



OLD SLEUTH WEEKLY

NO. 2

The MYSTERY of the MISSING MILLIONS



by
"OLD
SLEUTH"



OLD SLEUTH WEEKLY



A Series of
**THE MOST THRILLING DETECTIVE STORIES
EVER PUBLISHED**

No. 2.

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... THE ...

Mystery of the Missing Millions

OR

TRACKED BY A GREAT DETECTIVE.

By "OLD SLEUTH."

CHAPTER I.

A RIVER TRAGEDY.

"THE sound of a pistol shot; a vivid flash through the darkness; a wild, agonized shriek breaking the silence and reverberating over the surface of the water.

Then silence and darkness again.

Both the report and the cry had been heard by seven men in a boat, and the momentary flash had been sufficient to show them that the sounds had proceeded from another boat several hundred yards distant.

Involuntarily the men rested on their oars, and the sudden gleam of a dark lantern in the hand of one of them, seated in the stern, showed they all wore the blue uniform of the police, with the exception of one seated in the bow and striving to penetrate the darkness ahead of him.

He now turned impatiently to his companions.

"General the light instantly," he commanded, "and give way with a will. There is foul play of some sort going on yonder, and we must stop it if possible."

The men at the oars obeyed the order with alacrity, and their vigorous stroke almost seemed to make the boat leap from the water as they headed it in the direction from which the sounds had come.

The night was intensely dark; neither moon nor stars were shining, and the heavily running tide created the waves with foam.

For several moments the men at the oars kept themselves to the utmost in silence, the man in the bow now standing upright and apparently endeavoring to make the rocking motion of the boat and the spray that dashed in showers around him.

Suddenly an ejaculation left his lips.

"Stop!" he commanded in rapid tones. "Look there! 'Tum on the light!"

Though none was of the reason for the order, the man holding the lantern obeyed at once, and removing the shade, swept the rays of the light through the darkness.

Then the cause of the command became apparent.

Rapidly drifting past them was a launch.

For a moment, on the crest of a large wave could be seen a pale face, and long tresses of golden hair floating in the water, and then they vanished from sight.

"Put about at once!" the man in the bow called excitedly. "There has been murder done or attempted, and if she is not dead we must save her."

Rapidly the command was executed, and the boat followed in the wake of the drifting figure.

Taking the lantern from the hand of the man in the stern, the other resumed his old position in the bow, and cast the rays of light through the darkness.

For several moments, however, no sign of the body could be discovered; it must have sunk again.

Resting on their oars, the men let the boat drift with the tide for a few moments longer, when they were again aroused by the voice of the man in the bow.

"There she is yonder!" he cried. "Pull bravely now, or she will sink again and for the last time!"

A few strokes of the oar and the boat was alongside the drifting figure. Leaning over the gunwale, the man seized the floating drapery and dragged her on board.

The rays of the lantern, thrown upon her face, showed her to be a beautiful girl of not more than seventeen or eighteen at the most. Her hair was of the most delicate shade of gold, and with a natural wave that even the salt water had not disarranged. But on the broad white forehead was a purple spot that showed where the murderous bullet had done its deadly work.

"I fear we have lost the assassins," the man said who still held the lantern; "but we can try if we can catch them. Put the boat around again and follow them."

He extinguished the light as he spoke, and in a few moments the boat was once more headed on its original course.

Any hope of finding the assassins, however, proved useless, and after half an hour's vain search, the boat was run up to the shore and the body of the murdered girl carried to the nearest police station.

There was no need of an examination to prove the shot had been fatal. The bullet had lodged in the brain, and death must have been almost instantaneous.

When the object of the crime could have been was a mystery. That it was not robbery was evident; for though not expensively dressed, the girl still had several rings on her fingers and a gold chain holding a locket around her neck.

Removing this and opening it, the man dressed in civilian's

clothes saw the painted miniature of a man about fifty or sixty years of age.

For several moments he examined it attentively, and the light falling obliquely upon his features, brought them out in strong relief.

He was a man of apparently between twenty-eight and thirty years of age. His features were clear cut and regular, and the formation of his forehead spoke at once of intellectual power. His eyes were dark and penetrating, but the lower part of his face was concealed beneath a heavy beard and mustache.

He seemed to possess an acknowledged authority both with his companions upon the river and at the police station. Upon his entrance the sergeant had saluted him with marked deference, and the examination of the body for any article that might lead to its identification was carried out under his direction.

At first there was nothing found beyond the few trinkets and her pocket-book, containing only a few coins; but at length, in a concealed pocket in the bosom of her dress, were found two letters.

The first had been opened. It was addressed to "Miss Agnes Lindley, Post Office," and read as follows:

"MY DARLING SISTER.—I write this letter with a vague fear of some impending danger. When will you give up your wild quest? Our poor papa must be dead, and the money we do not need. Come back to me, Agnes, for you are all I have to love in the world. You and I are all in all to each other. A great nameless dread of some calamity hanging over you oppresses me. If you will not relinquish your purpose, at least allow me to share the perils with you. Write at once, for the hours will seem years until I hear from you.

"Your loving but anxious sister,

"MAUD."

The other letter was sealed with wax and had been stamped, but the salt water had removed it. It was addressed to "Miss Maud Lindley, 247 Blank Street, City."

Evidently it was an answer to the other letter, and for several moments the man held it in his hand as if deliberating whether to open it or not. At last, however, evidently deciding not, he thrust it with the other into his pocket, and turned to leave the station.

"I will call again in the morning and see the captain," he said as he did so.

The sergeant nodded assent, and the speaker passed into the street and walked rapidly to the corner of the block, where he stood some moments, evidently deep in thought.

As he stood there, a neighboring clock struck the hour of one. The night was still dark, although the clouds were beginning to break a little; and with a hasty glance around him, he walked for a couple of blocks further and then struck into one of the side streets.

After walking a short distance, he again stopped and looked around him. The street was apparently deserted; and with a rapid motion he seized the heavy beard and mustache, and removing them, showed a face not so old by six or seven years as it had at first appeared, with closely shaven lip and chin.

The change in his appearance was marvelous; and placing the heavy beard in his pocket, he directed his steps toward Broadway.

Quick as the change had been made, however, it had not been unobserved. No sooner had he turned the corner of the street than a figure clothed in rags and looking the very picture of a thorough-paced tramp, arose from a crouching position in the shadow of a stoop and followed him.

"I have been in hard luck lately," this individual soliloquized, "but I guess it has changed at last. Strike me dead if that isn't the very bloke the captain offered five hundred dollars to spot—Maurice Darral, the detective!"

CHAPTER II.

THE MISSING MILLIONS.

THE course of the seeming tramp was correct. The man he had seen removing the false beard was Maurice Darral, the most efficient detective on the New York force.

Though still young—in fact, not more than twenty-three—he had already earned a reputation, and never had he failed in any case he had undertaken. His name was a terror to all evil-doers, and the more so because he was never seen in his own proper person. His disguises were numerous and impenetrable.

Now, probably for the first time, he was seen in his true character, and as he reached Broadway and walked toward his apartments, which were in the vicinity of Union Square, he was still followed at a distance by the tramp.

Unconscious of this fact, however, he at last reached home, and taking the letter from his pocket, again read it carefully.

He saw in it and the murder of the girl upon the river all the elements of a most mysterious case, and for some time he sat pondering it over.

Being at length, he said:

"To-morrow I will deliver the other letter and see what comes of it."

As he spoke, he replaced the letter in his pocket and glanced at his watch. It was past three o'clock; and throwing himself upon the lounge, in a few moments he was sound asleep.

When he awoke, the sun was shining through the window, and unlocking his wardrobe, he prepared to assume a disguise suitable to the business he had on hand.

The character he selected was that of a country clergyman. With clothes of a clerical cut, wide-brimmed hat, and spectacles upon his nose, he looked the very *bona-fide* of a recent graduate from some New England university.

This attire, he left the house, and taking a hack, was driven to the address on the letter.

Ringling the bell, he inquired if Miss Lindley was at home, and being informed she was, he sent up his card with a request to see her.

As may be presumed, his own name was not upon the card. Instead, it read:

"REVEREND CHAS. CLINTON,

"Pastor Reformed Lutheran Church,

"Plainfield, Mass."

After a few moments' delay the servant returned, and saying the lady would see the visitor, led the way to a room on the second floor.

As he entered, a young lady seated by the window rose to receive him. In spite of his habitual composure, Darral could hardly suppress a start of surprise as he saw her. She was so like the murdered girl that it would have been difficult to distinguish them apart.

Quickly recovering himself, however, he bowed courteously, and asked:

"Do I address Miss Maud Lindley?"

The young lady bowed assent, and the detective continued, "I am the bearer of a letter from your sister."

An eager light came into the girl's eyes, and she made a step forward.

"You have seen her, then?" she said. "Is she well?"

"Yes; I have seen her," he answered. "Then after a moment's pause: "Miss Lindley, you must be prepared to hear bad news."

With her hands clasped together in an appealing way, she drew yet nearer to him.

"Is Agnes sick? Is she in danger?" she asked.

"No," he answered, gravely; "your sister is in no danger now. The danger is past, and she—"

Something in his manner and the tone in which the words were spoken aroused the girl's fears. With a sharp, waiting cry, she interrupted him.

"She is dead?" she asked.

"I am sorry to cause you pain," the detective said, pityingly, "but I must tell the truth. Your sister is dead."

For a moment the girl reeled as if struck a sudden blow, and then sinking into a chair, sat there trembling. Her face was pallid to the very lips, but she uttered no cry, and in vain for some time the detective tried to arouse her from her apathetic despair.

At last, in sheer desperation, he said:

"You should not give way to your grief so much. Your sister was murdered, foully murdered, and it is your duty to have vengeance upon her assassins."

For the first time since he had told the news of her sister's death she seemed to hear his words, and looked at him inquiringly. Rightly interpreting the meaning of the glance, he went on:

"You think it strange to hear such sentiments from my lips, perhaps," he said, "but I am not here in my proper character. I am not a clergyman, but a detective."

The girl did not answer, but she gave a slight start of surprise; and seeing she was listening, he continued,

"I have read your letter to your sister," he said, "and can

plainly see it covers some mystery. What was the object with which your sister left her home?"

By a great effort the girl nerved herself to answer.

"She went to find our father," she said in a low voice.

"Your father?"

"Yes."

By degrees the detective learned the whole story.

The two girls were twin sisters. Their mother had died in giving them birth, and their father, emigrating West, had been so successful in mining speculations as to have amassed nearly fifteen million dollars. About two years previously he had returned to New York, when a strange freak seized him. Converting all his securities into money, with the exception of a small income barely sufficient to live upon, he had placed it in some spot known only to himself. There could be little doubt that he was partially demented at the time; but this neither of his daughters had suspected. After living for over a year in New York, he had left the house one evening, saying he would return in an hour; but he had not done so, and had not been seen since.

As this remarkable narrative was concluded, the detective stood in silent thought for a few moments.

"But your sister?" he asked, at length.

"Alas!" the girl answered, for the first time breaking into tears; "we waited and waited, but no tidings of papa ever came, and then one day Agnes disappeared. She left a letter for me, saying she had found a clue to the cause of papa's disappearance. That was nearly three months ago, and I have not seen her since."

"You corresponded with her, though?"

"Yes; but her address was simply the post-office."

"And you had no knowledge of her whereabouts or her actions during the whole time of her absence?"

"None. I begged of her to take me into her confidence, but she steadily refused."

"Did not her letters throw any light upon the matter?"

"Not the slightest. They were all brief, and beyond the fact of her good health, stated nothing."

"The one I have just brought you may be an exception."

In her agitation the letter had fallen from her hands and lay unheeded on the floor. Now, however, as Darral picked it up and once more gave it to her, she tore it open with trembling fingers and hurriedly read the contents.

There were but a few lines, and as she finished, her tears broke out afresh and she handed the letter to the detective, who read as follows:

"MY DEAR MAUD,—At last I am on the track of the villains who cofiled papa from home. He is not dead, and before many days I hope to have him restored to us.

Your loving sister,

AGNES."

When he had read the letter, again for several moments Darral was silent.

"You were aware at the time of your father converting his securities into cash?" he asked, at length.

"Yes," the girl answered.

"And did he give you no hint as to the place where he intended depositing it?"

"No. He merely told me it was safe, and to be sure and remember the numbers 123 and 16."

After several more questions and answers without anything further being revealed, Darral turned to take his leave.

"Miss Lindley," he said, earnestly, "there is more in this case than appears on the surface. I have a theory in regard to it that may or may not be correct; but it shall be my duty to prove it, and also to bring to justice the assassins of your sister. Your father, however, I am confident is still alive; but in the meantime, until he is restored to you, I request that you will put yourself under my guardianship."

The girl looked up in a dazed sort of way, as if not comprehending the words, and the detective taking a card from his pocket, wrote his name upon it in bold characters.

"That is my name," he said—"Darral. I have taken this case in hand, and I must ask you not to leave the house or receive any visitors until I return or send a message signed in the same handwriting as upon the card."

The girl gave the required promise; and leaving the room, Darral passed down-stairs, and opening the door, stepped into the street and walked rapidly toward Broadway.

As he did so, a dilapidated-looking individual, evidently under the influence of liquor, who had been seated upon an opposite stoop, staggered to his feet and followed him.

CHAPTER III.

A DARK PLOT.

LEFT alone, Maud Lindley gave way to an unrestrained outburst of grief.

She had dearly loved her sister, and when told of her death by the detective, she had been like one stunned by an unexpected blow. She could not realize the fact of her bereavement. Now, however, when the restraining influence of a spectator was removed, she gave full vent to her sorrow.

How the hours passed she did not know. She sat in the same chair, alternately weeping and wringing her hands in the vain misery of utter despair.

At last the striking of the clock on the mantel-shelf aroused her. It told the hour of three; and rising, she entered her bed-chamber and layed her throbbing temples with cold water.

All joys, and all sorrows alike, have their degrees. Now that the first intensity of her grief had passed, she experienced a sense of languid calm, yet in her heart throbbled a troubled unrest as if the world had gone out from her forever, and she could never know happiness again.

She was able now, however, to recall the events of the morning, and as she did so the parting warning of the detective strongly impressed her.

Despite her allusion in his presence, she had felt he was one whose commands were to be obeyed. In his assurance that he believed her father still lived she had felt relief, and now she had an added conviction that his warning was not an idle one.

Slowly and wearily the afternoon passed. Look where she would, every object reminded her of her lost sister, and despite her efforts, every now and then she would break into a passionate fit of weeping.

She halted the dusk at last with relief, and sitting alone in the darkness, she waited expectantly for Darral's arrival; but the hours passed away and still he did not come.

Seven, eight, nine had struck, and she was beginning to give up all hopes of him, when a knock came on the door, and a servant entering, gave her a note.

Eagerly opening it, she read the following:

"Your father is not dead, but is very ill. Accompany the bearer, and he will take you to him. Have no fears, for he is to be trusted."

The message was signed "Darral" in a similar hand to the one which the detective had written on the card. Overjoyed that her suspense was ended, and with the thought of meeting her father, the girl did not wait to compare the two, but hastily putting on her hat and cloak, went down-stairs to where the messenger was waiting.

He was a man of middle age, dressed in black broadcloth cut in something of a clerical style. He bowed respectfully as Maud approached, and opening the door of the carriage, chided it when she had entered, and seated himself on the box beside the driver.

After a dreary journey of nearly an hour the carriage stopped, and the man who had brought the message, dismounting, opened the carriage door and held out his hand to assist her to alight.

As she stepped to the ground, Maud, looking around her, saw they had left the city limits and were in one of the suburban towns, where most of the houses were detached and stood in grounds of their own. Dismissing the carriage, her guide led the way to the door of a gloomy-looking brick building, and rang the bell.

In a few moments the door was opened by an old woman of repulsive appearance. As she saw Maud, however, her toothless jaws expanded in a grin, and she seized her hand.

"I am so glad you have come, my dear," she mumbled. "The poor gentleman has been calling for you until I was beginning to be afraid you would be too late."

The conflicting emotions in the girl's breast almost choked her utterance.

"Take me to him at once," she said, with an effort.

The old woman led the way upstairs, the man following until a door on the second floor was reached. Then, opening it, she motioned Maud to enter.

The apartment was in almost total darkness. A lamp burned upon the table, but the light was turned so low as to make it hardly visible. In one corner of the room stood an old-fashioned four-post bedstead with lace curtains.

"We dare not turn up the light," the old woman whispered, "for he does not like it. He made us promise, too,

we would not move the curtains. Poor gentleman, he has sadly changed."

She shook her head in a manner evidently intended to denote pity; and with a new fear of she hardly knew what, Maud approached the bed.

"I am here, papa," she said.
A wasted hand protruded from the curtains. The girl seized it and pressed it to her lips.

"Ah!" a weak voice said. "You are Maud?"
The girl's tears were falling thick and fast. It was in choking accents that she answered:

"Yes, papa."
"Maud, I am dying," the weak voice behind the curtains said. "I know it, and I want to ask you something before I die."

"Oh, papa," the girl pleaded, "let me see you once again and kiss you—"

"No, child," the voice interrupted. "I can not. The disease with which I was afflicted has so changed my face that I am ashamed for even my own daughter to look upon it. I feel that I am dying, and one thing troubles me. I have forgotten where I placed the money. It is your and your sister's fortune, and I can not die and leave my darlings penniless. Some numbers that I told you once. What are they? Tell me and I will know where to look."

"But, papa," the girl said, "of what value will money be to me when both you and Agnes are taken from me? Let the money go, but once more let me kiss you or my heart will break."

"No, child, no," the voice answered, impatiently. "The numbers. I must have them. Quick, what are they?"

The speaker's tone was totally different from what it had previously been. Before, it was low and suppressed; now, it rang out sharp and almost fiercely. A sudden impulse prompting her, the girl seized the lamp from the table, and tearing aside the curtains of the bed, cast the light upon the occupant's face.

As she did so, instantly came the knowledge that she had been betrayed and made the victim of a dark plot.

The man upon the bed was not her father.
Almost overwhelmed by the discovery, for a moment she stood irresolute how to act.

Then, with a fierce oath grinding from between his teeth, the man who had been her crush sprang toward her.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DETECTIVE AT BAY.

WHEN Darral left the house, after his interview with Maud Lindley, he went direct to the police station.

Giving orders to have the body of the murdered girl delivered to an undertaker at his own expense, he started on a tour among the streets along the river in the vicinity of where the tragedy of the previous night had taken place.

As he had told Maud, a theory had already taken definite shape in his mind, but before proceeding to prove it, his first move was to try and find some trace of the assassin.

It was growing dusk when he returned home; but his day had not been wasted, for he had gained what he imagined to be a clew to at least one of the murderers.

For some time he deliberated whether or not he should again call upon Maud Lindley, or at any rate send her a message. Relying on the promise she had given him, however, he at last decided not, and set to work to make preparations for his change of disguise.

When he again left the house it was between eight and nine o'clock.

In the intervening time he had changed his attire to that of a sailor in the merchant service.

Not only his attire was changed, but his very personality. His hair was of a fiery red, with straggling beard and moustache to match. His complexion was of the tint customary to one used to wind and weather.

Walking along with the gait customary to seamen, his legs far apart, as if he expected a breaker to strike him every moment, he went on until he reached a street near the river, and paused before a sailors' boarding-house.

The flags of all nations were festooned from the windows. It was one of those dens designed especially for the temptation of poor Jack ashore. There are hundreds such in the city of New York; but as this story is not intended as a directory of vicious haunts, the exact location of this particular one does not matter.

Assuming a partially intoxicated air, the detective leaned against a lamp-post, and taking a plug of tobacco and a pipe from his pocket, filled it and began to smoke.

Several passing policemen looked at him curiously, but he paid no attention to them; and for more than an hour he continued in the same position, watching all who entered or emerged from the boarding-house, when suddenly he moved and reeled across the pavement.

"Shipmate, ahoy!" he called in a shrill voice. "I'm out of my bearings. The compass is lost and the rudder carried away. What port is this, anyhow?"

The man addressed was as rough-looking a specimen of humanity as could be picked up anywhere. He was dressed in well-worn clothes of pil-d-cloth, and his head was covered with an old sea-dish cap, from which the hair was worn in many places. Seeing, as he supposed, a victim ready to be picked up, he was beginning to explain, when the other interrupted him.

"I'm—n it, anyhow, what's the difference?" he hiccupped.
"I'm Jim Pratt, born in New Bedford, and have been sailing nigh onto twenty years. If that don't make a sailor, what does?"

Without waiting for a reply, he added:
"Let us go and shake fins over a glass of grog."

No second invitation was necessary, and together they crossed the street and entered the bar of the sailors' boarding-house.

The river rat—for such he evidently was—swallowed the fiery poison with a relish; but Darral had foreseen the occasion, and his share, instead of going down his throat, was absorbed by a sponge concealed in his sleeve.

"Step inside, gents," the battenler said; "the dancing is just going to begin."

Accepting the invitation, Darral and his companion pushed open the lattice door dividing the bar, and found themselves in an apartment of about thirty feet long by a little more than half as wide.

Tables were ranged on either side, at which hard-looking men, and still harder women, were sitting drinking. It was lighted by lamps on brackets along the wall, while a chandelier suspended from the ceiling. In the center of the floor a space had been cleared for dancing. Four couples had already taken their places, and the musician, seated on a chair on top of one of the tables, was tuning his violin.

"Do you want to shake a leg?" Darral's companion asked him.

"Not just yet," the detective answered. "Let us have another drink first."

To this proposition the other was quite willing, and crossing to one of the tables, they seated themselves.

The drinks were brought and paid for, and the bartender returned to the bar. In selecting the table, Darral had noticed it was the last in the room, and their backs were turned to the rest of the company. Now, as they raised their glasses, it was with the left hand the detective grasped his, while the right held a revolver with the muzzle just protruding from beneath his coat.

"Move an inch or utter a word, Bill Blake," he said in a low, stern tone, "and I will blow your brains out! My name is Darral, and I always keep my word!"

Hardly had the words left his lips than the lamps along the wall were extinguished as if by magic. Only the center chandelier still burned, and now a man sprang forward to also turn it off.

In an instant Darral had leaped to his feet and covered him with his revolver.

"Leave that light alone," he commanded, "or you are a dead man!"

Involuntarily the man paused, while the rest of the crowd drew closer together.

There was a moment of silence.
It was broken by Darral's companion.

"A fly cop!" he shouted. "Darral the Detective!"

Turning on the instant, Darral shifted his revolver to his left hand, and striking out with the right, dealt the speaker a blow behind the ear that felled him like a log to the floor.

Then he turned and faced the crowd.

"Yes, I am Darral," he said. "What are you going to do about it?"

In an instant a dozen knives were drawn and revolvers raised, as they sprang toward him, confident in their numbers of an easy victory.

But their little knew the man they had to deal with. When

aroused, Maurice Darral was dangerous. He was thoroughly aroused now, and with his revolver sweeping the crowd he stood at bay.

CHAPTER V. IN DEADLY PERIL.

As the man who had been her guide sprung toward Maud Lindley, the figure upon the bed also arose to a standing position.

"Leave the young lady alone," the latter commanded; "she has already been frightened too much by our little ruse."

The man addressed obeyed at once, and the girl looked at the speaker in utter surprise at the sudden change in his behavior.

"I must apologize for my attempt at a little innocent deception," he went on. "It was innocent, I assure you. You must permit me to explain."

His tone was courteous, and his manner bore the unmistakable evidences of good-breeding. He was a man of probably between forty and fifty, with a face that at first sight might have been called handsome, but the restless dark eyes had something sinister in their glance. His hands were noticeably small and well-shaped, and upon the third finger of the left hand—it was the right he had extended from behind the curtains—flashed a diamond of unusual size and brilliancy.

The only article of his attire that had been removed was his coat. He had reclined on the bed with the coverlet drawn closely about his throat; and now, as his coat was handed to him from the wardrobe by the man dressed in black, and he once more resumed it, his bearing was so gentlemanly that in spite of herself the girl felt inclined to trust him as he proceeded with his explanation.

"Ray be seated," he said, taking the lamp from her hand and placing a chair for her. Then turning to the other man, he added:

"You can leave the room, Dalton; when I send you I will ring."

In respectful silence the man obeyed, and the speaker, also seating himself, drew his chair closer to that of the bewildered girl.

"You are naturally offended at the deception I endeavored to play upon you," he said; "but believe me, it was necessary, both for your own safety and that of your father. You are both the victims of a nefarious plot, the instigators of which I have set myself the task of hunting down."

He paused a moment, as if expecting some reply; but Maud making none, he continued:

"You have been most cruelly deceived. The man who called upon you yesterday in the character of a clergyman was a vile impostor. I am the true Maurice Darral, the detective."

Though hardly able at once to comprehend the whole meaning of the words, the girl strove to make some reply; but the words died still-born on her lips. She felt that she was in the toils, and could only sit and listen in silence.

"The man who called upon you yesterday," her companion went on, "is one of the greatest scoundrels known to the police. His hand it was that murdered your poor sister. Having learned the fact of your father converting his whole fortune into cash and concealing it in a secret spot, he and his accomplices determined to gain possession of it. Through his agency your father was betrayed from home and kept a prisoner in a solitary dungeon."

For the first time the spell of the girl's silence was broken, and forgetful of everything in her anxiety about her father's fate, she sprung to her feet.

"Then he is not dead!" she cried.

"No," the other answered; "but the cruel treatment he has received has affected his reason. For more than six months he had been in the villain's power when I rescued him from the vile den in which he was confined. Since then he has been in a private insane asylum, where every care has been taken of him, in the endeavor to restore his reason, but in vain. One thing seems ever praying upon his mind and retarding his recovery. He has forgotten some numbers which he once told to you and your sister. If these are recalled to his recollection, the physicians have no fear of effecting a complete cure. It was for the purpose of learning them that I wrote the note summoning you here. The means I took to learn them were ill-chosen, perhaps; but the cause must be

my excuse, which was to restore your father to reason and fortune."

The story was told with plausible volubility, yet something in the tone of the narrator's voice sounded false. There was a suppressed eagerness also in his manner that filled the listener with a vague alarm. Collecting her scattered faculties by a great effort, she answered:

"Take me to my father and I will tell him the numbers myself."

A fierce glance flashed from the man's dark eyes for a moment, but it vanished as quickly as it had come, and he spoke in the same suave voice he had used since the beginning of the interview.

"It is only on your own account that I must refuse your request," he said. "The spectacle of his present condition could only cause you pain. His mood is furious at times, and he would not recognize you. When his reason is restored, it shall be my pleasant duty to lead you to his arms."

The fears that had been gathering in Maud's breast grew more definite. She felt confident now that the man's story was wholly false, and he was her enemy. With a sudden desperate courage, as she thought of her sister's death and her father's sufferings, she answered, firmly:

"What you ask is impossible. I promised my father when he told me the numbers never to repeat them to any person but himself. Even to my own sister I never mentioned them, and now I can not do so to an utter stranger."

Again the angry light flashed from the man's eyes. He asked, quickly:

"And have you never told them to any person?"

"Yes; to one."

The man leaned forward and seized her arm with a grasp that caused her to utter an involuntary cry of pain.

"That person's name? I must have it!"

"It was to the man who called upon me yesterday—Darral the Detective."

"And so you have told him?" the man said, in a voice of baffled rage, and still keeping his hold upon her arm. "Now tell them to me, or you shall never see your father's face again or leave this house alive!"

The restless black eyes were flashing fiercely, and the girl instinctively felt that he would not hesitate at any dark crime to gain his object. Determined, however, that she would never tell him the numbers, with a recklessness born of utter despair, she answered, firmly:

"I will not! Release my arm at once, or I will call for assistance!"

Slowly the man released his grasp, a sardonic smile curling the corners of his mouth as he did so.

"Call for assistance if you wish," he said; "but it will be useless, for there is no one to hear you. Once more I ask, will you tell me the numbers?"

"No."

"Then you shall starve until you die," he cried, with an oath; and rising from his seat, he pressed the bell upon the table.

"Take this girl and give her into Mudge's charge," he said, as the man dressed in black answered the call. "She is not to have anything to eat or drink until I give the order. If she is allowed to escape, Mudge shall answer for it with her life!"

Seizing the girl's arm, the man hurried her from the room, and pausing in the hall, called the name of Mudge.

In a few minutes the old woman who had opened the door came holding up the stairs with a tallow candle in her hand, and repeating his master's instructions, the man gave the trembling girl into her charge, and then returned to the room he had just left.

Clutching Maud's hand in her bony fingers, the old woman led her up two more flights of stairs until the top floor was reached. Here opening a door, she pushed the girl through it, and following herself, locked the door on the inside.

The feeble rays of the candle showed the room to be about twelve feet square. It had but one window, and the only furniture consisted of a bed and two three-legged stools.

Drawing one of these in front of the door, the old woman placed the candle on the floor and seated herself, while Maud cast herself despairingly upon the bed.

For some time she lay there utterly overwhelmed by the thought of her position. Bitterly she regretted having so soon accepted the signature of the detective as genuine. It was too late, however, now for regrets; and with a forlorn

hope animating her, she at last rose and approached the old woman.

The latter had fallen into a doze, with her head nodding on her breast; but as Maud lightly placed her hand upon her arm, she started to her feet and drew a murderous-looking knife from the folds of her dress. Upon discovering who it was, however, she replaced the knife, and the fierce look fading from her face, she regarded her almost pityingly.

"You startled me, child," she said. "I was dreaming of my own girl that I lost when she was about your age. Go to sleep now—go to sleep. Ah! it is a bad, bad business."

The softer accents of the old woman's voice, as her more tender memories were stirred, encouraged Maud to proceed.

"If you have any pity, and me to escape," she pleaded. "I am not penniless, and you can come with me to some place where they will never be able to find us."

The old woman shook her head.

"I couldn't do it, child," she said; "I darsent. It would be more than my life is worth. Go to sleep now, and I will bring you something to eat in the morning on the sly. The captain is gone out by this time, and I must go to sleep myself. Hear, dear! I'm not so young as I was once, and I can not do without my rest."

She took up the candle as she spoke, and opening the door passed from the room, turning the key in the lock upon the outside.

Left alone in the darkness, Maud again sunk upon the bed. A feeling of the most utter despair had taken possession of her. She realized how fully she was in her enemies' power, and how all hope of escape was futile.

She was thoroughly exhausted. The reaction of the excitement and suspense of the day had completely worn her out, and gradually she dropped into a troubled sleep.

She was awakened by a sense of suffocation and a sharp, crackling sound in her ears, as if of flames. Springing to her feet, she found the room was full of a dense smoke, while thin tongues of fire were breaking through the walls and floor.

In a moment the terrible knowledge came to her that the house was on fire, and urged by the instinct of self-preservation, she rushed to the window and threw open the sash.

The outlet thus made for the smoke gave her a momentary relief, and then, like an imprisoned bird in an iron cage, she crossed the room to the door. The flames, however, had not yet touched it, and the lock resisted her utmost efforts to force it open.

The smoke became denser and denser, while the heat grew more than her strength could bear. With a last despairing effort she staggered again to the window, and extending her arms, raised her voice in a wild cry for help. Then utterly overcome, she sunk insensible to the floor.

Her peril was imminent and deadly. Nearer and nearer toward her leaped the flames, as if impatient to clasp her in their fiery embrace.

CHAPTER VI. THE LOST SCHEMES.

AFTER giving Maud into the custody of the old woman, the man who had attempted to personate her father left the house accompanied by the man he had called Dalton, and who was evidently a servant, and walked two or three hundred yards to a spot where the carriage in which the girl had come was waiting.

Both the men entering it, they were driven at a rapid pace back to the city, and toward that portion bordering the East River.

During the drive hardly a word was exchanged between the two. The dark-complexioned man seemed to be busy with his own thoughts, and the other did not seek to interrupt them until the carriage came to a stand-still and both alighted.

The locality in which they now were was equidistant in the extreme. The houses for the most part were old, and rented as tenements by the poorest of the poor. A dingy ware-house or a factory occasionally broke the monotony, but at this hour all the lights were extinguished, with the exception of a faint ray here and there from some of the upper windows.

"I have changed my mind, Dalton," the dark-complexioned man said. "That girl's discovery of the job we put up on her has upset all my plans. Send the carriage back, and wait for me at Black Dan's saloon."

Waiting a few moments until the carriage had driven away, and the figure of the other man had vanished in the darkness, the speaker walked rapidly until he reached the center of the

block, when he paused before what seemed to be an unoccupied building, and taking a key from his pocket, opened the door.

The house appeared to be quite deserted. No lights shone from the lower floor, while the glass in the sashes on the upper one was broken, and its whole aspect was as if it had not known any human habitation for many a long day.

Closing and carefully locking the door behind him, the visitor drew out a pocket-lantern, and striking a match, lighted it. Then throwing its rays upon the steps before him, he began to ascend the staircase.

Notwithstanding the deserted appearance of the house from the outside, all the doors of the rooms were locked. The man tried one or more of them as he passed, and then going up another flight, paused before a door directly at the head of the stairs.

In this instance the door was not locked; and entering the room, he saw a man seated in a chair, with his feet resting on the table before him, and smoking a cigar. A small lamp shed a feeble light through the apartment, but the rays were prevented from being seen from the outside by heavy wooden shutters on the inside of the windows.

The man was the same who had seen Darrel entering the false beard on the previous night, and who had shadowed him during his visit to Maud Lindley. Now, however, his appearance was changed, and he was dressed in a new suit of loud pattern, with a superabundance of flashy jewelry.

As the visitor entered, he rose to his feet with an air of marked respect.

"How long have you been waiting?" the new-comer asked.

"Not more than half an hour, captain."

"What report have you to make about Darrel?"

"Well, captain," the man answered, hesitatingly, "I tracked him all day until night, and then he gave me the slip."

"You are a fool," the other said, angrily. "Go at once and take off those clothes. Then watch the house where he lives until you see him. Start this moment, and do not let me see you again until you have some news of him."

The man addressed was about to answer, but the other checked him with an impatient gesture, and pointed to the door. With an abashed air the man left the room and passed down-stairs, the other following him into the hall. Waiting until he heard the street-door close, he re-entered the room and locked the door.

Then turning the flame of the lamp still higher, he seated himself at the table, and drawing a paper from an inner pocket, regarded it attentively.

It was a half sheet of small-sized note, and had the appearance of having been soaked in water and dried again. The characters written upon it were as follows:

"1—6, 22, 13, 5, 7, 19, 30, 41, 3, 18, 11, 2, 31.

"6—4, 17, 15, 2.

"13—4, 18, 6, 2, 11, 21, 14, 15, 31, 43, 00, 1, 17, 23, 9, 31, 8, 32, 57, 3."

It was signed with the initials A. L.; and after a few moments' further examination, the man rose from his seat and crossed the room to one corner where an old cabinet was standing. Opening it, he took from one of the shelves a small volume bound in faded crimson cloth, and then once more re-secured his seat at the table.

The volume was the first of one of Dickens' novels, and turning to the fourth page, he counted six words from the right-hand corner.

The sixth word was "1," and following the number on the sheet of paper before him, he wrote down the corresponding words. Then turning to the sixth and thirteenth pages, he did the same, until the words he had written read in this way:

"I have buried the money in the garden of the deserted house in—

"It is beneath the—

"I have done this because of a dream of coming misfortune, and I wish to leave my children provided for.

"A. L."

A frown dark as midnight settled upon the man's brow as he read the words, and he sprung to his feet.

"Why do I continue striving to find the missing num-

Sers?" he said. "They never were written, but told separately to the girls. The old madman had some method in his madness, I must admit; but one of the girls is dead—my curses on the shot who fired the shot!—and the knowledge of one is valueless without the other. My only chance of learning them both is from the old man himself. I will ask him now for the last time, and he shall either tell me or die!"

His looks and the tone of his voice were vengeful and menacing. Once more taking up the pocket lantern, he passed out of the room and down the stairs. Without pausing on the ground floor, he proceeded direct to the basement, and to a room in the rear, which had probably originally been the kitchen.

The wall was paneled with some dark wood; and turning his hand down one of the moldings, he pressed a concealed spring and the panel flew open, disclosing a narrow passage leading to a flight of steps. Descending these, he came to a door with a grating of iron bars above it, and secured with massive bolts. Shooting back the bolts, he swung open the door and passed into a cell of about ten feet square, with walls, floor, and roof of cemented stone.

The atmosphere was close and stifling, making it difficult to breathe, yet the rays of the lantern showed the cell was not without an occupant. In one corner was a heap of mucky straw, and lying upon it, apparently asleep, was the figure of a man.

He slowly raised himself to a sitting position as the visitor entered, and as he did so it could be seen his hands were fettered, and he was fastened to the wall by a massive iron chain.

He was clothed in rags that hadly served to cover his attenuated form. His hair and beard were unkempt and tangled, yet in his features a close observer could easily have traced a resemblance to the miniature taken from the neck of the murdered girl. He looked up with a wild, an almost maniacal glare in his hollow eyes.

"Why do you come to mock me in my misery?" he said. "Have you not pity enough to let me die in peace?"

"No," the other answered; "I do not want you to die unless it is your choice to do so. I have come to offer you your freedom, but on one condition. You can accept it or not, as you choose, but the alternate is death."

"I know what you would ask," the prisoner said, his voice rising almost to hoarseness, "and I refuse!"

Changing the lantern to his left hand, the visitor drew a revolver from his breast and deliberately aimed it at the prisoner's head. Cowering before it, the latter shifted his position, and as he did so, a sharp eye might have detected the fact that one of the links of the fetters on his wrists, and also of the chain that held him to the wall, had been cut almost through. It was unnoticed by the man with the revolver, however, and he went on:

"I have come for the last time to ask you for the numbers that tell the spot where you have buried the money. If you tell me, I swear that half shall be your own. If you do not—"

The click of the hammer of the revolver as it was raised finished the sentence. Waiting a few minutes for an answer, but receiving none, the man continued:

"Quick! your answer. If by the time I have counted three you do not speak, I will fire!"

Still the prisoner did not answer, and in measured tones the other began to count.

"One—two—"

Another moment and the old man's doom would be sealed. But before the concluding number could be uttered, the prisoner had crouched still further back for an instant, and then springing suddenly forward, had snapped his already partially severed fetters.

Then with a suppressed cry he dashed aside the revolver from the other's hand and seized him by the throat.

CHAPTER VII.

A TERRIBLE MOMENT.

With his back against the wall and revolver leveled, Darral stood at bay.

"Back, all of you!" he repeated. "The first man who advances a step, dies!"

The advancing crowd, however, did not seem inclined to heed the warning, and the detective pressing the trigger of his weapon, the foremost of the ruffians fell heavily to the ground.

This prompt action on his part in all probability saved Dar-

ral's life. For a moment the advancing ruffians paused irresolutely, and he was not slow to take advantage of their hesitation.

Placing one arm around the man whom his well-delivered blow had stunned, he raised him, with seemingly as little exertion as if he had been an infant, and then with his revolver grasped in the other, he made a dash for the door.

Abandoning themselves from their momentary irresolution, the ruffians started in pursuit, while the bartender placed himself in the door-way to stop his escape.

A heavy blow with the butt of the detective's revolver, however, sent the bartender sprawling on his back; but at the same moment the sharp crack of a pistol-shot came from the rear of the saloon, and Darral felt a sharp twinge of pain in his left shoulder. Still it did not cause him to release his hold of his prisoner, and the next moment he had reached the street.

By this time, a squad of police passing by had been attracted by the sound of the shots, and hastily explaining the state of affairs to the sergeant in command, Darral slipped a pair of handcuffs on his prisoner's wrists, and having a hack, gave the driver orders to take them to the nearest police station.

By the time he was assisted into the carriage the man had recovered consciousness, and as soon as they had started Darral asked:

"Do you know what I have arrested you for?"

A surly negative was the reply.

"Then I will tell you. It is for the murder of the girl upon the river last night."

The man was a coward, as such ruffians usually are, and evidently taken by surprise, he gave himself away at once.

"It was an accident," he stammered, "I did not do it."

"You were in the boat, though, and saw it done," Darral answered. "Now it is no use denying it. You are in a bad hole, and you had better get out of it the easiest way you can. Turn state's evidence and clear yourself. If you do, I will see that you have the money to get safely out of the way afterwards."

The man deliberated a few moments before replying. He was evidently considering which course would be most to his advantage to pursue. The idea of honor among thieves is generally a fallacious one.

"Well, I suppose," he said, at length, "I can't help myself. It was an ugly business, anyhow, and if I had known how it was going to turn out, I would never have had anything to do with it. You see, me and two of my mates were hired to row the girl out to a vessel that was lying in the stream ready to sail the first thing in the morning. She had a notion her father was on board."

"Did she hire you herself?"

"No; the story of a vessel was only a blind, and there was not any one on board of it belonging to her. Captain Parker made a bargain with us, that when we were about half-way out we should seize her and tie her up tight."

At the mention of the name of Captain Parker, the detective started slightly. The man in question had long been suspected of being the head of a nefarious gang who existed by preying upon society, but so carefully had he played his cards that as yet nothing absolutely criminal had been brought against him.

"Captain Parker!" he asked, quickly. "Was he in the boat?"

"Yes."

"And what was the reason of the girl being shot?"

"Well, when we came to seize her, she began to struggle and would have cried out, and one of my mates had to put his pistol to her head to keep her quiet. Somehow the pistol went off and shot her on the spot, and we checked the body overboard."

"The shot was not intentional, then?"

"No. The captain didn't want it at all. He swore like a madman, and would have shot the man that did it there and then, only we saw the light of a boat following us, and we had to keep quiet and make for the shore."

By this time the station was reached, and telling the hackman to wait, Darral alighted, and taking his prisoner by the arm, led him up the steps of the building.

"If the story you have told me is true," he said, as they entered, "I will see that you come out all right, and be rewarded into the bargain; but until I am satisfied that it is so you will have to remain under lock and key."

The man's countenance fell visibly, but he made no answer;

and Darral, after seeing him placed in a cell, hastily examined the wound he had received. It was not dangerous—in fact, a mere scratch—and binding it up, he returned to where the hack was waiting, and once more entering it, gave the driver the address of the house where Miss Lindley resided. It was a somewhat late hour for a visit, being after ten o'clock; but he had promised to either call or send a message, and he was determined to keep his word. As he alighted from the carriage, he saw that the lights were still burning in the lower windows, and ascending the stoop, he rang the bell.

The servant who opened the door looked surprised as he asked for Miss Lindley. It was evident she did not recognize him as the visitor of the morning; and now for the first time Darral remembered his rough sailor's costume.

"I would not trouble Miss Lindley at this late hour," he said, "if it were not upon a matter of great importance."

"Well, she is not in now," the girl answered. "She went out about an hour ago in a carriage."

For a moment Darral was startled out of his habitual composure, and an exclamation left his lips; but quickly recovering himself, he asked:

"Is the lady of the house at home?"

"Yes."

"I must see her at once."

There was something in the tone of command in which he spoke that, in spite of his rough appearance, silenced the objections that were rising to the girl's lips; and holding open the door for him to enter, she left him standing in the hall while she went to carry the message to her mistress.

In a few moments a pleasant-looking, middle-aged lady came out of one of the lower rooms, and bowing courteously, Darral addressed her.

"Malaise," he said, "I am a detective, and I have reason to believe Miss Lindley has been induced to leave the house to-night under false pretences. May I ask as a favor that you admit me to her rooms?"

As he finished speaking, he opened his coat, showing the badge pinned to his vest. The landlady, voluble in her expressions of surprise, assented at once, and leading the way to the upper floor, opened the door with a pass-key.

The light was still burning, and almost the first object upon which the eyes of the detective rested was the note purporting to be from himself, which lay upon the table.

Hastily perusing it, he placed it in his pocket; and making a hurried apology to the landlady for having troubled her, he passed out of the house to the street, where the hack was still waiting.

With instructions to the driver to urge his horses to their fastest speed, he entered it and was driven back to the police station. Arrived there, after a few moments' conversation with the sergeant, he was admitted to the cell in which his prisoner had been placed.

The man looked up in surprise as he entered, but the detective did not give him time to speak.

"See here," he said, "I want some information, and I am willing to pay for it. Do you know of any haunt of Parker's where he would be likely to carry a girl he wanted kept out of the way? If you name the correct spot, I will give you a hundred dollars."

The man considered a moment or two before he answered. "Yes," he said, at length, "I think I do. There is an old house out in Harb'n where he was going to take the girl last night."

"Can you show me the house?"

"Yes."

"Then come with me at once."

Opening the door, he led him along the corridor to the outer office. Then, with a hurried explanation to the sergeant at the desk, out to the back, and following the prisoner's direction, he told the driver to drive to High Bridge.

During the journey Darral was busy with his own thoughts. The circumstances of the case, as they developed themselves, served to confirm the first theory he had formed; yet there were several mysterious points he could not understand.

At last High Bridge was reached, and after the driver had driven about a mile further, the prisoner motioned to Darral to tell the driver to stop.

"We had better walk the rest of the way," he said, "for there may be some one on the watch."

Alighting accordingly, they walked a few hundred yards, when they saw a lurid glow in the sky ahead of them.

"It is a fire," Darral said; and quickening their pace, they

turned an angle of the road, when an exclamation of surprise broke from his companion's lips.

"By thunder!" he said, "it is the very house you want to find."

By this time they were full in view of the burning building. As yet the fire seemed confined to the upper stories, from the windows of which the flame and smoke were breaking forth in dense volumes.

Suddenly a wild, despairing shriek broke the silence, and for an instant a female form could be discerned at a window on the top floor.

In an instant the knowledge came to the detective that it was none other than the girl he was seeking; and quickening his pace to a run, he hastened toward the door.

It was locked, and tearing open the shutters of one of the lower windows, he dashed himself through the sash into the room.

The lurid glare of the fire above showed it evidently was not a sort of lumber room, and was stored with articles of almost every description. His eye was at once attracted by a coil of rope, and seizing it, he sprang toward the door.

Fortunately it was not fastened, and passing through it into the hall, he dashed up the staircase.

As he reached the second floor, the mingled smoke and flame almost drove him back, but he kept on bravely until the top one was reached.

Unaware of what room the girl was confined in he tried the first one he came to. It was locked, and hurling himself with all his force against it, burst it from its hinges and entered the apartment.

As he did so, he saw a female form lying prostrate on the floor, and raising it in his arms he turned to descend the stairs.

As he did so, however, the staircase fell with a crash, cutting off all hope of escape.

The position was a terrible one; it seemed they both were doomed to perish together. The heat was almost more than human strength could bear, while the smoke was suffocating. Most men would have succumbed at once, but Darral, once more laying the girl down, seized the rope and rapidly fastened it around the projecting window-sill.

Then again seizing the girl with one arm, with the disengaged hand he grasped the rope, and crawling through the window, began to descend.

The strain upon his strength was intense, but nearly half the distance to the ground had been completed in safety, when suddenly the sound of a human voice smote upon his ears.

It was raised in a wild, maniacal laugh, and seemed to proceed from out of the flames above him. Involuntarily glancing up, he saw the head and shoulders of an old woman protruding from the window.

The expression upon her face was absolutely demoniac. Evidently the terror of her situation had crazed her.

In her hand she held a long knife upraised to cut the rope above him.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW MYSTERY.

As Darral, glancing upward, saw the terrible doom threatening himself and his companion, an involuntary thrill of horror shot through his breast.

It had not the effect of unnerving him, however. Instead, it caused his thoughts to seize with more than electric quickness upon their only possible means of escape.

If he could manage to swing himself upon one of the window-ledges before the rope was severed, it would at least prevent them from being dashed to death upon the ground below.

Still it seemed but a forlorn hope; even if he succeeded in gaining the window, an equally terrible fate awaited them.

It was merely a change of doom—a change between being dashed to the ground, a mangled mass of senseless clay, or perishing in the smoke and flame.

Yet it was the only thing he could do; and as the thought struck him, he swung himself clear of the wall, ready to spring upon the window-ledge.

It was destined, however, that he should be spared the necessity of taking such desperate chances.

The knife was not two feet from the rope to which he was clinging, when the fingers of the hand that held it suddenly relaxed and the weapon fell through the air, passing not six inches from the detective's head.

At the same moment, also, a large piece of the eaves came

crashing down and struck the ground with a dull thud below him.

Either a lucky chance or a direct interposition of Providence had saved the lives of the girl and the driver man who was trying to rescue her.

The portion of the eaves burning through, had struck the old woman's arm just in time to knock the knife from her hand and foil her murderous purpose.

As she saw this, and realized that her intended vengeance was frustrated and she was left to her horrible doom, a blood-curdling cry of despair left her lips.

At the same time, with her arms thrown wildly upward, she disappeared from the window, evidently overcome by the mingled flame and smoke.

Almost before the shriek had died away, however, the detective had reached the ground and carried the miserable girl a hundred yards or so from the burning house, to where the man who had driven himself and his companion from the city was standing.

Laying her gently upon the ground, he drew a revolver from his breast and gave it to the man.

"Do not stir from this young lady till I return," he commanded, rapidly. "If any one attempts to interfere with you, shoot him on the spot!"

Taken by surprise by this peremptory and decided order, the man could only stammer:

"But you? Where are you going?"

"Back to the house to save the old woman," Darral answered. "Remember what I told you."

This time the hackman was too utterly astounded to utter a word; and before he could find speech to the effect that it would be better to let the old hag burn, the detective had once more reached the burning house.

As he saw the mass of flame and smoke before him, he fully realized what desperate chances he was about to take, but not for an instant did he hesitate.

All his instincts of humanity revolted at the thought of leaving a woman, even though she had attempted to murder him, to perish without attempting to save her; besides, he considered if he were fortunate enough to rescue her, he might be able to gather information from her that would solve the mystery that now so puzzled him.

The flames had not as yet touched the rope, and seizing it, Darral held his breath and began to ascend.

Up he went steadily until half the distance was reached, when he paused a moment to take a fresh breath, and then went up again.

More than once he felt that he would be driven back—only a man of iron will could have so triumphed over his physical sensations; but at last the window was reached and he entered the room.

The old woman lay unconscious upon the floor; her clothing was on fire in several places, and in a few seconds more her doom would have been sealed.

Once more driving back the feeling of dizziness and suffocation that seemed overpowering him, the detective seized her with one sinewy arm, and passing through the window again, grasped the rope with the other.

The rope, where it hung out of the window, was now scorched until black almost as a cinder, and it seemed more than probable it would not support the double weight.

There was no time to waste in conjectures, however, and letting it slip through his fingers so fast that he could feel it cutting into his flesh, he began to descend.

Down they went in silence until about ten feet from the ground; then, with a short snap, the rope broke above them and they fell.

Darral had been prepared for this, however, and he landed safely on his feet; then staggering a few yards out of the scorching heat of the burning building, he fell unconscious to the ground.

By this time quite a crowd had collected, and one of the men taking a flask of whisky from his pocket, poured some of it down the detective's throat.

The fiery liquor revived him almost instantly, and staggering to his feet, he looked about him.

A small group had gathered around the old woman, and were endeavoring to also restore her to consciousness. Maud had already recovered from her swoon, but looked around as if she could not understand the situation; while the hackman, true to Darral's order, stood with the revolver in his hand keeping the crowd at a distance.

Advancing toward them, Darral addressed the girl:

"I hope, beyond the natural fright, you are not injured, Miss Lindley?" he said.

The girl looked at him in surprise; evidently she did not recognize him—and it was but little wonder. His face was blackened with the smoke, his hair and eyebrows were singed by the flame, and his clothes were scorched almost to cinders.

"I see you do not recognize me," he said. "I am Darral."

The girl uttered a little cry of delight, and made a step or two forward.

"Forgive me," she said. "You have saved my life."

"It was no more than any man would have done in my place," Darral answered, evidently endeavoring to avoid her thanks. "Do you think you can walk a few hundred yards to the carriage?"

Maud answered in the affirmative; and telling her to wait a few moments, he left them and walked to where the old woman lay.

She had also begun to revive, and with the assistance of two of the by-standers, soon stood upon her feet. Asking them to continue to assist her to the carriage, Darral rejoined Maud and the driver, and the whole party proceeded to the spot where the vehicle had been left.

It was nowhere to be seen.

In an instant a knowledge of the truth flashed across the detective's mind.

In the excitement, he had up to this moment completely forgotten the fact of the man he had taken prisoner at the sailors' boarding-house having accompanied him. Now he had evidently taken advantage of Darral's absence to make his way to the carriage and escape.

It was a lamentable oversight, and the detective felt deeply chagrined. Still, regrets were useless, and all that could be done was to make the best of the situation. Accordingly, after a little difficulty, another carriage was procured, and entering it with Maud and the old woman, he was driven back to the city.

Hardly a word was spoken during the journey. The detective was busy with his own thoughts; the old woman had sunk again into a state of semi-unconsciousness; while a languor, the reaction of the excitement she had undergone, had stolen over Maud, making it impossible for her to shape her thoughts into words.

Only when her home was reached, and Darral gave her his hand to assist her to alight, she held it in her own for a moment.

"Mr. Darral," she said, "any thanks I could offer you would be only a mockery. Believe me, I feel more than I can express. I have yet a favor to ask you. Will you call and see me to-morrow morning?"

Darral willingly promised; and after seeing her safe inside the house, he re-entered the carriage and told the driver to take him to the hospital.

Arrived there, the old woman was placed in a private ward, with strict instructions to allow no person to see her; and then the detective was driven home to take the rest he so much needed.

The following morning about ten o'clock he once more resumed his clerical disguise and proceeded to the house where Maud Lindley lived.

She was evidently waiting for him; her cheeks were pale, and it was plain to be seen she had been weeping.

As he entered she rose from her seat to receive him.

"Mr. Darral," she said, "I am so glad you have come. You must have thought me ungrateful last night, but my heart was too full to thank you for your brave and noble action. I thank you now with my whole soul. I—"

As she spoke the detective experienced a feeling in his breast that he had never known before. The girl was very beautiful, and the light that shone from her eyes was unmistakably that of purity and truth. The gratitude she tried to express was very dear, yet it embarrassed him, and he interrupted her somewhat abruptly.

"Pray say no more, Miss Lindley," he said; "I only did my duty. You told me you had another service for me, and I shall only be too happy if I can in any way oblige you."

A sudden rush of tears came into the girl's eyes. She moved a step nearer to him and laid her hand lightly on his arm.

"I would like," she almost whispered, "to see my sister—once more."

There was a depth of pathos in the words so tremulously spoken that still further awakened the detective's pity.

"I think it would be better that you did not," he answered, gently. "But if you wish it—"

"I do," she answered, clasping her hands. "Poor Agnes! I loved her so, and if I can not kiss her dear lips again I shall never cease to reproach myself."

Seeing that she had so set her heart upon it, Darral, though still reluctantly, consented. He had given the body of the murdered girl into the hands of an undertaker, and he knew it was now in a fit state not to shock the susceptibilities of her sister any further than the fact of her death most necessarily inspire. Accordingly he waited while Mand hastily dressed herself, and when she rejoined him, they went together into the street, and hailing a hack, were driven to the undertaker's establishment where the body lay.

As they alighted, Darral said in a low voice: "You must try and be brave, Miss Landley. Your sister is happier now than she could ever be on earth, and your grief will not bring her back to life."

The girl was trembling all over, but she looked into the detective's face with a look of perfect trust.

"I will," she said, resolutely, and looking at her closely. Darral knew she would keep her word.

The body of the dead girl lay in the on-cket in a small apartment in the rear of the store. Darral had given orders that no expense should be spared; and as she lay there, with a white lily upon her breast, were it not for that purple stain upon her forehead, she might almost have been taken for one asleep.

When she had first drawn near and looked upon the pallid, passionless face that had been so dear to her, a sudden rush of tears had blinded her, obscuring from her sight the face she had loved so well.

Gradually, however, the mist began to clear away, and Darral, watching her intently, was surprised at the expression that came upon her face.

It was not an expression of grief, or even pity—it was one of doubt.

For several moments she stood gazing upon the cold and yellow face, with its braids of golden hair resting among the satin puffs of the lining of the coffin, and then, as if urged by a sudden impulse, she started forward.

The next moment she had torn open the throat of the shroud, and exposed to view a shoulder pure and white as alabaster marble.

A single moment she looked upon it, and then she turned to the detective, a look of great bewildered wonder in her beautiful eyes.

For several moments she tried to speak, but could not; choking sobs checked her utterance. At last, however, she recovered herself, and drawing nearer to Darral, she said, with an air that was almost one of terror:

"That girl is not my sister!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE MILLIONS' LOT.

TAKEN wholly by surprise by his prisoner's unexpected attack, Parker was unable to offer the least resistance for a moment or two.

The longing for revenge that had taken possession of the old man, for the time being gave him a feebler strength, against which Parker was powerless as an infant.

His antagonist's bony fingers clutched his throat in a grasp of steel, and bearing him against the wall he tried to speak, but his excitement kept him from uttering a word.

Parker, however, was a strong man, and besides, had the advantage of a thorough scientific training in the art of self-defense, and he exerted himself to the utmost to try and throw his opponent.

In this he was at last successful; but the clutch of those bony fingers upon his throat never relaxed, and together they fell to the floor.

Parker was beneath, and the next moment the old man had his knee upon his chest, which, taken with the grasp upon his throat, made it almost impossible for him to breathe.

It was as weird scene there in that narrow cell, these two men struggling for life or death.

The fury of a very maniac shone from the old man's eyes—it looked as if he would be satisfied with nothing less than the death of his opponent.

Parker's face was growing perfectly purple; there was a horrible gurgling sound in his throat as he tried to catch

his breath; then the vain struggle for respiration ceased altogether, and he lay perfectly motionless.

Slowly the old man released one hand from his throat; then he reached for the revolver he had dashed from the other's hand, and pressed it against his temple until the muzzle cut through the skin.

Still the prostrate man did not move an inch, and satisfied that he was really unconscious, the other rose to his feet.

"At last!" he cried. "At last, after that dreary eternity of suffering, I am free! free! Now to make the fiend in human form who caused it to suffer as I have done!"

The wild, maniacal glare was still in his eyes, but there evidently was a method in his madness. Dragging Parker's unconscious body across the floor to the heap of moidy straw, he wound the chains around his wrists and ankles so that the slightest movement was impossible. Then placing the end of one link through another, he thrust the one he had severed through into the projecting part, thus fastening the fetters so that it was impossible for them to be removed without assistance.

Having done so, he again picked up the revolver and the lantern, and passing out, shot the heavy bolts upon his prison.

Ascending the staircase, he opened the door and went on until the first floor was reached; then consulting the revolver and the lantern beneath his rags, he opened the front door and passed into the street.

The excitement of the fight had by this time passed away, and as he walked along the hall it seemed as if he would faint. No, however, when the cool night air blew upon his face, he appeared to suddenly recover all his former vigor.

"Great God!" he cried aloud, as he inhaled the breeze that blew in from the river, "it is like the air of Paradise. It is almost worth the agony I have endured to understand how great 'Thy gifts are if we could but appreciate them.'"

As he spoke, he drew his form erect and walked rapidly toward the heart of the city.

He seemed to have no particular destination in view. The bracing air, after his long months of confinement in the stinking cell, seemed to have the same effect upon him as light has upon an ordinary man, and to cause a wild exaltation to take possession of him.

At last, after walking an hour or more, he reached one of the public parks, and seating himself upon a bench, he remained for some time in silence.

Suddenly he looked fearfully around him. No one was in sight, and with a sigh of relief he laughed almost manfully to himself.

"They knew of the secret of the millions," he said, in a whisper; "but they did not have the key to unlock it. When I buried the money, I wrote it all down, except what they wish to know. I gave half to Agnes and half to Mand. 'They said I was mad, but I was not mad enough to forget the numbers.'"

He laughed again in a sort of maniac way, and then resumed his soliloquy. Solitary confinement often has the effect of causing the prisoner to utter his thoughts aloud, and so it appeared it had done in his case.

"To Agnes," he went on, "I gave 15, 25. That meant 'fortunes.' To Mand I gave 16, 125. That was 'Staten Island.' I do not forget. I will go and dig it up from where I buried it. Then let those who have tried to steal it from me beware!"

When he had proceeded thus for the sound of measured footsteps approaching started him. Looking up, he saw the figure of one of the park policemen coming toward him, and rising from his seat, he began walking across town.

His thoughts evidently busy with the recovery of his buried treasure, he paid no heed to where he was going, and probably an hour more had passed when he found himself near the East River.

A post piled in with lumber was ahead of him, and walking along into the shadow of one of the jungs, he threw himself upon the ground, and in a few minutes was fast asleep.

When he awoke the sun was just rising. Starting to his feet, he looked around him in a frightened way, as if he had been caught in some criminal act, and then walked at a rapid pace toward the lower portion of the town.

As he hurried on, most of the people he met turned to look at him; he certainly presented a pitiable spectacle; hatless, and the rags hanging about him barely sufficing to cover him, he was certainly as bad a looking citizen as is often met.

At that early hour, however, there were but few people in the streets, except mechanics going to their daily labor; more

than one of them paused, more than willing to give him a few pennies, but his past no heed to them and kept rapidly on his way.

His destination was Baxter Street. There he managed to make a trade of the revolver and the lantern for a hat, an old coat that partially covered the rags from sight, and half a dollar in cash.

With this money he went to a cheap restaurant and procured his breakfast; then he made his way to the Staten Island ferry and bought a ticket.

During the passage he seemed to be very nervous, and eyed the passengers with a furtive eye.

Arrived at the pier, he walked a short distance, and then hung around for more than an hour, watching all the passers-by with the same distrustful look.

Then, suddenly starting at a rapid pace, he took one of the least frequented roads and walked for nearly half an hour.

At last he paused before a rusty iron gate giving admittance to what seemed to be a thicket of evergreen-trees. They had evidently been handsome grounds at one time, but that had been years ago, and now a dense undergrowth had sprung up, making it more resemble a patch of forest than anything else.

Climbing over the gate, the old man struck into what had once been a carriage-way, but was now grown up with thistles and weeds until it was difficult for any person to make his way through. After going on thus for about five minutes, an old brick building came in sight.

It evidently was very old, probably of the time of the Revolution—a long, low house, two stories in height, and concealed from view of the road by the surrounding trees.

The traces of years of neglect and decay were upon everything. On one side of the house stood the remains of what was once a noble orchard, and on the other the garden.

It was to the latter that the old man directed his steps; making his way through the almost impenetrable hedge of interlacing branches, he paused before a dried-up pond, in the center of which stood a broken fountain.

The basin was probably a hundred feet in circumference and five or six feet deep. The bottom was covered with weeds and grass. Stepping into it, the visitor made his way to the fountain; then kneeling, he began to scrape away the leaves and grass about its base.

He continued thus until he had a space several feet square cleared upon one side; then suddenly starting to his feet, he went toward the house, where from some place where it had been concealed he produced a spade, and returning, began to dig on the spot he had cleared.

For nearly a quarter of an hour he worked assiduously, until at last his spade struck some hard substance like a stone. As he did so his face suddenly blanched to an almost livid hue.

"My God!" he ejaculated, "can it be stolen?"

As he thus expressed his thoughts aloud he redoubled his exertions, until in a few minutes more a flat stone was discovered, with the initials "A. L." roughly engraved upon it.

When he saw this a man left his lips, and he fell to the ground as if struck a sudden blow.

For some time he lay like one dead; then, gradually recurring consciousness, he looked at the hole he had dug where he had expected to find the treasure he had buried, and again a man of other misery left his lips.

Raising his hands to his head, he tore his long white hair in a very agony of despair.

"Gone!" he wailed. "Gone! Gone!"

CHAPTER X.

TRAPPED.

As Maud Lindley made the startling announcement that the murdered girl was not her sister, Darral gazed at her in undisguised amazement.

"Not your sister?" he repeated.

"No," Maud answered. "The resemblance is striking; so much so that at first it even misled me. But that it is not still I have convincing proof."

"What is it?" the detective asked, eagerly.

"Upon my sister's shoulder was a scar about two inches long. It was the remains of a wound accidentally received when a child. Upon this poor creature's shoulder there is not even a mark."

The truth of this latter statement was self-evident. Not so much as a scratch marred the purity of the delicate skin. For some moments the detective stood in silence, trying vainly to

find some probable explanation for this new development of the most mysterious case he had ever been engaged upon.

At length, starting from his reverie, he said:

"I can not doubt your word, Miss Lindley, and it pleases me to think your sister still lives. If she does, I shall never rest until I have found her."

"Oh! I trust so," the girl cried, her eyes lighting up with the hope thus presented to her. "Oh, Agnes, if I could see you once again I would be almost willing to die!"

"Do not be too sanguine," Darral said. "I am afraid there may be a deeper villainy than we can imagine in this affair. If there is, I must try to find it out. In the meantime, I can do no good stopping longer here, and if you are ready, I shall be happy to accompany you home."

The momentary expression of joy faded from the girl's face at the words so gravely spoken, and she turned to leave the apartment.

"I am ready," she said, sadly.

Entering the waiting carriage, they were driven back to the house where she lived, and as he parted with her at the door, Darral received her promise not to go out again until she had seen him in person. Then re-entering the vehicle, he was driven back to the undertaker's establishment.

His brow was clouded as he pondered over this new feature of the case. He could not understand it. Either the girl whose floating corpse he had dragged out of the river was not Agnes Lindley, or else the body had been stolen and another substituted.

Which was it?

Supposing the murdered girl had not been Agnes Lindley, how was the fact of the two letters having been found upon her person to be explained? If it had been she, how had the change in the bodies been accomplished?

And granting the latter supposition as the truth, what was the motive?

Arrived once more at the undertaker's, Darral called the proprietor into the room where the corpse lay, saying he had some important questions to ask him.

Before beginning, however, he took a long survey of the dead face in the casket.

As he gazed upon it he almost became convinced it was not that of the girl he had picked up on the river. The resemblance was marked, but under closer scrutiny, the features were not so clear cut and regular, while the hair was of a coarser texture and several shades darker in hue.

Thus far he was satisfied. He now had to find out how the change had been made, and with what purpose. Suddenly turning to the undertaker, he asked:

"When was this body laid out?"

The undertaker looked his surprise at the abruptness of the question, but he answered promptly:

"This morning."

"Where are her clothes?"

"They are somewhere around, I suppose. I was not here myself, but I will ask the clerk."

"Do so at once," Darral said. "It is more important than you may think."

The clerk was summoned, but he was unable to give the least information upon the subject. The body had been got ready for burial by an old woman who usually performed this disagreeable duty for them. It was more than probable, he thought, that she had taken them away with her. As a general thing, where a body was brought for interment, the clothes became her prerequisites.

Mentally cursing his own oversight in not having given orders to have the clothes carefully preserved, the detective asked the street and number of the house in which the woman lived. Both were given to him at once, and entering the still waiting hack, he was driven to the address.

It was a dilapidated-looking house, in one of the worst parts of Mott Street. The basement was occupied as a Chinese laundry, and the hall, as he entered, showed at a glance the tokens of poverty and neglect.

The undertaker's clerk had told him the situation of the rooms, which were on the attic floor, and ascending the narrow and creaking flights of stairs, he knocked at the door.

A cracked voice told him to enter, and doing so, he saw an old woman of repulsive appearance seated in a rocking-chair and smoking a short black pipe. A nearly empty flask of gin stood on the deal table beside her, and it was plain to be seen she had been imbibing.

She rose hurriedly from her seat as the visitor entered, and

then noticing his clerical dress, a vicious look came into her bleared eyes.

"I don't want none of yer blasted tracts here," she said. "I'm a decent, hard-working woman, and I don't want to be converted. You'd better make yourself scarce, or it will be the worse for you. I don't want any parsons around me."

How long her torrent of abuse might have continued it is impossible to say, had not Darral checked her.

"I do not want to convert you," he said; "I want to give you some money."

At the mention of money the old woman's manner changed instantly, and in a chummy way she attempted to apologize; but her visitor again interrupted her.

"I do not want any excuses," he said. "What I want I am ready to pay for. I want the clothes of the girl whose body you laid out this morning."

The woman seemed embarrassed at the request, and the detective noticing it, continued:

"She is the only sister of a dear friend of mine, and I want to send them to him. Give me the clothes and I will give you twenty dollars."

He drew the money from his pocket as he spoke, and an aversive look came upon the woman's face as she saw it.

"I would do it in a minute to oblige you, sir," she said, "but I sold them not half an hour ago to Jimmy the ragman. A good friend Jimmy has been to me, and I could not refuse him."

For a moment or two the detective was silent. He saw that chance once more had taken the claw he was trying to find out of his hands. At length he said:

"Tell me where I can find the man you sold them to and I will give you five dollars."

"I would like to oblige such a pleasant-spoken gentleman as you are," she answered, "but I can't do it. Jimmy has gone on his daily rounds, and he won't be back till night. If you will only wait till he comes home, I will coax him to sell them back to me, and then I will let you have them."

The eagerness with which she spoke and the look of anxiety still upon her wrinkled face convinced the detective that she meant what she said, and he asked:

"Do you think he will give them back to you?"

"Oh, I am sure of it. Jimmy is next the same to me as a son. Dear, dear, if he had lived I would have had a son five years older than him."

"What time do you expect him to return?"

"Between seven and eight. If you could manage to come here between eight and nine, I will have the clothes waiting for you."

"I will be here," Darral answered, after a moment or two of reflection. "If you have them for me, I will not haggle for a dollar or two."

The old woman was voluble in her assurances that they would be waiting for him at the time named, and the detective left the house, impatient for the hour to arrive.

Until the still open question as to whether the corpse lying ready for burial in the undertaker's shop was or was not that of Agnes Lindley was decided, he could not proceed with his investigations, except quite in the dark. That the old woman meant to play him false he did not suspect; he trusted to her evident anxiety to keep her true to her promise.

Still this did not prevent him from proceeding to the station and giving some of the points of the case to the captain. The result was, that when at the hour appointed he entered the house, several policemen in civilians' attire, sauntered along the street within easy talking distance.

Ascending the stairs, he entered the room. The old woman, who had evidently been waiting for him, rose from her seat and advanced eagerly toward him.

"I have got them," she said.

A pile of feminine attire was lying upon the table, and crossing the floor, she handed them one by one to him.

As he looked at them, Darral recognized them as the ones that had been upon the body of the murdered girl when in the station house she had been searched for anything that might lead to her identification.

What then could be the explanation of the mystery? It resolved itself into the first unanswerable question:

Was the murdered girl Agnes Lindley, or was she not?

At any rate, one thing was certain. The old woman had kept her word, and was entitled to the money he had promised her in the morning, and Darral placed his hand in his pocket to give it to her.

Before he could withdraw it, however, the door flew sud-

denly open and half a dozen men, all armed to the teeth, crowded across the threshold.

"Attempt any resistance," the foremost cried, leveling a revolver at the detective's head, "and you are a dead man!"

CHAPTER XI.

BARFIELD.

As Darral, turning, saw the armed ruffians standing in the door-way, he realized at once that he was in a trap.

Each of their weapons covered him, and any attempt at a rash just then would be nothing less than courting his death.

It seemed as if there was no choice, except either to die or surrender himself a prisoner, when suddenly a wild hope of escape flashed through his mind.

On the opposite side of the room was a large closet with shelves along the wall, the door of which was open, and with a sudden bound he sprang toward it, and entering, closed the door.

There was a bolt on the inside, and shooting this into its socket, he climbed to the highest shelf, which was above the level of the door.

Having done so, he waited a few moments for the bullets which he expected would come crashing through the panels of the door.

It was to evade them that he had climbed upon the shelf.

He knew that if he could do so, the report would bring to his assistance the officers in plain clothes who were watching outside.

Contrary to his expectations, however, no shot was fired; instead, a grating noise told him they were trying to remove the door from its hinges, evidently with the intention of securing him without making any noise.

No sooner had he become convinced of this than, drawing his own revolver, he fired three shots through the door in rapid succession.

Hardly had the reports ceased, than the wisdom of the elevated position he had taken became apparent, as two answering bullets came crashing through the panels and buried the missiles in the wall opposite.

The next moment he could hear the footsteps of the ruffians hurriedly leaving the room.

Knowing that the sound of the shots would attract attention, and fearing, as they supposed, either killed or mortally wounded the detective with their bullets, they were evidently trying to make good their escape before they were discovered.

In this design, however, they were destined to be foiled; for hardly had they reached the head of the stairs than they were met by the officers, who, upon hearing the pistol shots, had rushed into the house.

The ruffians fought desperately, but in a few moments they were overpowered and the handcuffs locked upon their wrists.

No sooner had he heard the ruffians leaving the room than Darral had emerged from the closet and joined the other officers in capturing them.

Now he looked around for the old woman.

She was nowhere to be seen; and then he made another discovery.

The clothes taken from the body of the murdered girl, and which he had risked his life to get possession of, were nowhere to be found.

During the few minutes he had been in the closet the old woman must have made her escape, carrying them with her.

The evidence of the officers confirmed this suspicion. A few moments before they had heard the first shot, an old woman carrying a bundle had passed out of the house; but having received no orders, and thinking she was one of the lodgers in the house, they had permitted her to pass on without interference.

Again Darral had to admit himself baffled; it seemed as if the mystery surrounding the murdered girl was destined never to be revealed. It was of no use regretting what could not be helped, however; and leaving the house, the officers escorted the prisoners to the station. Here they were closely examined, but their answers gave but a slight clue to work upon.

They had been hired by a man they did not know, they said, to follow the detective to the house and murder him. The man had met them at a thieves' tavern, where they were drinking, and made his proposition. He was to give them a hundred and fifty dollars for the job. Fifty he had paid them on the spot, and the other hundred had been given to the proprietor of the place, to be handed over to them on the follow-

ing night, unless he received orders in the meantime not to do so.

The prisoners were examined separately, and each told the main points of the story the same. Each imagining his was saving himself at the expense of his accomplices; they all were eager to give any additional information, and their accounts as to the place where they had met the stranger tallied exactly.

As soon as they were placed safely in their separate cells, Darral was driven rapidly home; and about half an hour later he had changed his disguise to that of a rough, and made his way to the crib the faded assassin had mentioned.

It was a dive of the worst kind. Swaggering into the bar, he called for some whisky, and as he reached for the decanter to fill his glass, he made an almost imperceptible motion with his hand.

That the bartender saw and understood it, however, was evident. The man was the proprietor of the place, a bull-necked, low-browed ruffian, a single glance at whose countenance was sufficient to cause an instinctive feeling that he should be avoided like some dangerous animal.

It was not the first time that Darral, in his professional capacity, had come in contact with him. The man was one of those two-faced villains, false alike to friend and foe; and while he was in league with criminals of every grade, he did not hesitate to take the bribe of the police.

Paying for his drink and lighting a cigar, the detective swaggered into the small inner apartment, and seating himself in one chair, placed his feet upon the ottoman. He sat thus smoking for a quarter of an hour or more, when a new bartender having arrived, the owner of the place joined him.

As he did so, Darral removed his feet from the second chair and motioned the other to be seated; his bullying air vanished in an instant.

"You had a hundred dollars placed in your hands as recently last night?" he said, more in the manner of one making a statement than asking a question.

The other hesitated a moment, but at last replied in the affirmative.

"You know the object it was to be paid for, and therefore you are liable to arrest as an accomplice. But I did not come here to threaten. I want your assistance, and I am willing to pay for it. Who was the man that put up the money?"

Instead of answering the question, the other replied to the first statement:

"It was only a bet between the four of them, and I was to hold the stakes," he said, apologetically. "What the bet was about I do not know, but if I had thought it was anything unethical—"

"Yes; I know that," Darral interrupted. "That is understood. What I want to know is the name of the man who put up the money."

"Hope I may die if I can tell you. As far as that is concerned, I am as much in the dark as you are. He was a check-completed man, but it was plain to be seen he was made up for the occasion. When he first came in I spotted him for a detective."

"Have you no suspicion as to who he was?"

"None."

"You would know him again if you saw him?"

"If I heard him speak, I would. There is only one man in this town can fool me on his voice, and that is yourself."

The detective was silent for a few moments, and then he said:

"He is to see you again or send you word before you pay out the money?"

"Yes. That was the condition."

"Then if either he or any messenger comes, I want you to keep him here until I arrive, if it is a week from now. I have no doubt you can manage to persuade him to stay."

The ruffian burst into a hoarse laugh.

"I understand you," he said. "If he comes, you can depend upon him not going out again until you have interviewed him."

"That is what I want," Darral said, rising from his seat. Then he added, menacingly: "Your part in the affair will be safe with me, and it is better to run a little risk than spend the rest of your life in Sing Sing."

An expression almost of terror came upon the ruffian's face as he heard the concluding words, and he removed his pretensions of fidelity. Without answering them, the detective, resuming his swaggering manner, passed through the saloon into the street, and crossing Broadway, took an up-town car.

As he reviewed the incidents of the past two or three days,

he felt far from satisfied with himself. More than once he had made a false move, and the case, instead of being nearer solution, seemed further from it than at first. Still his resolve to follow it up had not weakened, and he was more determined than ever to do so, or die in the attempt.

By the time he reached home it was past three o'clock, and after snatching a few hours' sleep, the following morning he once more proceeded to the house where Maud Landley lived.

He found its inmates in a state of the utmost confusion and the house itself in charge of the police. It had been broken into the previous night and several hundred dollars' worth of property stolen. So skillfully had the job been done that none of the inmates had been alarmed, and it was only in the morning that it was discovered.

The means by which the burglars had entered was plain to be seen. The fastening had been torn from the outer shutters of the kitchen window, and then a pane of glass cut from the sash so as to allow the catch to be removed, when entrance was easy. Then, by the aid either of skeleton keys or ingeniously constructed pickers, the doors of the apartments had been opened, and every article of any value taken from them. Having accomplished their purpose, the burglars had gone out through the front door, leaving it open behind them.

But this was not all.

An additional and startling fact yet remained to be told.

Maud Landley was missing.

She had taken the last of last night, about ten o'clock, and retired to her room. She had not been feeling well, and when, about an hour afterward, the lady of the house was ready to go to bed, she had first gone to her room to see if she needed anything. The girl was already in bed, but she rose to open the door, and, making her visitor, had told her she needed nothing but sleep, and once more locked the door.

When in the morning the discovery of the burglary had been made, hers was almost the first room that had been entered. Everything was in confusion. Her wardrobe and trunk had been forced open, and the contents lay scattered over the floor. The bed showed that it had been slept in for at least part of the night. Upon the pillows were several drops of dark liquid, and on the floor beside the bed was a sponge saturated with chloroform.

As Darral listened to this story, and saw the proof, a knowledge of the truth came at once into his mind.

She had been abducted.

He was confident the burglary had only been a blind to throw suspicion into another channel, and the girl was once more in the hands of the miscreants who had already murdered her father and sister in their vain endeavor to learn the hiding-place of the missing willows.

As the detective realized this fact, a feeling of almost utter despair came over him.

With the feeling also came a new revelation to him.

He now understood the almost unaccountable interest he had taken in the case, and the sympathy he had felt for Maud Landley from the first moment he had seen her.

He loved her.

It was the first time that the passion in its true sense had been aroused in his heart by any woman, and it was only now, when he had again lost her, that he fully realized its power.

He felt that without her his life would be a blank, and arousing himself from his despair, he vowed that he would either rescue her or ever afterward devote himself to wreaking vengeance upon the miscreants who had been the cause of her misfortune.

Henceforth he had taken an interest in the case, as he had supposed, from a professional point of view; but now he had a greater incentive to urge him on.

Would he ever be able to accomplish her deliverance, and bring retribution upon her enemies?

If it lay in the power of mortal man to do so, he would do it. But time alone could tell.

CHAPTER XII.

A TERRIBLE ALTERNATIVE.

As old Landley passed out of the cell, leaving Parker a prisoner in his place, the latter began to recover consciousness.

The sound of the door as it was closed and the bolt shot into its socket, still further aroused him, and he tried to rise, but the chains held him fast.

A gleam of despair broke from his lips as he realized his position.

It was, indeed, a desperate one.

The secret of this subterranean cell and its prisoner had been a secret known only to himself, and no foot had ever been permitted to approach it but his own.

It had served his purpose before, but now this secrecy seemed destined to be fatal to him.

There was no hope of any one coming to release him—no prospect but a lingering death of thirst and starvation.

Say what one will, there is a sure, though sometimes slow in coming, retribution that waits upon evil deeds; and now he began to experience the feelings of the unhappy man who so long had been his prisoner in this same loathsome dungeon.

The darkness was intense, the atmosphere stifling; his situation terrified him, and with a false remorse, born of his fear, he sought to tempt his Maker with promises of future amendment.

The silence was oppressive; he felt that he would go mad if it continued, and he raised his voice in wild supplication for deliverance.

All hope had left him; he knew that any hope of escape was worse than futile; nothing short of a miracle could save him, and a wild delirium taking possession of him, he uttered the most blasphemous oaths.

Then again his mood would change and he would abjectly crave pardon for his previous crimes, and vow, that if released, he would change his ways and strive to atone for his guilty past.

Thus, alternately praying and cursing, he went on for an hour or more, when he suddenly stopped.

His quick ear had caught the sound of footsteps outside. Had his prayers been answered? In an agony of suspense he waited, hardly daring to hope that his ears had not played him false.

He had not been mistaken, however; the footsteps came nearer and then stopped; the next moment the bolt was shot back, the door swung open on its creaking hinges, and Dalton, with a lantern in his hand, stood upon the threshold.

Stepping into the cell, he threw the rays of the lantern upon the prisoner's face, and an ejaculation of surprise left his lips as he recognized Parker.

He was probably the last person in the world he expected to see.

The explanation of his unexpected appearance was simple.

Dalton was a deep and wily villain. Although Parker's most trusted accomplice, he knew his master had many secrets of which he did not know. He suspected that the abduction of Maud Lindley was merely a pretext to cover some deeper motive than Parker's pretended passion for her. He had an inkling of the truth when he had questioned her as to the numbers, but to what they referred he was not aware. Now he had determined to find out the truth, and after parting with Parker, he had returned to the house upon some trivial pretext. Finding his master was not in any of the rooms, he had eagerly seized the opportunity to explore the lower portion of the house.

Parker, however, in his joy at seeing him, did not think of asking him the reason of his being there, but commanded him to release him at once.

This Dalton proceeded to do, meditating the while upon some plausible excuse for his unexpected appearance should the other question him on the subject.

No sooner had the chains been removed, and Parker stood once more at liberty, than all his good resolutions vanished.

"A thousand curses!" he exclaimed. "I had a prisoner here, and he has given me the slip. You must find him for me. I will give you a thousand dollars if you find him, and double it if it is within twelve hours."

"But how about Darral?" Dalton asked.

"Never mind him for the present. I will set some one else to shadow him. Until this one is found the others are of second importance."

"What sort of looking man is he?" the other asked.

Parker described the escaped prisoner's appearance accurately, and ascending the steps to the first floor, he proceeded upstairs, while Dalton left the house to begin his search.

Hardly had Parker reached the next landing than the door-bell rang three times, and descending the stairs again, he opened the door.

As his eyes fell upon the visitor, he seized him by the arm, and half dragging him inside, closed the door.

"What news?" he asked, eagerly.

The visitor, who was a flashily dressed man of about thirty-five, with a stolid, brutal expression of countenance, answered with provoking slowness:

"All hunky, captain," he said. "The stuff has been taken to the undertaker's, and is to be laid out in the morning."

"And have you all the preparations made?"

"Everything is ready, captain. All we want to know now is when do you want it done?"

"To-night—immediately. I will wait here till you return."

"All right, captain," was the answer. "You haven't forgot the amount you promised if the job was done neatly?"

"I have not forgotten," Parker said, impatiently, "and if you do it well I will double it."

"Enough said," the other replied; and leaving the room as he spoke, descended the stairs and passed out into the street.

Waiting until the door had closed, Parker again ascended the stairs and entered the room he had left to visit the prisoner in the cell in the basement.

Crossing to the desk from which he had taken the book, he opened one of the drawers and took out a revolver. After assuring himself that the chambers were all loaded, he thrust it in his hip-pocket, and began impatiently pacing up and down the floor.

"A curse upon my luck!" he said, angrily. "Will I never be able to find the secret of the hiding-place of these missing millions? Just now, too, when I thought I had dealt the cards so as to hold the game in my hands, to be foiled! But I shall triumph yet. If the dramatic Dalton I had arranged proves a failure through that old devil's escape, I still have the girl, and I will force the numbers from her, or she shall die."

His tone was full of menace as he uttered the concluding words, and then stopping in his walk, he sat down, and lighting a cigar, smoked in gloomy silence.

For nearly two hours he sat thus, lighting a fresh cigar as soon as the former one was finished, when again the bell sounded thrice.

Starting to his feet, he left the room, and descending the stairs, opened the door.

The same flashily dressed man stood there. Before Parker could speak, he said:

"The job is done, captain, and my pals are coming with the bundle."

A covered carriage stood a short distance away, and as he spoke, two men lifted some object wrapped in a dark blanket, that looked vaguely like a human figure, from the vehicle, and between them carried it toward the house.

As they entered, Parker carefully closed the door, and leading the way upstairs, unlocked the door of an unoccupied room and told them to take their burden inside. Obeying his command, they laid it upon the floor, and then passing out, Parker relocked the door.

Leading the way to the room in which he had been sitting when they had rung the bell, he drew a roll of bills from his pocket and gave them to the flashily dressed man.

"That is double the amount I promised you," he said. "Now lose no time in getting away from here."

The men complied at once, and following them to the door, he was about to return upstairs, when again the bell rang. Opening the door, he saw the man whom Darral had made a prisoner at the sailor's boarding-house, a few hours before, standing on the steps.

"Let me in at once, captain," the man said. "I have something important to tell you."

Opening the door wider, Parker admitted him. When they had once more reached the room above, the man hurriedly narrated the particulars of his own capture and escape and the rescue by Darral of Maud Lindley from the burning house.

As he finished, a fierce oath broke from Parker's lips.

"Poof! again!" he cried. "But, by Heaven, it shall not be! I will learn the secret, or die trying!"

Then suddenly checking himself and turning to the man, he said:

"You may be recognized, and you had better stay here till I return. I may have work for you, and I want you to be on hand."

The man willingly assented, and with a parting nod not to leave the room until his return, Parker left the house and walked rapidly toward the lower quarter of the city.

A dark look was on his swarthy face as he walked along; a desperate resolve was forming itself in his mind.

By this time the day was beginning to break, but the dusk had fallen before he once more returned to the deserted house.

The man was still there; Parker had brought some food and a small flask of spirits, and giving them to him, he entered

the room in which the men had placed the seeming body in the morning.

It was nearly a quarter of an hour before he came out again, and when he did so he carried a bundle in his hand. Again commanding the man to remain until his return, he once more left the house, and walking a short distance to where a carriage was waiting, he was driven rapidly down-town.

When the junction of the Bowery and Chatham Square was reached, he struck into one of the many side streets, and walked until he stopped before a hard-looking saloon and entered.

He did not remain here more than half an hour, and then walked in an opposite direction until he reached Broadway, when he got into a stage.

He alighted at the corner of the street next to the one in which Maud Landley lived, and walking along it until an unoccupied house was reached, he ascended the stoop and rang the bell three times.

In a few minutes the door was opened a few inches and a man's face peered cautiously out; after a few whispered words, however, he opened the door wide enough for Parker to enter.

"Are they all here?" the latter asked.

The man answered in the affirmative, and throwing a slender streak of light from the dark-lantern he carried, led the way into the basement.

Opening the kitchen door they saw four men playing cards by the dim light of a lantern. They all rose as the two entered, but Parker motioned them to be seated again.

"Keep on with your game, boys," he said in a low tone; "but do not speak. We have several hours to wait yet."

He threw himself on the floor and lighted a cigar as he spoke, while the others resumed their places. The cards were dealt again and again, and flasks of liquor were passed from one to the other. Still no word was spoken, except in subdued whispers, and thus the hours passed away until midnight passed.

More than another hour had passed, and the men were evidently beginning to grow weary, when Parker glanced at his watch.

"It is time now, boys," he said.

In an instant all had sprung to their feet, and each seized one or more of the tools that until now had been unseen in the semi-darkness.

A single glance at their construction, and it was evident that burglary was intended. Completely concealing the light, they opened the back door and passed into the yard.

Here, pausing before the wall separating it from the next yard, one of the men opened a ladder made of slender rods of steel, opening on hinges, and which, when folded, occupied a space of not more than two feet square, but now, when extended, reached to the top of the wall. Each in turn ascending this until the top was reached, the ladder was raised and placed on the opposite side, when all descended and stood in the next yard.

It was the yard of the house in which Maud Landley lived. All the household had retired, and no lights shone from any of the windows. The men were evidently scientific burglars, and in a few moments the shutters of one of the kitchen windows were opened, one of the panes cut out with a diamond, and the fastening was easily reached and the sash raised. Then, all removing their boots and placing them in their pockets, they entered through the opening.

By the dim light of the dark-lantern they made their way along the halls and up the stairs in silence until Maud's room was reached. Evidently, Parker knew its location, and at a signal from him they paused and one of the men inserted a curiously shaped pair of pincers into the key-hole. The door was locked and the key on the inside, but in a few moments he had seized the wards with the pincers, and turning it around, unlocked the door.

Cautiously opening it, Parker and two of the men entered the room, while the rest kept guard in the hall. Throwing the full rays of the lantern upon her, it could be seen the girl was fast asleep. Then drawing a sponge from his pocket, Parker poured the contents of a small vial upon it and held it under her nostrils.

For a second or two she struggled feebly, and then a stillness as of death came over her. Throwing the sponge upon the floor, Parker raised her in his arms, and wrapping a long cloak lying upon a chair around her, started for the door, followed by his companions.

Walking along the hall until the front door was reached, one of the men opened it. Then Parker, placing the uncon-

scious girl upon her feet, took one of her arms, while one of the men took the other, and between them they carried her in this way to the corner of the street, where a carriage was waiting. Placing her in it, they also entered, and were driven rapidly across town.

Meanwhile, the other three men remained to go through the house. As Darrel had surmised, the burglary was a blind to divert suspicion from the abduction.

After the lapse of about half an hour, the carriage drew up in front of the supposed deserted house. By this time Maud had begun to recover consciousness, but had not yet completely collected her scattered faculties, and in a dazed sort of a way she followed Parker's guidance into the house and up the staircase.

As they entered the room Dalton confronted them.

"I have earned the two thousand, captain," he said.

As he spoke he pointed toward the further end of the room. Seated upon a chair, with his head bowed upon his breast, was old Landley. Dalton had gained information that had set him on the old man's track, and he had proceeded direct to Staten Island. The loss of the money had seemingly turned to the old man's brain, and in his imbecile condition, Dalton had but little difficulty in inducing him to return with him to the city.

By this time Maud had somewhat recovered her senses, and though still bewildered, notwithstanding the change in his appearance, she recognized her father. With a joyful cry she sprung toward him.

"Papa!" she exclaimed.

The old man raised his head and gazed at her with no look of recognition in his hollow eyes.

"Gone! gone! gone!" he said in a low voice. "My millions lost—lost!"

Notwithstanding his agony, the girl would have thrown herself upon his breast, but Parker interposed and placed one hand upon the old man's shoulder, while with the other he drew a revolver and pressed the muzzle of it against his forehead.

"Now, Miss Landley," he said, "you can take your choice. Tell me the numbers I wish to know, and your father and you are free. Refuse, and I will send a bullet through his brain."

For a moment the girl hesitated.

She felt she could not break the trust reposed in her by her father.

Yet the alternative was terrible.

CHAPTER XIII.

RETRAYED.

DARREL was a man of iron will, and his first feeling of despair, upon learning of Maud's disappearance, was but momentary. By a great effort he controlled his feelings, and concentrated his thoughts upon the best course to take.

After a few moments' meditation, he left the house, and, having a carriage, was driven to the hospital where he had left the old woman whom he had rescued from the flames at the risk of his own life two nights before.

He found her quite recovered from the effects of her fright, and able to talk rationally. She was diffuse in her expressions of gratitude.

"If it had not been for you," she said, "I would have been dead by this time. How can I ever thank you? If I had been a young and pretty girl, it would have been different, but I am a poor old woman that has neither child nor child belonging to me, and my own poor little girl she died, she did, and left me all alone. Deary me, deary me, it is hard to be old and have no one to care for you!"

Darrel was no fool. In his experience he had often met with instances both of the selfishness of old age and the selfishness of youth. He had found that, as a general thing, both extremes meet, and in the old woman's speech he saw very much of the former, and but little of the latter.

"Your own little girl?" he said. "Then you had a daughter?"

A touch of tenderness was in the old woman's voice as she answered:

"Yes," she said, "my little Maggie. She was the only comfort I had for years, and I tried to make a lady of her, but I had no money to keep it up, and she went to the bad like all the rest—like all the rest."

"But she is dead now?"

"Yes," the old woman said, with a sorrowful shake of her head. "She was only eighteen, but the man who ruined

ber deserted her, and she went from bad to worse until she drowned herself."

"But the man's name?" Darral asked: "do you know it?"

"Yes. It was Captain Parker."

"Captain Parker?" the detective repeated. "And yet you serve him?"

"Yes," the old woman said, mournfully: "what can a poor body like me do? One has to live somehow. Deary me, it is a sad thing to be poor and old."

"But do you never think of revenge for your daughter's fate?" the detective said, earnestly.

For a moment a fierce gleam came into the woman's bleared eyes.

"I need to think of it by day and dream of it by night—once," she answered. "But that was long ago. I was poor and he was rich. What could I do?"

"True, you could do nothing. But now, if you had a chance to be revenged, without danger to yourself, would you do it?"

"Yes," the woman answered, without a moment's hesitation. "I would be willing to die if I could make him suffer as I have done."

The eagerness with which she spoke convinced the detective he had struck the keynote to her feelings. All the softer ones had been buried years ago, probably the last ingering ones lay in the grave with her last daughter. Her capability for gratitude was dead, but that of revenge still remained.

"Then I will tell you how you can be revenged upon him," he said, "how you can feel the sweetness of your vengeance as long as you live. You say you know his haunts. Take me to one of them where I can find him, and he shall be sentenced to prison for life."

The woman shrunk back with a look of fear.

"He would kill me," she said.

"Not a hair of your head shall be harmed," Darral answered. "More than that, I promise you you shall want for nothing as long as I live."

She made no answer, and after a moment's pause, Darral asked:

"You know of some place where you can always find him?"

"Yes."

In silence the detective drew a roll of bills from his pocket and spread them out one by one before her. Then he said:

"This money is yours if you take me to him."

The old woman looked at the money for a moment or two before replying. Evidently her cupidity and her fear were struggling for the mastery. At last her avarice triumphed.

"I will do it," she said. "He is the head of a gang of counterfeiters, and he is always on hand at twelve o'clock. I will take you there, but I must be sure of my money."

Darral selected about half of the money and placed it in her hand.

"I will give you this now," he said, "and the rest as soon as I have Parker a prisoner."

The old woman clutched the money eagerly and stowed it away in the bosom of her dress. Then, after a short explanation to the physician, the detective led her to the waiting carriage. Entering it, they were driven to the police station.

Leaving her there until midnight should arrive, Darral once more changed his disguise to that of a bowery sport, and a little before the hour appointed returned, bringing with him a long cloak and a hat with a heavy veil.

Making the old woman put these on so as to completely conceal her identity, they left the station and were driven across town.

At the corner of Grand Street and the Bowery they alighted, and proceeded on foot toward the East River.

Pausing at last before a basement saloon, the old woman signified this was the place, and descending the steps, they entered the saloon. The old woman's face and figure being concealed by the veil and cloak, the bartender naturally took her for a woman of the streets, and as they entered a small room in the rear of the bar, he followed and asked what they were going to have.

The order for the drinks was given, and after a few moments they were brought and paid for, when the man went out, closing the door behind him.

As the glasses were placed upon the table, the detective fancied he had seen an almost imperceptible signal of the woman's hand. Although when they had entered the saloon was quite deserted, he knew perfectly well that if the bartender suspected his real character, in a few moments it would be swarming with desperate ruffians, and his life would not be

worth a moment's purchase. No sooner, therefore, had the door closed than, seizing the woman's wrist, he drew a revolver from his pocket and leveled it at her brow.

"Now for the business that brought us here," he said.

"Show me the panel in the wall that you say leads to the cellar where the corners are at work. I mean to act square with you, but if you attempt any treachery, I will shoot you on the instant!"

The woman shrunk back in terror, but before she could reply, the gas was suddenly extinguished, leaving them in total darkness.

At the same moment there was a noise as of a panel sliding aside, and realizing that he had been betrayed, the detective released his grasp of the old woman, and pointing his revolver in the direction from which the noise proceeded, fired.

The momentary flash was sufficient to show him that a narrow panel had opened in the wall, and several men were crowding through the aperture into the room.

As he saw this, he again raised the revolver, but before he could press the trigger the outer door flew open.

The next moment he felt a dull, numb pain shoot through his temples, and he fell to the ground beneath a blow struck him from behind with a loaded club.

Then came a blank—after unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XIV.

A REVELLING RECONSTRUCTION.

WHEN Darral recovered consciousness, after receiving the treacherous blow in the rear apartment of the saloon, he found himself in total darkness. The atmosphere was close and stifling, like the interior of a vault.

Reaching out his hand, he found the floor on which he lay was stone, and struggling to his feet, he groped through the darkness to find the wall. It was soon reached, and continuing to feel his way, he made the circuit of the cell. The walls, like the floor, were built of stone, and it was about ten feet square.

He was still somewhat bewildered by the shock of the blow he had received, and again seating himself on the floor, he thought over his situation.

It was, to say the least, far from an agreeable one.

He had been betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and he only wondered that by this time he had not caused to live. He well knew that neither fear nor pity had caused them to spare his life, and they must have had some other motive in doing so. What it was he could not surmise, except it might be that they intended to keep him a prisoner and torture and starve him into revealing some secrets that might be of value to them.

This, however, he was firmly determined not to do. He would die first. But at the same time he was not one of the dying sort, and he began to meditate upon some scheme of escape.

For some time he could think of none. The darkness made it impossible for him to see even his hand when held before him. If he only had a light, he would be able to tell whether or not any design of making his escape was utterly futile, but the gang into whose hands he had fallen had searched him during his period of unconsciousness and taken every article of any value, as well as his matches and pocket-lantern.

The damp and chill-like atmosphere seemed to penetrate him through, and he shivered with cold.

Searching his pockets for the dozen time, in the hope of finding a match, he at last discovered one that had worked its way between the lining of his vest.

The discovery sent a fresh thrill of hope through his breast. To tear open the lining was the work of a moment, and removing his coat and vest, he tore the lining into shreds and placed them in a heap upon the stone floor. Then, with a feeling of dread lest it should not light, he struck the match.

It burned readily, however, and placing it to the heap of shreds, they at once sprang into a blaze, and by their light he was able to take a rapid survey of the cell.

As he had supposed, it was about ten feet square, the walls, floor, and roof of cemented stone. The door, which he had already tried, was of massive construction and securely bolted on the outside; but there was another outlet to the cell which he had before unsuspected.

This was an iron shutter about three feet square. It was about five feet from the floor, and evidently covered a window. It, like the door, appeared to be fastened on the outside, as

there was no lock visible. Crossing to it, Darral extended his hands and pressed against it with all his strength.

To his surprise, it seemed to yield. The fastening on the outside was evidently old and worn out, and animated by a new hope of escape, he renewed his efforts to force it open.

For several minutes he was unsuccessful, but at last the fastening gave way, and on creaking hinges the shutter flew open, disclosing an opening in the wall.

So absorbed had he been in his task that he had neglected to attend to the fire, and now, with a last expiring flicker, it went out, leaving him again in darkness.

It was an unlucky oversight, for beyond, on the other side of the opening, it was as dark as within the cell. There was no help for it now, however, and raising himself by his hands to the opening, he crawled through and dropped on the other side.

His feet struck solid ground and he groped his way cautiously for several yards, when he heard the sound of running water ahead of him. Pausing instantly, he realized where he was, as also the cause of the iron shutter opening so easily.

It opened on a passage-way leading to one of the main sewers of the city, and as the shutter was only intended to resist the force of a weight of water from the outside, the fastenings had been intended for little more than to keep it closed.

The passage was a foot or two higher than the usual level of the water in the sewer, and had evidently been constructed for some illegal purpose.

As Darral realized this, he stood for a few moments longer, considering upon his best course of action, when suddenly he heard the sound of bolts being shot back and a door opened behind him.

He was now in a new peril.

His enemies had come to his cell to visit him.

His position was worse than before. He knew his enemies would not hesitate a moment to shoot him down where he stood, and, unarmed as he was, there was no choice but either to remain and submit tamely to his fate or plunge into the filthy waters of the sewer and at least attempt to escape.

Even while this thought flashed through his mind a light brothered through the opening in the wall, and the next moment a bullet whistled past his head. To have remained any longer would have been costing his death, and dashing a few yards further forward, he plunged up to his waist in the filthy current.

It was fortunate for him that the water was no deeper; another lucky chance also was that before his pursuers had crawled through the opening and reached the edge of the sewer that a slight turn had him from their view.

He could hear their fierce curses as they stood irresolute for a moment or two, and then they plunged in after him.

A few moments more, and, treading, he could see the light of their lanterns flashing behind him, while the sound of a couple of shots broke the silence.

The head start Darral had got, however, and their hesitation before following him, momentary though it had been, had placed him beyond the range of their weapons, while their lights, not being able to penetrate so far through the inky darkness, caused their shots to be fired at random.

Determining to try the effect of a little strategy, no sooner had the double reports rang out than he uttered a loud shriek, as though he were in mortal agony.

Pursuing a moment to watch its effect, he saw the lights suddenly become stationary; evidently his ruse had been successful, and although he was too far distant to hear the words, he knew his pursuers were consulting together whether or not they should follow him. At last, apparently they decided not, and after firing two more shots, they turned, and in a few minutes were lost to view.

Drawing a sigh of relief, Darral pressed on again in the hope of finding either some intermediate opening or being able to reach the main one of the sewer which, as he was traveling in the direction the water was running, he knew must be ahead of him.

Soon, however, the water began to grow deeper, until it nearly reached his breast, and then a new horror confronted him. The rats, scared away for a few minutes by the sound of the shots, again swarmed around and upon him.

To continue on was impossible, while the rapidity with which the water ran made it equally so to attempt to return. It was almost more than he could accomplish to prevent the rats from devouring him alive.

It was a terrible situation there in darkness and unarmed,

well knowing that when his strength was exhausted he must fall a prey to the insatiable creatures.

Already his limbs were growing numb, and he felt his strength fading; he knew that he could not endure it many moments longer, when, as he turned, he saw a light coming rapidly along with the current toward him.

He knew that they were his enemies, and that he could expect no mercy at their hands, yet he hailed their approach with thankfulness; any doom was better than the one that confronted him.

A few moments more, and the light approached near enough for him to make out the figures of two men upon a sort of raft; then, raising his voice in one loud cry, he lost all consciousness.

When he again came to himself, he was stretched out upon the raft, with two villainous-looking men, one of whom guided the raft with a paddle; he lay in a sort of dazed state for a moment or two before opening his eyes.

From their conversation he could gather that they had gone through his pockets and were disappointed at not having found anything. "Thinking it better still to feign unconsciousness, he kept his eyes closed, and listened.

"Knock him on the head," the man who was guiding the raft said. "Dead men are safer than live ones every time, and the sinners ain't going to kick about it."

"It ain't that," the other replied. "The question is, which lay is there most money in? If we take him to the hospital for a stiff we won't clear over twenty dollars, and if he is, as I take him to be, some swell bloke what was on a racket and got left, and his mamma is crying her eyes out about him, we may make a big stake, and take in our thousands."

The other seemed struck with this view of the case, and meditatively bit a huge chew off of a plug of navy tobacco before replying:

"Well, fall," he said, at length, "there may be something in what you say. We'll try it on anyhow, and if it don't work he's good for a stiff any time."

"That's sensible," his companion answered. "Now watch me go to work to revive the sucker. You'll think he was my brother. We'll play we're poor but honest fishermen what's gone into bankruptcy and has to catch rats for a livin'."

As he spoke, he took a flask of whisky from his pocket, and poured some of it down Darral's throat. "The detective could not resist a shudder as he was forced to swallow the villainous liquid, and to avoid a repetition of the dose, he very soon began to revive.

"Where am I?" he asked, in a dazed sort of way.

"You are with friends," the man who held the whisky flask answered. "We are poor men, but we are honest ones, and we could not see you die like a dog without trying to save you."

The conversation he had overheard gave Darral the cue to talk.

"God bless you," he said, freely. "As soon as my father hears of what you have done he will reward you, and you shall have my eternal gratitude."

"We don't want no money for doing our duty," the man answered. "We ain't that sort, we ain't, and when we have took you back to your friends what misses you we will be happy knowing we's done what's right. Won't we, Jim?"

The other assented eagerly, but Darral did not answer; apparently he had relapsed into unconsciousness, and congratulating each other on the fortunate had they had made, the two men guided the raft along for about five minutes more, when they stopped, and, one of them holding the raft stationary, the other placed his face close to the wall and gave three shrill, peculiar whistles.

In a few moments what had seemed part of the solid wall swung open on noiseless hinges, and the two men, raising the detective's apparently unconscious form, stepped through the opening. Then, laying him upon the ground, with the assistance of the man who had opened the door, they also dragged through the raft, and the door was again closed.

Once more raising Darral between them, they passed along a narrow passage-way, and then entering a building, passed through several doors until at last an apartment was reached where over a dozen men and women were seated.

All were drinking and playing cards, but as the new-comers entered they rose from their seats and crowded around them.

"So you have fished up another stiff, eh, Jim?" one of the men asked.

"A stiff!" the man addressed answered, scornfully. "I guess it's something better than that. It's a swell cove what's

gone astray, and whose papa and mamma are ready to pony up steep for having him brought back."

While he had been speaking, he and his companions had laid Darral upon the floor, and all were crowding closer around to gain a view of his features, when one of the men uttered an exclamation of surprise:

"That isn't no sucker in trouble," he said. "That is a fly cop—Darral the Detective!"

For a moment after this announcement was made there was silence; then outcries and fierce cries of rage rang through the room.

Darral, upon learning he had been recognized, had instantly sprung to his feet, but before he could grasp anything to defend himself, half a dozen hands had seized him so that the slightest movement was impossible.

More than one knife was drawn and upraised threateningly; another moment and the detective's earthly career would have been at an end, when suddenly the door was thrown open, and a young girl entered.

In each hand she held a revolver, and she leveled them toward the men who were advancing toward Darral, knives in hand.

"Down hands!" she cried, "or I fire!"

Involuntarily the ruffians obeyed the command, so taken by surprise were they at this unexpected interruption.

But, great as their surprise might be, it was nothing to that which filled the detective's breast.

Could he believe his eyes? Had the peril he had undergone turned his brain?

The girl before him was either Maud Lindley or her murdered sister come to life.

CHAPTER XV.

FOURTEEN PLOTTING.

For a moment longer Maud Lindley hesitated between the alternatives presented to her.

She would have died herself before she would have betrayed the confidence reposed in her, but when her father's life was at stake, she did not dare hesitate any longer.

"Only spare his life and allow us to go at liberty," she pleaded, "and I will tell you the numbers."

A look of triumph lighted up Parker's face, and he lowered his weapons.

"You have my promise to that effect, Miss Lindley," he said. "You can not regret more than I do the harsh measures I have been obliged to take, but the numbers I must have."

With a feeling of utter desperation, Maud answered:

"They are 15, 125."

Up to this time the old man had shown no sign of recognition of what was going on around him; even when the revolver had been placed to his head he had not even started, but now he looked up with a sudden light of intelligence in his eyes.

"Yes," he said, "those were the numbers. I thought to make it more serious, and I did not take them from the same book as the others. But it does not matter now."

"What book did you take them from?" Parker asked, quickly.

The momentary light of intelligence had faded from the old man's eyes, and he answered, as if mechanically:

"From a guide-book of New York City. The number was Station Eleven. But it is lost now—lost—lost—lost!"

He had sunk into his old apathetic attitude again as he uttered the concluding words, and Parker stood in thought a few moments before speaking.

Then, addressing Maud, he said:

"If this information proves correct, Miss Lindley, your father and yourself shall at once be set at liberty. I will have to detain you here, however, until it is proved whether it is or not."

Having spoken thus, he motioned to Dalton, and together they left the room.

Locking the door and placing the key in his pocket, Parker led the way to an adjoining apartment, and motioning his companion to be seated, he said:

"Dalton, the time is past for half confidences between you and me. You already have gathered the main points of this affair. If the girl's information is correct, you shall have enough of the money to keep you the rest of your life. If it does not, I want your assistance to find it, and we will share and share alike."

The listener was too much surprised by this unexpected proposition to answer, and Parker went on:

"I have other business that must be attended to at once, and I may not return before to-morrow night. Before I do so, I shall have proved the truth or falsity of the old man and his daughter's statements. While I am gone, I will leave them in your charge. Treat them well, but if you suffer them to escape, you shall pay dearly for it."

Dalton readily promised, and Parker, after entering the room in which Maud and her father were, and repeating his assurances that as soon as their information was found correct they should be set at liberty, left the house.

As he did so, an evil look came upon Dalton's face.

"At last," he muttered, "the chance I have been waiting for has come and the game is in my own hands. The risk is terrible, but I will take it."

A desperate scheme had formed itself in Dalton's mind. His ruling passion was avarice, and the thought of gaining possession of the missing millions had excited his cupidity until he resolved to try and do so. He was a thorough villain, and would pause at nothing to gain his ends. The only thing in heaven or earth he really feared was Parker's anger, but the thought of the immense amount of money he would gain, if successful, mastered even this feeling, and he determined to have it.

He had his plan all laid out in his mind, and when Parker left the house, instead of following his instructions and keeping watch over the prisoners, after the lapse of about half an hour he also passed into the street.

More than two more hours passed, and then a carriage drew up at the corner of the street, and Dalton, accompanied by two men, alighted, and walking toward the house, entered it.

bidding the men to wait in the hall, he unlocked the door of the room where Maud and her father sat. The girl was on her knees beside him, striving, but in vain, to arouse him from his apathy. With an air almost of severity, Dalton approached the pair.

"Miss Lindley," he said, "I have come in sorrow and shame to beg your pardon for the part I have had in your persecution. I know I am to be blamed, but what I did was not of my own free will. That man Parker is a fiend, and he had me in his power. I had to do what he told me, or my life would not have been safe a moment. Now, he has gone away for a day or two, and I am come to make all the atonement in my power, and offer you the means of escape."

The girl sprung to her feet, her whole form trembling with eagerness.

"To escape?" she cried.

"Yes," Dalton said, hastily following up the impression he had made. "A carriage is waiting for you. Loss no time, but leave this house at once, and before Parker returns you will be in safety, out of his power."

This time, however, the girl did not respond so eagerly. She evidently was afraid of a new snare. Still, Dalton's words were so plausible that, urged on by a feeling of desperation that any change could hardly be worse than their present situation, she at last consented. The old man needed no persuasion, but followed mechanically, and the three passed out of the room and into the street.

The two men waiting in the hall had discreetly drawn into the shadow as they passed, but no sooner had they descended the stairs than they followed.

When the carriage was reached, Dalton assisted Maud and her father in and then got in himself. No sooner had he done so than the other door opened and another man entered.

At this unexpected addition to their number a sudden convulsion of foul play took possession of Maud, and she was about to cry out, when Dalton, leaning forward, placed his hand over her mouth. The next moment a sponge saturated with chloroform was pressed beneath her nostrils and held there, in spite of her struggles, until she was quite unconscious.

At the same moment, the other man had seized old Lindley by the throat, preventing him from moving or giving any alarm, and then the sponge was also placed beneath his nostrils until he also was insensible.

For nearly an hour the carriage drove on, until the suburbs were reached, and it drew up before a large barrack-like building standing in grounds of its own. Alighting, the man who had ridden on the seat beside the driver opened the gate, and the vehicle was driven up to the front door.

Getting out, Dalton rang the bell, and in a few moments the door was opened by a man with a most repulsive cast of

countenance. He gave a slight nod of recognition as he saw Dalton.

"Is the doctor home?" the latter asked.

"Yes," the man answered; "he is in the consulting-room."

"Any visitors?"

"No."

"Then tell him I am here. I will go with you."

The man turned and began to ascend the stairs, Dalton following him, until the first landing was reached. The staircase was unoccupied, and the aspect of the halls and landings was gloomy and prison-like. The house, in truth, was neither more nor less than a private lunatic asylum.

His proprietor was one of the most unscrupulous scoundrels in the metropolis, and had more than once been before the courts. Yet he was a smart practitioner, and had he so chosen, might have made an honorable name in his profession.

As it was, his skill and knowledge, especially in chemistry, made him only the more dangerous.

He was a man of between forty and fifty, with a face that once must have been rather handsome though now distorted and blotched with leprosy. His leprosy was noticeable for its intellectual development, but sadly deficient in evidence of the moral qualities. As a physiognomist he was a man to be at once avoided like a dangerous animal.

As the servant announced the visitor, he rose from his seat to receive him. Greeting him with excessive cordiality, he waited until the man had left the room to learn his business.

"I have brought you two patients," Dalton said, when the door was closed.

The doctor rubbed his hands together in a way to denote satisfaction.

"And you wish them treated after the approved method of the institution?" he said.

"Not at all," Dalton answered. "One is an old man only partially deranged. I want you to cure him."

The doctor looked the surprise he did not speak, and Dalton continued:

"The other is a girl. She is not at all affected mentally. She only has too powerful a will sometimes. What I want in her case is a few drops of that drug of yours that will make her subservient to me."

An evil smile came upon the doctor's face as he listened.

"I understand," he said; "but such services cost heavily."

Dalton drew the roll of bills Parker had given him from his pocket.

"Name your own price," he said.

"Five hundred and the regular price for the patients' board and attendance."

Without a word, Dalton counted the bills out upon the table; the other villain clutched them eagerly.

"The bargain is made," he said. "I will have preparations made to receive the patients at once. When do you want to have the girl under your control?"

"As soon as possible. How soon can you manage it?"

"Will to-night answer?"

"Yes."

"Then say at eight to-night."

Dalton assented, and after a short delay, the still inanimate forms of Maud and her father were carried into the house. Then, entering the carriage with his two companions, Dalton was driven back to the city.

The game the villain was playing was a deep one. He was determined to gain possession of the missing millions if it lay in his power to do so, but he had seen how Parker had tried force and failed, and he was going to pursue a different course. It was his intention to have old family cured of his partial insanity, if it were possible, and trust to his gratitude to worm himself into his confidences and learn the secret of the spot where the money was hidden. He did not for a moment believe that either the old man or Maud had told the truth about the numbers and their meaning, but set it down as a mere ruse to gain time.

His plan in regard to the girl was a more nefarious one. He had bargained with the villainous keeper of the mad-house to administer to her a subtle drug which should, for the time being, rob her of her senses and render her subservient to his will. While in this state, he intended to marry her, and then, should her father ever recover his recollection of where the money was hidden, his chances of eventually gaining possession of it would be doubly sure.

When he reached the city, he made arrangements with a clergyman to perform the ceremony at nine that night, and

when, about seven o'clock, he returned to the mad-house, the doctor received him smilingly.

"She has taken it and is as docile as you could wish," he said.

As together they entered the room in which she sat, a single glance at the girl was sufficient to prove the truth of the doctor's words. She sat in a spiritless attitude and gazed with lack-luster eyes at the doctor and his companion as they entered.

Following the doctor's instructions, Dalton advanced and took her hand.

"Maud," he said, "are you not ready to be married?"

She looked at him wonderingly for a moment or two in silence; he repeated the question.

"Yes," she said, at length, "I am ready to be married."

"Come, then," he said, "put on these clothes and let us go."

"Let us go," she repeated, and submitting passively until he had arranged the cloak and other outer articles of feminine attire he had brought with him upon her, she accompanied him to the carriage.

"Whatever you wish her to say, speak it first yourself," the doctor whispered, "but do not keep it up too long. I did not give her a heavy dose, and the effect will begin to wear off in a few hours."

A few minutes later, and the carriage was being driven rapidly into the city.

Once they stopped to take up a man and woman, who were to stand up with the principals at the ceremony, and then they drove on again until the minister's residence was reached.

He was awaiting them, and greeted them cordially as they entered. Though a good man, he was not unembarrassed with much penetration of character, and he set down the hesitation of the bride as natural maiden modesty.

The preliminaries gone through, the clergyman asked of Dalton the usual question:

"Will thou take this woman to be thy wedded wife?"

"I will."

Then, turning to Maud, he asked the same question in the different words:

"Will thou take this man to be thy wedded husband?"

"I will," prompted Dalton in an under-tone, and in a strange, far-away voice Maud repeated:

"I will."

CHAPTER XVI.

AN INTENDED MURDER.

THE sudden appearance of the girl, and the sight of the leveled revolvers, had for the moment the effect of checking the ruffians in their murderous intention.

Utterly bewildered, Barral gazed upon her, hardly knowing whether or not it was a freak of his imagination.

Again the girl spoke.

"The first man who harms a hair of his head, dies!" she said.

For another moment or two there was silence; both the weapons were cocked, and her fingers rested lightly on the triggers; evidently none of the ruffians loved vengeance upon the detective well enough to risk his own life in taking it.

Even while the girl had been speaking, however, two men had crossed the threshold of the door, and now, springing suddenly forward, they seized the girl from behind, and wrested the weapons from her grasp.

Barral had seen the new-comers, and was about to warn the girl of her unseen danger, but before he could utter a word, a hand had been clapped over his mouth, rendering him speechless.

For a moment or two the girl glared around with a look of baffled rage; then, repressing her fury with visible effort, she broke into a laugh.

"What are you trying to get through you, anyhow?" she said, addressing her captors. "I guess I'm not so old and feeble yet but that I can get around without two men to hold me up."

The two men looked at each other in a sheepish sort of way.

"You see, Mag," one of them said, "we thought you'd gone back on us, when you took up for a sneaking skunk of a cop like that."

Again the girl laughed, and turned to the man who held her other arm.

"And what did you think?" she asked.

"I thought pretty much what Hank thought," he answered, smiling.

"And do you know what I think?"

"No."

"Well, I will tell you; but you must first let go your hold of me."

The two men glanced at each other hesitatingly.

"Let go, I tell you," the girl said, with an impatient stamp of her pretty foot.

Involuntarily, the men released their hold; it was evident to be seen both were more or less smitten with her undoubted beauty. Treating a foot or two from where they stood, the girl tossed her pretty head in a saucy manner.

"A pretty pair you are," she said. "Two nice young men for a moonlight excursion. Here is the whole gang acting like fools, and you must go and back them up in it. If you think I'm in with the detective, all right. Yes, I am; and what are you going to do about it? You know the captain has been trying to get his hands on Darral for more than a year past, and as soon as you do get hold of him you want to kill him, and lose two or three hundred all around. That ain't my style, it ain't. I want money. I want it paid right down, two, in advance, for fear of fire, every time."

This somewhat unconnected address she delivered with true feminine relevance, and as she paused, her hearers looked at one another.

"That's so," the man who had first recognized Darral said; "if it ain't, damn me. The captain promised a big stake to any one who would catch him, and now that we have got him, we ought to have the spoils. Give Mag a chance. She's a right square girl, and her head is level every time."

This expression of opinion seemed to be that of the whole crowd, and, although they still held the detective firmly, no one made any further attempt to threaten him.

"I'll tell you what to do," the girl said, "and if you follow my advice you'll find you'll come out on top of the heap. Just take and tie his hands and feet."

In less than two minutes this suggestion was adopted, and Darral lay prostrate upon the floor, his wrists and ankles tied with cord strong enough to have held an ox.

"Now," the girl said, when she saw her orders had been thoroughly carried out, "we will all leave the room, and lock the door. Each of us will take a turn keeping guard at the door, and when the captain comes, we will be clear of the trouble and have the snap in our pockets."

This proposition, like the previous one, was received without objection. The girl seemed to have some mysterious power over the majority of the gang that nothing except the attraction of her beauty could explain. At once they all started for the door, the girl lingering last.

"Are you sure you have got the sucker tied up safe?" she asked. "That cord upon his ankles seems rather loose. No, it's all right."

As she had commenced to speak, she had stooped over the detective's prostrate figure, and with her right hand seized the cord around his ankles. At the same moment, with her left, she thrust the handle of an open case-knife between his teeth.

Then rapidly she whispered:

"Cut the cords and wait."

In the same breath she said aloud, that the cords were all right, and seizing the only remaining light, passed out of the room, leaving it in total darkness.

Waiting until he heard the key turned in the lock and the voices die away in the distance, until only the tramp of the person left to guard the door could be heard, Darral raised himself to a sitting position, and with little difficulty severed the rope binding his ankles.

Then, with the knife still gripped between his teeth, he strove to turn and cut the cords upon his wrists.

As his hands were tied behind his back this proved a more difficult task, but at last it was accomplished, and he was at liberty.

In his first exhilaration of feeling at being once more free, he was about to spring to his feet and endeavor to make his escape or perish in the attempt, but remembering himself in time, he recalled the girl's parting words, and concealing the knife in the palm of his hand, he arranged the cords upon his ankles so as to appear as if they had not been cut, and lay, with his hands behind him, in the same position as his captors had left him.

Hardly had he done so than he heard the sound of footsteps along the hall, and then some one talking to the sentinel.

The next moment the key was turned in the lock, and a man carrying a lantern entered the room.

A single glance was sufficient for the detective to recognize Parker.

Lying motionless, Darral waited until the visitor had advanced to within a few feet of him and flashed the rays of the lantern upon his face.

"So, my bold detective," the latter said, "for once you have been outwitted, and you are in my power."

"What of it?" Darral answered. "Every dog has his day. To-day is your day, but to-morrow may be mine."

"Yes," Parker answered, meaningly, "if I am fool enough to allow you to live to see it."

Darral laughed scornfully.

"I suppose you mean that you intend to murder me. If such is your design, go on, assassin."

For a moment Parker paused in an admiration he could not repress.

"You are a brave man," he said.

"And you are a coward," was the answer. "None but a coward would taunt a helpless prisoner as you are doing."

In spite of himself, a hot flush suffused Parker's face, and he drew a revolver from his breast.

"Coward or no coward," he said, "I have the dead wood upon you, and I mean to take advantage of it. Do you know what I am going to do?"

He cocked the revolver as he spoke, and leveled it at Darral's head, but the detective replied in the same nondescript manner:

"Tell me, and probably I will know."

The lurid light of an intended murder was in Parker's eyes as he answered:

"I will tell you. I am going to blow your brains out."

CHAPTER XVII.

A SEEMING SNARE.

As Parker, with his revolver leveled, expressed his murderous intention, Darral, with a sudden bound, sprung to his feet, snapping the already almost severed cords that held him. The next moment, before the astonished onlooker could press the trigger of the weapon, it was wrested from his grasp and his throat seized with a grip of iron.

"Now, you scoundrel," Darral said, fiercely, "you will blow my brains out, will you?"

The other was unable to reply, for the grip upon his throat was choking him. With a sudden, adroitly executed wrestling trick the detective tripped him, and then catching him again before he fell, so as not to arouse the suspicions of his accomplices, who were doubtless within hearing distance, laid him noiselessly upon the floor.

Then, somewhat relaxing his hold of the prostrate villain's throat, he pressed the muzzle of the revolver he had taken from him against his forehead.

"If you attempt to give the alarm," he said in a stern voice, "I will shoot you on the instant. As it is, I will give you five minutes to make your peace with the Almighty before I send you into His presence."

There was something so determined in the way the detective spoke the words, that a golden lock of terror came into Parker's eyes.

"You would not murder me in cold blood?" he managed to gasp in choking accents.

"Why not? It was what you intended to do with me. As you had no mercy, I will have none, and unless you answer the questions I ask you, at the expiration of five minutes I will send you into eternity with all your sins upon your soul."

"What do you want to know?"

"Several things. In the first place, I want to know where you have concealed the girl you abducted?"

For a moment or two Parker was silent, until a closer pressing of the revolver against his forehead warned him he had better answer.

"I do not know," he said, reluctantly. "I acknowledge I attempted to carry her off, but she managed to make her escape."

"That is a lie!" Darral answered, sternly. "Remember, I hold your life in my hands, and if you again attempt to deceive me, you die on the instant!"

His voice and manner were both so menacing that, moved by the desperation of terror, and taking advantage of the fact that in order to allow him to answer his questions, the detect-

ive had relaxed his grip upon his throat, Parker raised his voice in a call for assistance.

It was not half uttered, however, before Darral had again tightened his grip, and removing the weapon from his forehead, seized it by the barrel and brought the butt down between his eyes with a force that would almost have felled an ox.

The cry Parker would have uttered died away in a choking sob, and when the detective again loosened his grasp, he lay stunned and unconscious.

Hastily assuring himself that the insensibility was real and not assumed, and well knowing that if the suppressed cry had been heard his life would not be safe another moment, Darral sprang to his feet and made for the door.

Opening it, and passing into the hall, where a faint light was burning, he began rapidly to descend the staircase.

As he did so, he saw at once that it led to the first floor, and a thought of satisfaction flashed through his mind at his chances of escaping so easily.

Before he had gone down half-way, however, he heard the sound of voices on the landing above him.

From the angry tones in which they were raised in force oaths, he realized that his own escape and Parker's situation had been discovered.

Hardly had this knowledge come to him than he heard the sound of tramping footsteps on the landing, and knew they had started in pursuit.

At the same moment the clang of a gong sounded on the floor above him.

It was evidently a signal of alarm, for even before the sound had ceased, the door of one of the rooms on the lower floor was opened, and three men, with weapons in their hands, rushed into the hall and crowded toward the foot of the staircase.

Darral was now indeed in a trap.

His only hope of escape was cut off, while his enemies crowded in pursuit, and his death or recapture seemed inevitable.

The knowledge, however, instead of causing even a momentary feeling of despair, at once urged him to a desperate dash for liberty.

Instantly the revolver was leveled, and one of the newcomers fell dead with a bullet through his brain.

Even as he fell, the detective made a leap forward and reached the foot of the staircase.

In another moment the hammer of the weapon was again raised, and another of the three fell heavily to the ground.

Then, dashing up the weapon the third had raised at his head, he seized his own revolver by the barrel and struck him a blow behind the ear that dropped him like a stone to the floor.

Though all this had not in reality taken as long to happen as it does to narrate, in fact, not more than a few seconds, by the time the last had fallen the pursuing ruffians had already reached the head of the stairs, more than half a dozen in number.

Henceforward they had hesitated to fire, for fear of hitting their accomplices below, but no sooner had the last of them fallen than a very shower of bullets came whistling around the fugitive.

He had already leaped sideways from the foot of the staircase, however, and they whistled harmlessly past him; the next moment he had reached the door and seized the bolt.

Had there been a moment's delay in unlatching it, he must have inevitably been lost, for the pursuing ruffians had already reached the hall; but it opened easily, and passing through, he closed the door behind him, and before any of them could seize it he stood safely in the street.

No sooner had he done so than he started and ran with all his speed until, by the time the door was opened, he had reached the corner of the block.

Turning the corner, he kept on without slackening his pace for several blocks until, discovering no signs of pursuit, he halted.

Evidently the ruffians had given up the chase, knowing that the sounds of the repeated pistol-shots must have alarmed the whole neighborhood, and preferring their own personal safety to the capture of the detective.

Notwithstanding his danger, Darral had not for a moment lost his presence of mind; he was perfectly aware of the course he had taken after leaving the house, and its exact situation.

Waiting only long enough to recover his breath, he again started on the run for the nearest police station.

Upon reaching it, he made a hurried report of the circumstances, and in less than half an hour, accompanied by twenty policemen, he had again returned to the house.

By this time an eager and excited crowd, that half a dozen officers were vainly trying to keep in order, thronged the street; upon the arrival of the new force, however, they became more quiet, and the detective and the officers entered the house.

But the period between Darral's escape and his return, short as it had been, was sufficient to allow all the ruffians to make their escape.

A thorough search of the house was made, revealing many secret passages, as also the entrance to the sewer, and knowing it was by the latter the escape had been effected, a party was sent to explore it.

Several hours' search of the sewer itself also ended in failure, and more disgraced than he cared to own even to himself, Darral returned home to change his attire, while the house remained in charge of the police.

When he had made his escape from the house, it had been about half an hour before day-break; when the fruitless search was over, it was almost noon; when he again returned to the police station, it was the middle of the afternoon.

As he entered, he noticed a little girl seven or eight years old seated on one of the benches, and looking in a frightened way at the blue-uniformed officers around her.

"This child has a message for you," the sergeant in charge said, addressing him, "which she will not deliver to any one but yourself."

Turning in some surprise to the child, Darral asked:

"Have you a message for me, little girl?"

The child looked at him suspiciously for a moment or two before she answered.

"Are you Mr. Darral?" she said, at length.

"Yes, that is my name," he answered, kindly. "Any of those gentlemen will tell you so."

Evidently satisfied, the girl dived into the pocket of her calico dress and drew out a small note, which she placed in his hands.

It was addressed in feminine handwriting, and tearing it open, he read as follows:

"The girl who saved your life last night desires to speak with you alone. It is on a matter of life and death, and she hopes you will not refuse the request. Name any place and hour you choose, and she will be there. This is asked in good faith. Do not, for the love of Heaven, deny the request."

There was no signature, and as Darral read the missive, a thoughtful look came upon his face, and for several moments he was silent.

What was the explanation of this new mystery?

Was the interview really asked in good faith, or was it a snare to lead him once more into the hands of Parker and his rathian associates?

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DESPERATE GAME.

As Maud Lindley uttered the words that signified her assent to become Dalton's wife, a feeling of triumph filled the villain's breast.

It was destined to be short-lived, however; no sooner had the words passed her lips than she staggered for a moment and then fell, apparently lifeless, to the floor.

For several seconds all stared aghast at each other.

Of them all, Dalton was the only one who could give the true explanation of the occurrence.

The explanation was a simple one.

The effect of the villainous drug, administered to the girl by the doctor of the mad-house had begun to wear off, and her vital power succumbing to the unnatural strain that had been laid upon it, she had fainted.

A smothered oath came from between Dalton's lips as he saw how his villainous scheme had failed in the very moment of seeming triumph.

The clergyman, who had knelt beside the unconscious girl, overheard his expression of baffled rage, and for the first time his suspicions were aroused.

"Is the young lady subject to sudden indispositions like this?" he asked.

In an instant, Dalton realized the effect of his incaution, and he hastened to answer:

"I am grieved to say she is," he said. "She has been subject to them from a child."

The minister still seemed to be far from satisfied; like most slow-witted men, when his suspicions were once aroused, it was all over to ally as it had been to arouse them.

"It is very singular," he said. "In all my clerical experience, I have never seen anything like it. Under the circumstances, I do not think it right she should enter the state of wedlock, and when she recovers from her swoon, I shall consider it my duty to inform her that I refuse to perform the ceremony."

An evil look came upon Dalton's face for a moment, but repressing it immediately, he answered in an apologetic manner: "It was the wish of her parents for years that she should become my wife."

"Then why do they not sanction it by their presence," the clergyman asked, quickly.

"Because it is impossible. They both have been dead for more than a year."

This reply, for the time being, silenced the clergyman. He had a vague suspicion of foul play of some sort, but of what kind or for what purpose, his mind could not grasp. Meanwhile, the woman whom Dalton had brought as one of the witnesses had partially succeeded in restoring Maud to consciousness.

But though the milk-white eyeballs slowly opened, no look of recollection came into the beautiful violet eyes. She gazed around for a few moments in a bewildered way, and then she attempted to rise.

"I am very tired," she said, in a strange, mechanical way. "I want to sleep."

"My poor darling," Dalton said in a tone of well-simulated tenderness; "let me help you to rise, and we will go home at once and rest."

He placed his arm about her waist as she spoke; he did not repel his touch, but suffered him to raise her to her feet.

"We will go home and rest," she repeated.

Still supporting her with his arm, Dalton turned to the clergyman.

"You see that the weakness was but momentary," he said. "Now that she has recovered consciousness, will you not conclude the ceremony, if she so desires it?"

"I have already told you that I will not," the minister answered, sternly. "The young lady is in no fit state at present to enter into so solemn and holy a contract. Even did she so desire it, I should consider it my duty not to do so until she was in the full possession of her faculties, which she evidently is not at present."

Dalton could have gnashed his teeth in balled rage, but restraining himself by a violent effort, he took a ten-dollar bill from his pocket, and placed it on the table.

"You are more harsh with me than I deserve," he said in a piteous tone, as if deeply hurt by the other's manner. "I regret my intended bride's affliction more than any words can express, and if I seemed too eager to have the ceremony proceed, it was only that I could know I had a right to aid her and endeavor to have her restored to health. I see now that I was in error, and I hope that at some future time you will recall your hasty decision and nuptial us as man and wife. In the meanwhile, I trust you will not refuse to accept this as a small token of my appreciation of the trouble I have caused you."

The clergyman seemed quite mollified by this address, yet he took the bill from the table and forced it back into Dalton's hands.

"I may have been too hasty," he said; "but I can not take money from you for a service I have not performed."

"Then I will bid you good-night," Dalton answered; and while the minister stood with a puzzled expression upon his face, he moved toward the door, still supporting Maud with his arm, and followed by the man and woman.

Until they had left the house and reached the street where the carriage was waiting, his manner was one of sorrowful solicitude; but no sooner had he placed the girl in the vehicle, than a blasphemous oath left his lips.

"I will not be foiled so easily," he muttered. "I will have the girl for my wife yet, in spite of that old idiot, and his life into the bargain."

It has already been said that Dalton was a wily villain, and a plot had formed itself in his mind that he proceeded to put into execution at once. Ascending to the seat beside the driver, as the carriage drove away he gave the man some hurried instructions.

By the time they had been given, they had driven a distance of several blocks from the minister's house. Then the driver checked his horses, and, dismounting, gave the reins into Dalton's hands, who once more started the horses, leaving the man standing on the sidewalk.

Meanwhile, the clergyman, as soon as the visitors had departed, had seated himself and sunk into a fit of thought.

His mind was in a state of perplexity as to whether he had acted rightly or not. He was a conscientious man and a thorough Christian, and he thought that he had not done his duty toward him so that he was unconscious of the flight of time, until more than half an hour had passed, when a knock came upon the door.

It was the servant to announce a visitor, who wished to see him at once on a matter of life and death. Giving orders to admit him, in a few moments a man entered.

He was none other than the driver of the carriage that had conveyed Dalton and his helpless victim to the house not an hour before; but utterly ignorant of this fact, the clergyman listened with interest while he told his story.

He had come, he said, to entreat the minister to accompany him to the bedside of his old mother, who was dying. His mother had led a wretched life, but she had shown signs of repentance, and when told she could not live many hours, she had mentioned the minister's name and pleaded so earnestly to see him, that her son could not refuse her dying wish, but had come at once.

Completely taken in by the story, the clergyman only waited long enough to put on his hat and gloves, and then, telling the servant he was going on a sick-call, and it might be some time before he returned, passed out of the house.

A hack was waiting at the corner of the street, and both entering it, they were driven rapidly across town.

After a ride of a little more than a quarter of an hour, the carriage drew up before a squalid-looking house in one of the most poverty-stricken parts of the city. Both alighting, the messenger paid the driver, and then led the way to the house.

The door was unlocked, and, upon entering, the evidences of the most squalid poverty were at once apparent: the hall was filthy and uncarpeted, as were also the stairs, which creaked beneath every footstep. After ascending three flights, the guide stopped before a door, and without knocking, entered the room.

The room was a small one and guiltless of furniture, except a solitary chair and a table, upon which a tallow candle was burning. It was quite unoccupied, and the clergyman looked around in some surprise.

"Where is the sick woman?" he asked.

Almost before the words had left his mouth, the door of what he had supposed to be a closet flew open, and two men rushed into the room.

The next moment his arms were pinioned behind him so that the slightest movement was impossible, while a revolver was leveled at his head.

"The moment you utter a sound you die!" the man who held the weapon said.

The clergyman did not attempt to answer; surprise held him dumb. In his captors he at once recognized Dalton and the man who had accompanied him as witness to the marriage earlier on the same night.

In an instant they had hurried him forward and seated him roughly on the chair; then a paper with pen and ink was placed upon the table before him.

A single glance was sufficient to show the minister what the paper was. It was a certificate, filled in with the names of Maud Lindley and Dalton, that he had that night united them as man and wife.

Dalton's villainous design now was evident; it was to force the minister to sign it, and, when the proof of the ceremony was thus obtained, to murder him.

Something of the truth of this came into the victim's mind as for several seconds he stared aghast at the certificate before him.

He was roused to a sense of the full peril of his position by the cold muzzle of the revolver pressed against his forehead, and the sound of Dalton's voice.

"Sign it," he said, "or you die on the spot!"

CHAPTER XIX.

A DEEDY.

FOR several moments after receiving the letter from the girl in the police station, Darral remained silent, deep in thought.

Suddenly arousing himself, he drew a quarter from his pocket, and gave it to the child.

"Who sent you with this note?" he asked.

"It was a lady I never saw before. She was standing on the corner of the street, and she called me and told me to take this note here, and not give it to any one but yourself or you would have me put in prison, but if I brought her back an answer safe, she would give me a whole dollar."

Evidently the sum represented a fortune in the child's eyes, and this fact probably accounted for the fidelity with which the command had been obeyed.

"Where did she tell you to take the answer to?"

"I was to give it to an old man who would be standing in the place where she was when I came back."

"Do you know this old man?"

"No, sir."

"Then how will you know whether he is the right one to give it to?"

"The lady said he would know me when I came."

From her manner, it was evident the child was speaking the truth, and considering it was not any use to question her further, he told her to wait a little while, and then entered one of the inner offices.

"Where is Dwarf?" he asked of the sergeant seated at the desk.

"He is somewhere around. I will call him if you wish."

"Do so."

The officer touched the bell upon the table, and upon it being answered, he gave orders for Dwarf to be summoned.

After the lapse of about ten minutes the individual in question made his appearance. He was a remarkable character, and the mention of his name will at once recall him to the remembrance of most of the oldest officers on the force. Though over forty years of age at the time of which we write, his stature was not over that of a boy of ten. As an adept in the science of shuffling he had no equal, and as his costume was almost always that of a gamin of the streets, his connection with the police force was seldom suspected. This one accomplishment, however, was his only one, and he could no more have made anything out of an intricate case than he could have flown, but his ability in his particular line had gone far toward bringing to light more than one dark crime.

"Dwarf, I have some work for you to do," Darral said, as he entered.

It was characteristic of the Dwarf that he was always saving of his speech.

"Give it a name," he said.

"You saw that little girl sitting outside?"

"Yes."

"I want you to follow her until she meets an old man and gives him a letter. Then follow the old man and see whom he gives it to. Then come back here and report."

The dwarf nodded assent, and Darral passed out of the office to where the girl was sitting, and wrote hurriedly in pencil:

"Six this evening, at 17 Blank Street. Ask for Mr. Howard."

Including this in an envelope, he gave it to the girl, charging her to lose no time in delivering it.

As she passed out of the door the Dwarf followed her, and glancing at his watch, Darral returned to the inner office to wait until he should bring his report.

He waited in vain until it was nearly half past five, however, and then, hailing a hack, he was driven to the street and number he had named, to keep his appointment.

He had a room in the house which he always kept as a blind, and as he always retained the same character while visiting it, his identity was unsuspected, and no one suspected he was other than the commercial traveler as he had represented himself to be.

He reached there exactly at the hour named, but no one had as yet called to see him, and after waiting nearly an hour longer without any visitor arriving, he again left the house and returned to the police station.

Here he found the Dwarf awaiting him.

"I followed the girl," he said, in answer to Darral's question, "and she struck the old man on the corner of Spring and Bowery. Then I followed the old man until he struck into Mott and entered a tenement house, No. 116, and went upstairs two flights to the room at the head of the stairs. He stayed there about ten minutes and then came out and went into a beer saloon, where he began to booze, and there I left him."

"Go back and watch him," Darral said, after a few moments' thought. "Get him drunk or safe some other way by midnight, and then join me here."

The dwarf nodded, and the other, passing out of the station, was driven to his own apartments.

After the lapse of about a quarter of an hour he again came out, but so changed in appearance that his own mother would not have known him. His disguise was now that of a Jew peddler, and in his hand he carried a number of card-board boxes fastened together with a strap.

He had made up his mind to find out for himself who the mysterious writer of the note was, and he hurried at a rapid pace toward Mott Street.

Entering the door of No. 116, which stood open, he ascended the stairs, and knocking on all of the doors, asked the occupants of each of the rooms in turn if they wanted to buy any socks or pocket-handkerchiefs.

In most cases his reception was the reverse of cordial, but he kept on until he reached the door of the room at the head of the second flight of stairs.

Knocking, and being told to come in, he did so, and cast a hasty glance around the apartment.

It was comfortably though plainly furnished, and had but a single occupant; she was a girl of about eighteen years of age. As he looked at her, Darral could hardly repress the involuntary exclamation that rose to his lips.

It was the girl who had saved his life on the previous night—the living counterpart of the girl he loved.

It was with an effort that he restrained himself, and said, with an insinuating smile:

"Do you want to buy any nice laces this evening, young lady?"

"Not to-night," the girl answered; and again, in spite of himself, the detective started.

The tone of her voice was so identical with that of Maud Lantry that he could almost have sworn it was she who spoke.

"Let me show them to you," he said, crossing the door.

"You need not buy them if you do not want them."

He advanced, as he spoke, until he was close beside where she was sitting; then, stopping, he said in a low voice:

"You did not keep your engagement with me to-night?"

A sudden flush suffused the girl's face, then as suddenly faded, leaving it pallid as marble, and she sprung from her seat.

"You," she gasped, "you are—"

"I am Darral the Detective."

The girl advanced a step nearer to him.

"I could not come," she said. "It would have been as much as my life was worth. But, now you are here—"

"Now I am here," Darral said, interrupting her, "I wish to express my gratitude to you for saving my life last night."

A sudden change came over the girl's manner, and she laughed demurely.

"I do not want your thanks," she said.

Her tone and manner were so defiant, that in utter surprise Darral asked:

"Why not?"

Instead of at once answering, the girl retreated a step or two, and drawing a small revolver from the folds of her dress, leveled it at his head.

"Because I do not work for thanks," she said, fiercely.

"I saved your life last night. It is now mine, and I mean to have it. So much as raise your hand, and I will shoot you dead!"

CHAPTER XX.

ON THE TRACK.

For a moment Darral was so utterly taken by surprise at the girl's unexpected action that he was powerless to move.

His hesitation was only momentary, however, and then he made a step forward to wrest the revolver from her hands.

With the weapon still leveled threateningly, the girl stood her ground.

"Down with your hands, or I will fire," she repeated.

"Your life is mine and I mean to take it; but first I have something to say to you."

She cast a rapid glance around, and the detective, taking advantage of the action, again attempted to seize the weapon, but still the girl covered him with the muzzle.

"Down hands, I say!" she cried, sternly.

Then, in a rapid whisper, she added:

"I will fire over your head. Make your escape at once."

Even as she spoke she slightly changed the direction of the weapon and pressed the trigger.

The bullet whistled harmlessly past, burying itself in the wall behind him, and instantly comprehending the advice given him, he followed it and made a dash for the door.

Instantly he now understood the reason of the girl's singular behavior; there were, no doubt, concealed listeners somewhere, and she adopted this method of giving him a chance of escape.

The truth of this surmise was soon proven, for hardly had he reached the door, than three men ripping from the closet with weapons in their hands.

"Seize him!" he heard the girl's voice cry. "He must not be allowed to escape!"

Almost as she spoke, the sound of four shots blended into one simultaneous report, and four bullets came whistling past him.

By this time, however, he had reached nearly half-way down the stairs, and before his pursuers had arrived at the top of it, he had commenced to descend the lower flight.

A few moments more and he had reached the street in safety.

Hurrying for a block or two, he met two policemen, and making himself known to them, in their company he returned to the house.

Short as the time since he had left it had been, already a crowd was beginning to collect around the house, while all the inmates were in a state of the wildest excitement.

Proceeding directly to the room from which he had made his escape a few moments before, he tried the door, but found it locked on the inside.

Throwing their combined weight against it, the detective and the two officers burst open the door.

Grasping their weapons firmly, they rushed into the room, expecting a desperate resistance on the part of the occupants.

But in this expectation they were destined to be disappointed.

The room was empty.

Evidently the ruffians had preferred their own safety to the detective's capture, and taken advantage of the few moments' delay to make their escape.

But how had they done so, when the door was locked on the inside?

An examination of the closet gave the answer.

In the back of it was a small door. It was locked, and forcing it open, the searchers saw it communicated with a narrow passage in which was a ladder leading to a higher floor.

Ascending it to the small landing above, another was seen leading still higher up, and climbing up the steps of this also, when the highest rung was reached, their further progress was stopped by a hatchway, the door of which was closed.

A moment's examination was sufficient to show it was unlocked; opening it and passing through, they found themselves upon the roof.

The means of the ruffians' as well as the girl's escape were now evident; it was plain to any person of even half ordinary comprehension they had reached the roof by the aid of the ladders, and being favored by the darkness, had got off clear.

As this, and also the additional knowledge that pursuit was hopeless, came to Darral, he ground his teeth together in silent chagrin.

Before this case, his acute reasoning powers had been able to grasp the mystery of any case he had ever undertaken; now, however, he had to admit himself repeatedly baffled and completely at fault.

Since the night he had heard the shot, and picked up the body of the murdered girl in the river, mystery had seemed to pile one on top of the other until their confusion was bewildering.

He had believed he had discovered the identity of the floating corpse, and had found himself mistaken. Then came the mystery of the loss of the clothes taken from the corpse. Who had taken them? and, granting the thief was found, what was the object?

The association of ideas and the desire to solve the truth presented another question.

Was the corpse Mand Lindeley had asserted was not that of her sister, and supported her assertion by showing the absence of an indelible mark upon her shoulder, really the one Darral had dragged from the river, or was it one substituted in its place?

Granting this also to be the truth, again came a repetition of the question:

What was the object?

It was easy to imagine many plausible ones, but none that was wholly satisfactory, for all these later mysteries were only side issues of the original one of the missing millions.

That, and the fate of old Lamley, seemed too deep over to be solved.

Darral, however, was a man who knew no such word as fail, and the combined mysteries he was determined to solve if it took him the rest of his life.

An extra force of police had by this time been summoned from the station, and leaving the house in their charge, he halted a hack and was driven home.

When the house was reached, he paid the driver, and proceeding to his apartments, in less than half an hour had made a thorough change in his costume.

He had thought the affair over, looking at it from every point of view, until he came to the conclusion that his only chance of gaining any light upon it was by again finding either the man he had taken prisoner in the sailors' boarding-house, or the old woman whom he had rescued from certain death in the burning building.

Accordingly, when he again left the house, his general appearance was that of a broken-down sport.

Walking on until he reached Third Avenue, he got upon a car and rode as far as Hester Street; then, alighting, he sauntered slowly along, scrutinizing every person he met, as if either in the hope of picking up a victim or meeting some one he was acquainted with whom he could strike for a temporary loan.

Both quests seemed to meet with no success, however, for nearly an hour, until at last he met a freshly dressed young man who was swaggering along, apparently about half intoxicated.

Stopping at once, Darral addressed him:

"Halloo, Tom," he said. "Had any luck to-night? I'm dead broke; call me a sucker if I ain't, but I want you to lend me a liver. It will be all right out of the next swag I collar."

While he had been speaking, the detective had seized the other's arm, and now, holding it firmly, walked beside him; the other attempted to shake him off, but in vain.

"What are you giving me, you old sucker?" he was beginning, when the detective interrupted him.

"I am giving you my name," he said. "It is Darral."

An almost magical change came over the other in an instant; his manner became superlatively apologetic.

"I did not know you," he said, "and I am sure I am always glad to meet you in a friendly way, but if you think you have got anything against me, you are on the wrong lay this time."

"Of course," Darral answered, dryly. "As it happens, though, I have nothing against you at present—that is, nothing new. What I want is your assistance to find a certain party I am after. Act on the square with me, and that old funny business of yours will not trouble you again."

"I am sure if I can oblige you, I will do it," the other answered, eagerly. "Let us go into some place where we will not be overheard, and then, if I know the person you are after, I will help you all I can to find him."

Turning into the first saloon they came to, they passed into the private room in the rear.

"Now," Darral said, when the drinks were called and paid for, "let us come to an understanding."

"Evet," the other answered; "that is just what I want. If I help you to find the fellow you are after, supposing he isn't a pal of mine, you will give me your word that those little lads will never be brought against me in the future?"

"Yes," Darral said, "I give you my word as far as they are concerned; but the promise has nothing to do with what you may do yet."

"Correct," the other replied. "I know when you say so you'll stick to what you say. It's a bargain. Now, what's the name of the chap you are after?"

"It is a woman," Darral said, "an old woman who used to be housekeeper for Captain Parker in the old rookery out in Harlem that was burned down the other night."

The other hesitated a moment before replying.

"I know her," he said, slowly, at length, "and just where to lay my hands upon her; but before I tell you you must promise not to mix me up in the affair. I would sooner be sent up for half a dozen years than have Captain Parker down on me."

Seeing the terror the name of Parker inspired, Darral had

tened to assure him he should not be implicated in any way. Evidently the man knew that the word of the detective was to be depended upon, yet it was somewhat doubtfully that he replied:

"You have got me in a hole," he said, "and I suppose I might as well own up at once. Come with me, and I will show you the house she went into not an hour ago."

Without replying, Darral took a slip of paper and envelope from his pocket, and writing a few words upon it, retained it in his hand; then rising, he said:

"Come."

Somewhat puzzled by his behavior, the other rose from his seat and followed him through the saloon into the street; here, meeting a policeman, in a few words Darral made himself known, and giving the note he had written to the man, told him to deliver it at the nearest police station at once.

Watching the officer for a few moments as he departed on his errand, the detective turned to his companion.

"I never break my word," he said, "and if you act on the square with me, all right. If not, I have taken precautions that whatever happens, your treachery will do you no good."

The other started guiltily.

"I will take you to the house where she is," he said. "How many there may be there I do not know; but I do not think there is more than one. If you like to take the chances, it is not my fault."

"All right," Darral answered, shortly. "Come on."

In almost utter silence they walked on for more than a quarter of an hour, until the block in which the house from which Dalton had taken Maud Lindley and her father was reached.

Pausing at the corner, the detective's companion pointed the house out to him.

"That is the place," he said. "Ring the bell, and then, when you hear an answering peal inside, give three whistles. Remember, I do not tell you to go in, but if you like to take the chances it is no fault of mine."

The detective did not answer for a moment or two; his companion was the first to break the silence.

"You know I can not go with you," he said, somewhat nervously. "I suppose you have no more use for me now, and I can go?"

He asked the question as if expecting a refusal, but Darral answered, simply:

"Yes, you can go."

The man needed no second assent, and walked rapidly off, while Darral stood for a few moments lost in thought.

At last he started from his reverie, and advanced toward the house.

The chances he was about to take were desperate ones, but he was determined to risk them.

He was resolved to again find a clue to the mysteries of the case that had so long baffled him, or perish in the attempt.

He felt that he was again upon the track he had lost, and if he left it now he deserved to fail.

Ascending the steps to the door, he rang the bell.

For a few seconds there was silence, and then he heard an answering peal inside.

As he heard it, he stopped, and placing his lips close to the key-hole, gave three distinct whistles.

Listening intently for a few moments longer, he heard the sound of footsteps descending the stairs.

Regaining his upright position, he grasped the handle of the revolver in his breast-pocket. Hardly had he done so than the door was cautiously opened, and a man holding a candle stood in the opening.

Darral had already determined upon the course he would pursue; and the next moment he sprang forward, and with one hand striking him by the throat, with the other he pressed the end of the muzzle of the revolver against his forehead.

"Silence!" he commanded, sternly. "or you die!"

CHAPTER XXI.

DECEIT.

AFTER taking the reins from the hands of the man who drove the carriage in which the unconscious form of Maud Lindley had been placed, Dalton drove rapidly up-town until the house at which, on their downward journey, they had stopped to take up the man and woman who were to stand as witnesses of the fraudulent marriage, was reached.

Stopping here, the man inside alighted and entered the house, while Dalton still remained upon the driver's seat.

After the lapse of a few minutes, the man emerged from the house, accompanied by another.

Climbing up to the driver's seat, the new-comer listened to Dalton's hurried commands, and then took the reins from his hand.

The next moment, Dalton had dismounted from his seat and stood on the sidewalk beside the other, while the new driver whipped up the horses and drove off at a rapid pace.

Watching the retreating vehicle for a few moments until it was lost in the distance, with a few hurried words, Dalton and his companion turned and hurried in an opposite direction.

The new scheme that had formed itself in Dalton's mind is already known to the reader, and also how far it was successful in inducing the clergyman to leave home, on a supposed errand of mercy, only to be decoyed into the power of the villain and his accomplice, and having no alternative but to sign the false certificate or die.

Meanwhile, as they were proceeding to carry out this nefarious plot, Maud Lindley still lay in the carriage, utterly unconscious, and with the woman who had come to witness her forced marriage.

The new driver, who was none other than one of the paid tools of the keeper of the asylum, urged on the horses to the same rapid pace at which they had started, until the place was reached.

As he at last drew up before the entrance, the woman alighted and rang the bell.

In a few minutes the door was opened, and as she rapidly explained to the servant that a patient had been brought back, he left her standing in the hall while he went to inform the proprietor.

The doctor answered the summons almost instantly; and in a few more minutes Maud had been lifted from the carriage, and being carried into the house, was laid upon a bed in one of the private wards.

She was still in a state of utter unconsciousness; and after closing the door and giving instructions that she should not be disturbed, he asked the woman to follow him to his study.

As has already been stated, the keeper of the asylum was no charlatan in his profession; he knew that the girl's insensible state was not the result of a swoon, but that she was under the influence of a powerful drug; he also knew that perfect quiet was the only means by which she could be restored to sense and reason, and he imagined he saw a powerful motive for bringing this end about.

A perfect loss of money had been his passion for years; and having received the amount given him by Dalton for robbing the girl of her senses, he had been considering if he could not make any more out of the affair.

Now that he once more had her under his care, he saw his way to his object at once.

He knew that, unless Dalton had a heavy amount at stake, he would not have paid out so much money and taken such chances as he had done; and, the doctor reasoned, that he might as well take it in as the other.

What Dalton's game was precisely he did not yet know, but he was determined to find it out.

The girl already was in his power, and with his misapprehended skill he was able to make her appear either rational or insane at his will.

He had already followed Dalton's instructions in regard to the old man; the proper restoratives had been given him, and he was sleeping as peacefully as a child.

It was a cunning course the doctor was following; it was to his interest, he thought, to restore these two particular patients to reason instead of turning them into a state of incurable insanity, which was his usual method of treatment.

But he wanted to play the game alone; if he held the winning cards, as he thought he did, he wanted to share the stake with no other person.

Therefore, as he asked the woman to follow him to his study, he gave the man who had opened the door, and another who was standing in the corridor, a meaning glance.

Evidently they understood it, for as the doctor and the woman entered the apartment, they also did so.

Courteously placing a chair for her, the doctor waited until she sat down, and then also took a seat himself.

Again, also unnoticed by the visitor, he flashed a rapid glance toward the two men standing behind her.

"I am curious to know, madame," he said, stately, "why the gentleman who placed the patient in my care has not also returned."

"He was detained," the woman answered. "He had business—"

Before she could finish the sentence, a heavy hand was placed over her mouth, checking her further utterance, while at the same time she was seized by either arm so that even to move was impossible.

"Take her to Cell 17," the doctor said. "If she is violent, put the jacket on her."

Realizing at once she had been trapped, the woman struggled to free herself, but in vain, and she was led out of the room, while an evil look of satisfaction came upon the doctor's face.

"Now I have the game all in my own hands," he soliloquized. "If there is any money in it, I shall have it all, and if there is none, I have lost nothing. I can depend on the driver, and, the woman out of the way, I will swear to Dalton that the girl never returned since he took her away."

Hardly had he uttered the words than the bell rang violently. A few moments more a knock came upon the door, and without waiting for permission to do so, the servant entered.

"A gentleman to see you," he said. "He will not—"

Before the man could say any more, he was thrust violently aside, and the visitor entered. As he did so, the doctor started to his feet with a look of almost fear upon his face.

It was Parker.

A look black as midnight was upon his face as he advanced toward where the doctor sat.

"So you have been playing me false?" he said, menacingly.

The doctor's look of terror had only momentary, and reverting his self-possession, he said, calmly:

"You are mistaken, I think. Sit down and I will talk to you alone. James, leave the room and close the door."

The concluding words were addressed to the servant, who at once obeyed; and then the doctor turned to his visitor.

"In what way have I played you false?" he asked.

Parker replied with another question:

"Have you not got an old man and a girl placed in your care?"

"Yes—several."

"I am not talking of several," Parker said, fiercely, "but of two. When did the latest of your patients come?"

"Last week."

"You lie! Those of whom I speak were brought here yesterday morning."

"Then I throw the blame in your teeth. I have had no new arrivals since last week."

For a moment or two Parker glared at the other, as if meditating a spring at his throat; but restraining himself, he asked in a suppressed voice:

"When did you see Dalton last?"

"Not for more than a month."

Take a flash, Parker's hand sought his breast-pocket, and the next moment a revolver was leveled at the other's head.

"Do not be so nervous," he commanded, "or I will shoot you where you sit! Again I ask you, and for the last time, where are the old man and the girl?"

Before the doctor could answer, the door-bell rang loudly, and almost instantly the servant opened the door and rushed into the room.

"We are lost!" he cried. "The police, more than fifty strong, are outside!"

Involuntarily lowering his weapon for a breathing space, Parker looked at the doctor in silence.

"They both know they were trapped."

Before either could speak, a voice outside was raised threateningly.

"Open the door, instantly," the speaker said, "or we will break it in!"

CHAPTER XXII.

A STARTLING REVELATION.

As Darral seized by the throat the man who had opened the door and pressed the muzzle of the revolver against his forehead, he bore him back into the hall, causing the candle to fall from his hand and be instantly extinguished.

"Now," the detective said in a low, stern voice, "tell me the truth or I swear I will kill you on the spot. How many are there in the house?"

The man did not answer for a moment, and the detective pressed the muzzle of the weapon still closer, until it almost cut through the skin.

"Speak!" he commanded.

"There are more than two dozen," the man said, reluctantly.

"That is a lie," Darral answered, "for I know just how many there are! Tell me at once, and if you do not speak the truth, I will shoot you without another word!"

"If you know, what is the use of asking?" the man said, with a last attempt at defiance.

"None," Darral answered, "except to see if you can tell the truth for once. Now, for the last time, how many are there?"

"There is only myself and an old woman. Leave go of my throat; you are choking me."

"That is the truth, at last," Darral said. "Now come upstairs."

He partially released his grip of his throat as he spoke; but still keeping him covered with his weapon, he led him up the staircase until the door of a room which was partially open was reached.

Still keeping hold of his prisoner, Darral entered it, and then, as for the first time the light fell upon his face, he recognized him as the man he had before captured in the sailors' boarding-house.

Removing his hand from his throat, but still keeping him covered with his revolver, in another instant the detective had drawn a pair of slender handcuffs from his pocket and locked them on his wrists.

Another moment and a gag was thrust between his teeth and his ankles tied tightly together with a strip torn from the cloth that covered the table.

All this had been done so rapidly that it had taken less time than it requires to tell it, and then, for the first time, Darral noticed the other occupant of the room.

It was the old woman he had risen from the burning house; as yet she had sat motionless, and now approaching her, he saw she was asleep and evidently under the influence of liquor.

Tearing the rest of the table-cloth into strips, he also tied her hands and feet, and then, taking the light from the table, he left the room to explore the rest of the house.

Pausing before the door of the next room, he tried it, but found it was locked, and then setting down the light, he dashed his weight against it to try and break it open.

For some time it resisted his attacks, but at last the lock gave way, and he nearly fell headlong over the threshold.

Assured now that, besides himself, the man and the old woman in the next apartment were the only occupants of the house, he again took up the light and entered the room.

As he did so, the first object that met his eyes was some object lying upon the floor.

It was covered with a blanket, and bore a vague resemblance to the outline of a human form.

Advancing toward it, the detective raised the covering, and his first surmise was confirmed.

It was the corpse of a woman.

In an instant the involuntary thought flashed through his mind that it was that of Agnes Lindley, which had been stolen from the undertaker; but a single glance was sufficient to show him it was not so.

The body was that of a woman nearly ten years older than the missing girl, and her long, dark tresses of hair were black as midnight.

Hardly had the detective become satisfied on this point than another object attracted his attention.

It was a bundle of clothing, and opening it, he recognized them at once as those worn by the girl whose dead body he had dragged from the river.

For several moments he stood in utter wonder.

His mind was powerless to grasp any explanation of this new development of the most mysterious case upon which he had ever been engaged.

He knelt down and once more examined the articles of clothing one by one.

He could not be mistaken; they were without doubt those that had been worn by the murdered girl.

Then he again turned to the corpse of the woman beside them.

For several minutes he knelt there, gazing at the expressionless features, and vainly trying to grasp a clue to all these seemingly endless mysteries, when suddenly the sound of a light footstep startled him.

Involuntarily his hand sought the handle of his revolver, and starting to his feet, he faced around toward the door.

No answer had he done so, than an involuntary exclamation left his lips.

Notwithstanding his far more than ordinary presence of mind, for the moment he was completely unmoved.

Standing before him, with her wealth of golden hair streaming over her shoulders, stood the girl who at the moment was uppermost in his mind.

Was it she herself, or her spirit? Was it the deal again come to life?

Recovering his self-possession by a violent effort, the detective asked:

"Who are you?"

In a soft and musical voice came the answer:

"I am Agnes Lindley."

CHAPTER XXIII. THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

As the girl uttered the words, Darral started in awful surprise.

"You are Agnes Lindley?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"Pray explain yourself further."

"I will," the girl said; then, after a moment's pause, she continued:

"Of my father's fortune and his eccentric disposal of it you are already aware, and also of his disappearance. We had reason to suspect foul play, and we employed detectives to trace him, but in vain. At last, I determined to try in person to solve the mystery of his fate, or perish in the attempt."

A firm, almost hard look was in the girl's eyes and around her mouth as she uttered the concluding words. As he looked upon her he could not help comparing her with Maud, and thinking that, while she was all gentleness, this was a woman of iron and resolute will.

"The idea of doing so was long in my mind before I could find any means of putting it into execution," she went on, after a moment's pause. "At last, however, chance threw the means in my way. There was a girl of about my own age who had once been my servant. The resemblance between us was striking, and though, if standing together the difference could be easily detected, when we were apart it would have puzzled almost any person to distinguish us. When in my service she had been deceived by a married man, and my kindness to her, both before and after her child was born, had earned her lasting gratitude. Accidentally meeting her one day, she confided to me her sorrows, and told me that she had fallen still lower and had become one of an organized gang of criminals."

"It was a mad idea that flashed through my brain as she told me this. At first it was vague and shadowy, and as it assumed more definite form, it startled me. But at last I determined, with her connivance, to occasionally assume her character, and learn the secrets of the gang."

"I explained to her the reason of my wish to do so—that I desired to learn my father's fate, and, if possible, recover his lost fortune, as well as bring the authors of his death to justice. Very reluctantly, and after long persuasion, she consented to lend me her aid to accomplish my purpose."

"I kept the scheme a total secret from my sister, until, finding it impossible to do so any longer, I left her, and have not seen her since. By that time, however, I was already able to play my part without exciting suspicion."

"I begin to see," Darral said, slowly. "It was the girl, then, who was murdered that night upon the river."

"It was. By means of his spies, Parker found out my intention."

"Then I was right so far?" Darral interrupted. "It was Parker who was the moving spirit of the whole conspiracy?"

"You were. He is the captain of the most regularly organized gang of criminals in the country. He it was who deceived my poor father into his hands, in the hope of gaining possession of his hidden fortune. But in that design he was foiled."

"Foiled!" Darral repeated. "Then the millions—"

"Are safe. By the key given me, by the numbers he intrusted to my care, I found out the spot where they were buried, and removed them to another hiding-place."

Darral's face showed the admiration the girl's resolute will inspired in him. For a few moments he was silent.

"You interest me more than I can express," he said, at length. "Pray, continue your explanation of the tragedy upon the river."

"As I said before," the girl answered, "by means of his spies, Parker learned of my intention, and resolved to get me into his power. At the time he began to put his scheme into execution, I was playing the part of the girl of whom I spoke, while she was playing mine. Therefore, when Parker tried to induce her to accompany him on board the vessel on which he said my father was, I was absent, and afraid of exciting any suspicion in his mind of the double parts we were playing, she consented to accompany him. Poor girl! her gratitude to me cost her her life."

Her voice trembled and a tear bedimmed her eyes as she spoke. After a moment's pause, Darral asked:

"How did the letters found upon her come into her possession?"

"I will tell you. When I received the note from my sister we had already reversed our parts. Hastily writing the answer, I gave it to her to post. As I was going upon an expedition of danger, and fearful of some accident happening by which the note might be found in my possession, instead of destroying it as I should have done, I gave it to her with the one she was to mail."

Again, for a few moments, there was silence. It was first broken by Darral.

"You say you were going on an expedition of danger. Had it anything to do with the gang to which you were supposed to belong?"

"Apparently, yes; in reality, no. I was supposed to go into one of the suburban villages to gain points for a contemplated burglary. Instead, I went to the spot where the money was buried, and removed it to a more secure hiding-place."

"That was the same night on which the girl was murdered?"

"It was."

"Do you think Parker intended to murder her?"

"I am sure he did not. The fact of her being murdered upset all his plans."

"Are you acquainted with his further acts since the night of the murder?"

"Only partially so. I have endeavored to follow them, but the peculiar position in which I was placed rendered it impossible for me to do so. One thing, however, I am acquainted with. It is the abduction of my sister, and your gallant rescue of her from the burning house. Allow me to express my earnest gratitude for your noble act."

"It was no more than any other man would have done in my place," Darral answered. "But, you will pardon my seeming inquisitiveness, I would like to ask you a few more questions."

"If I am able to do so, I shall be pleased to answer them."

"Did you know the clothes were stolen from your supposed sister's corpse while it was under the care of the undertaker?"

"I understood they were, but as I knew they would not give Parker the key he wanted to find, I took no trouble to make any further inquiries."

"Was the corpse also stolen and another substituted in its place?"

"No."

For a few moments Darral was silent, as though meditating over something, and then he pointed to the corpse lying upon the floor near them.

"Do you know anything regarding this evident murder?"

"Nothing. It is probably a link in some of the chains of crime which Parker is continually forging. The man is a fiend in human form."

Again the detective was silent; at last he said, abruptly:

"Have you any idea where your sister is now concealed?"

It was now the girl's turn to be surprised.

"My sister?" she repeated. "Is she not in your care?"

In a few hurried words Darral told of Maud's second abduction, and how his efforts to trace her had been fruitless.

As he finished, a curious meditative expression came upon his hearer's face.

"I did not dream of such a thing," she said, slowly, at length. "Let me consider a few moments."

For several minutes she stood, evidently thinking deeply, until she suddenly looked up.

"I think I know of a place where he would be likely to take her," she said. "Whether he has done so or not, it will do no harm to raid it. It is a villainous place, a private lunatic asylum, and is kept by a man second only to Parker in crime."

The hope, vague though it was, that was thus held out to

him of seeing Maud once more at liberty, animated Darral to the instant.

"Let us lose no time, then," he said; "but go at once."

The girl was not behind him in eagerness, and together they left the house.

Walking rapidly along until they saw a hack, the detective hailed it, and entering, they were driven to the nearest police station.

After a hurried explanation of the case to the captain, about twenty-five men were at once detailed to raid the place; and carriages being summoned, under the girl's directions they were driven rapidly toward the asylum in which Dalton had placed Maud and her father.

All alighting a short distance from the building, they crept cautiously forward until it was reached, and then separating into four parties, they surrounded it on every side.

Then advancing to the front door, Darral rang the bell.

Waiting for several moments and receiving no answer, he again rang, but this time more impatiently than before.

Still there was no response, and raising his voice, he commanded, sternly:

"Open the door, instantly, or we will break it in!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

AND LAST.

As Parker and the doctor heard the imperative command to have the door opened, they looked at each other in consternation.

Parker was the first to recover his self-possession.

"I must not be found here," he said, hurriedly. "Place me in one of the cells and pass me off as a patient."

"And what shall I do?" the doctor asked.

"Open the door and bluff them. It is me, not you, they are after."

For a moment the doctor did not answer; then, evidently thinking the plan a feasible one, he gave the servant directions to conduct Parker to a cell, while he went himself to open the door.

As he did so, his ruddy face assumed a shocked expression. "What is the meaning of this?" he said. "This is a private refuge for the insane, and—"

Before he could finish the sentence, Darral had sprung over the threshold and leveled a cocked revolver at his head.

"It means," he said, "that we are going to search this den, and you are my prisoner."

"What for?"

"For being an accomplice in the abduction of Miss Lindley and the murder of her father."

The shot was a somewhat random one, but it struck home; in spite of himself, the doctor's face paled, and his lips trembled as he replied:

"You are really mistaken," he said.

"I am not mistaken," Darral answered. "I know the young lady to be here, and also that you are an accomplice of Parker in her abduction."

As he spoke, with a dexterity only to be acquired by long practice, the detective slipped a pair of handcuffs upon the doctor's wrists, rendering him powerless to offer any resistance.

Nothing, however, was further from the doctor's intentions than such a course. Instead, he had determined upon another. The doctrine of honor among thieves is a fallacious one. Well knowing that the officers would make a thorough search of the house, and that old Lindley and his daughter as well as Parker would be discovered, he made up his mind to save himself, if possible, by betraying his accomplices.

Therefore, he said:

"Your mistake is natural as to my complicity in the crime you mention. I own, appearances are against me; but if you will come into my study, I know I can explain them in a few minutes."

Knowing well that he intended to betray his accomplices, Darral considered the end would justify the means; and with a parting command to the other officers to keep the house well watched, he accompanied the doctor to his study.

Closing the door as they entered, he asked:

"What have you got to say? Let me hear it quickly, for I am in a hurry."

"Simply this," the doctor answered. "As I said before, you labor under a mistake as to my complicity in this affair. The old gentleman and his daughter are here, and every care has been taken of them. They were not brought here by

Parker, but by a woman in his employ. The bargain between her and me was strictly straightforward and honorable, until she began to insinuate a hint about putting them both out of the way. I resented any such murderous proposal at once; and then the woman began to threaten me with Parker's anger, until she became so very violent that I felt myself justified in placing her under restraint. Hardly had I done so, than Parker himself arrived, and I had him, also, placed in a cell until I could inform the proper authorities."

Darral could not but admire the ingenuity with which the speaker so glibly distorted the facts of the case. He knew how much it was worth as truth, but he did not say so. Instead, he asked:

"And is Parker in confinement now, or has he unfortunately escaped?"

The last part of the question was asked with unmistakable sarcasm, and the doctor assumed an air of injured innocence.

"You wrong me; indeed you do," he said. "Both Parker and the woman are securely locked in separate cells at the present moment."

Darral was puzzled. He did not know the doctor's original plot, nor Parker's case, as the reader already does, and he could not understand it, and for a few seconds he was silent.

"Then take me to the cells," he said, suddenly.

"Instantly," the doctor answered, briskly; "only you must promise that, at the proper time, the evidence I have given will be remembered in my favor."

"It shall be, if it proves to be of any use," Darral said. "Lead the way at once."

He opened the door and held it for the other to pass out as he spoke. As he did so, with his right hand he grasped the handle of his revolver. He suspected treachery of some sort, but what, he could not imagine, and determined to be prepared for any emergency. As he passed into the hall, he summoned three of the officers guarding the front door to accompany him.

He could see no signs of treachery, however. The doctor ordered the servant who waited in the hall to go and open the door of Parker's cell. A perplexed look came upon the man's face as he received the order, but he obeyed in silence.

As the door was opened a snarl like that of a wild beast came from the inside. Evidently Parker was trying to keep up his character of a dangerous maniac. Tumbling in a moment to the whole game that was trying to be played upon him, Darral advanced with rapid steps to where Parker sat crouched in one corner of the cell.

Quickening to a sense of his danger, the latter sprung suddenly to his feet, a cocked revolver in his hand.

The next moment there was a blinding flash, followed instantly by a sharp report, and the detective reeled across the floor against the wall.

Then, with a fierce cry, Parker sprang forward again, rocking his revolver as he did so.

Dashing past the officers, he encountered the doctor.

"Traitor!" he cried. "You have played me false! Die!"

As he spoke, he leveled the revolver at the doctor's head and pressed the trigger; without so much as a single groan the latter dropped dead, with a bullet through his brain.

The delay, almost momentary as it had been, however, was sufficient for the other officers to recover from their first hesitation; and now raising their weapons, they discharged them after the fugitive.

With a cry of agony, Parker sunk upon the floor, his leg shattered by one of the bullets, while another had lodged in his shoulder; but, almost instantly, a blasphemous oath left his lips while he again cocked his revolver.

"Curse you all!" he cried; "I never will be taken alive! I defy you all! See!"

As he spoke, he raised the weapon, and placing the muzzle between his teeth, pressed the trigger. The next moment he fell back a corpse.

For a moment or two the officers stood motionless in speechless horror; before they had recovered themselves, Darral staggered out of the cell into the hall. The bullet had not been fatal, having merely grazed his temple, but a stream of blood running down his cheek showed how narrow his escape had been.

It was several minutes more before he fully recovered his senses, and then he gave orders to have Maud and her father released.

The old man was still delirious, but Maud had awakened from her drugged slumber perfectly rational, although very much exhausted.

The meeting between the sisters by the bedside of their father, whom they had long looked upon as dead, may be better imagined than described.

Closing the door and leaving them alone, Darral proceeded to the cell in which the woman who had brought Maud back to the asylum had been placed.

She was quite unmoved, and in a few hurried words gave away the whole plot to force Maud into a marriage while under the influence of the drug administered to her, and that having failed, how Dalton had resolved to intimidate the minister into signing the certificate and then murder him.

With the fear of a life-long imprisonment threatening her, the woman consented at once to guide them to the house into which Dalton had intended to decoy the clergyman; and, accompanied by three other officers, Darral entered one of the carriages with her, and was driven at the fastest speed to the spot.

Reaching the street in which the house was situated, they alighted at the corner, and then proceeded the rest of the way on foot. Trying the front door, they found it locked; but the woman, with a gesture of silence, ran her finger along the frame of one of the windows on either side, until the click of the lock turning was heard inside. Then turning the knob, they entered the hall.

Cautiously ascending the stairs until the landing was reached, the sound of voices in one of the rooms became indistinctly audible. Drawing nearer to the door, Darral listened.

He could hear the voice of Dalton raised threateningly as for the last time he commanded the minister to sign the certificate; and beckoning the rest of the officers to approach, he spoke a few hurried orders.

Drawing their revolvers, they all dashed their weight against the door; it burst open at the first attack, and they all rushed into the room.

So utterly taken by surprise was Dalton and his fellow-ruffian, that for a moment or two they were unable to offer any resistance. Before they could recover themselves the handcuffs were locked upon their wrists, and in less than an hour later they were safe in the Tombs.

It was useless for them to deny their guilt, and they maintained a sullen silence. Some time later they received the just reward of their villainy in a sentence of imprisonment for life.

In the meantime, however, by the aid of the papers found in the deserted house, and the points given him by Agnes Lindley, Darral was enabled to bring to justice the principal

members of one of the worst criminal organizations that ever preyed upon society, and in consequence received enough praise and admiration to have turned any ordinary man's head.

In a few days after his release from the asylum, old Lindley began to visibly improve, and in a month was wholly restored to health and reason. Maud had also entirely recovered from the effects of the drug that had been administered to her with such nefarious intent.

One day Darral received a visit from Agnes Lindley, asking him to accompany her to Staten Island and assist her to remove the buried treasure from the spot where she had secreted it.

He assented at once; and as he listened to her account of how, alone in the darkness of the night, she had removed it from beneath the fountain and placed it in the cellar of the deserted house, where it now was, a feeling of genuine admiration of her nerve and courage filled his breast.

But it was only a feeling of admiration, nothing more. It was impossible it could ever develop into the feeling with which he regarded her sister Maud.

That feeling was the one great passion of his life, and he sometimes dared to hope she regarded him with something more than mere friendship.

Still a feeling of diffidence kept him silent until, at last, he cast aside his false pride and avowed his love.

To the listening girl he had never seemed so noble as when, standing there with nothing but his love to offer her, he asked her to be his wife.

For a moment or two after he had finished Maud was silent; then she drew nearer to him, and laid her hand gently on his arm.

"You should not talk of the difference in wealth between us," she said in a tone of soft reproach. "To you I owe both my life and fortune, and I count them as nothing beside the knowledge that I have gained your love."

After this avowal there was no need for any more to be said, especially as the match was heartily approved of both by Agnes and her father; indeed, they seemed to be even more eager to have it consummated than the parties most concerned, and in less than two months later the wedding took place.

And now our story is told. Having followed our hero and his bride through danger and adversity in the past, we leave them happy in the present, and with the future bright with golden hopes. At last bliss and prosperity have followed the once Missing Millions.

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Tit-Bits of General Information

FROM ALL THE WORLD.

A racehorse galloping at full speed clears from 20ft. to 24ft. every stride.

With a population of 41,000,000, only 441 Japanese have fortunes of \$50,000 or over.

The only country in the world where the fashions in women's dress do not change is Japan.

It takes about three seconds for a message to go from one end of the Atlantic cable to the other.

The average life of an American-built ship is only eighteen years, while that of British ships is twenty-six years.

The Emperor of China and the Viceroy of India, between them, govern more than half the population of the world.

Among birds the swan lives to be the oldest, in extreme cases reaching 300 years. The falcon has been known to live over 162 years.

Red glass hastens vegetation, while blue glass suppresses it. Sensitive plants, like the mimosa, grow fifteen times higher under red glass than under blue.

Trained falcons, to carry despatches in the time of war, have been tested in the Russian army. Their speed is four times as rapid as that of carrier-pigeons.

Fifty thousand patents were registered last year at Washington, U. S. A. The record patentee of America, if not in the world, is Mr. Thomas A. Edison, who has nearly 1,000 patents in his credit.

Although the sea covers three-fourths of the earth's surface, it does not provide in the same proportion for man's wants. Only about 3 per cent. of the people in the world gain their living directly from the sea.

Metals get tired as well as living things. Telegraph wires are better conductors on Monday than Saturday, on account of their Sunday rest, and a rest of three weeks adds to per cent. to the conductivity of a wire.

The grandest train in the world is the Kaiser's. It cost \$1,000,000, and took three years to build. In the twelve sumptuous saloons are two nursery coaches, a

gymnasium, a music-room, and a drawing-room furnished with oil paintings and statuary. The treasure-room with its two safes is burglar-proof.

Poets' Field Day.—India would seem to be a pleasant land for minor poets, since the Rajah of Rampur recently sent out invitations to all the poets in India to a gathering in his State. About 200 poets accepted the invitation, and some of the poets recited their own compositions. His Highness was too unwell to be present.

The Korean never cuts his hair or beard. To do so is considered a mark of dishonour to his parents, whom he strongly reverences. Any hairs that may happen to come out, and even the parings of his fingernails, are carefully saved and put into the coffin with him, in order that he may go back to another earth intact.

Soldiers on Oxen.—A strange and comical military body is a troop of cavalry at St. de Moorway, a province on the East Coast of Africa, which is under the rule of the French Governor-General at Madagascar. These soldiers go about their military operations on oxen. The animals are lean creatures, and they move with surprising rapidity.

DARING DEEDS OF FAMOUS DETECTIVES.

1. *How M. Vidocq Became the World's Greatest Police Spy.*

"The fellow has made his escape by the roof!"

A little band of Parisian police had paid a surprise visit to a fine, dirty house in one of the most disreputable parts of Paris. It was about three o'clock in the morning when an officer tapped at the door and demanded admittance of the trembling person who opened it. Slipping past him, they crept swiftly and noiselessly up the rickety stairs to the door of a room, opened it, and rushed in. But the bed in which they had expected to find their man was empty. He must have heard them stealing up the stairs and escaped by the window.

The officer in charge of the party looked out. In the darkness he could distinguish nothing. But the man must be there. His clothes still lay beside the bed, where he had cast them down when he had retired the night before.

Captured Among the Chimney-Stacks.

Some of the most daring of the officers crawled out after him, while others went for ladders to reach the roof from the street. The man must be caught! He was found at last. Crouching down and seeking to hide himself among the chimney stacks, the officers pounced upon him.

A short time later he was before one of the chiefs of the police.

"Good day, M. Henri," he said, saluting the stern-looking official. "Someone has once more betrayed me into your hands."

"You are accused of being in league with coiners and passers of bad money," said the official. "What have you to say?"

"Only that I am innocent, monsieur, though the people in the house where I lodged were guilty of such practices. I had the honour of calling on monsieur some

time back, and of saying that I could put it in his power to clear Paris of such scoundrels."

The man the officers had found upon the roof and who addressed those words to the police official was one Vidocq—a man destined to become famous as one of the greatest detectives of modern times.

Vidocq's Early Career of Roguery.

Vidocq had been concerned for years past in all manner of rogueries. He had received various terms of imprisonment. He was regarded as one of the most dangerous of the hundreds of criminals that threatened the honest citizens of Paris. He was daring, full of resource, a man of marvelous physical strength and audacity. Upon two previous occasions his accomplices had, knowing how much the police valued his capture, betrayed him into their hands. This was the third time Vidocq had so suffered. Two could play at that game.

"M. Henri," said Vidocq, "make me one of your agents, and I swear to put you in possession of the secrets of half the criminals in Paris."

The Detective as a Convict.

The offer was a tempting one, for the Parisian police were then baffled by criminals of all descriptions, and Parisians were crying out for more efficient guardians. "We will see" replied the official.

A short time later Vidocq found himself in prison, condemned to serve a sentence of eight years! But that miserable convict sentenced to that terrible sentence was really a police spy! He was popular with the other convicts, and learnt all their secrets. Each night he used, in his cell, to write out an account of the discoveries he had made during the day. The report was dispatched to the chief of the police and proved remarkably useful.

Vidocq's Marvellous Escape.

One day the criminal world of Paris was amazed and joyful over the marvellous escape of Vidocq from prison. They received him with open arms. As a matter of fact the authorities had come to the conclusion that Vidocq could be much more useful to them outside than in that grim place. His escape had all been planned! Vidocq returned to his associates as a hero. In fact, he was a spy—a spy with the keenest eyes, the most alert ears, the most subtle brain to learn all the villainy going.

Spying on the Criminals of Paris.

It was wonderful what ill luck began from henceforth to dog the criminals of Paris. All their plans came in some mysterious manner to the ears of the police. Was it Vidocq who betrayed them? Some of them were so convinced of it that at last Vidocq found it necessary to disguise himself and act the part among them of a new hand in crime. A consummate master of disguise, he went amongst them still unsuspected in his new rôle.

The Woman With the Humped Back.

He was certainly one of the most useful fellows that the police had ever had as an ally.

"Vidocq," said M. Henri to him one day, "we must find that fellow Fossard, the man who has escaped from the prison at Brest. He is in Paris, hiding somewhere. His lodging is in a house in a by-street near to a market-place. And there are yellow silk curtains to the window

of his room. In the same house there lives a woman with a humped back. That is all I can tell you about the fellow—all I have been able to learn."

It was a vague clue to work on. Vidocq, anxious to distinguish himself, set off. A widow with yellow curtains! A woman with a humped back! For weeks he walked about Paris searching for such a window in a house in which lived such a female.

(Continued in our Next.)

TEACHING ELEPHANTS TO WALTZ.

BY A TRAINER.

Although the elephant is not a carnivorous animal, he is dangerous enough at times. If you want to teach an elephant to stand on his head you have to be very careful. Chains are placed round his hind-quarters, and he is then hoisted by pulleys into the air often enough for him to understand what is required of him. To teach these bulky creatures to pose is very difficult. One well-known position is one elephant standing with his forepaws on the hind-quarters of another while he flourishes his trunk in a theatrical attitude. To teach him to do this you first have to pass a chain round his neck and another round his trunk.

The assistants haul away on the neck chain until the animal begins to choke. Naturally, he rises on his hind-legs in order to be able to breathe. Then the trunk cable is hauled on, and the elephant on whose back he is to place his forepaws is hauled under him. Curiously enough, elephants dislike this treatment, and often, after a severe lesson, will attack their teacher.

If you want a waltzing elephant, you will have to engage a number of strong assistants, who will push the elephant round, some at either end of the great beast. You then shout "Waltz!" and all begin pushing. Soon the elephant learns to waltz on the sound of the word, of his own accord.

Such tricks as ringing a bell and grinding an organ are simple and effective. You simply put the object in the elephant's trunk and shake it for him.

When he dances with tinkling bells round his feet, one foot at a time is lifted and shaken by the assistants.

MONARCHS AND THEIR SAVINGS.

The Sultan of Turkey, who has an official income of about £800,000 a year, has long been depositing his savings with the Bank of France. The same institution is likewise honoured with the patronage of King George of Greece and King Leopold. The Czar has preferred to keep his ready cash in the vaults of the Bank of England where, it is said, he has at his command nearly three and a quarter millions sterling in Russian gold. The gold deposited by these monarchs, unlike other funds which come into the banks, never goes out again into circulation, unless it be by express command of the Royal depositor.

MURDERED MONARCHS.

How Rulers have been Assassinated.

Twenty-one rulers of civilized countries murdered in just over a century! No wonder a timid man like the Czar shuts himself up in fortified palaces, and everyone is constantly quoting Shakespeare's words, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." And it has remained for Portugal, which, like her neighbour Spain, has been practically free from Royal assassinations—although attempts have been made by anarchists and political regicides—to establish a sad record; for never within modern history, at any rate, have a Sovereign and Crown Prince been murdered together.

The assassination of King Alexander and Queen Draga of Serbia in June, 1903, is the nearest parallel to the terrible deed which has just horrified the world. How the young King disgusted his Ministers and the army, and rendered himself generally unpopular by marrying Mme. Maschin, his mother's lay-in-waiting, is too recent history to need more than a passing mention here. It is interesting to note, however, that most of the army officers who carried out the plot, and actually murdered the King and Queen in the palace, are not only alive, but still hold prominent military appointments. Moreover, they were paid £12,000 for the deed.

Three years previous to the Serbian tragedy King Humbert of Italy was slain by the anarchist Bresci; while in 1808 the cruel and utterly purposeless murder of the beautiful and gracious Empress of Austria took place. The Empress was passing through Geneva on her return from Wiesbaden, where she had been for treatment of a heart affection, when she was stabbed with a small fish-shaped stiletto, which pierced her heart. King Humbert was shot while entering his carriage, and it is an extraordinary fact that he had twice previously escaped being murdered only by a hair's-breadth. In Naples in 1878 a man rushed up and tried to stab His Majesty with a poniard, but the King escaped with a slight scratch; while, 19 years later, as King Humbert was driving to the Caponele Race-course, a workman struck at him with a dagger. Luckily the blow was averted.

Included in the twenty-one rulers already mentioned are eight Presidents who have been assassinated, and it is a singular fact that three of these were Presidents of America; and they have all been murdered within the last forty-five years. First came President Lincoln in 1865, Garfield in 1881, and McKinley twenty years later. The murder of President Lincoln came like a thunderclap to the people of America just when they were rejoicing that the great Confederate War had come to an end. Lincoln went to Ford's Theatre in Washington, and sat with his family in a box watching the performance of "Our American Cousin," when J. Wilkes Booth, an actor, who with others had prepared a plot to assassinate the several heads of the Government, entered the box and shot the President through the brain.

He then stabbed Major Henry Rathbone with a knife and crying out, "The South is avenged!" rushed across the stage, through the back door, and escaped by riding off on a horse which was kept waiting for him. He was captured twelve days afterwards, however, and forthwith shot.

President Garfield was shot by a disappointed office-seeker, while McKinley, it may be remembered, met his death at the hands of Czolgosz, the anarchist, at the Buffalo Exposition.

Four of Russia's Czars have been assassinated, the last being Alexander II. in 1881. Six times did assassins attempt this monarch's life. On one occasion he only escaped through the barrel of the assassin's pistol bursting, while in 1866, when the dining-hall of the Winter Palace was wrecked by an explosion proceeding from the cellars beneath, the Emperor owed his life to a breach of his usual punctuality, the company not having sat down to dinner when the explosion took place.

His Majesty's "Guardian Angel," however, was powerless against the Nihilist's bombs of 1881. The Emperor was returning to the Winter Palace after a military review, when his carriage was suddenly shattered by a bomb. Several of the escort were killed, but strangely enough the Czar himself remained unhurt. After inquiring about the wounded, His Majesty, with phenomenal coolness, continued his progress on foot. He had advanced but a few steps when another bomb exploded at his feet, and mangled his body in the most frightful manner. He died a few hours later.

From 1872 to 1876 four rulers were assassinated—namely, Colonel Baita, President of Peru; Moreno, President of Ecuador; Gutierrez, President of Peru in 1872-3; and the Sultan Abdul-Aziz. At the time it was given out that the latter, having gone mad, had committed suicide by cutting the arteries of his arm; but in June, 1881, various high officials, including the Sultan's brother-in-law, were convicted of the murder of the Sultan.

Perhaps the most barbarous assassination on record was that of the Queen of Korea in 1896, when a band of hired Japanese assassins, backed by Korean troops, entered the palace and hacked the Queen and two ladies of the Court to pieces, afterwards burning the bodies with paraffin.

Built by One Man.—At Stivichal, near Coventry, there is a church which is unique among places of worship. In 1850 a stonemason named John Green had the first stone of the building, and seven years later he completed the edifice. During that period he declined assistance from anyone, doing all the work himself until the building was ready for its interior fittings. This, it is said, is the only stone structure in England of which every stone was laid by one man.

Valuable East African Forest.—The Colonial Office recently sent out an expert to report on the Kenia Forest, in the East Africa Protectorate. He finds the forest extends to 287 miles long by eight miles broad, and comprises 1,000,000 acres of timber. Taking the average value of the timber at 2 1/2d. per cubic foot, this works out to £23 per acre, or a total value for the whole forest of £23,000,000.

It is estimated that the Kafirs in the diamond mines at Kimberly, South Africa, steal \$1,250,000 worth of diamonds in a year.

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