer had scolded him the day before. Once in a while he would sing, or rather emit a curious, jerky cadence of notes that soared up, or plunged down unmelodiously and for no reason. On certain nights an unwilling passer-by (the villagers shunned his shack at night) heard him groaning aloud. On such nights he had overeaten of hard-boiled crabs.

By day French Charley was a friend to everybody—save, perhaps, to a few finicky ladies of the Presbyterian set who felt a proper disgust at his unpleasant odor and rather disagreeable habits. Not a few of the villagers would go out of their way considerably to do him a good turn. Why not? French Charley always minded his own business and never consciously annoyed a living creature. When he worked for Grandma Dietz she allowed him to sit with her at table and talked kindly to him. Sometimes she gave him a bouquet of roses and some cookies to take home with him at night. It was only when people asked him questions that he would talk to them of his travels, or give out the odd bits of information stored curiously in some dusty corner of his brain.

Most of us treated him with a kind of amused tolerance which had, to be sure, a trace of holier-than-thou in it. But that never bothered French Charley. In fact, he never noticed it.

He never analyzed. He remembered incidents with photographic exactness. His philosophy of life was a fatalistic expression of endurance with an animal indifference to physical hardships. He was not unhappy—save, perhaps, in those long sleepless nights, when, conscious of his aloneness, he groaned aloud in a kind of indeterminate suffering.

Thus, perhaps, does that huge mongrel on a lush summer's night howl at a gorgeous harvest moon; thus, perhaps, does

an aged, hoarse-voiced frog croak through the summer solstice—with something of sadness, something savage, something of sex, something ecstatic in the mournful cadences.

For fifteen years, about the beginning of September, Jim Fox, the blacksmith, or Constable Cochran, watchman at the Savings Bank, would stop French Charley in front of the drug-store.

"Well, where's it goin' to be this year?"

If the two were present one would wink at the other. Charley would smile, scratch his head in his puzzled, helpless way and say: "Dunno as I'll go this year. Been thinkin' it over. Why should I give all my money to the railroads? Been enough of a fool."

With this they would agree and advise him to put his hard-earned money in the bank. Where could he find a better place than right there in Norwold, on the bank of Corey's Creek—among friends?

"You're right, I guess." He would hitch his suspenders with decision. "Goin' to stick it out this year."

"Now you're talkin'! Next spring you can hire an acre or two and plant potatoes. Be your own boss. You'll get sense—give you long enough!"

And French Charley would laugh sheepishly and go on home to his shack by the creek. There, he would pull out his fiber suitcase from under the bed, examine the two pairs of clean socks, the three blue bandanna handkerchiefs, the set of woolen underwear, the comb, the brush, soap and bottle of bayrum, and dream, and plan and puzzle, and talk to himself by the hour about when he would go, and how, and whither.

Each spring Charley would emerge from the frost and smudge of winter cured of his last cold and having discarded his underwear. As he set about his day's work he would whistle and chatter softly to himself as though the rioting sap of the vegetable world were revitalizing his own sluggish bodily forces.

Invariably he raised a brood of chickens. With a care that had in it an element of tenderness he would cluck the fluffy chicks about him and stuff them with soaked bread, or meal. Many died of a colic.

UN**TIL** the dog-days of August Charley would labor indefatigably, keeping his engagements with employers faithfully and scheduling his odd jobs so as

to leave scarce an hour of idle time. In the back of a Daboll's Almanac he kept a careful account of the money received, or due him.

Never once did he crawl into his bed at night without first laboriously reckoning up what was due him (drumming with black and broken nails on the edge of his wooden bed) and counting, one by one, with care, the bills and pieces of change that were slowly piling up in the cigar box which constituted his bank of deposit.

By mid-August French Charley grew noticeably uneasy and erratic. He would go late to his job, or he would fail altogether to put in an appearance. He no longer kept accounts. He wanted his money cash down at the completion of each task. The lid of the cigar box no longer closed tightly because of the one-, two- and five-dollar bills inside.

He now spent much of his time alone in his old black rowboat out on the creek. If he saw his friend Phil clammimg in Long channel he would pull in the opposite direction. For a whole day he would remain at home, walking about nervously, talking, gesticulating, sitting for a moment on the chopping block, or on the broken step that led to his kitchen.

By the end of August he had practically ceased to work. He "soldiered" on his job. He overcharged for his time. If either of his neighbors, Gin Jones, or Polack Joe, greeted him now, be it in ever so kindly a fashion, he either answered not at all, or surlily. He was tired. He was sick of slaving for other people. No pleasures, no fun, no nothin' to break the monotony. What the devil did they take him for? Nothin' but work, work, slave and drill! He was no fool. He knew more about the world than Jeremiah Jenkins, or any other of the rich skinflints of that town. Damn little any of them knew, but how to screw the last cent out of a dollar. What did they know? Where had they ever been? They could all freeze if they wanted to. He wasn't old Ollie Ben Terry's jackass even if he did work one day a week for him to pay the rent on his damned old shack. He knew plenty of better places.

From the fifteenth of September French Charley's life was a nervous fever. A hundred times a day he would look about his shack and tell himself how comfortable he was; how idiotic to leave it all for all

the well-remembered sufferings of a hobo in the south. How well he remembered them! Yet all the while he knew he would go. There were other memories, too, that called to him.

Day after day his resistance grew weaker.

At last, on some gray day in October, when the farmers drove their loads of cauliflower to the station with upturned coat-collars, slapping their hands on their knees to hurry circulation and casting an anxious eye to the east where gray-black clouds were piling up, they saw French Charley pacing rapidly up and down the wooden platform of the railroad station, gripping his suitcase, nervously fingering a ticket, awaiting feverishly the train that was to start him on his annual flight.

They would all laugh heartily and call at him:

"Well, you're off again!"

Whither was he hurrying—and why?

Each year before the winter had broken, French Charley would reappear—dirty, thin, penniless, repentant. Sometimes his home-coming occurred as early as the middle of January, sometimes as late as the first of April. Where he had been; how he had spent his time, no one could ever clearly determine from his garbled account of disconnected incidents scattered over half the area of the Southern States and the Caribbean Sea.

One fall, when French Charley had just turned thirty-eight, he left Norwold with a ticket to New Orleans and one-hundred and forty-odd dollars pinned in his inside vest pocket. He was on his way to New Orleans because he had heard from a fellow hobo the previous winter that they were building there a new levee which offered any one a job at good wages.

There were other reasons. Reasons that clung like a mist to its lurid river-front; its steaming potpourri of disreputable humanity, male and female. "Shivers" they had dubbed him because of his twitching, when excited, the left shoulder and right arm. No one there smiled at him with the expression on the faces of the Presbyterian ladies in his home town.

As his train wound slowly through the cotton fields and lazy heat of southern Mississippi, Charley mumbled to himself vague dreams, warm and lazy as the air outside the smoker.

French Charley never lacked company on his travels. Once off on his annual

trip, all reticence, all taciturnity dropped from him like a snake's skin in June. He greeted every one. He talked incessantly. He could not bear to be alone. Kind people gave him of their sandwiches, listened to his chatter, speculated as to who and what this curious specimen might be, tried wonderingly to stop the whirl that was going on in his happy, excited mind.

He could talk best and enjoyed himself most with negroes. South of the Mason and Dixon line he felt a strange and delightful reversal of the circumstances of life. He would show a simple-minded black his envelope of bills pinned inside his vest. How he loved to see the negro's mottled eyes shine, his broad, white teeth glisten! Then, if he had it, he would give his comrade of the moment a drink from a pint bottle, or a sandwich and cup of coffee at a railway lunch counter.

French Charley never touched a drop of liquor in Norwold, from April to October. Now, he felt human, happy, aroused—as one on a quest.

Arrived at his destination, Charley picked up his fiber suitcase and wandered across town into the tangle of streets that lie in a dirty snarl behind the levee of the lower city.

Over a basement hung a yellow sign painted with black, scrawling letters:

"Lagoon Lou's."

Charley read it "louse."

Underneath was a beer sign.

The word "louse" had an element of humorous appeal to French Charley. He was very, very thirsty. He turned in at the rusty gate and descended the three mildewed stone steps to the basement.

A pock-marked mongrel stood wiping glasses behind the bar. The ceiling was covered with a false trellis on which hung oak leaves and Spanish moss. A woman sat at a table near one of the two barred window-casings. Chairs and tables were scattered about. There was fresh sawdust on the floor. It was fine and cool in here in the gloom. There was a sour odor in the room of spilled beer and cheap rum.

"What's a Lagoon louse?" inquired Charley blowing the foam off his schooner of beer.

"Lagoon Louse?" The mongrel bar-keeper accented the first syllable. Charley pointed through the window.

"Your sign out there!"

"Huh!" The bartender grunted disgustedly and shrugged his shoulders.

"Louse! Better not—louse!" He nodded toward the woman at the table by the window. "Dat's boss, Lagoon Lou."

French Charley looked over at Lagoon Lou. Then he drank off his schooner of beer.

"Any work around here?"

He frequently asked this by way of opening conversation, as others remark on the weather.

"Dunno." The mongrel barkeeper was evidently not of the sociable variety. Charley set his glass on the bar.

"Same."

The barkeeper flipped off the foam with the black straight-edge. Charley stared curiously at the woman eating by the window.

At length she noticed him.

"Hello."

"Hello."

In five minutes Charley was telling her when he had arrived and how happy he had been the night before and how he had one hundred and forty dollars.

SHE laughed. Her accent was not new to Charley, but always delightful. A French nigger, no doubt. Her skin was dark, but her lips, glaringly rouged, were not too thick. They weren't nigger lips. Her black hair was coiled under a dingy lace cap. A dull red wrapper, grease-spotted, was cut low in front and partly unbuttoned. Two roses, printed on the mercerized cotton, opened at her breasts. The frayed green foliage straggled down toward her heavy hips. Her teeth were not pleasant to look at. Her heavily penciled black eyes prevented one, however, from looking at her teeth.

Over French Charley crept an odd feeling of comfort, sociability, friendliness, curiosity. He chattered on at this creature who ate greedily—like himself—and drank black coffee. He did not notice her appearance. But he was keenly aware of her good nature—and of her sex. He showed her the money he had left and asked her how long that would keep him in New Orleans. At first her eyes snapped just a trifle. Later, when she had listened to more of his rambling talk, she advised him to get a job—to be careful.

At length she rose, wiping her reddened lips on the sleeve of her wrapper.

"Better you go, now; I busy. Maybe sometime—you come back, heh? Good-by." She went back of the bar.

Charley paid for his beer and left. His face wore a cheerful smile as he emerged into the heat and dirt of the street. He had another good friend. The world was full of good people. He turned down to the new levee and watched the gangs at work. He avoided the foreman. He didn't want to work. They might ask him.

So he shambled on back into the city and sat on one of the benches of a little square. Palms were growing all about him. In front was a walled-in space filled with many varieties of cactus. On one of the spiny stems was a gorgeous flower five inches across. As he looked, a huge black butterfly with yellow splashes on its waving wings crawled across the flat face of the flower with wabbling, uncertain gait. Two little negro children, very nearly bare-skinned, rolled in the sand of the pathway.

At night, after supper, he took his suitcase to his room and put on a clean shirt. His old one smelled sour from the night before. He washed, combed his hair and put on it some bayrum. French Charley had never drawn the cork from his bottle of bayrum north of the Mason and Dixon line. He went out into the heavy New Orleans night.

He found Lagoon Lou's basement saloon crowded, the air thick and heavy with tobacco smoke and the odor of sweating men and women. A darky girl was singing as he entered. He didn't catch the words. She worked her body in a way that interested him. The fellow at the piano banged away much as he himself chopped wood, sometimes, back on Corey's Creek when he was feeling uneasy.

Every table was full. French Charley gazed around a bit dizzy. He hadn't expected to find this. He saw Lagoon Lou serving drinks at a table about which were six or eight men and girls.

She was gloriously tricked out. About her neck and arms glittered jewelry. The girls had little on—flimsy stuff. He had been in one of these places before. His arm twitched as he closed the door. He went up to the bar. He felt a sudden flush of heat. His head shook a little. He could not think clearly. But he liked this. Here was life!

Lagoon Lou recognized him.

"Hello, French Charley." Her smile showed those teeth. "You find job? Six rum, two gin." The latter to the bartender. Charley laughed sheepishly.

"You boss of all this?" he asked irrelevantly.

"Eef you don't teenk—start sometin'!"

Lagoon Lou laughed and winked at him.

"Hm! You're pretty good—Gee!"

"Pretty? Mebbe! Good? No good!"

She shook her head vigorously—merrily. Her voice was a harsh guttural. She went away with her tray of drinks. Charley, on whom the witticism was entirely lost, looked after her, wondering. He drank his beer slowly—with gusto. It was a habit of his to tip his emptied glass several times, quickly, as though unwilling to lose the last few drops. It was from nervousness, not thirst.

"Sit down, French Cha'ley. Eet cost ze same." Lagoon Lou had returned. She showed her new customer to a seat at which sat a man and two girls. Lagoon Lou winked at one of them.

"What'll eet be?"

"Whisky sour."

"Same."

"Beer." The man's voice was a sort of growl. He was drunk. He was dirty. He had red eyes.

Lagoon Lou turned to French Charley inquiringly.

"Well?"

"Dunno. Beer, I guess." He felt vastly embarrassed, yet uncommonly pleased.

"Oh! Have a whisky with me," said the girl beside him. She laid her hand on his knee.

FRENCH CHARLEY drank with this girl. She talked to him—boldly. He ordered a second round. He grew confused. The darky girl sang again. He caught more of the words this time. He clapped. The girl beside him felt neglected.

Charley watched Lagoon Lou scurrying here and there through the murk, serving drinks, counting change, cracking jokes, scintillating in her flowered dress, her paint, her imitation jewelry.

"Hey, you fish! Goin' to buy me another drink?" French Charley smiled at the girl beside him vacantly.

"Sure! Much as you like. I got money."

She motioned to the waiter.

"Same. Two." She turned to her curious table partner.

"Say, you're a queer guy! Where'd you blow from?" She looked horrible when she leered at him through her paint.

Gradually French Charley warmed up.

Gradually the liquor, the heat, the noise, the nearness of women set his brain spinning. He lost all consciousness of time. This girl was a she-devil. He never knew that kind lived in the world.

Suddenly his companion screamed.

"Damn you! Say! Hey, this guy's a lunatic! Take him away from me!" She shrieked.

French Charley saw Lagoon Lou standing beside him in the haze. He could see nothing distinctly. He saw others whirling about. Some one grabbed him. Some one struck him. That made him angry. He began thrashing about. This was fun! He loved a rough-house. He saw red.

A wretched welling in his bowels awoke him. He was not in bed. It was dark. He couldn't move. He was sick. His wrists hurt him—and feet. He was tired. He was on a wooden floor.

"What—the—hell!—"

He saw daylight shining dimly through a closely shuttered window. His head ached. Worse than yesterday. He groaned.

Some one came into the room and opened the shutter. He recognized the mongrel bartender.

"Where am I?"

"Shut up!"

The bartender turned him over with his foot.

"You beeg dam' fool!"

"Lemme up."

"Huh!" The bartender looked at him mistrustfully.

"I'm all right. I'm sick."

Another grunt—this time of disdain.

"I'll make it right with you. I'm all right. Lemme up."

The mongrel untied his wrists. Charley sat up weakly.

"God! How sick!"

"No more fight—heh?" The man chuckled.

"Was I fightin'?"

"You devil feller! Crazy devil! Some day you get keeled."

Charley sat slowly revolving. His hands had been bleeding. He could feel dried blood on his face. He dimly remembered the noise, the lights, the crowd of the night before.

"Any water here?"

The bartender nodded at a bowl and pitcher on a stand.

Charley stood up dizzily and drank in huge gulps from the pitcher.

"Wash you' dirty face. Come down stair." The bartender left.

Charley tried to recollect what had happened. He could remember one or two things well enough. That girl made him crazy. He remembered Lagoon Lou trying to coax him. What for? His whole body ached. They must have beaten him up. With difficulty he put one of his swollen hands into his pocket. Stripped! Not a cent!

"Oh, well!"

He'd get a job now.

Hell! That was a night worth while! Only that drunken Sally. He was ashamed of that. It was her fault. She ought to have known better.

He washed his face. It was cut and sore. Then he groped his way down a narrow stair.

Lagoon Lou was sitting at the table where he had first seen her. The room was empty—disordered. It smelled horribly.

"Hello."

He stood there sheepishly enough. Also a bit unsteadily.

Lagoon Lou looked up and laid down her knife. She leaned back in her chair and sighed as she spoke. There was no great anger in her tone.

"You—beeg—devil! What you t'ink?"

Charley grinned.

"Sorry I made you trouble. Guess I must a been drunk."

"You no drunk—you dam' lunatic! Look my chair—my table! You break my house! You put me in jail! Maybe you keel my bes' girl!" Her voice rose. "You raise hail! What you are? Where you come?"

ON Charley's face was the look of a faithful hound that is being beaten by his master. His hands went in and out of his pocket. He looked appealingly at the bartender, who scowled at him.

"Don't give me any more booze. Goes to my head."

He looked at the little pile of broken furniture.

"Gee!"

He sighed. He felt sick, very repentant. He had been a nuisance to this woman. He looked at her sadly.

"I'll make up for it—soon as I get a job. You c'n trust me."

"Heh? Trost! You money gone, what?" She laughed.

Charley nodded—and grinned.

"Yeh." He turned to go. "Sorry I made

trouble. Don't want to be a bother to no one."

"Come here." Lagoon Lou pointed to the chair opposite her. Charley sat down. She beckoned to the bartender, who brought a pot of coffee. She reached down and pulled a roll of bills from her stocking. She counted it.

"Feefty-six dollar!"

She explained how she had taken it from the fellow who sat on his stomach when he had been overpowered. Three men tied him hand and foot and dragged him to the room upstairs. He offered her the money to pay for the damage he had caused.

"I ain't fit to have money."

Lagoon Lou looked at Charley curiously.

She gave him coffee. He began to talk. The bartender swept out the wet and dirty, ill-smelling sawdust. Lagoon Lou examined his cuts and bruises. She felt his arm, chest and shoulders.

There was in her voice a gentle—almost plaintive note.

"You beeg—ba-bee! You—strong—like hail!"

It had never occurred to Charley. She spoke slowly. Her voice was rough and low.

"You mak' plenty trouble—yas; but I like! I see one man fight t'ree—four—fi' man. I like!" She nodded her head. Her heavy black hair, greasy, coarse, shining, hung down raggedly to her right shoulder. The paint was still on her lips and cheeks from the night before. Her black eyes had in them much of the sadness and some of the glow of a dead desert under a setting sun.

She looked at French Charley. In her look was something almost maternal, something infinitely tired. And Charley looked at her out of his wide-open eyes, unseeing, but full of wonder as always, the dumb wonder of a bull that watches a red-winged black-bird swaying on a sumac bush.

He dipped bread in his coffee.

She brought him a piece of pine-tar soap and helped him wash his face and hands. While she did so he told her he would start work immediately. He never meant to make trouble. He'd stay away. It was the drink—and that Sally.

Then she told him to go. He could come there any time for a meal—except at night.

He turned back from the door and stood for a moment hesitating. Lagoon Lou had gone behind the bar.

"Wish you'd do me a favor, Missus Lou."

He came over and laid his money on the bar. All except a five-dollar bill.

"Keep that for me. I can't have money on me."

Lagoon Lou looked at him across the bar and smiled strangely. For twenty years she had stolen, wheedled, forced money from men. But she had never yet been appointed a custodian of funds. French Charley would never know the battle she had had with herself before she had pulled his roll from her stocking that morning.

"You can lemme have a little when I get broke."

Her hands rested on the bar. She looked at the bills, then at Charley.

"You a fonna fellow."

"This'll keep me for a week." He fingered the five-dollar-bill. "Wish you would."

"All right; I keep!" She picked up the money quickly and counted it.

"Feefty-one dollar."

Then with a change of voice.

"What you geeve money dat girl? Fi'e, ten, feefteen dollar! You crazy bug."

She laughed.

"All right, French Cha'ley. Goo'-by. You come get money any time. Don't you come here night-time. I trow you—right out!"

She made a vigorous gesture.

French Charley grinned sheepishly and left Lagoon Lou's basement. It was almost noon. His legs were shaky. But the hot sunshine was pleasant and he felt an immense relief to be rid of his trouble-making money. He stopped at a little shop and bought a cap. His clothes were torn and dirty. He felt quite comfortable. He went down to the new levee and looked up a boss. In an hour he was working with thirty negroes loading barrows with broken stone from the bowels of a barge.

IT was toward noon two weeks later that French Charley again visited Lagoon Lou's basement. He had had a row with a damn Scotchman and a nigger about who should wheel the next barrow-load of stone. He had been fired. He hadn't stopped to collect his wages. He wouldn't go back.

Lagoon Lou looked him over. He was filthy.

She ordered him to get clean socks and a shirt from his suitcase and to bring his dirty clothes back to her. She gave him five dollars and directions where to find a

job back of the new gas-house where they were filling in a marsh.

Twice a week for two months French Charley had a meal with Lagoon Lou and changed his shirt and socks. She sewed the rips in his coat and pants. From his money she bought him a pair of blue-jeans and heavy brogans.

Once he bought her a bottle of Colgate's lilac perfume.

Again he bought a paper bag full of per-simmons. One night on his way up from the gas-house he bought a mop for the surly bartender and took it to him just before dark. Lagoon Lou was upstairs dressing for the evening. One of the girls came down for a whisky. French Charley gulped his beer hurriedly and left, feeling nervous lest he be caught there again.

That night he rolled about on his corn-shuck mattress over the saloon and talked incessantly to himself. Now and then he groaned aloud. The barkeeper below heard him and yelled up to him.

"Shut up, Shivers, you damn lunatic!"

He heard the bums downstairs laughing and smiled sheepishly in the dark. He felt more and more uneasy. Finally he got up and went down to them. He didn't go to work the next day.

Two days later he went to Lagoon Lou. It was early afternoon. The surly bartender called to her upstairs.

"French Cha'ley like see you."

"Tell him go home. I can't bodder weez heem. Come tomorrow."

Charley heard her. He ordered a schooner of beer. He had fifteen cents in his pocket.

Finally he said to the bartender:

"Tell her I want my money. Goin' back north. Sick o' bummin' around here." He was dirty. He looked sick.

"Wat's matter you, Cha'ley?"

"Aw—nothin'. Jest tell her." He shambled out. He did not return the next day. Nor the next. He felt ashamed to go and get his money. He didn't quite know whether he wanted to go back home, or not.

Finally hunger made his decision. He went in the midafternoon to his bank. He had eaten a few bananas the day before. His bartender landlord had given him some kidney stew at night.

Lagoon Lou was all dressed for the evening. The only customer was a nigger bargeman.

French Charley sat down with Lou in the

corner by the barred window and told her about the last few days. He was sick of being drunk and bumming around.

She told him he had thirty-two dollars coming to him.

He'd better get back home. Spring work would commence before long. It was pretty good back north in the spring. He wanted to set a hen. Gin Jones would be trimming his grape-vine about now.

"You got—house—and cheeckins—"

If she would give him his money he could get back as far as Baltimore, and then beat a freight to New York.

"H'm-m!" Lagoon Lou went over to the bar and counted some bills.

"Who tek care you, dirty fellah, back up dere?"

Charley apparently did not hear her.

"Heh?"

"I'm all right." Charley grinned in his vacant, helpless fashion.

She handed him his money. Charley counted it.

"You been good to me."

"Yeh—mebbe. Anton!" She spoke sharply. "Get Cha'ley's shirt!"

The bartender went to fetch it.

She stood close to Charley and unbuttoned his coat.

"Ugh—nasty peeg! Where you been? Go change you shirt! Wash yourself!" She turned him around and pulled down his collar. "Ugh!"

She sent him back with the bartender.

When he returned Lagoon Lou was sitting at the corner table staring out of the dingy, barred window. The drunken bargeman had left. Charley sat in the chair she pushed out for him. She felt his neck and noticed the red in his cheeks from the rubbing he had given them. His hair was wet and tangled.

"Why you no comb hair?"

"Dunno—no comb."

She ran her fingers through the tangle. "Beeg—ba-bee!" She beckoned to the bartender.

"Two mescal!" She turned to Charley.

"So you go! H'm-m!"

"Good stuff, that—strong!"

HE had never tasted Mexican brandy before. She beckoned to the bartender who brought the bottle of mescal and set it beside the newspaper bundle in which were wrapped Charley's shirt and socks. Lagoon Lou nodded her head toward the

door in back. The bartender left the room.

She poured out another drink. She held up her glass.

"Bon voyage!"

French Charley did not understand French. But he grinned and drank his liquor. He shivered a little.

"Gee. Great stuff, that."

"Dat's good! You no geet dat up dere. You dreenk—mebbe—snow-water!" She laughed.

French Charley did not tell her that he never drank a drop in his shack on Corey's Creek. It was different, somehow, very different back there.

"Well, I got a nice little place, anyhow, there by the crick. Chickens an' a garden—'taint so bad. I'm no good around here. Nothin' but—well—I got good friends up there, Phil Hawkins, Old Ollie Ben, Donkey Ditch. Gimme plenty o' work!"

Lagoon Lou looked out of the window.

"H'm-m!"

Charley stroked a gaunt black cat that rubbed up against the leg of his chair with her long tail erect and her back arched.

Lagoon Lou laughed oddly. She had seldom in her life been unable to find words with which to express herself.

"French Charley—I guess you—a beeg—donkey—heh?"

"Guess you're right. Well, you been nice to me all right." His face lighted up. "I'll send you a post card when I get back. It's got a picture of the crick on it."

The cat stuck her fore-claws into his leg through his pants. He kicked her away. Then he looked at Lagoon Lou. She leaned over and buttoned his shirt where he had left it open.

"Do you lak me, French Cha'ley?"

The red on her lips and cheeks looked nice. He might have been in jail if it hadn't been for her. Who the hell wouldn't like her—all dressed up fine. Naturally! He wasn't a fool.

"Course I like you. You been a good friend to me, ain't you? Lots o' people don't bother about me, anyhow." He laughed. "Well, I ain't much—damn bum!"

She put her heavy hand on his shoulder, and looked with her black shining eyes into his wide open blue ones, which blinked a little.

"You—good fellah, French Cha'ley."

She smelled nice. The powder on her neck made him think of Donkey Ditch

Dietrich, the baker, at home. He used to watch him kneading bread and talked to him about Frederick the Great. He hitched his shoulder.

"Kees me!"

French Charley started as though some one had slapped him. The blood flared red on his neck and face. He felt her pinching grip on his shoulder.

"Jesus Christ! I ain't never kissed a woman!"

Lagoon Lou flung her arms about him and held him pressed against her. She kissed him three, four, five times, with fierce kisses. He struggled a little. Then he kissed back. He went blind.

He picked her up bodily. She bit him at the side of his neck. The table crashed over.

"Sh'h— Id-diot-t!" The word hissed out.

The bartender ran in through the back door.

From behind he struck Charley a savage blow with the bar blackjack. French Charley toppled over. Lagoon Lou struggled to her feet, her face flaming, her breasts heaving with sharp intakes of breath. Her hair had fallen down. The bartender picked up the bottle of mescal. Only a few drops remained.

"Lock ze doors!"

He did so. Lagoon Lou knelt by Charley and bathed his forehead with her handkerchief soaked in mescal. She staunched the blood oozing slowly from the bite at the side of his neck. Anton stood looking at her. He was used to this.

"Better dat guy get put away, heh?"

"Go to hail! Jackass!"

The bartender pursed his lips and raised his eyebrows. He shrugged. Then he went back of the bar and wiped glasses.

WHEN French Charley came to he sat up in the sawdust and gingerly felt of the lump on the side of his head. Lagoon Lou sat looking down at him.

Then he smiled sheepishly. He saw Anton back of the bar and rose to his feet unsteadily. He picked up his hat where it had rolled under the table. Lagoon Lou took it and brushed it off. She gave it to him. Her hand was trembling.

"Guess I better go."

Lagoon Lou looked out of the window. He spoke vaguely in her general direction.

"Good-by."

"You been awful good to me, Missus Lou. Wish you'd forgit this."

Lagoon Lou nodded. She was still staring out of the barred window.

"Good-by, Anton—no harm done. Little crazy, I guess—must be a nut!"

He went out.

That spring French Charley arrived back in his shanty by Corey's Creek much earlier than usual. He returned thin, dirty, ragged, and looking ill. The rest of the winter he lived on clams and eels, and a few groceries which he bought "on tick" with the promise to work them out later. When winter finally broke and the swallows were once more twittering in the firs around his shack he started on his regular spring jobs of raking lawns, cleaning out-houses, trimming hedges and the like.

His first brood of chickens came off the nest late in April.

By the middle of May the bottom of his cigar box was covered with one- and two-dollar bills. His Daboll's Almanac was marked with several advance dates. On Sunday he went to church in a new suit of clothes Ollie Ben had given him for trimming the biggest of the Terry elms.

Jim Fox, the blacksmith, stopped him in front of the post-office and inquired about his winter travels.

French Charley grinned at him a bit sheepishly and shook his head.

"No more! I'm sick of it!"

One night in August, as he was pottering about his tiny, dirty bedroom, he pulled his fiber suitcase from under his bed, took out a half-empty bottle of bayrum, pulled the cork very carefully and took a long whiff from the neck of the bottle.

The night was hot and stuffy. The incessant rasping of the crickets outside annoyed him. He had overeaten too, of boiled crabs. He thrashed around on his bed. At intervals he groaned aloud. Constantly he muttered to himself. Toward morning he broke into one of those weird cadences of semi-melody that leaped up and down the scale like a swallow's flight over a salt meadow just before a rain.

On a gray day in October, the farmers who were driving their loads of cauliflower to the station saw French Charley board the train for the city.

He had his black fiber suitcase with him. He had a through ticket for Mobile, Alabama.



Some Interesting Ghosts

*There are more things in heaven and earth,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*

Shakespeare: Hamlet.

A LONDON GHOST

TO a modest home in Soho Square came a fine gentleman asking for lodging, and so rich was his apparel and courtly his manner that the kindly master and mistress made ready their best chamber for his use. In truth, he soon became as though a member of their family, and when he informed them sorrowfully that his brother had died in Hampstead and had requested burial in the family vault in Westminster Abbey, they readily consented to the corpse being laid out in their home awaiting the interment.

The night before the funeral, they were awakened by the loud shrieks of Hetty, the maid of all work, who pounded on their chamber door, and told them of a dread apparition that had floated through the kitchen, clad in mouldy grave clothes, and scattering the scent of the dead. Tremblingly, they descended the stairs, but the corpse was reposing peacefully in the coffin, and the gentleman lodger had not returned from his walk. No ghost was to be seen.

But Hetty would not be appeased unless she slept in the same room with her mistress, and she curled up on a chair beside the door. A few hours later, there was another blood-curdling yell, this time from the lady of the house. The ghost had returned, and this time to their own chamber! With ghastly gray cerecloth trailing behind, the specter floated back and forth in front of the door, and master, mistress and maid huddled together in stark terror while the direful parade continued. At last the wraith disappeared, and hours later they regained their courage and went below.

The house was deserted. Gone was the fine lodger without paying for his lodging! Gone was the corpse, and, undoubtedly the ghost! But, stranger still, gone was the family silver. And the savings of twenty years secreted behind the clock!

And when that arch-rascal, Arthur Chambers, was executed at the Tyburn Tree in 1706, his features were remarkably like the gallant gentleman they had taken into their midst.



THE DEVIL AND THE PRUSSIAN GRENADIERS

IT has been said, and wisely, too, that "the devil is not so black as he is painted!" During the first Silesian War in 1742, Colonel Fouque occupied the town of Kremsir in Moravia with his brave grenadiers. They camped in a bad part of town, and rumor had it that the devil prowled around and practiced his black art among the soldiers. Fouque placed a sentry upon the ramparts near the home of the burgomaster. Now, the Prussian sentinel was a man of spirit, and rather than fear, he craved to see the Prince of Darkness. At night fall, he appeared, horns, claws, long tail and pitchfork! "Ha," said the fearless guardsman, "I have long wished to fall in with your Infernal Majesty!" And disarming him of his pitchfork, he held the screeching,

writhing demon until his comrades arrived and carried him to the guardhouse. Shorn of his infernal accoutrements, it was plainly seen that the devil was the burgomaster himself, and he was quickly dispatched to a monastery to expiate his sins. But still the people of Kremsir deplored the fiendish treatment given the grenadiers, and resolved to show their good will by a gift of new gaiters to the entire battalion. They had always been shod in sober black, but the new leggings were snowy white and handsome. Indeed, a fine gift from the devil to the Prussian Grenadiers!



THE COLD HAND

TRAVELING to Dieppe, Lord Plympton found himself at nightfall with no inn to afford him rest. But the flickering light of a small roadside house caught his eye, and, knocking, he was greeted by a beautiful young girl, who gave him meat and drink, and showed him a small, poor room that he might occupy. So tired was his Lordship that he soon fell asleep, only to awaken at midnight when a clammy hand slid cautiously across his countenance. Twice the horrible performance was repeated, and the nobleman, paralyzed with terror, was unable to move an inch. Soon he reassured himself that it was a dream, and drifted off to sleep again, only to experience the same dread happening again! Like a slimy streak, it slid across his face, leaving the coldness of death in its wake. His Lordship slept no more until daybreak.

The next day he told his hostess of the occurrence, and she was completely mystified. They had no family ghost, she said, and the neighboring forests were free from gnomes and sprites.

But as he finished his morning meal, a rough fellow lurched into the room, and greeted the fair young maiden. "Ah, my sister, so you let my room to fine lodgers! Jock Bones and I drove in at twelve and yon well-dressed carcass reposed upon my couch. I knew from the feel of his lily-skin that he was at least a duke! Bread and meat for me, and out with his Lordship! I want to sleep!"

And Plympton took his mantle and beplumed hat and hastily quitted the premises!



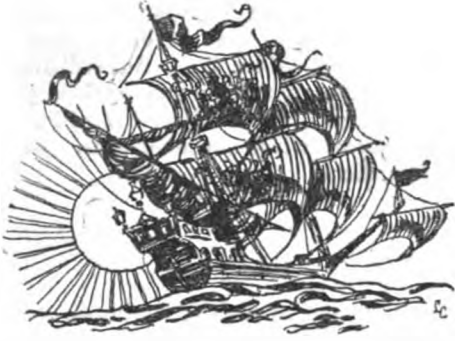
THE SPECTRE OF VIENNA

MARSHAL SAXE, Elector of Saxony under King Joseph, was a jovial fellow who feared God, loved his King and set a good table. Nor was he lacking in charm toward the fair ladies of the court, as was witnessed by his love for the beautiful Aurora Konigsmark. Joseph dispatched Saxe as head of the Imperial Army against the Turks in Hungary, and while in Vienna the brave soldier laid siege to the heart of Dona Esterle, the lovely favorite of the King. Aurora heard of her lord's indiscretion, and hurried to Vienna to confirm her suspicions.

A few nights later as Joseph lay sleeping in his palatial quarters, he was visited by a frail spectre that floated through his rooms, swathed in cloudy veils and smote terror in his soul. Night after night it appeared, and always it wailed the warning, "By thy friendship with the Elector of Saxony, thou wilt plunge into an abyss of destruction!"

The King was sore beset, but being at heart a superstitious person, he dared not disregard the words of the ghost. Finally he recalled the noble Saxe and placed another general in charge. Always he regarded him uneasily, and the shadow of the weird visitor hung over their friendship. Aurora regained her lover, and burned a collection of shrouds and veils that had for weeks been hidden in her boudoir. And the next time the King visited the beautiful Dona Esterle, he found her languid and uninterested, with just a suspicion of tears in her large black eyes.





WHEN Ivy Whalley, motherless daughter of Captain Henry Whalley, once master of the famous clipper *Condor*, married the man of her unfortunate choice, her father's farewell had been a solemn command to call on him whenever she needed aid. Advancing years and changing fortunes laid a heavy hand on the staunch old seaman, and at last in desperation, he sold his barque *Fair Maid*, when Ivy asked for money to buy a boarding house to support her invalid husband and two small children.

With the last remnants of a once comfortable fortune, Captain Whalley bought part interest in the *Sofala* from her owner, Massy, an engineer of low character, who needed a partner to save him from a financial debacle, and a partner to man the ship. Through three tempestuous years, Massy feared the honest old man, whose record on the Admiralty Charts vouched that he had never lost a ship nor countenanced a shady transaction. And he hated him as only a malicious, depraved soul can hate that which is high-minded. Seeking in vain to find some evidence to displace him from command, Massy pursued his evil way, aided by the second-mate, Sterne, a villain of the same character. But firm in his own strength, Henry Whalley silently steered the *Sofala* on her course with the help of the faithful Malay Serang, while the clouds of dastardly intrigue played about him. Then, with the shores of Batu Beru looming on the horizon, and but six weeks left in which to break the captain's contract and confiscate his investment, Massy resolved to play his last evil card.

PART FOUR

MR. VAN WYK, the white man of Batu Beru, an ex-naval officer who, for reasons best known to himself, had

Joseph Conrad's The End of the Tether

thrown away the promise of a brilliant career to become the pioneer of tobacco-planting on that remote part of the coast, had learned to like Captain Whalley. The appearance of the new skipper had attracted his attention. Nothing more unlike all the diverse types he had seen succeeding each other on the bridge of the *Sofala* could be imagined.

At that time Batu Beru was not what it has become since: the centre of a prosperous tobacco-growing district, a tropically suburban-looking little settlement of bungalows in one long street shaded with two rows of trees, embowered by the flowering and trim luxuriance of the gardens, with a three-mile-long carriage-road for the afternoon drives and a first-class Resident with a fat, cheery wife to lead the society of married estate-managers and unmarried young fellows in the service of the big companies.

All this prosperity was not yet; and Mr. Van Wyk prospered alone on the left bank on his deep clearing carved out of the forest, which came down above and below to the water's edge. His lonely bungalow faced across the river the houses of the Sultan: a restless and melancholy old ruler who had done with love and war, for whom life no longer held any savour (except of evil forebodings) and time never had any value. He was afraid of death, and hoped he would die before the white men were ready to take his country from him. He crossed the river frequently (with never less than ten boats crammed full of people), in the wistful hope of extracting some information on the subject from his own white man. There was a certain chair on the verandah he always took: the dignitaries of the court squatted on the rugs and skins between the furniture: the inferior people remained below on the grass-plot between the house and the river in rows three or four deep all along the front. Not

seldom the visit began at daybreak. Mr. Van Wyk tolerated these inroads. He would nod out of his bedroom window, tooth-brush or razor in hand, or pass through the throng of courtiers in his bathing robe. He appeared and disappeared humming a tune, polished his nails with attention, rubbed his shaved face with eau-de-Cologne, drank his early tea, went out to see his coolies at work; returned, looked through some papers on his desk, read a page or two in a book or sat before his cottage piano leaning back on the stool, his arms extended, fingers on the keys, his body swaying slightly from side to side. When absolutely forced to speak he gave evasive, vaguely soothing answers out of pure compassion: the same feeling perhaps made him so lavishly hospitable with the aerated drinks that more than once he left himself without soda-water for a whole week. That old man had granted him as much land as he cared to have cleared: it was neither more nor less than a fortune.

Whether it was fortune or seclusion from his kind that Mr. Van Wyk sought, he could not have pitched upon a better place. Even the mail-boats of the subsidized company calling on the veriest clusters of palm-thatched hovels along the coast steamed past the mouth of Batu Beru river far away in the offing. The contract was old: perhaps in a few years' time, when it had expired, Batu Beru would be included in the service; meantime all Mr. Van Wyk's mail was addressed to Malacca, whence his agent sent it across once a month by the *Sofala*. It followed that whenever Massy had run short of money (through taking too many lottery tickets), or got into a difficulty about a skipper, Mr. Van Wyk was deprived of his letters and newspapers. In so far he had a personal interest in the fortunes of the *Sofala*. Though he considered himself a hermit (and for no passing whim evidently, since he had stood eight years of it already), he liked to know what went on in the world.

Handy on the verandah upon a walnut étagère (it had come last year by the *Sofala*—everything came by the *Sofala*) there lay, piled up under bronze weights, a pile of *The Times* weekly edition, the large sheets of the *Rotterdam Courant*, the *Graphic* in its world-wide green wrappers, an illustrated Dutch publication without a cover, the numbers of a German magazine with covers of the "Bismarck malade" color. There were also parcels of new music

—though the piano (it had come years ago by the *Sofala*) in the damp atmosphere of the forests was generally out of tune. It was vexing to be cut off from everything for sixty days at a stretch sometimes, without any means of knowing what was the matter. And when the *Sofala* reappeared Mr. Van Wyk would descend the steps of the verandah and stroll over the grass-plot in front of his house, down to the water-side, with a frown on his white brow.

"You've been laid up after an accident, I presume."

He addressed the bridge, but before anybody could answer Massy was sure to have already scrambled ashore over the rail and pushed in, squeezing the palms of his hands together, bowing his sleek head as if gummed all over the top with black threads and tapes. And he would be so enraged at the necessity of having to offer such an explanation that his moaning would be positively pitiful, while all the time he tried to compose his big lips into a smile.

"No, Mr. Van Wyk. You would not believe it. I couldn't get one of those wretches to take the ship out. Not a single one of the lazy beasts could be induced, and the law, you know, Mr. Van Wyk. . . ."

HE moaned at great length apologetically; the words conspiracy, plot, envy, came out prominently, whined with greater energy. Mr. Van Wyk, examining with a faint grimace his polished fingernails, would say, "H'm. Very unfortunate," and turn his back on him.

Fastidious, clever, slightly sceptical, accustomed to the best society (he had held a much-envied shore appointment at the Ministry of Marine for a year preceding his retreat from his profession and from Europe), he possessed a latent warmth of feeling and a capacity for sympathy which were concealed by a sort of haughty, arbitrary indifference of manner arising from his early training; and by a something an enemy might have called foppish, in his aspect—like a distorted echo of past elegancies. He managed to keep an almost military discipline amongst the coolies of the estate he had dragged into the light of day out of the tangle and shadows of the jungle; and the white shirt he put on every evening with its stiff glossy front and high collar looked as if he had meant to preserve the decent ceremony of evening-dress, but had wound a thick crimson sash above his hips as a concession to the wilderness, once

his adversary, now his vanquished companion. Moreover, it was a hygienic precaution. Worn wide open in front, a short jacket of some airy silken stuff floated from his shoulders. His fluffy, fair hair, thin at the top, curled slightly at the sides; a carefully arranged moustache, an ungarnished forehead, the gleam of low patent shoes peeping under the wide bottom of trousers cut straight from the same stuff as the gossamer coat, completed a figure recalling, with its sash, a pirate chief of romance, and at the same time the elegance of a slightly bald dandy indulging, in seclusion, a taste for unorthodox costume.

It was his evening get-up. The proper time for the *Sofala* to arrive at Batu Beru was an hour before sunset, and he looked picturesque, and somehow quite correct, too, walking at the water's edge on the background of grass slope crowned with a low, long bungalow with an immensely steep roof of palm thatch, and clad to the eaves in flowering creepers. While the *Sofala* was being made fast he strolled in the shade of the few trees left near the landing-place, waiting till he could go on board. Her white men were not of his kind. The old Sultan (though his wistful invasions were a nuisance) was really much more acceptable to his fastidious taste. But still they were white; the periodical visits of the ship made a break in the well-filled sameness of the days without disturbing his privacy. Moreover, they were necessary from a business point of view; and through a strain of preciseness in his nature he was irritated when she failed to appear at the appointed time.

The cause of the irregularity was too absurd, and Massy, in his opinion, was a contemptible idiot. The first time the *Sofala* reappeared under the new agreement swinging out of the bend below, after he had almost given up all hope of ever seeing her again, he felt so angry that he did not go down at once to the landing-place. His servants had come running to him with the news, and he had dragged a chair close against the front rail of the verandah, spread his elbows out, rested his chin on his hands, and went on glaring at her fixedly while she was being made fast opposite his house. He could make out easily all the white faces on board. Who on earth was that kind of patriarch they had got there on the bridge now?

At last he sprang up and walked down the gravel path. It was a fact that the very gravel for his paths had been imported

by the *Sofala*. Exasperated out of his quiet superciliousness, without looking at any one right or left, he accosted Massy straightway in so determined a manner that the engineer, taken aback, began to stammer unintelligibly. Nothing could be heard but the words: "Mr. Van Wyk . . . Indeed, Mr. Van Wyk. . . For the future, Mr. Van Wyk"—and by the suffusion of blood Massy's vast bilious face acquired an unnatural orange tint, out of which the disconcerted coal-black eyes shone in an extraordinary manner.

"Nonsense. I am tired of this. I wonder you have the impudence to come alongside my jetty as if I had it made for your convenience alone."

Massy tried to protest earnestly. Mr. Van Wyk was very angry. He had a good mind to ask that German firm—those people in Malacca—what was their name?—boats with green funnels. They would be only too glad of the opening to put one of their small steamers on the run. Yes; Schnitzler, Jacob Schnitzler, would in a moment. Yes. He had decided to write without delay.

In his agitation Massy caught up his falling pipe.

"You don't mean it, sir!" he shrieked.

"You shouldn't mismanage your business in this ridiculous manner."

Mr. Van Wyk turned on his heel. The other three whites on the bridge had not stirred during the scene. Massy walked hastily from side to side, puffed out his cheeks, suffocated.

"Stuck-up Dutchman!"

AND he moaned out feverishly a long tale of griefs. The efforts he had made for all these years to please that man. This was the return you got for it, eh? Pretty. Write to Schnitzler—let in the green-funnel boats—get an old Hamburg Jew to ruin him. No, really he could laugh. . . . He laughed sobbingly. . . . Ha! ha! ha! And make him carry the letter in his own ship presumably.

He stumbled across a grating and swore. He would not hesitate to fling the Dutchman's correspondence overboard—the whole confounded bundle. He had never, never made any charge for that accommodation. But Captain Whalley, his new partner, would not let him probably; besides, it would be only putting off the evil day. For his own part he would make a hole in the water rather than look on

tamely at the green funnels overrunning his trade.

He raved aloud. The China boys hung back with the dishes at the foot of the ladder. He yelled from the bridge down at the deck, "Aren't we going to have any chow this evening at all?" then turned violently to Captain Whalley, who waited, grave and patient, at the head of the table, smoothing his beard in silence now and then with a forbearing gesture.

"You don't seem to care what happens to me. Don't you see that this affects your interests as much as mine? It's no joking matter."

He took the foot of the table, growling between his teeth.

"Unless you have a few thousands put away somewhere. I haven't."

Mr. Van Wyk dined in his thoroughly lit-up bungalow, putting a point of splendor in the night of his clearing above the dark bank of the river. Afterwards he sat down to his piano, and in a pause he became aware of slow footsteps passing on the path along the front. A plank or two creaked under a heavy tread; he swung half around on the music-stool, listening with his finger-tips at rest on the keyboard. His little terrier barked violently, backing in from the verandah. A deep voice apologized gravely for "this intrusion." He walked out quickly.

At the head of the steps the patriarchal figure, who was the new captain of the *Sofala* apparently (he had seen a round dozen of them, but not one of that sort), towered without advancing. The little dog barked unceasingly, till a flick of Mr. Van Wyk's handkerchief made him spring aside into silence. Captain Whalley, opening the matter, was met by a punctiliously polite but determined opposition.

They carried on their discussion standing where they had come face to face. Mr. Van Wyk observed his visitor with attention. Then at last, as if forced out of his reserve—

"I am surprised that you should intercede for such a confounded fool."

This outbreak was almost complimentary, as if its meaning had been, "That such a man as you should intercede!" Captain Whalley let it pass by without finching. One would have thought he had heard nothing. He simply went on to state that he was personally interested in putting things straight between them. Personally. . . .

But Mr. Van Wyk, really carried away by his disgust with Massy, became very incisive—

"Indeed—if I am to be frank with you—his whole character does not seem to me particularly estimable or trustworthy. . . ."

Captain Whalley, always straight, seemed to grow an inch taller and broader, as if the girth of his chest had suddenly expanded under his beard.

"My dear sir, you don't think I came here to discuss a man with whom I am—I am—h'm—closely associated."

A sort of solemn silence lasted for a moment. He was not used to asking favors, but the importance he attached to this affair had made him willing to try. . . . Mr. Van Wyk, favorably impressed, and suddenly mollified by a desire to laugh, interrupted—

"That's all right if you make it a personal matter; but you can do no less than sit down and smoke a cigar with me."

A slight pause, then Captain Whalley stepped forward heavily. As to the regularity of the service, for the future he made himself responsible for it; and his name was Whalley—perhaps to a sailor (he was speaking to a sailor, was he not?) not altogether unfamiliar. There was a lighthouse now, on an island. Maybe Mr. Van Wyk himself. . . .

"Oh, yes. Oh, indeed." Mr. Van Wyk caught on at once. He indicated a chair. How very interesting. For his own part he had seen some service in the last Acheen War, but had never been so far East. Whalley Island? Of course. Now that was very interesting. What changes his guest must have seen since.

"I can look further back even—on a whole half-century."

Captain Whalley expanded a bit. The flavor of a good cigar (it was a weakness) had gone straight to his heart, also the civility of that young man. There was something in that accidental contact of which he had been starved in his years of struggle.

THE front wall retreating made a square recess furnished like a room. A lamp with a milky glass shade, suspended below the slope of the high roof at the end of a slender brass chain, threw a bright round of light upon a little table bearing an open book and an ivory paper-knife. And, in the translucent shadows beyond, other tables could be seen, a number of

easy-chairs of various shapes, with a great profusion of skin rugs strewn on the teak-wood planking all over the verandah. The flowering creepers scented the air. Their foliage clipped out between the uprights made as if several frames of thick, unstirring leaves reflecting the lamplight in a green glow. Through the opening at his elbow Captain Whalley could see the gangway lantern of the *Sofala* burning dim by the shore, the shadowy masses of the town beyond the open lustrous darkness of the river, and, as if hung along the straight edge of the projecting eaves, a narrow black strip of the night sky full of stars—resplendent. The famous cigar in hand he had a moment of complacency.

"Somebody must lead the way," he said. "I just showed that the thing could be done; but you men brought up to the use of steam cannot conceive the vast importance of my bit of venturesomeness to the Eastern trade of the time. Why, that new route reduced the average time of a southern passage by eleven days for more than half the year. Eleven days! It's on record. But the remarkable thing—speaking to a sailor—I should say was. . . ."

Captain Whalley had been also the pioneer of the early trade in the Gulf of Petchili. He even found occasion to mention that he had buried his "dear wife" there six-and-twenty years ago. Mr. Van Wyk, impassive, could not help speculating in his mind swiftly as to the sort of woman that would mate with such a man. Did they make an adventurous and well-matched pair? No. Very possibly she had been small, frail, no doubt very feminine—or most likely commonplace with domestic instincts, utterly insignificant. But Captain Whalley was no garrulous bore, and shaking his head as if to dissipate the momentary gloom that had settled on his handsome old face, he alluded conversationally to Mr. Van Wyk's solitude.

Mr. Van Wyk affirmed that sometimes he had more company than he wanted. He mentioned smilingly some of the peculiarities of his intercourse with "My Sultan." He made his visits in force. Those people damaged his grass-plot in front (it was not easy to obtain some approach to a lawn in the tropics), and the other day had broken down some rare bushes he had planted over there. And Captain Whalley remembered immediately that, in 'forty-seven, the then Sultan, "this man's grandfather," had been notorious as a great pro-

ductor of the piratical fleets of praus from farther East. They had a safe refuge in the river at Batu Beru. He financed more especially a Balinini chief called Haji Daman. Captain Whalley, nodding significantly his bushy white eyebrows, had very good reason to know something of that. The world had progressed since that time.

Mr. Van Wyk demurred with unexpected acrimony. Progressed in what? he wanted to know.

WHY, in knowledge of truth, in decency, in justice, in order—in honesty, too, since men harmed each other mostly from ignorance. It was, Captain Whalley concluded quaintly, more pleasant to live in.

Mr. Van Wyk whimsically would not admit that Mr. Massy, for instance, was more pleasant naturally than the Balinini pirates.

The river had not gained much by the change. They were in their way every bit as honest. Massy was less ferocious than Haji Daman, no doubt, but. . . .

"And what about you, my good sir?" Captain Whalley laughed a deep soft laugh. "You are an improvement, surely."

The lamps on the verandah flung three long squares of light between the uprights far over the grass. A bat flitted before his face like a circling flake of velvety blackness. Along the jasmine hedge the night air seemed heavy with the fall of perfumed dew; flowerbeds bordered the path; the clipped bushes uprose in dark, rounded clumps here and there before the house; the dense foliage of creepers filtered the sheen of the lamplight within a soft glow all along the front; and everything near and far stood still in a great immobility, in a great sweetness.

Mr. Van Wyk (a few years before he had had occasion to imagine himself treated more badly than anybody alive had ever been by a woman) felt for Captain Whalley's optimistic views the disdain of a man who had once been credulous himself. His disgust with the world (the woman for a time had filled it for him completely) had taken the form of activity in retirement, because, though capable of great depth of feeling, he was energetic and essentially practical. But there was in that uncommon old sailor, drifting on the outskirts of his busy solitude, something that fascinated his scepticism. His very simplicity (amusing enough) was like a delicate refinement of an upright character. The striking

dignity of manner could be nothing else, in a man reduced to such a humble position, but the expression of something essentially noble in the character. With all his trust in mankind he was no fool; the serenity of his temper at the end of so many years, since it could not obviously have been appeased by success, wore an air of profound wisdom. Mr. Van Wyk was amused at it sometimes. Even the very physical traits of the old captain of the *Sofala*, his powerful frame, his reposeful mien, his intelligent, handsome face, the big limbs, the benign courtesy, the touch of rugged severity in the shaggy eyebrows, made up a seductive personality. Mr. Van Wyk disliked littleness of every kind, but there was nothing small about that man, and in the exemplary regularity of many trips an intimacy had grown up between them, a warm feeling at bottom under a kindly stateliness of forms agreeable to his fastidiousness.

They kept their respective opinions on all worldly matters. His other convictions Captain Whalley never intruded. The difference of their ages was like another bond between them. Once, when twitted with the uncharitableness of his youth, Mr. Van Wyk, running his eye over the vast proportions of his interlocutor, retorted in friendly banter—

"Oh. You'll come to my way of thinking yet. You'll have plenty of time. Don't call yourself old: you look good for a round hundred."

But he could not help his stinging incisiveness, and though moderating it by an almost affectionate smile, he added—

"And by then you will probably consent to die from sheer disgust."

Captain Whalley, smiling, too, shook his head. "God forbid!"

HE thought that perhaps on the whole he deserved something better than to die in such sentiments. The time of course would have to come, and he trusted to his Maker to provide a manner of going out of which he need not be ashamed. For the rest he hoped he would live to a hundred if need be; other men had been known; it would be no miracle. He expected no miracles.

The pronounced, argumentative tone caused Mr. Van Wyk to raise his head and look at him steadily. Captain Whalley was gazing fixedly with a rapt expression, as though he had seen his Creator's favorable

decree written in mysterious characters on the wall. He kept perfectly motionless for a few seconds, then got his vast bulk on to his feet so impetuously that Mr. Van Wyk was startled.

He struck first a heavy blow on his inflated chest; and, throwing out horizontally a big arm that remained steady, extended in the air like the limb of a tree on a windless day—

"Not a pain or an ache there. Can you see this shake in the least?"

His voice was low, in an awing, confident contrast with the headlong emphasis of his movements. He sat down abruptly.

"This isn't to boast of it, you know. I am nothing," he said in his effortless strong voice, that seemed to come out as naturally as a river flows. He picked up the stump of the cigar he had laid aside, and added peacefully, with a slight nod, "As it happens, my life is necessary; it isn't my own, it isn't—God knows."

He did not say much for the rest of the evening, but several times Mr. Van Wyk detected a faint smile of assurance flitting under the heavy moustache.

Later on Captain Whalley would now and then consent to dine "at the house." He could even be induced to drink a glass of wine. "Don't think I'm afraid of it, my good sir," he explained. "There was a very good reason why I should give it up."

On another occasion, leaning back at ease, he remarked, "You have treated me most—most humanely, my dear Mr. Van Wyk, from the very first."

"You'll admit there was some merit," Mr. Van Wyk hinted, slyly. "An associate of that excellent Massy. . . . Well, well, my dear captain, I won't say a word against him."

"It would be no use your saying anything against him," Captain Whalley affirmed a little moodily. "As I've told you before, my life—my work, is necessary, not for myself alone. I can't choose. . . ." He paused, turned the glass before him right round. . . . "I have an only child—a daughter."

The ample downward sweep of his arm over the table seemed to suggest a small girl at a vast distance. "I hope to see her once more before I die. Meantime it's enough to know that she has me sound and solid, thank God. You can't understand how one feels. Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh; the very image of my poor wife. Well, she. . . ."

Again he paused, then pronounced stoically the words, "She has a hard struggle."

And his head fell on his breast, his eyebrows remained knitted, as by an effort of meditation. But generally his mind seemed steeped in the serenity of boundless trust in a higher power. Mr. Van Wyk wondered sometimes how much of it was due to the splendid vitality of the man, to the bodily vigor which seems to impart something of its force to the soul. But he had learned to like him very much.

This was the reason why Mr. Sterne's confidential communication, delivered hurriedly on the shore alongside the dark silent ship, had disturbed his equanimity.

The portable table was being put together for dinner to the left of the wheel by two pig-tailed "boys," who as usual snarled at each other over the job, while another, a doleful, burly, very yellow Chinaman, resembling Mr. Massy, waited apathetically with the cloth over his arm and a pile of thick dinner-plates against his chest. A common cabin lamp with its globe missing brought up from below, had been hooked to the wooden framework of the awning; the sidescreens had been lowered all round; Captain Whalley, filling the depths of the wicker-chair, seemed to sit benumbed in a canvas tent crudely lighted, and used for the storing of nautical objects; a shabby steering-wheel, a battered brass binnacle on a stout mahogany stand, two dingy life-buoys, an old cork fender lying in a corner, dilapidated deck-lockers with loops of tin rope instead of door-handles.

He shook off the appearance of numbness to return Mr. Van Wyk's unusually brisk greeting, but relapsed directly afterwards. To accept a pressing invitation to dinner "up at the house" cost him another very visible physical effort. Mr. Van Wyk, perplexed, folded his arms, and leaning back against the rail, with his little, black, shiny feet well out, examined him covertly.

"I've noticed of late that you are not quite yourself, old friend."

HE put an affectionate gentleness into the last two words. The real intimacy of their intercourse had never been so vividly expressed before.

"Tut, tut, tut!"

The wicker-chair creaked heavily.

"Irritable," commented Mr. Van Wyk to himself; and aloud, "I'll expect to see you

in half an hour, then," he said, negligently, moving off.

"In half an hour," Captain Whalley's rigid silvery head repeated behind him as if out of a trance.

Amidships, below, two voices, close against the engine-room, could be heard answering each other—one angry and slow, the other alert.

"I tell you the beast has locked himself in to get drunk."

"Can't help it now, Mr. Massy. After all, a man has a right to shut himself up in his cabin in his own time."

"Not to get drunk."

"I heard him swear that the worry with the boilers was enough to drive any man to drink," Sterne said, maliciously.

Massy hissed out something about bursting the door in. Mr. Van Wyk, to avoid them, crossed in the dark to the other side of the deserted deck. The planking of the little wharf rattled faintly under his hasty feet.

"Mr. Van Wyk! Mr. Van Wyk!"

He walked on: somebody was running on the path. "You've forgotten to get your mail."

Sterne, holding a bundle of papers in his hand, caught up with him.

"Oh, thanks."

But, as the other continued at his elbow, Mr. Van Wyk stopped short. The overhanging eaves, descending low upon the lighted front of the bungalow, threw their black straight-edged shadow into the great body of the night on that side. Everything was very still. A tinkle of cutlery and a slight jingle of glasses were heard. Mr. Van Wyk's servants were laying the table for two on the verandah.

"I am afraid you give me no credit whatever for my good intentions in the matter I've spoken to you about," said Sterne.

"I simply don't understand you."

"Captain Whalley is a very audacious man, but he will understand that his game is up. That's all that anybody need ever know of it from me. Believe me, I am very considerate in this, but duty is duty. I don't want to make a fuss. All I ask you, as his friend, is to tell him from me that the game's up. That will be sufficient."

Mr. Van Wyk felt a loathsome dismay at this queer privilege of friendship. He would not demean himself by asking for the slightest explanation; to drive the other away with contempt he did not think prudent—as yet, at any rate. So much

assurance staggered him. Who could tell what there could be in it? he thought. His regard for Captain Whalley had the tenacity of a disinterested sentiment, and his practical instinct coming to his aid, he concealed his scorn.

"I gather, then, that this is something grave."

"Very grave," Sterne assented, solemnly, delighted at having produced an effect at last. He was ready to add some effusive protestations of regret at the "unavoidable necessity," but Mr. Van Wyk cut him short—very civilly, however.

Once on the verandah Mr. Van Wyk put his hands in his pockets, and, straddling his legs, stared down at a black panther skin lying on the floor before a rocking-chair. "It looks as if the fellow had not the pluck to play his own precious game openly," he thought.

This was true enough. In the face of Massy's last rebuff Sterne dared not declare his knowledge. His object was simply to get charge of the steamer and keep it for some time. Massy would never forgive him for forcing himself on; but if Captain Whalley left the ship of his own accord, the command would devolve upon him for the rest of the trip; so he hit upon the brilliant idea of scaring the old man away. A vague menace, a mere hint, would be enough in such a brazen case; and, with a strange admixture of compassion, he thought that Batu Beru was a very good place for throwing up the sponge. The skipper could go ashore quietly, and stay with that Dutchman of his. Weren't these two as thick as thieves together? And on reflection he seemed to see that there was a way to work the whole thing through that great friend of the old man's. This was another brilliant idea. He had an inborn preference for circuitous methods. In this particular case he desired to remain in the background as much as possible, to avoid exasperating Massy endlessly. No fuss! Let it all happen naturally.

Mr. Van Wyk all through the dinner was conscious of a sense of isolation that invades sometimes the closeness of human intercourse. Captain Whalley failed lamentably and obviously in his attempts to eat something. He seemed overcome by a strange absent-mindedness. His hand would hover irresolutely, as if left without guidance by a preoccupied mind. Mr. Van Wyk had heard him coming up from a long way off in the profound stillness of the

river-side, and had noticed the irresolute character of the footfalls. The toe of his boot had struck the bottom stair as though he had come along mooning with his head in the air right up to the steps of the verandah. Had the captain of the *Sofala* been another sort of man he would have suspected the work of age there. But one glance at him was enough. Time—after, indeed, marking him for its own—had given him up to his usefulness, in which his simple faith would see a proof of Divine mercy. "How could I contrive to warn him?" Mr. Van Wyk wondered, as if Captain Whalley had been miles and miles away, out of sight and earshot of all evil. He was sickened by an immense disgust of Sterne. Even to mention his threat to a man like Whalley would be positively indecent. There was something more vile and insulting in its hint than in a definite charge of crime—the debasing taint of blackmailing. "What could any one bring against him?" he asked himself. This was a limpid personality. "And for what object?" The Power that man trusted had thought fit to leave him nothing on earth that envy could lay hold of, except a bare crust of bread.

"DON'T you try some of this?" he asked, pushing a dish slightly. Suddenly it occurred to Mr. Van Wyk that Sterne might possibly be coveting the command of the *Sofala*. His cynicism was quite startled by what looked like a proof that no man may count himself safe from his kind unless in the very abyss of misery.

At this moment Captain Whalley, bolt upright, the deep cavities of the eyes overhung by a bushy frown, and one large brown hand resting on each side of his empty plate, spoke across the table-cloth abruptly—

"Mr. Van Wyk, you've always treated me with the most humane consideration."

"My dear captain, you make too much of the simple fact that I am not a savage." Mr. Van Wyk, utterly revolted by the thought of Sterne's obscure attempt, raised his voice incisively, as if the mate had been hiding somewhere within earshot. "Any consideration I have been able to show was no more than the rightful due of a character I've learned to regard by this time with an esteem that nothing can shake."

A slight ring of glass made him lift his eyes from the slice of pineapple he was cutting into small pieces on his plate. In

changing his position Captain Whalley had contrived to upset an empty tumbler.

Without looking that way, leaning sideways on his elbow, his other hand shading his brow, he groped shadily for it, then desisted. Van Wyk stared blankly, as if something momentous had happened all at once. He did not know why he should feel so startled; but he forgot Sterne utterly for the moment.

"Why, what's the matter?"

And Captain Whalley, half-averted, in a deadened, agitated voice, muttered—

"Esteem!"

"And I may add something more," Mr. Van Wyk, very steady-eyed, pronounced slowly.

"Hold! Enough!" Captain Whalley did not change his attitude or raise his voice. "Say no more! I can make you no return. I am too poor even for that now. Your esteem is worth having. You are not a man that would stoop to deceive the poorest sort of devil on earth, or make a ship unseaworthy every time he takes her to sea."

Mr. Van Wyk, leaning forward, his face gone pink all over, with the starched table-napkin over his knees, was inclined to mistrust his senses, his power of comprehension, the sanity of his guest.

"Where? Why? In the name of God!—what's this? What ship? I don't understand who. . . ."

"Then, in the name of God, it is I! A ship's unseaworthy when her captain can't see. I am going blind."

Mr. Van Wyk made a slight movement, and sat very still afterwards for a few seconds; then, with the thought of Sterne's "The game's up," he ducked under the table to pick up the napkin which had slipped off his knees. This was the game that was up. And at the same time the muffled voice of Captain Whalley passed over him—

"I've deceived them all. Nobody knows."

He emerged flushed to the eyes. Captain Whalley, motionless under the full blaze of the lamp, shaded his face with his hand.

"And you had that courage?"

"Call it by what name you like. But you are a humane man—a—a—gentleman, Mr. Van Wyk. You may have asked me what I had done with my conscience."

He seemed to muse, profoundly silent, very still in his mournful pose.

"I began to tamper with it in my pride. You begin to see a lot of things when you are going blind. I could not be frank with an old chum even. I was not frank with Massy—no, not altogether. I knew he took me for a wealthy sailor fool, and I let him. I wanted to keep up my importance—because there was poor Ivy away there—my daughter. What did I want to trade on his misery for? I did trade on it—for her. And now, what mercy could I expect from him? He would trade on mine if he knew it. He would hunt the old fraud out, and stick to the money for a year. Ivy's money. And I haven't kept a penny for myself. How am I going to live for a year? A year! In a year there will be no sun in the sky for her father."

His deep voice came out, awfully veiled, as though he had been overwhelmed by the earth of a landslide and talking of the thoughts that haunt the dead in their graves. A cold shudder ran down Mr. Van Wyk's back.

"And how long is it since you have. . . .?"

"It was a long time before I could bring myself to believe in this—this—visitation." Captain Whalley spoke with gloomy patience from under his hand.

He had not thought he had deserved it. He had begun by deceiving himself from day to day, from week to week. He had the Serang at hand there—an old servant. It came on gradually, and when he could no longer deceive himself. . . .

His voice died out almost.

"Rather than give her up I set myself to deceive you all."

"It's incredible," whispered Mr. Van Wyk. Captain Whalley's appalling murmur flowed on.

"Not even the sign of God's anger could make me forget her. How could I forsake my child, feeling my vigour all the time—the blood warm within me? Warm as yours. It seems to me that, like the blinded Samson, I would find the strength to shake down a temple upon my head. She's a struggling woman—my own child that we used to pray over together, my poor wife and I. Do you remember that day I as well as told you that I believed God would let me live to a hundred for her sake? What sin is there in loving your child? Do you see it? I was ready for her sake to live for ever. I half believed I would. I've been praying for death since. Ha! Presumptuous man—you wanted to live. . . ."

A TREMENDOUS, shuddering upheaval of that big frame, shaken by a gasping sob, set the glasses jingling all over the table, seemed to make the whole house tremble to the roof-tree. And Mr. Van Wyk, whose feeling of outraged love had been translated into a form of struggle with nature, understood very well that, for that man whose whole life had been conditioned by action, there could exist no other expression for all the emotions; that, voluntarily to cease venturing, doing, enduring, for his child's sake, would have been exactly like plucking his warm love for her out of his living heart. Something too monstrous, too impossible, even to conceive.

Captain Whalley had not changed his attitude, that seemed to express something of shame, sorrow, and defiance.

"I have even deceived you. If it had not been for that word 'esteem.' These are not the words for me. I would have lied to you. Haven't I lied to you? Weren't you going to trust your property on board this very trip?"

"I have a floating yearly policy," Mr. Van Wyk said almost unwittingly, and was amazed at the sudden cropping up of a commercial detail.

"The ship is unseaworthy, I tell you. The policy would be invalid if it were known. . . ."

"We shall share the guilt, then."

"Nothing could make mine less," said Captain Whalley.

He had not dared to consult a doctor; the man would have perhaps asked who he was, what he was doing; Massy might have heard something. He had lived on without any help, human or divine. The very prayers stuck in his throat. What was there to pray for? and death seemed as far as ever. Once he got into his cabin he dared not come out again; when he sat down he dared not get up; he dared not raise his eyes to anybody's face, he felt reluctant to look upon the sea or up to the sky. The world was fading before his great fear of giving himself away. The old ship was his last friend; he was not afraid of her; he knew every inch of her deck; but at her, too, he hardly dared to look, for fear of finding he could see less than the day before. A great incertitude enveloped him. The horizon was gone; the sky mingled darkly with the sea. Who was this figure standing over yonder? What was this thing lying down there? And a

frightful doubt of the reality of what he could see made even the remnant of sight that remained to him an added torment, a pitfall always open for his miserable pretence. He was afraid to stumble inexcusably over something—to say a fatal Yes or No to a question. The hand of God was upon him, but it could not tear him away from his child. And, as if in a nightmare of humiliation, every featureless man seemed an enemy.

He let his hand fall heavily on the table. Mr. Van Wyk, arms down, chin on breast, with a gleam of white teeth pressing on the lower lip, meditated on Sterne's "The game's up."

"The Serang of course does not know."

"Nobody," said Captain Whalley, with assurance.

"Ah, yes. Nobody. Very well. Can you keep it up to the end of the trip? That is the last under the agreement with Massy."

Captain Whalley got up and stood erect, very stately, with the great white beard lying like a silver breastplate over the awful secret of his heart. Yes; that was the only hope there was for him of ever seeing her again, of securing the money, the last he could do for her, before he crept away somewhere—useless, a burden, a reproach to himself. His voice faltered.

"Think of it! Never see her any more: the only human being besides myself now on earth that can remember my wife. She's just like her mother. Lucky the poor woman is where there are no tears shed over those they loved on earth and that remain to pray not to be led into temptation—because, I suppose, the blessed know the secret of grace in God's dealings with His created children."

He swayed a little, said with austere dignity—

"I don't. I know only the child He has given me."

And he began to walk. Mr. Van Wyk, jumping up, saw the full meaning of the rigid head, the hesitating feet, the vaguely extended hand. His heart was beating fast; he moved a chair aside, and instinctively advanced as if to offer his arm. But Captain Whalley passed him by, making for the stairs quite straight.

"He could not see me at all out of his line," Van Wyk thought, with a sort of awe. Then going to the head of the stairs, he asked a little tremulously—

"What is it like—like a mist—like. . . ."

Captain Whalley, half-way down, stopped, and turned round undismayed to answer:

"It is as if the light were ebbing out of the world. Have you ever watched the ebbing sea on an open stretch of sands withdrawing farther and farther away from you? It is like this—only there will be no flood to follow. Never. It is as if the sun were growing smaller, the stars going out one by one. There can't be many left that I can see by this. But I haven't had the courage to look of late. . . ." He must have been able to make out Mr. Van Wyk, because he checked him by an authoritative gesture and a stoical—

"I can get about alone yet."

IT was as if he had taken his line, and would accept no help from men, after having been cast out, like a presumptuous Titan, from his heaven. Mr. Van Wyk, arrested, seemed to count the footsteps right out of earshot. He walked between the tables, tapping smartly with his heels, took up a paper-knife, dropped it after a vague glance along the blade; then happening upon the piano, struck a few chords, standing up before the keyboard with an attentive poise of the head like a piano-tuner; closing it, he pivoted on his heels brusquely, avoided the little terrier sleeping trustfully on crossed forepaws, came upon the stairs next, and, as though he had lost his balance on the top step, ran down headlong out of the house. His servants, beginning to clear the table, heard him mutter to himself (evil words no doubt) down there, and then after a pause go away with a strolling gait in the direction of the wharf.

The bulwarks of the *Sofala* lying alongside the bank made a low, black wall on the undulating contour of the shore. Two masts and a funnel uprose from behind it with a great rake, as if about to fall: a solid, square elevation in the middle bore the ghostly shapes of white boats, the curves of davits, lines of rail and stanchions, all confused and mingling darkly everywhere; but low down, amidships, a single lighted port stared out on the night, perfectly round, like a small, full moon, whose yellow beam caught a patch of wet mud, the edge of trodden grass, two turns of heavy cable wound round the foot of a thick wooden post in the ground.

Mr. Van Wyk, peering alongside, heard a muzzy boastful voice apparently jeering at a person called Prendergast. It

mouthed abuse thickly, choked; then pronounced very distinctly the word "Murphy," and chuckled. Glass tinkled tremulously. All these sounds came from the lighted port. Mr. Van Wyk hesitated, stooped; it was impossible to look through unless he went down into the mud.

"Sterne," he said half aloud.

The drunken voice within said gladly: "Sterne—of course. Look at him blink. Look at him! Sterne, Whalley, Massy. Massy, Whalley, Sterne. But Massy's the best. You can't come over him. He would just love to see you starve."

Mr. Van Wyk moved away, made out farther forward a shadowy head stuck out from under the awnings as if on the watch, and spoke quietly in Malay, "Is the mate asleep?"

"No. Here, at your service."

In a moment Sterne appeared, walking as noiselessly as a cat on the wharf.

"It's so jolly dark, and I had no idea you would be down to-night."

"What's this horrible raving?" asked Mr. Van Wyk, as if to explain the cause of a shudder that ran over him audibly.

"Jack's broken out on a drunk. That's our second. It's his way. He will be right enough by to-morrow afternoon, only Mr. Massy will keep on worrying up and down the deck. We had better get away."

He muttered suggestively of a talk "up at the house." He had long desired to effect an entrance there, but Mr. Van Wyk nonchalantly demurred; it would not, he feared, be quite prudent, perhaps; and the opaque black shadow under one of the two big trees left at the landingplace swallowed them up, impenetrably dense by the side of the wide river that seemed to spin into threads of glitter the light of a few big stars dropped here and there upon its outspread and flowing stillness.

"The situation is grave beyond doubt," Mr. Van Wyk said. Ghostlike in their white clothes they could not distinguish each other's features, and their feet made no sound on the soft earth. A sort of purring was heard. Mr. Sterne felt gratified by such a beginning.—

"I thought, Mr. Van Wyk, a gentleman of your sort would see at once how awkwardly I was situated."

"Yes, very. Obviously his health is bad. Perhaps he's breaking up. I see, and he himself is well aware—I assume I am speaking to a man of sense—he is well aware that his legs are giving out."

"His legs—ah!" Mr. Sterne was disconcerted, and then turned sulky. "You may call it his legs if you like; what I want to know is whether he intends to clear out quietly. That's a good one, too! His legs! Pooh!"

"Why, yes. Only look at the way he walks," Van Wyk took him up in a perfectly cool and undoubting tone. "The question, however, is whether your sense of duty does not carry you too far from your true interest. After all, I, too, could do something to serve you. You know who I am."

"Everybody along the Straits has heard of you, sir."

"Supposing, then, he got the loan," Mr. Van Wyk resumed in a deliberate undertone, "on your own showing he's more than likely to get a mortgagee's man thrust upon him as captain. For my part, I know that I would make that very stipulation myself if I had to find the money. And as a matter of fact I am thinking of doing so. It would be worth my while in many ways. Do you see how this would bear on the case under discussion?"

"Thank you, sir. I am sure you couldn't get anybody that would care more for your interests."

"Well, it suits my interest that Captain Whalley should finish his time. I shall probably take a passage with you down the Straits. If that can be done, I'll be on the spot when all these changes take place, and in a position to look after *your* interests."

"Mr. Van Wyk, I want nothing better. I am sure I am infinitely. . . ."

"I take it, then, that this may be done without any trouble."

"Well, sir, what risk there is can't be helped; but (speaking to you as my employer now) the thing is *more* safe than it looks. If anybody had told me of it I wouldn't have believed it, but I have been looking on myself. That old Serang has been trained up to the game. There's nothing the matter with his—his—limbs, sir. He's got used to do things on his own in a remarkable way. And let me tell you, sir, that Captain Whalley, poor man, is by no means useless. Fact. Let me explain to you, sir. He stiffens up that old monkey of a Malay, who knows well enough what to do. Why, he must have kept captain's watches in all sorts of country ships off and on for the last five-and-twenty years. These natives, sir, as long as they have a white

man close at the back, will go on doing the right thing most surprisingly well—even if left quite to themselves. Only the white man must be of the sort to put starch into them, and the captain is just the one for that. Why, sir, he has drilled him so well that now he needs hardly speak at all. I have seen that little wrinkled ape made to take the ship out of Pangu Bay on a blowy morning and on all through the islands; take her out first-rate, sir, dodging under the old man's elbow, and in such quiet style that you could not have told for the life of you which of the two was doing the work up there. That's where our poor friend would be still of use to the ship even if—if—he could no longer lift a foot, sir. Providing the Serang does not know that there's anything wrong."

"He doesn't."

"Naturally not. Quite beyond his apprehension. They aren't capable of finding out anything about us, sir."

"You seem to be a shrewd man," said Mr. Van Wyk in a choked mutter, as though he were feeling sick.

"You'll find me a good enough servant, sir."

MR. STERNE hoped now for a hand-shake at least, but unexpectedly with a "What's this? Better not to be seen together," Mr. Van Wyk's white shape wavered, and instantly seemed to melt away in the black air under the roof of boughs. The mate was startled. Yes. There was that faint thumping clatter.

He stole out silently from under the shade. The lighted port-hole shone from afar. His head swam with the intoxication of sudden success. What a thing it was to have a gentleman to deal with! He crept aboard, and there was something weird in the shadowy stretch of empty decks, echoing with shouts and blows proceeding from a darker part amidships. Mr. Massy was raging before the door of the berth: the drunken voice within flowed on undisturbed in the violent racket of kicks.

"Shut up! Put your light out and turn in, you confounded swilling pig—you! D'you hear me, you beast?"

The kicking stopped, and in the pause the muzzy oracular voice announced from within—

"Ah! Massy, now—that's another thing. Massy's deep."

"Who's that aft there? You, Sterne? He'll drink himself into a fit of horrors."

"He will be good enough for duty tomorrow. I would let him be, Mr. Massy."

Sterne slipped away into his berth, and at once had to sit down. His head swam with exultation. He got into his bunk as if in a dream. A feeling of profound peace, of pacific joy, came over him. On deck all was quiet.

Mr. Massy, with his ear against the door of Jack's cabin, listened critically to a deep, stertorous breathing within. This was a dead-drunk sleep.

"I hope to goodness he's too drunk to wake up now," muttered Mr. Massy.

The sound of a softly knowing laugh nearly drove him to despair. He swore violently under his breath. The fool would keep him awake all night now for certain. He cursed his luck. He wanted to forget his maddening troubles in sleep sometimes. He could detect no movements. Without apparently making the slightest attempt to get up, Jack went on sniggering to himself where he lay; then began to speak, where he had left off as it were—

"Massy! I love the dirty rascal. He would like to see his poor old Jack starve—but just you look where he has climbed to. . . ." He hiccupped in a superior, leisurely manner. . . . "Shipowning it with the best. A lottery ticket you want. Ha! ha! I will give you lottery tickets, my boy. Let the old ship sink and the old chum starve—that's right. He don't go wrong—Massy don't. Not he. He's a genius—that man is. That's the way to win your money. Ship and chum must go."

"The silly fool has taken it to heart," muttered Massy to himself. And, listening with a softened expression of face for any slight sign of returning drowsiness, he was discouraged profoundly by a burst of laughter full of joyful irony.

"Would like to see her at the bottom of the sea! Oh, you clever, clever devil! Wish her sunk, eh? I should think you would, my boy; the damned old thing and all your troubles with her. Rake in the insurance money—turn your back on your old chum—all's well—gentleman again."

A grim stillness had come over Massy's face. Only his big black eyes rolled uneasily. The raving fool. And yet it was all true. Yes. Lottery tickets, too. All true. What? Beginning again? He wished he wouldn't. . . .

BUT it was even so. The imaginative drunkard on the other side of the bulkhead shook off the deathlike stillness that after his last words had fallen on the dark ship moored to a silent shore.

"Don't you dare to say anything against George Massy, Esquire. When he's tired of waiting he will do away with her. Look out! Down she goes—chum and all. He'll know how to. . . ."

The voice hesitated, weary, dreamy, lost, as if dying away in a vast open space.

He must have been very drunk, for at last the heavy sleep gripped him with the suddenness of a magic spell, and the last word lengthened itself into an interminable, noisy, indrawn snore. And then even the snoring stopped, and all was still.

Sometimes a breath of wind would enter and touch his face, a cool breath charged with the damp, fresh feel from a vast body of water. A glimmer here and there was all he could see of it; and once he might after all suppose he had dozed off, since there appeared before his vision, unexpectedly and connected with no dream, a row of flaming and gigantic figures—three nought seven one two—making up a number such as you may see on a lottery ticket. And then all at once the port was no longer black: it was pearly gray, framing a shore crowded with houses, thatched roof beyond thatched roof, walls of mats and bamboo, gables of carved teak timber. Rows of dwellings raised on a forest of piles lined the steely bank of the river, brimful and still, with the tide on the turn. This was Batu Beru—and the day had come.

Mr. Massy shook himself, put on the tweed coat, and, shivering nervously as if from some great shock, made a note of the number. A fortunate, rare hint that. Yes; but to pursue fortune one wanted money—ready cash.

Then he went out and prepared to descend into the engine-room. Several small jobs had to be seen to, and Jack was lying dead drunk on the floor of his cabin, with the door locked at that. His gorge rose at the thought of work. Ay! But if you wanted to do nothing you had to get first a good bit of money. A ship won't save you. True, all true. He was tired of waiting for some chance that would rid him at last of that ship that had turned out a curse on his life.

The conclusion of "The End of the Tether," will appear in the next issue of The Famous Story Magazine.



The Hatchetman

By

ACHMED ABDULLAH



BARREL-ORGAN had just creaked up the street, leaving a sudden rent of silence in the hectic clattering of the Pell Street symphony and lending a slow, dramatic thud to the words of Yung Long, the wholesale grocer, that drifted through the gangrened door.

"Yes," he said. "Wong Ti—" and Wong Ti, on his way through the hall, stopped as he heard his name—"is a killer, a hatchetman. In the whole of Pell Street there is none more skilled than he in his profession. He is old and withered. True! But his mind is sharp, his hand is steady, and he knows the intricate lore of drugs. He could put poison in your belly, and your lips would be none the wiser. Too, he is fearless of the white devils' incomprehensible laws. He has killed more often than there are hairs on his honourable chest. Yet has he never been punished, never even been suspected."

"Then—why—?" came the slurring, slightly ironic question.

"Because," replied Yung Long, "he is a philosopher and a just man, a sane man, a tolerant man. He knows that when the naked dance, they cannot tear their clothes. He knows that a dead mule cannot eat turnips. He knows that there is no beginning and no end to the beard of the beardless. He knows that one cannot cure a woman's heart with powder and ball and steel, nor heal the canker of jealousy with poison. He is a most honourable gentleman, gaining a great deal of face through his wisdom and the guile of his charming simplicity."

"The *guile* of his simplicity, O elder brother?" stuttered a naïve voice, belonging both as to question itself and the throaty, faintly foreign inflection to some young, American-born Chinaman.

"Indeed!" the grocer gurgled into his pipe, amongst a ripple of gentle, gliding laughter.

Then other voices brushed in, quoting the polished and curiously insincere sentences of ancient Chinese sages in support of his contention; and Wong Ti, the hatchetman, stepped back from the door and vanished behind the curtain of trooping, purple shadows thrown across the length of the narrow hall by the great, iron-bound tea chests in back of Yung Long's store.

He turned and walked up the stairs with that furtive step which, since it was the scientific accomplishing of murder that brought him the glitter of gold, the shine of silver, the jangling of copper, and the pleasant, dry rustle of paper money had become second nature to him: heels well down, toes slowly gripping through soft duffle soles, arms carefully balanced, hands at right angles from the wrists, and fingers spread out gropingly, like the sensitive antennæ of some night insect, to give warning of unfamiliar objects.

As he passed the first floor, he stopped.

There, beneath a flickering double gas jet, Doctor En Hai, A.B., Yale, M.D., Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, member of the American Society of Clinical Surgery, corresponding member of the Paris *Société de Chirurgie* and of the Royal British Association of Surgery and Gynæcology, flashed the incongruous modernity of his brass shingle through the musty, mouldy labyrinth of Chinatown.

In his post-graduate year, a famous New York surgeon fainting across the white enamelled table at the crucial moment of a hypogastric operation when the fraction of a second meant the difference between life and death, En Hai had taken the scalpel from the other's limp fingers

and had carried on the operation, in the same breath as it were, to a brilliantly successful finish. Immediately his name had become a household word in medical circles. He had received offers from the New York Post-Graduate Medical School, Johns Hopkins, and the Boston Polyclinic, but had refused them, saying he preferred to go back to his native Pell Street and work amongst his own people—"because they need me."

AT the time—it coinciding with dog days in matters political, social, and hysterical, and there being neither election, nor divorce scandal, nor sensational double murder to be blurbled across the front pages of the metropolitan dailies—Doctor En Hai's altruistic decision had caused considerable stir. All the "sob sisters" in Newspaper Row had interviewed him. They had covered reams of yellow flimsy calling him a Modern Martyr and a Noble Soul. They had compared him to Marcus Aurelius and several of the lesser saints. They had contrasted the honours and fortune and fame which might have been his to his life in the reeking, sweating Chinatown slums which he had chosen "because they need me."

Miss Edith Rutter, the social settlement investigator who specialized in Mongols and had paid for the young doctor's education out of her own pocket, wrote to a friend in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, interested, financially and otherwise, in her pet subject, that she had not laboured in vain, that here at last was a yellow man willing to bear the white man's burden.

If Pell Street knew different, it did not tell.

If Pell Street had its tongue in its cheek, nobody saw it.

But when, at night, the day's toil done, grave celestial burgesses met in the liquor store of the Chin Sor Company, the "Place of Sweet Desire and Heavenly Entertainment," to retail there the shifting gossip of Chinatown, it was recalled with compressed lips and eyes contracting to narrow slits, that Doctor En Hai's deceased father, En Gin, had been for many years a hopeless addict to the curling black smoke, a paralysed, spineless ne'er-do-well, and an object of material Pell Street charity.

But, being Chinamen, they had spiced their charity with crude jests, with floweringly obscene abuse, occasionally with a blow and a kick; and since to a Chinaman

a family, including its dead and buried progenitors, is an unbreakable entity while the individual counts for nothing, young En Hai, then a wizened, underbred, sloe-eyed lad of eight, had been included in the blending of harsh contumely and harsher charity which had been heaped upon his father's head.

Then Miss Rutter had sent him away, first to a good school, afterwards to college, and now he was back amongst them, in well-cut American clothes, clean, suave, polished, smooth—a successful man—almost famous.

And Pell Street knew—and did not tell—why he had returned.

"He will sneer at us, but he will cure us," Nag Hop Fat, the soothsayer, had crystallized the prevailing sentiment, "thereby accumulating much face for himself, his father, and all his ancestors. With every drop of medicine, will he give us two, perhaps three, grains of contempt. And we, knowing that he is a great doctor, will not be able to refuse the medicine—*nor* the contempt. A most proper and wise man is En Hai!" he had wound up with honest admiration.

Wong Ti stopped and looked at the brass plate which had the doctor's name both in English letters and Mandarin ideographs. A keen-eared listener might have heard a deep, racking intake of breath, almost a sob, and something like the crackle of naked steel, quickly drawn, as quickly snapped back into the velvet-lined scabbard.

Then the hatchetman passed on to his own apartment on the second floor of the house, that squinted back toward the Bowery with malicious, fly-specked, scarlet-curtained windows, and out toward Mott Street with the bizarre, illogical contour of an impromptu bird's-nest balcony where homesick blossoms of remote Asia were waging a brave but losing fight against the flaccid, feculent Pell Street sough.

A dwarfed, gnarled lychee tree with glistening, blackish green leaves; a draggletail parrot tulip, brown and tawny and gamboge yellow, in a turquoise blue pot; another pot, virulently crimson, dragon painted, planted with anæmic Cantonese frisias; a waxen budding narcissus bulb bending beneath the greasy, stinking soot—and the whole characteristic of Wong Ti, killer, red-handed assassin; yet a philosopher and a gentle, just man.

For—the which would have condemned

him as viewed through a white man's spectacles and, by the same token, enhanced his civic and moral value in the slanting eyes of his countrymen—he only killed when he was paid for it, and never out of personal spite, personal revenge, personal passion.

His footsteps became muffled, then died, as he opened the door to his apartment. The silence crept back again, like a beaten dog.

Only the murmur of singsong voices from the grocery store downstairs; a sound of metal clinking against metal from the doctor's office; and a woman's tinkly, careless laughter:

"Chia Shun!" called the hatchetman, his aged voice leaping to a wheezing crack. "Ahee! Chia Shun!"—just a little petulantly.

But Chia Shun—which is a woman's name and means "Admirable and Obedient"—did not reply; and Wong Ti shrugged his shoulders. Doubtless, he said to himself, she was on the lower floor, in the doctor's office.

Doing—what?

Talking about—what?

He made a slight motion as if to retrace his steps. His hand reached for the sheathed dagger up his loose sleeve.

Then again the tinkly, careless laughter, a man's echoing bass, and a deep blush of shame suffused the hatchetman's leathery, wrinkled cheeks. He dismissed the sounds, and what the sounds might portend, as something altogether negligible, opened an inlaid, carved sandalwood box, and took out his opium layout.

With a great deal of care he chose his pipe: one of plain cherry wood with a brown tortoiseshell tip and a single, black silk tassel—a pipe that harmonized with his resigned mood; plied needle, blew on flame, kneaded amber colored chandoo cube and inhaled the biting smoke deeply.

Complete peace enfolded him after a minute—his wife's laughter, the doctor's echoing bass, seemed to come from very far away, like the buzzing of harmless insects—and he smiled as he looked through the open door into Chia Shun's room, where the dying August sun blew in with mellow, rose-red gold, heaping shadow upon violet shadow, and embroidering color with yet more color.

The room was crowded with furniture and knick-knacks.

Each separate object represented a pass-

ing whim of his wife, too, a killing successfully accomplished.

There was the large cheval mirror, intimately connected with the mysterious murder of one Li Tuan-fen, king amongst laundrymen and hereditary enemy of the Yung clan, in which every morning and countless times during the day his wife surveyed the lissome, wicked sweetness of her nineteen years, her smooth, raven hair, her long black lashes that swept over opaque, delightfully slanting eyes like lovely silk fringes, the delicate golden velvet texture of her skin, and her narrow, fluttering hands.

NEXT to the mirror a dragon rug was spread, a marvellous sheen of ultramarine and syenite blue on a field of emerald green, with tiny points of orange and cadmium yellow; a rug fit for the mistress of a *murhachi*, an iron-capped Manchu prince, and paid for by the death—"due to ptomaine poisoning," the Bellevue Hospital record had it—of a man whose very name, an unimportant business detail, the hatchetman had forgotten.

There were other things—a piano that was never opened, a couple of incongruous sporting prints, a tantalus, a princess dressing-table, a bas-relief plaque framed in burgundy velvet, an array of silver-topped toilet articles—each a passing whim, each a passing death; and finally the masterpiece! the victrola, a large, expensive, Circassian walnut affair, and the record rack filled with hiccoughy, sensuous Afro-American rags, cloying gutter ballads, belching, ear-splitting Italian arias, and elusive faun-like Argentine tangos.

He remembered quite well how he had earned it!

The whispered colloquy in the back room of Mr. Brian Neill's saloon with Nag Pao, head of the Montreal branch of the Nag clan; the tiring trip, circuitously so as to muddy the trail, to the chilly, unfriendly northern city; the waiting in ambush back of the Rue Sainte Marie until night came and huddled the squat, rickety, wooden houses together in grey, shapeless groups; the light flickering up—a signal!—quickly shuttered; then his feline pounce, for all his brittle old bones, the knife flashing from his sleeve like a sentient being, the acrid gurgle of death—and Nag Pao's honor made clean, his own hand weighted with clinking, coined gold, and, two weeks later, his wife voicing her delight as, with a twist of her supple

fingers, she sent some lascivious Argentine tango record whirring on its way.

"Say! Ye're a sure enough peach, Wong-gee-Pongee!"—this was the undignified nickname which she had given to her elderly lord and master and in which he delighted, as well as in the fact that she preferred speaking to him in English—"Say! Yer may be old and sorta dried up—like a peanut, see? But ye sure know how to treat a goil, believe me! Come on, ol' socks, and have a try at the light fantastic!"—clutching him around the waist and forcing him, laughing, protesting, his dignity of race and caste flying away in a sweet rush of passion, to step to the mad rhythm of the tango that was gathering speed and wickedness.

Wong Ti smiled at the recollection. She had enjoyed it and—yes!—to him, too, it had been well worth while.

For he loved Chia Shun.

For love of her, he had picked her out of the gutter when her father, the last of his clan, had died, a bankrupt, disgraced. For love of her, he had interfered when Yu Chang, the joss house priest, had perfected certain arrangements with a lady—antecedents, though not profession, unclassified—in far Seattle. For love of her, relying on his hatchetman's privileges and the shivering fear that went with them, he had committed the one sin that would have been considered unpardonable in anybody else; he had whispered into Miss Rutter's receptive ears a tale of Chinese slavery, of a little child brought up to lead a life of shame—"we must blow away the golden bubble of her innocent beauty from the stagnant pools of vice," had been his quaint way of putting it; and had thus ranged the forces of the white man's interfering, bullying law and order on his side, with the natural result, nowise unforeseen by him, that Chia Shun, then fourteen years of age, became Miss Edith Rutter's petted ward.

THREE years later, he had married her, and Miss Rutter had voiced no objections to the match.

Neither she, nor Bill Devoy, Detective of Second Branch, nor anybody else around Pell Street except the yellow men, knew the crimson source which filled the hatchetman's purse. To her, he was just a harmless, soft-stepping, middle-aged Chinaman who dealt vaguely in tea and silk and ginger, who was not altogether indifferent to the white lessons of the Christ, and who

—Miss Rutter's spinster heart gave an entirely academic flutter at the thought—loved her pert little ward with utter devotion, utter tenderness.

"Yes," she had said to Bill Devoy, the man hunter who—irony of the white and yellow Pell Street muddle!—was the man killer's Best Man—"Wong Ti is the right husband for her. He is such a gentle old dear—and so square. She will be safe with him. He will never abuse her, nor beat her——"

"Mebbe that's the very thing she needs, lady," Bill Devoy had grumbled.

For he had looked more than once into Chia Shun's black, oblique eyes, and twenty years on the Pell Street beat had taught him a certain effective, if crude, appreciation of Mongol psychology.

At the time of the wedding, Wong Ti had explained his position to Nag Hong Fah, the pouchy, greasy proprietor of the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace, not because he thought that he owed an explanation to any one, but to forestall leaky-tongued, babbling gossip.

"I am not a Cantonese pig," he had said, adding with callous brutality, "as you are. I am from the West, from the province of Shensi, the cradle of the black-haired race. Our men are free, and so are our women—freer even than—these!" pointing out at the street where a tall, massive, golden-haired woman, evidently a sightseer, was laying down the domestic law to her stolid, resigned husband.

"I have heard tales about the women of Shensi," Nag Hong Fah, the remark about Cantonese pigs still rankling in his stout breast, had replied, quoting, certain scandalous stories which reflected unfavorably on the virtues of the Shensi ladies. "Good morals," he had wound up with oily, self-righteous sententiousness, "have been considered the source of life by the *ta-pi-k'u*—the one hundred and fifty Greater Disciples. Good morals are the only law by which the human mind may hope to attain to the shining planes of spiritual wisdom. Good morals are necessary for women—desirable even for men!"

"**G**OOD morals are a delusion, fool!" the hatchetman had rejoined. "Only happiness counts in life. Happiness—and justice. And as to Chia Shun——"

"Yes?" had come the eager question.

"I know that she is a butterfly, while I am a regrettable, dried-up cockroach."

"Do you think it fitting that a butterfly and—ah—a regrettable, dried-up cockroach should mate, O wise and elder brother?" Nag Hong Fah had smiled maliciously.

"No. But I know, too, that some day the little golden-winged butterfly will meet——"

"Another butterfly? Perhaps a male butterfly?"

"Yes. And on that day——"

"You will remember the strength of your sword arm, Wong Ti? You will remember the poison lore which is yours and busy your honorable hands with stinking pots and phials?"

"Again—no! O son of less than nothing at all! On that day my old heart will crack just the least little bit. But I will remember that Chia Shun has given me a breath of youth, a spice of love, a gentle breeze of happiness to fan the grey drabness of my declining years. I will remember that I am old and useless, that youth will always call to youth, that a butterfly will always yearn for a butterfly."

"You will—forgive?"

"What will not a goat eat or a fool say? Am I a Christian that I should forgive? Too, what is there to forgive in love—love that comes out of the dark, without warning, without jingling of bells? No. I shall not forgive. But I shall understand, O great fool!"

And he had understood almost from the first, when Doctor En Hai had returned to Pell Street—"because they need me"—and had nailed his shingle on the floor below.

"A butterfly will always yearn for a butterfly," Wong Ti smiled now, as he held over the lamp the little brown chandoo cube, which was stuck on the opening of the furnace. The opium fizzled, dissolved, and evaporated.

His thoughts became hazy.

"The man for whom there is no desire for coming into existence or having existence, him I call calm, he has overcome desire!"—the words of the Yellow Emperor came back to him, blending strangely with the tinkly, silvery laughter that drifted up from the doctor's office.

It was a curious, rather sardonic twist in the tail of altruistic ingenuousness that it should have been Miss Edith Rutter who first brought the young doctor into the hatchetman's life.

"I feel responsible for both these two youngsters," she had told him. "You see, I paid for En Hai's education, and I guess I taught that darling little wife of yours everything she knows."

"*Everything?*" had come the silent, gently ironic question in the hatchetman's heart while Miss Rutter had continued:

"They are bound to see a good deal of each other. They are both young. They live in the same house. They have their education—their American education—in common. And"—with spinsterly, innocent playfulness—"you must promise me that you won't be jealous, dear Wong Ti. You know what young Americans are like—and both your wife and the doctor are quite Americanized——"

"Quite!"

"And so they'll be!—oh, you know what I mean—just chums, real chums, like brother and sister. I just know it, dear Wong Ti, and I am so glad!"

"So am I," the hatchetman had assented, gravely—and truthfully.

AND so butterfly had met butterfly, Wong Ti thought, as he inhaled the smoke of his opium pipe; and he remembered how, at first, doubtless awed by his grim reputation as a professional killer, they had avoided looking at each other, how both, when the three were together, had been stiff and stilted and ill at ease and had scrupulously addressed to him all they had to say.

Later on, En Hai had become more bold in sidelong glance and whispered word and hand furtively touching hand beneath the table, while Chia Shun had still held back, either through nervousness or through a residue of loyalty—he didn't know which.

Finally, when she had imagined that her elderly husband did not see or, seeing, did not care, she had thrown all precaution to the winds. Her love for the younger man was in her eyes, in her every gesture; and typically feminine was she in this, that, in her very conversations with the man whom she was deceiving, she could not crowd from her lips the name of the man with whom she was deceiving him. She would speak about his neat American clothes, his skill as a physician, the agile energy of his thin, brown hands, his knowledge, his wit, his cleverness.

"Say, Wongee-Pongee," she would say to her husband, balancing her slender body on his knees and naively confiding to him—though she did not know what she was

doing—the secret of her love—“that doctor sure knows a thing or two. And, say, ain't he just the swell dresser, though? Did ye pipe that new grey suit he bought—made to order—yes, sir! And you oughter see how he treats them Chinks wot useter make life a hell for him and his Dad! Just like doit beneath his feet, that's how he treats 'em, Wongee-Pongee!”

“Tell him to beware, Butterfly! Some of these Cantonese pigs have a short temper and a long knife.”

“Gwan! Wottya givin' me? That young feller can take care of himself. He's got more honest-to-Gawd guts than all the rest of them Chinks put together!”

“To be sure!”

And always the hatchetman would smile, as he smiled now, listening to the tinkly, silvery spurts of laughter that floated up from the doctor's office.

He had considered everything, had decided everything.

Chia Shun had given him a few years of youth and happiness and golden glory. For ever after would he be grateful to her.

But now love had come to her, like a sweet, swift throe, and it would be useless to fight against it, as useless as painting pictures on running water.

“Love is love,” he confided to his opium pipe, “and an elephant is an elephant on low ground as well as on high.”

Presently he would die, and his body would be taken home, to Shensi of the purple, hushed West, to the free, eternal womb of China, far away from the bastard, yellow-and-white pidgin of the treaty ports, and be buried, properly, respectably, as befitted his ancient race, his ancestry, and his honourable profession. And the butterfly would marry the butterfly, and the love they were now nibbling with furtive, stealthy teeth, they would then gulp in brave mouthfuls.

He sighed a little—a sigh half of resignation, half of satisfaction.

Directly to the left of the door there was a heavy, black and gold length of temple brocade fastened against the wall, embroidered with vermilion Mandarin ideographs; and as he read and re-read, a great, white peace, a poignant sweetness, stole over his soul.

The quotation was from the *Book of Leih-Tzu the Book of the Unknown Philosopher* who lived many centuries before Confucius, and it said:

There is a Life that is unrevealed;
There is a Transformer who is changeless.
The Uncreated alone can produce Life;
The Changeless alone can evolve Change.

“There is a Life that is unrevealed—unrevealed—” mumbled Wong Ti, the killer, as his head sank drowsily on his breast, while the silvery, tinkly laughter seemed to fade and die in the curling poppy smoke.

QUITE suddenly, he sat up, wide awake.

Night had come, with a vaulted, jetty sky and a sickle-moon of delicate ivory, poised high. The flame of the lamp had flickered out. The opium had fizzled to its last, bitter, stinking dregs.

A slight headache throbbled in his temples. He felt very old, very lonely.

He rose, stretched his aching bones, and yawned elaborately.

The laughter—the tinkly, careless laughter—it had ceased—as life must cease—and passion and love and faith and strength—

He took a step toward the other room, squinting into the dark.

“Chia Shun!” he called. “Ahee! Little Crimson Lotus Bud!”

But no answer came.

Was she still downstairs?

He wondered.

Why—they always laughed, those two, when they were together—always—

Butterflies, little, silly, golden butterflies—who loved each other—who—loved—

“Say! For the love o' Gawd! Yer don't mean it! Yer can't mean it! Ye're joshin', ain't ye?”

Clear, distinct, his wife's voice stabbed up, through the dumbwaiter shaft in the kitchen; and Wong Ti rushed back, up to the dumbwaiter, listening tensely, his breath sucked in, his old heart beating like a trip hammer.

“But—say! Lover boy! Sweet lover boy! Ye told me ye loved me, didn't yer? And now—ye—”

And again, her voice peaking up to a hectic shrieking octave:

“Yer don't mean it, honeybugs? Tell me ye don't!”

“I do mean it, little fool!” came En Hai's smooth, silken voice.

"Yer—do?"

"Yes. How often must I tell you?" The man was becoming embarrassed, too, impatient. "Don't you understand English? I—" he softened a little—"I don't want to hurt your feelings, my dear——"

"Hurt my—*feelin's*? Christ! Afraid o' hurtin' my feelin's after yer torn the heart out'n my body and trampled on it and spit on it—say! And yer told me yer loved me! And I gave yer wot ye wanted! And all the time ye told me ye're just waitin' for my old man upstairs to kick the bucket, and then ye'd marry me and love me for ever—and now ye tell me——"

"Exactly!" En Hai's voice came chilly, metallic. "You are not the sort of woman I can afford to marry. There is my reputation—my profession—my standing. Try to look at it from *my* point of view—and——"

"Then—yer don't—love me?"

"No! If you absolutely insist on hearing the truth! I—of course I was—oh—fond of you—am still fond of you, my dear. But—well—let's be sensible, my dear. There's no reason why you and I shouldn't continue——"

"Don't ye dare touch me! I hate ye, hate ye, hate ye! Yer skunk! Yer welsher! Yer damned, no-good four-flusher! I hope to Gawd one o' these days one of them Chinks you treat as if they was doit will slit yer gizzard! Get out o' my way!"

AND a slamming of doors, a pattering of little feet up the stairs, and Chia

Shun rushed into the room, straight into the arms of Wong Ti who met her on the threshold.

"Wongee-Pongee!" she choked through her tears. "Oh, Wongee-Pongee! I—the Doctor and I—he——"

"Hush!" whispered the hatchetman, patting her wet cheeks. "Hush, Little Crimson Lotus Bud!"

He picked her up and put her on the couch, covering her quivering form with a silken robe.

"Wait, Little Piece of my Soul! Wait! Do not break your foolish little heart!"

"I hate him—hate him——" Chia Shun stammered, lying there limp and pitiful staring upon her husband with stricken eyes and dropped mouth.

"Yes, yes, Little Butterfly—wait!"

And, unhurriedly, he left the room and crept down the stairs with that furtive step which had become second nature to him; heels well down, toes slowly gripping through soft duffle soles, arms carefully balanced, hands at right angles from the wrists, and fingers spread out gropingly, like the sensitive antennæ of some night insect, to give warning of unfamiliar objects——

He slipped the dagger from his loose sleeve.

Even as he opened the door to the doctor's office, he wondered subconsciously which of the Cantonese whom En Hai had treated "like doit beneath his feet" would be suspected of the murder.



Reverie

By ZONA GALE

Now single in the idle afternoon
 The first note of the twilight takes its way,
 And prologue shades bear on the little hour
 That is not night, not day.
 Sometimes I want to be the morning,
 Sometimes the wide-eyed noon, the alien night;
 But oh, it is this dusk that speaks my spirit
 Better than light.
 Yes, in the twilight, I seem near, so near. . . .
 I stand within the garden—Here, Lord, here!
 . . . Is it the dusk that says this for me best?
 Or but the child's head tired on my breast. . . .



The Silent Spring

By

Will Levington Comfort



QUIET afternoon hour in Didsey Dreir's bar-room in Bolima. Old Mul Akers was there and Tollier Dip. Didsey himself was present; also a tall stranger, who sat apart at a table in the shadows. This stranger didn't appear to have the remotest interest in the talk of the others, which was mainly about a former citizen of Bolima who had disappeared—a young man they called David, who had brought a lot of raw gold to town one morning, saying he had found a rich lode on the other side of the foothills. This young David had promised to let his fellow citizens of Bolima in on diggings adjacent to his claim. He had "sold" some very rich mineral for currency of the realm, and left for San Diego to get a pack and work outfit, but he hadn't been heard of in several months.

Mul Akers now spoke: "Davey didn't look like he just come in from the mountains when he comes here with his first stack. I hears Mr. Rob Travis say in the assay office that Davey's stack don't look like no gold he's seen on this side of the border—"

"Gold is gold," said Didsey.

"She sure is," said old Mul. "An' sure scarce and retiring by nature; but there was crushin' already done on that stuff Davey brings in, not one-man hammers, but machine-work. There's some big mines over in Mexico that transport their stuff half-cleaned like that from the mountains to the mills—"

"Our Davey!" said Tollier Dip. "You hints that he's been robbin' a Mexican pack-train, an' I had my heart all set that he had found old McConachie's lost lode over in Haunted Valley."

"I'm sayin' as what Mr. Travis says," Mul answered patiently. "Also Mr. Travis says: 'Dave Ilcomb was in a hurry when he was here, and kept pullin' up his shirt collar to cover a bullet scar in his throat.' That scar might have something to do with a man bein' peaked—like Davey looked."

"Then over at Bidyards, where Mr. Travis boards, he happens to hear some one bring up the old subject of the Transcon train robbery, and how the man holdin' up the day coach was shot in the neck by a ranger from Little Top."

"But the train-gang run off the bandits outside that night, and there wasn't a dollar taken from the express or mail cars," said Tollier Dip. "The man inside, workin' on the passengers of the day coach, didn't get away with no three jack-loads of rotten ripe ore."

The tall stranger now came forward from the shadows and diffidently showed the badge of a forest ranger.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," he said, his words slightly muffled and impeded. "My name is Billings. I am stationed on Little Topnot and I'd like to sit in to this conversation."

"Which is accorded," said Didsey Drier.

"What sort of a looking young man was this Davey you speak of?"

"He wasn't tall exceptional—" Didsey began.

"Nor short, either," said Tollier Dip.

"He was smooth-faced and innocent," Didsey resumed, "and could look up into your face winnin'-like and amiable. He wasn't handsome—"

"He wan't bad-looking, either," said Tollier Dip.

"Could he shoot?" Ranger Billings inquired suddenly.

"Dave Ilcomb could shoot," said Tollier Dip. "Didsey, you're not forgettin' as how he knocked the last shoe button off a rattler's tail in Lucas's backyard—"

"The young man I have reference to could shoot," said the Ranger, clearing his voice. "He wasn't tall and he wasn't short. As to his being amiable I couldn't state, because he had a mask on at the time—I refer to the bandit on a Transcon day coach, east-bound on the Ragged Wren grade," said the Ranger.

"You was on that train?" asked Tollier Dip.

"I was on that train," said the Ranger. "I was in the back seat of that particular coach. The masked young man came forward filling his pouch and kidding the passengers along, as he took what they had. When he was a little less than half the way through the coach I lifted sudden from the seat and let drive one shot, which he ducked successful. Also, he fired back, making it advisable for me to loll behind the last seat."

"Then you kidded him from behind the seat you had clim' back of," said Tollier Dip. "That is, accordin' to the papers—"

"Which is correct," said the Ranger. "Neither of us had drawn blood by this time. I was figuring to get him before he got to me, and the bandit was figuring the same. His figures worked out. He didn't wait for me to begin. This that buzzes a little when I talk," indicating his upper lip, "isn't a birthmark. It was from one of that bandit's shots. His other shot I took to myself about as close to the place where I wear the ranger's badge as a man can assimilate a forty-five slug and prosper much afterward."

"But you got him after that—according to the papers," breathed Tollier Dip.

"Yes, I registered in his neck, after I had been sentenced to three months in the hospital."

There was another silence before the Ranger added:

"Of course, there isn't any comparison as to which of those bullets hurts the most now."

"It don't look so bad, Ranger. It was only at first I thought you had a hare-lip," said Mr. Dreir.

Mul Akers eased the tension:

"I never could get it straight in my mind how the bandit got away that night, hard-hit as he was; and about the fellow who helped him—"

"The man who helped him was Roger Dryden, the bank-robber of Pasadena, on his way to serve a ten years' sentence at the pen in Barclay," said the Ranger. "He was sitting in the middle of the car, manacled to Deputy Sheriff Drinkwater, when the bandit comes along and releases him on general principles. This Dryden appears to be the sort who pays cash for a favor. I was on the floor by this time, but they tell me Roger Dryden fought his way out of the car for two. They ran onto a couple of horses outside, and haven't been heard of since. All who saw the hold-up man after my last shot say that he couldn't possibly survive that hole in the neck and live."

"If it was Dave Ilcomb who held up that train, he lived," said Mul Akers. "And, as I was sayin', Mr. Rob Travis sees the remains of that hole in the neck you speak of."

"What you goin' to do about it, Ranger," Tollier Dip inquired.

"That train-robber spoiled me," the Ranger answered slowly. "I feel called to be interested in his case."

"I wouldn't like to be Dave Ilcomb, not with that fellow after me," mused Tollier Dip, after the Ranger had backed out of the bar-room.

THREE weeks later Didsey Dreir stared at the front page of yesterday's paper from Los Angeles, and what he saw there caused him to announce to those present: "Gents, you'll sure have to excuse me abrupt. I'm takin' the stage for Pasadena in exactly twelve minutes."

On the same day Ranger Billings sat at the door of his station as the sun went down and stared away off toward the sea. The legs of his chair dug into the disintegrated granite of Little Topnot's crest, over eight thousand feet high, and commanded a hundred miles of surrounding scenery. Back and a little north, Big Top himself hunched up nearly three thousand feet higher.

Billings had always had a laugh at life, but the laugh was gone. His upper lip was a broken thatch. It didn't grin when the rest of his face did. Also, there was a girl in Iowa waiting to be sent for, but no girl could live with that sitting opposite at her table—not on a ranger's salary.

The Ranger opened yesterday's paper which his assistant had just brought up from the post-office. After one long look at the front page, he called:

"Put on what you've got handy, Jake. I'm riding down trail before dark to get a stage for Pasadena, where they need me to-morrow, whether they know it or not. They caught Roger Dryden in New York five days ago, and he arrives in Pasadena to-night."

Next morning Billings sat with Deputy Sheriff Drinkwater and the recaptured bank-robber, in the latter's cell at the Pasadena jail.

"You've changed, Ranger," Roger Dryden remarked with his tired smile. "That mustache. When I saw you last, you didn't have enough upper lip to—excuse me, if the subject's painful—"

"You're changed yourself, Mr. Dryden."

Deputy Drinkwater's mood was jovial and proprietary as he explained:

"Roger's been in the hands of a face specialist in New York—been peeled and reefed tight, so he looks like a movie-queen, all but them gray eyes. They're just as old and dangerous as ever, Ranger. The face scar we've been looking so hard for is gone. That face surgeon—"

"That face surgeon will get a case of poison-ivy one of these days," Dryden said without feeling.

Drinkwater left the cell for several minutes.

"I'm curious to know how they happened to get you in New York?" the Ranger began.

"I was mugged here after the bank affair—prints sent all over, offering reward," Dryden said. "In New York, I got one of those ideas of going straight. A scar on my cheek left me wide open. A face specialist cleaned me up. He took six hundred dollars cash from me for his operation, then turned me over for the fifteen hundred dollars' reward—"

"Staggers a man's faith in the human family—a chap like that," said Ranger Billings.

Dryden glanced at him with a queer dry smile, but saw that the Ranger more than half meant what he said.

"What did you come for, Ranger?" Dryden asked.

"I haven't been able to forget that hold-up gent we met on the Transcon."

"There was one good kid," Dryden said sadly. "I'd like to have known him better."

"You mean that masked young person is dead?"

"I didn't know there was any doubt about that," Dryden said.

If there was a secret back of Dryden's words there was not a flick or quiver of a tissue in his face to betray what he knew.

Billings hated a thief, but he hated the face specialist sort more, right now. Dryden faced ten years' oblivion at Barclay. If the hold-up party was really dead, and Dryden was quietly insisting he was, to keep a pal more safely at large—well, this was the sort of thing Ranger Billings fell for, in spite of his disfigurement and the secret ache in his heart about the girl waiting in Iowa.

". . . Of course, after he had taken the pains to free me, I couldn't leave that kid," Dryden was saying. "I saw he was hard hit, from that last shot of yours—hard hit and leaking. The rest of his bandit crowd outside had been driven off by the post-office clerks and express messengers, but we found two loose horses. One horse was the kid's. The other belonged to the bandit they got outside. We hadn't ridden far, before I had to stop and tie the kid onto his saddle. I had to tie up his neck, too. Later I heard him whispering—whispering for me to go on, that he was done for. When I stopped a while after that, he had made good on those last words. I couldn't get the lariat loose, so I left him, saddle and all. But his horse followed mine, loose."

"The body was never found," the Ranger said.

"It was dark, a couple of hours before daybreak. It was a pebbly hollow I left him in—like an arroyo."

"Could you go there again?"

"Only by luck," Dryden said quietly. "I didn't know the country."

BILLINGS arose to depart.

Roger Dryden's hearing was set for four the same afternoon, in Judge Baker's court on the sixth floor of the Sequoia Building. Didsy Dreir was there from Bolima, Judge Baker, Drinkwater and two other deputies, a court clerk or two, Ranger Billings, and four or five men from the hills. The proceedings were rushed through. The Ranger scarcely listened. The slight, natty figure of the bank-robber standing between Drinkwater and another deputy, held his eyes. . . .

Presently, just behind him, a body whipped up from the seat and a voice above his head called quietly:

"Come on, pal. I've got every gent in the house covered."

It was a voice that Ranger Billings knew, that kidding, bantering voice he had heard in the day coach of the Transcon train. A hand was laid on his shoulder, and the same voice said:

"Be good, Ranger. I always did like your style and would hate to have to put you on sick report again."

Billings saw Drinkwater and the deputy on the other side of Dryden with hands raised. Dryden ducked under the arms of the two deputies and was running low up the aisle. The train-robber's voice finished a sentence for Billings alone:

". . . Not a man in the house but I'd rather puncture than yourself, Ranger. Let's keep this quiet and gentlemanly—only rapid."

It was so rapid, in fact, that Ranger Billings didn't lift from his daze until it was over and he heard Didsey Dreir's hoarse voice close to his ear:

"Our own little Davey of Bolima—"

Dryden and his rescuer had slipped softly out of the double-doors into the hall. A roar then from the deputies, a rushing forward to find that the doors were fastened. They gave on their floor bolts, but the outer knobs were held together. The entire body of men in the court-room rushed back through Judge Baker's private office and out into the hall by another door, to find that David and his Jonathan had caught an elevator down.

". . . Yes, sir," Didsey Dreir was saying, back in Bolima the next morning. "It was a hand-cuff that fastened that outer door—a steel hand-cuff slipped over the two knobs and locked."

"They'll never get one without the other," Tollier Dip remarked impressively.

The morning papers from the city had given themselves full-heartedly to the story of Roger Dryden's delivery by his pal. The old story of the Transcon hold-up was retold.

A real man hunt was on. A thousand dollars reward was posted for Dave Ilcomb, and another fifteen hundred for the twice-escaped bank-robber of Pasadena. The two getaways of Dryden and Ilcomb, their adamant loyalty to each other and the novelty of Dryden's second capture through a face specialist, furnished details of a big summer story from a newspaper standpoint. Billings had taken part in the man hunt at first, but Drinkwater and his sort didn't wear well afield. The Ranger was mainly riding alone, these later days,

and one of his rides took him to a ridge overlooking Haunted Valley. Far below was an old cabin built by a miner named McConachie, forty years before. A rumor connected with the valley, so persistently as to become tradition, that somewhere about was a lode of gold, wonderfully rich. Just as persistently hung about the cabin a story that old McConachie's ghost was wont to return.

Billings had been on this ridge before, and had happened upon a silent spring. He had counted on finding it again this night, but dark closed in and he was forced to make a dry camp. In the morning gray the position of the spring opened up like a mathematical example one has struggled over the night before. Billings was letting himself down a ravine toward it, when he heard voices. Two men, at least, were on their way up to the spring, as he was on his way down. One of the man-hunting parties, he thought. His left foot darted out to stop a small boulder that had started to slide, and in that position he stood stock still. He would wait until they filled their canteens and vamoosed. It was still half dark in the bottom of the ravine. Minutes passed before a voice reached him:

". . . Sure, I can make it! Back at dark, with coffee, beans and pork. You can lie up safe here. No one comes to this spring."

A weak murmur of a voice answered, and then a laugh from the first—a laugh Billings had come to know.

"I'll take a chance. . . . Not on your life, I won't stop for a big feed over there in Caliente. I'll be hurryin' back here to our own poison-oak tree for our party. So long, pal."

A full minute after that Ranger Billings reached his hand slowly down and picked up the loose boulder under his left foot. He placed it safely on a ledge where it couldn't slide, and wiped his forehead with his sleeve. His enemies had been delivered into his hands—twenty-five hundred, counting both rewards, and the old score settled. . . . Dryden lying up, starving to death—Dave Ilcomb forced out of cover for food!

Twenty minutes later Billings was less than forty feet lower down from the point where he had first heard voices, but he knew now exactly where his man lay, like a stag in his form, deep in a brush of ferns twenty feet lower still. He waited for a ray of actual sunlight to penetrate the

ferns. From time to time he heard a moaning breath.

"Hello, Dryden," he said at last, as close as one in the same room.

"Hello—"

"Don't draw, young fellow. It's suicide to draw. What's the matter—hurt, hungry?"

"Lost, mister—lost!" came a sudden wail.

Billings chuckled inaudibly. Dryden still had a shift to work to cover Dave Ilcomb's tracks.

"Now that's too bad," Billings said indulgently. "Excuse me for being suspicious, but I noted that you reached for a six-shooter."

THE Ranger hopped down from his sheltered seat and a minute later Dryden's gray eyes steadied upon him from the deep shadow of the ferns.

"Hello, Billings," he said quietly. "Your voice was familiar, but I didn't place it for a minute."

"Where is your partner, Dryden?"

"Tell me. That's what I want to know most. Dave and I lost each other four days ago."

Billings sat down close to Dryden's head. The face, so round and filled six weeks before in Pasadena, was darkened and wasted now.

"Dryden," the Ranger said quietly, "I'm forced to conclude that you're unreliable about Dave Ilcomb's whereabouts. I'm recalling how you said in Pasadena that Dave was dead. And now your mind wanders about them four days, because I was sitting up yonder when your pal leaves for a day's jaunt to Caliente."

The only change in the other's face was an added weariness.

Billings filled his water-bag, then bent over and started to help the starving one to his feet.

"What you goin' to do, Ranger?" Dryden asked dully.

"I'm takin' you up the ravine a piece where my horse is. I'll have a whole lot of fun with you up there, slicing bacon and pouring coffee for a man who hasn't fed himself lately."

Fifteen minutes later, Billings had watered his horse and was blowing into life a one-pan fire. Coffee water was on to boil.

Roger Dryden spoke:

"Excuse me, Ranger, but I'm eating

when Dave comes in to-night, and not before. If you heard what he said as he was leaving, you must have marked that he wouldn't stop in Caliente for a feed, only to pick up what he could and hurry back."

"You won't have breakfast with me?" the Ranger inquired, his eyes fixing themselves upon the wasted face.

Dryden shook his head.

"I don't see how I can relish the flavors of bacon and coffee under such circumstances," Billings muttered, putting the cover on the coffee can, and bundling up the pork in its canvas sack.

"Sorry," said Dryden, "but you go ahead and have your breakfast. You won't bother me. Why, Billings, you go as long without grub as we have, and grub don't matter any more. I'm in training for a regular hunger strike."

It wasn't easy after that for Ranger Billings to carry out his half-formed idea to rope Dryden securely and leave him here, while he rode over to Caliente to head off Dave Ilcomb. Billings just couldn't bring himself to coil his lariat around a man half-dead from starvation, who wouldn't eat until his pal came. All the time, the thought was gnawing at him, too, that Dave Ilcomb would run into somebody else's hands on his way, or meet recognition over there in the desert town. The thousand dollars reward for the train-robber looked mighty good to Billings in connection with the stake he could pull down from bringing in Dryden. Also, the idea of bringing both the boys in, gave a fascination to the idea of his writing a letter to the girl in Iowa. But his heart failed, and that was the end of it.

Dryden was strangely clear-headed but hopeless, like a man ready to die. He seemed not to hold the slightest grudge against Billings, but there was a deep aching bitterness in his mind against the face surgeon in New York.

"That's the sort of guy they leave wide open in this man's world," he muttered. "You can be a yellow polecat, and get by with it."

Billings saw the point, all right, and it didn't make him feel any more comfortable.

"Why, Dave was on an honest-to-God job over in the big town, holding onto a rivet hammer, six or seven hours a day, going steady and straight. I had to get the scar cut out of my cheek or run the risk of arrest every time I passed a bull on the

street. Dave and I agreed that I'd better have that operation. You see, he was masked for his last job on the Transcon. He felt pretty safe, too, because the word was out he was dead. But he never felt safe for me."

"Was he with you when you were arrested in New York?"

"No," Dryden answered emphatically. "I didn't see him afterward. He was on his job. They picked me up in the street and railroaded me west that night. Couldn't get a word to Dave. He must have got his news from the afternoon papers, and followed on by the next train. It was as much of a surprise to me as to anyone else—what he pulled off in the court-room in Pasadena."

That day was like half a summer to Ranger Billings. He strolled off in the thicket and munched a bacon sandwich by himself. He smoked up a week's supply of cigarettes. He came to share the dull hopelessness of Dryden, but his mind was confused while the other's was clear. All through the afternoon he studied the agony of the starving one; not the agony for food, but an agony that called upon heaven and earth for some way to warn his pal. Billings saw the sweat come to Dryden's wasted face, as he listened—looked down toward the spring and listened. Billings also studied the mysterious thing called Fidelity—the first and last article of Roger Dryden's code.

The Ranger realized he was taking a longer chance every minute now. If not prevented, Dryden would surely signal the instant he heard his pal down by the spring. That would mean a pistol duel. Billings had had about all the pistol stuff he cared for with a master like Dave Ilcomb; and yet he couldn't bring himself to force a gag into Dryden's mouth, as the shadows of afternoon lengthened, any more than he had found it possible to rope him early in the day. One idea troubled him until he spoke:

"But Dave's been starvin' just as you have. How was he fit to foot it the twenty miles to Caliente, there and back, when you can't get up?"

Yellow day still lay upon the peaks, but evening was deep in the valley, and dim upon the slope where they camped. Billings now heard the tribute of one bad boy for another.

"You saw Dave keep his foot in the day-coach. Why, that kid couldn't die, unless

he let go himself. He wasn't fit to go to Caliente any more than I was. Only he's game. That kid's so game, Ranger, he freezes you, and he's just as square as he is game!"

DRYDEN was shivering in the night cold. Billings brought his saddle blanket and put it over the little man.

"Your blood's all whitened out, Mister," he said gently. "I can't start a fire with your pal coming in. It would draw his shot from the brush. I've been feeling a need for the last hour or two to keep out of range from below."

Dryden's hopeless eyes stared down toward the spring.

"Dave told me it was only twelve miles over to Caliente and back," he muttered.

Billings heard a faint crackle down by the spring, evidently before the sound reached the other's ears.

"Dryden," he said, bending over the other in the dusk, "I'll have to ask you not to make any noise, not to make any answer—if we should happen to hear your partner down by the spring."

"What would you do if I did?" Dryden said a little breathlessly.

The Ranger drew a gun.

The other laughed with scorn. "Anybody would think I was afraid to be put out of my misery," he said, pushing himself softly up from the ground.

He was looking into the Ranger's face—a queer leisurely scrutiny. Suddenly his mouth opened and the yell was out:

"Back, Dave—danger—Ranger!"

Billings laughed softly. "You did hear him then, a minute ago. You've sure got a poker face, young fellow. . . . What are you so busy with under your blankets?"

He bent forward with a swift movement and caught Dryden's hand. A rock was in it the size of a duck's egg.

"Uncomfortable lying on—was it?" Billings asked.

"Work it loose under the blanket? Poor little tool—meant to mash my head in, but I don't blame you, Roger."

The other seemed scarcely to hear, every roused faculty intensely concentrated down slope toward the spring.

"Your pal's making a little circle to the left, trying to locate where you are," the Ranger went on. "Tell him to come up here and have his supper."

The face that looked up at him now from the blanket was harder than anything Bil-

lings had seen that day—the face of a man who didn't fear death, but both hated and feared the double-cross.

"That's what I said," Billings repeated. "I'd have managed different, if I hadn't expected you to signal when you heard your pal below. Call to him again who's here, and we'll cook up a little banquet for three. I've been trying to make myself believe I was in the deputy sheriff business, but it won't work—not after dwelling with you all day—"

Dryden shoved his face up still closer to the Ranger's. It was luminously gray, sick, frightened, grim with torturing hope.

"Honest to God?" he said hoarsely.

"Just that," said Billings, and added, "Tell him I'll go down to help him up here with his packs, if he likes."

. . . It wasn't exactly a merry party. The Ranger had to watch that the two didn't shock themselves to death from nourishment. Dave's mind was inclined to ramble a little over his coffee cup. The two had lived five weeks on less than ten days' rations, hiding in the rocks on this slope, never far from the silent spring. Dave Ilcomb had been able to elude his pursuers up to this time, because he was familiar with every notch and groove of the vicinity.

The next afternoon Billings arose, reached for his saddle and walked out where his horse was tethered. When the saddle was on and the duffel packed, he halted a minute before going back to the whitened fire-place where the two sat up waiting for him. The Ranger's hand moved up to his face and his eyes grew mournful. He wasn't pleased with himself and no nearer than before to writing that letter to the girl in Iowa. He had a man's idea that he had to do a lot for that girl that a man

working on government pay couldn't do—to make up for the way he looked.

"I've just got time to ride over to the station before dark," he said. "I may be back this way in ten days or two weeks—just for a call. You'll be here, doubtless—"

"Yes, Ranger," said Dave. "At least that long. It's safer right here by the spring than anywhere else. It's so safe here in this ravine, that she's kept a secret for forty years—"

The Ranger turned to him queerly.

BOTH Dave and Roger laughed.

"Why, Ranger," Dave went on. "You couldn't turn a trick like you've turned for us and get away with just a thanks and come again. We're goin' over into Mexico a little later, where they'll let us alone and we'll have a chance to grow up and not be stunted by hiding in cramped places. Roger and I ran onto the secret here at the spring. We've been starvin' to death all these days on Treasure Island.

. . . Yes, Mister Billings, be calm. We've found old McConachie's Lode, and she's richer than anybody ever said she was. It's no good to us—not for years, anyway, until Drinkwater and his crowd forget. We couldn't dispose of a nickel's worth, but we might be silent partners. . . . In other words, Ranger, McConachie's Lode is yours. Some day we'll let you know where we are over the border. And if you get too clotted with dividends, and we're on a fruit-ranch and might need some insect poison—"

Billings went down trail with them towards the spring. A half hour later he rode very thoughtfully away toward the station on Little Top. Two months after that, a girl left Iowa and came to live in a new cabin overlooking Haunted Valley and by the Silent Spring.



Beauty

By CLINTON SCOLLARD

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 It flashes forth again and yet again!



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