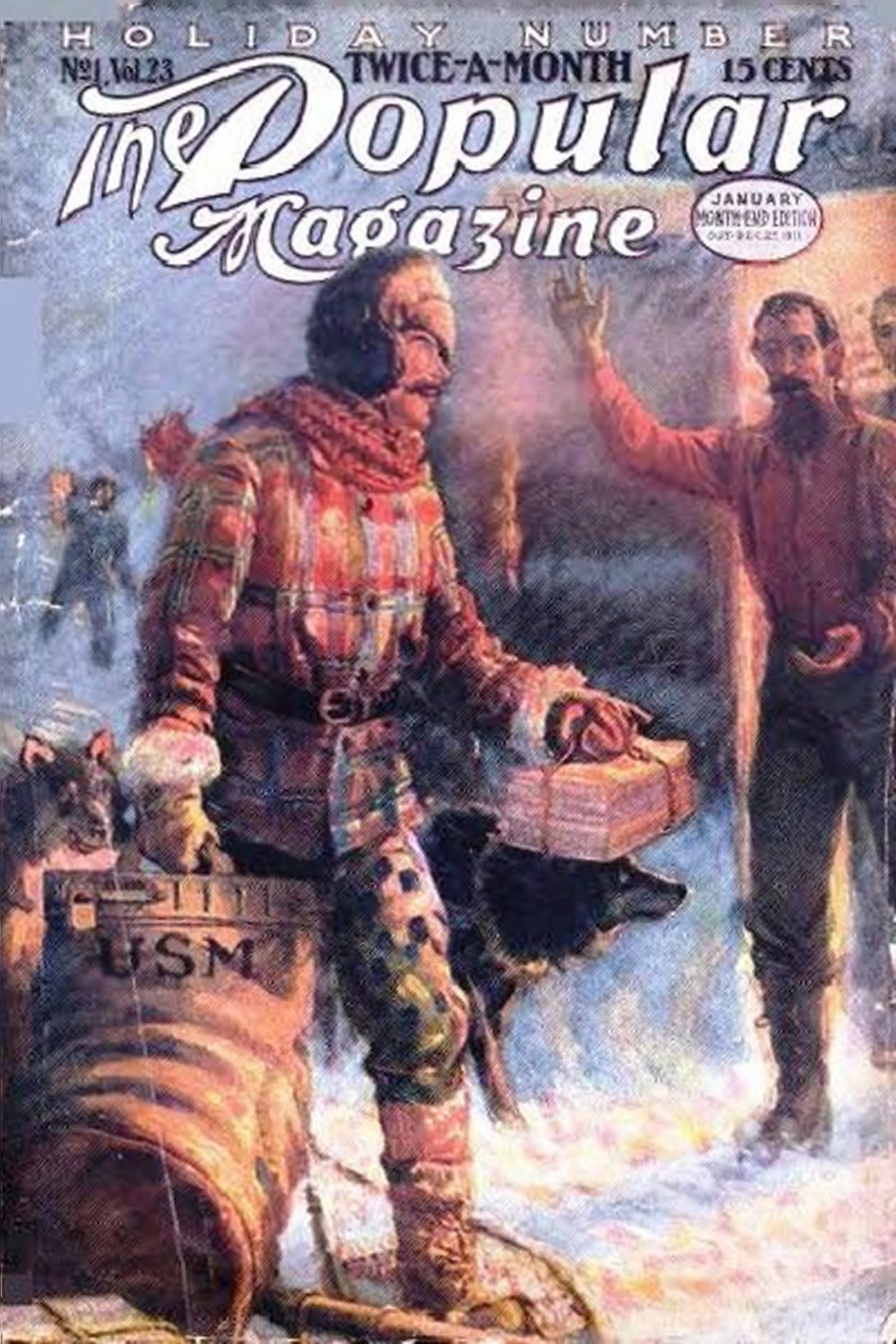
HOLIDAY NUMBER
No. 1, Vol. 23 TWICE-A-MONTH 15 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

JANUARY MONTH-END EDITION



UNDER THE POPULAR STANDARD

A PAINE LOVER.

SIR: I have read your publication for years, almost from the start, and while its first number was good, every succeeding number brings new and better articles, and make it a better magazine. The present issue, that of October 10, now on my desk, seems to be "unbeatable." "The Prodigy," by Paine, is a winner—all his stories appeal to me, as an old university man, especially. He has the true human note, if you will pardon the time-worn expression, and they go straight to the spot. Of course there are others—Van Loan, Pattulo, Doctor Rowland, Chisholm, Lynde—that are in the top rank, and I do not remember of but very few stories in the magazine that have escaped me, and failed to interest me. Luck to you, and were it possible I'd suggest a more frequent publication, but I guess twice a month is enough. We might get too much POPULAR, but I can't see how. Yours,

P. L. PRITCHETT.

Web City, Missouri.

A MINISTER PROTESTS.

DEAR SIR: The POPULAR came yesterday with its fine contents of splendid literature. Myself and family all enjoy it because it is full of interest, inspiration, and high ideals, and above all it is clean and sweet. On the same day another magazine was received which contained one unspeakably vile story, another full of salacious suggestion, a sketch of disgusting matrimonial infidelity, and an entirely absurd account of the political conditions in a certain Southern State. I suppose there is no way of getting at these purveyors of falsehood and filth, except possibly through the fight which you people are making to elevate the literary standards and moral tone of magazine fiction and articles. Success to you! Sincerely,

PHILIP DAVIDSON.

Rector of St. James', Greenville, Mississippi.

SPLENDID ACHIEVEMENT.

DEAR SIR: The October month-end POPULAR has been in my hands for a few weeks now, and I can truthfully say I have read and reread it. I want to congratulate you on your splendid achievement, the ever-popular "twice-a-month POPULAR," and to pronounce the October month-end number the best, without an exception, magazine I have ever read, seen, or heard of.

Wishing you every success, I am,

Yours respectfully,

G. Z. STOVER.

Homestead, Pennsylvania.

A NEW CONVERT.

GENTLEMEN: No doubt you receive an enormous number of "letters of praise" for your wonderful magazine; but I doubt if you get many from nonsubscribers. I am not a subscriber to the POPULAR—not to-day—but I will be to-morrow.

I say your magazine is wonderful. It is. A friend of mine who is a regular subscriber loaned me a few copies. They were dated 1900. I read them and hollered for more.

I have had a try at about all the magazines published; but until I read a POPULAR I must confess that I didn't know what a real magazine was.

I was simply amazed at the quality of the stories you gave for the money.

Wishing you "57" different kinds of success, I am, yours very truly, J. J. DUNN.

Lawrence, Mass.

THE CHANGELESS POPULAR.

DEAR SIRS: In the last seven years I have changed my business, politics, and papers throughout, with one exception—the POPULAR.

Yours respectfully,

O. A. WAGGONER.

Dexter, Kansas.

MONTH-END EDITION

VOLUME XXIII NUMBER 1

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

CONTENTS

JANUARY 15, 1912

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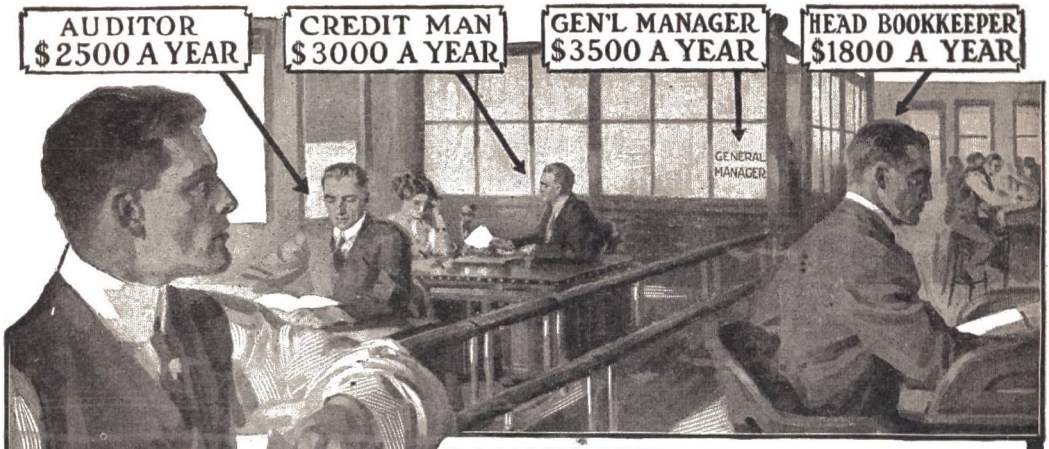

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Chicago, U. S. A.

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXIII. JANUARY 15, 1912. No. 1.

The Cruise of the "Colleen Bawn"

By Francis Lynde

Author of "The Fight for the G. V. & P.," "A Check for Seven Figures," Etc.

How it happens that a railroad man, a breezy young giant, full of enthusiasm for his work, is called to the Pacific coast and, after an eventful night that remains a queerly distorted thing in his memory, finds himself on board the *Colleen Bawn* and learns that he has signed on for a voyage to the Pribilofs as an able seaman! A strange predicament for an ambitious railroad man surely! When you hear what happens on the voyage and, after it, you will agree that it is a big story Lynde has to tell.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

THE MODERN VEHMGERICHT.

IN a certain high-storied office building in a Western city whose name is synonymous with refrigerated meats and many excellent packing-house products, in the private room of a suite whose windows commanded a wide outlook upon the lower roofs and chimneys, and in which the furnishings were as rich and costly as they were simple, two great men sat soberly discussing matters of business.

One of the two, the one with sloping shoulders, a dome-shaped head with light, curly hair thinning to baldness, and the face of a middle-aged and slightly shopworn cherub, was the general traffic manager of the far-reaching railroad whose business offices filled several floors of the tall building.

The other, large-framed and of generous flesh, was the second vice president, whose private car was halting for the day at the company's executive headquarters. To go with the vigorous frame and big body, there were hard-lined features, relieved only by the crow's-feet at the outer corners of the eyes; wrinkles pleasantly humorous when the vice president was telling one of his inimitable after-dinner stories at the Railway Club, but remaining after the laugh had expired to give the strong face an unrelenting and rather forbidding aspect.

"Oh, yes; by the way, there was another thing I wanted to take up with you while we are on this interstate business." It was the vice president speaking, and his voice had a distinct metallic quality in it that his after-dinner listeners seldom heard. "You have a young man on your pay rolls by the name of Livingston—a freight solicitor at St. Paul. What do you know about him?"

If the traffic manager wondered why his ranking officer should be interested

in one of the general freight agent's young men, he was judicious enough not to let the wonder manifest itself, and his answer was categorical. "Not much more than the little Romer has told me in going over the personnel of his outside agencies. Romer says he is one of the few really 'live wires' among the field men."

"You have his record, I suppose?"

"We should have it. Doubtless it is in Romer's private files."

"Get it," was the brief command.

The traffic manager pressed one of the electric buttons in the row at the desk's end, and the shirt-sleeved stenographer answering the call was directed to bring the personal record—item, "Livingston"—from the general freight office. When the neatly docketed file came, the traffic manager read its notings aloud.

"Livingston, Sidney G. Native of New York, and a descendant of well-known family of that name. Education, public schools New York City and college course in mining engineering; entered service of the company immediately after leaving college at age 22; one year engineering department and one year agent at Crow Mines, Wyoming; one year clerk and two years outside solicitor and contracting agent district freight office, Denver——"

"Hold on," interrupted the listener. "How did he come to shift departments and give up his profession?"

"Romer spoke of that," explained the reader. "It seems that the young man developed some considerable business ability at the Wyoming mines, and the traffic department offered better pay and more chance for promotion."

"All right," was the big man's comment, and the traffic manager continued:

"——Promoted from Denver to St. Paul agency on merit. Record A-X-12."

"Which means?" queried the vice president.

"'A' is the bonding company's letter, and it refers to the fiduciary standing of the man. It is the highest marking. 'X' refers to his business ability, and is also a first-grade mark. 'Twelve' indexes his habits and manner of living; in Livingston's case it means that he is a decent fellow and lives within his salary."

"Go on," said the vice president tersely.

"That is all, save a footnote, added recently, I take it. It records two items, either of which explains the other: Livingston has bought a cottage in a St. Paul suburb, and he is engaged to be married."

"Engaged to be married, is he?" questioned the vice president. "To some girl in St. Paul?"

"The record doesn't say."

"Then the record is incomplete, and my New York files give better details. Tell Romer so, with a hint that he'd better get busy. I happen to know that the young woman lives in Denver; that her father is a lawyer and a rabid anti-corporation crank, and that she has a cousin who is a special agent for the Interstate Commerce Commission."

"Ah!" said the traffic manager, and his face was now the face of a middle-aged cherub mystified and mildly disturbed. Then: "You don't mean to say that Livingston has been injudicious enough to——"

"I'm coming to that," snapped the big man in the broad-armed easy-chair. "What are Romer's instructions to his field men?"

"To track the law, but not to lose the business. The outside man understands that if he takes illegal chances he does it at his own risk; that if he is caught in any evasion of the law, the company will not stand behind him."

"Those are the open instructions, of course. But neither you nor Romer let it stop at that, do you?"

"No, not completely. Livingston dropped in the last time he was in Omaha—a duty call to pay his respects to the new traffic chief, I suppose. Frankly, I was most favorably impressed. He is a breezy young giant, what you might call a laughing fighter, upstanding, and full of enthusiasm. After a bit of desultory talk about the company's business in his district, he came at me squarely for a definition of the company's attitude toward the law."

"And you gave it?"

"I did. I told him there could be no two ways of regarding a law which was spread upon the statute books, and which sharply penalizes the law-breaker. We might—and do—consider the law unjust and oppressive; we might go farther and refuse to be morally bound by it. At the same time, the company, holding its charter under the law, must keep its skirts clean. I told Livingston that, while we wanted all the business in sight, we took it for granted that our men would look out for themselves, bearing in mind the fact that the company could not and would not undertake to defend its agents and solicitors in the courts."

"That ought to have been enough."

"To tell the truth, I was afraid it might be a little too much," said the traffic chief. "Romer had given me a pointer on this particular young man, saying that, while he was one of the most successful solicitors in the field, he was a trifle too much inclined to think for himself in matters involving ethical questions. Having this in mind, I sent Wood, my confidential stenographer, out to take Livingston to lunch at his club. Wood knows pretty well what to say in such cases."

"What *did* he say, in this particular case?" grated the vice president. "That is the nib of the matter."

At this, the traffic manager's smile was entirely cherubic.

"I am not supposed to know—and I don't know officially. But in an unofficial talk with Wood that same evening, I got the gist of the club-table confidences between him and Livingston. Wood gathered that Livingston was having a rather difficult fight in the northern territory; that it was growing increasingly harder for our young man to hold his own against the northern lines on a strictly legal basis. Probing a little deeper, Wood found that Livingston had been comparing notes with our Chicago office, where, as you know, we have been compelled to wink at a pretty liberal construction of the rebate clause. Having got thus far, Wood gave him his tip."

"Just precisely what *was* the tip?" demanded the ranking official, with more than a touch of impatience.

Again the traffic manager smiled.

"You mustn't forget that I know nothing at all—officially. Wood didn't go into details with me; I didn't want him to. But in a general way he let me understand that he had given Livingston the necessary inch of leeway."

The big man in the armchair sat up and brought his fist down solidly on the broad armchair.

"Yes, and again I can give you details where you can give only the vague generality," he commented, with some asperity. "Your man told Livingston that he would be allowed a more liberal expense account, and that the items wouldn't be too closely scrutinized here in the general offices. From that he went on to suggest ways and means of evading the law; a dozen of them. With a small shipper he might make a losing election bet, say, of a suit of clothes; for another he might make a convenient mistake in rate quotations, explaining it afterward by calling it a simple error in figuring and making it good with his own personal check to the shipper. These, and other similar outlays, he was to bury in his expense account under regular headings—automobile hire, hotel bills, and so on."

The traffic manager nodded gravely. "I know," he said; "or, rather, I carefully refrain from knowing. But I presume your information is correct."

"It is, and it goes still further. I can tell you precisely what Livingston said after your man had got through with his suggestions. He said something like this: 'Mr. Wood, if I could get my own consent to become a criminal for the company's profit, I should go the necessary inch farther and be a criminal for my own pocket first.' I venture to say that your confidential man didn't report that part of the talk to you, did he?"

Since even a general traffic manager may not be beyond the effect of a moral bucketing of cold water, the man at the handsome mahogany desk gasped.

"You may be very well assured that Wood didn't tell me anything like

that!" he ejaculated. And then: "I suppose your report comes straight?"

"It comes in the form of a sworn statement," said the vice president dryly. "I don't mind telling you how it was obtained. Shortly after this club-table episode, Livingston went to Denver on some company business, didn't he?"

"I couldn't say, though it's quite possible."

"Exactly. And while he was in Denver he saw the girl he is going to marry, and repeated to her, word for word, what your man Wood had suggested, and what he had said in reply, making a cheerful joke of the entire incident. This happened at the girl's home, and the girl's cousin, who is, as I have said, one of the special agents of the Interstate Commerce Commission, was conveniently hidden in the adjoining room. There was also another listener, as it happened—the person who made the sworn statement I spoke of; a man from our New York office who had been instructed to keep an eye both on Livingston and on the young woman's cousin. That is where we stand now!"

The traffic manager smiled wanly, and shook his head.

"Always a woman at the bottom of it," he remarked, with mild cynicism. "I'm sorry for Livingston. He impressed me favorably, as I have admitted. We'll let him go."

Again the vice president smote the arm of his chair, and this time profanity went with the blow.

"That isn't enough! You must find some way to tie his hands. Don't you see what will happen? He will be called into this case that the department of justice is trying to make out against us, and, if he repeats this story under oath, as a young fire eater of his type is likely to, we may as well throw up our hands. Turn it over to Gantley, and tell him to get busy on it at once. There isn't any time to lose!"

The traffic manager shrugged his sloping shoulders ever so slightly.

"Of course, if you say so. But I'd hate to turn my worst enemy over to Gantley and the legal department. Can't we hurry this young man out of the country on some business errand? Won't that answer the purpose?"

"I don't care what you do with him, so long as the Washington people won't be able to find him with a subpœna. Fix it up among yourselves, you and Romer and Gantley. Only see to it that there is no misfire. We can't afford to take any chances."

The traffic manager nodded, and his smile was once more slightly cynical when he said: "There will be one small ameliorating circumstance: the little Delilah out in Denver will get what is coming to her."

"Let us hope so," said the vice president; and, since the small matter of business had been definitely disposed of, he passed quickly to the discussion of larger affairs—a discussion dealing with the company's revenues, the probable size of the bumper crop which was already in harvesting along the company's lines, and, lastly, with a certain "gentleman's agreement" designed to maintain rates stiffly through the impending crop-moving car famine; all matters of much greater importance than the court-martial sentence which had been pronounced upon a joyous young ranker in the great traffic army, who had earned his effacement by talking too much to the young woman he was intending to marry.

CHAPTER II.

WHERE ROLLS THE PLATTE.

Denver, at its best a paradise for hustlers and convalescing "T. B.'s," and at its worst—namely on a dry summer day when a sand storm is blowing in from the suburbs—a good place to leave behind for a week-end in the mountains, bade good-by to Sidney Livingston about four hours after his arrival from St. Paul; that being the interval required for the transaction of the railroad business, which was his excuse for another Western trip, and for ascertaining upon good authority that Miss Philippa Goodwin had gone to

spend a few days with the Armstrongs at Cliff Cottages in the Platte Cañon.

Thus it happened that in the early evening of the day whose forenoon had witnessed the conference between the second vice president and the traffic manager in the high-storied office building some hundreds of miles to the eastward, Livingston was sitting out the after-dinner interval on the puncheon-floored porch of an imitation log cabin in the Platte Cañon, enjoying the cooling airs of the high places and the magnificent Rocky Mountain sunset, with Philippa Goodwin, cushion-propped in a hammock swung across the porch corner, for his sharer in the scenic sky carnival.

"We shall never, never see anything like this in Minnesota, shall we, Siddy?" said the girl, with the faintest possible tremolo of regret in her voice. "Isn't it perfectly glorious!"

"It is, and we shan't," admitted the joyous young athlete lounging in the split-bottomed chair at the hammock side. Then he administered the grain of comfort which had been made to do duty before in more than one of the regretful moments. "We're still hoping it won't be for longer than a century or so, Philly. That's why I bought the St. Paul cottage in a suburb with growing values. When I get that lead-pipe cinch on the Denver general agency we're banking on, we'll sell out and come back to the tall hills."

The pretty girl locked her fingers under her head, and gave him a love glance out of a pair of bewitching eyes that could look anything that Miss Philippa wished them to look.

"What difference does it make, Sidney, boy—so long as we can be together?" she asked softly.

"It will make a difference of about one hundred and fifty simoleons a month, for one thing," retorted the practical lover, with a good-natured grin. "Of course, we're far and away above counting the dollars just now, but every little so-while I have a thirsty sort of get-rich-quick attack—when I think of all the things I'd like to squander on you."

"Don't I know?" she said, still more softly. And then: "But money isn't everything, and I don't want you to get rich quick. I'd rather have more of you and less of the money."

This time Livingston's grin was a laugh.

"You needn't worry, Philly; when you find a railroad man getting rich, there will be a blue moon in the sky—either that, or else he'll be a grafter."

"Cousin Miles is always saying that you are all grafters, and it makes me spiteful," said the girl.

To this Livingston made no reply. From the beginning of things, Miles Glendish, who was a cousin-german to the Goodwins, had been his *bête noire*. For one thing, Glendish was an ex-railroad man who had broken all the traditions by taking service under the Interstate Commerce Commission and using his inside knowledge of railroading to trap his former associates. For another and greater thing, he had been Philippa's tireless and most persistent suitor, dating from the period when she had worn short dresses.

"The sunset is even more gorgeous now than it was when we came out, don't you think?" was the rather clumsy way in which Livingston tried to bury the Glendish reference.

The girl's laugh was low and sweet. The best of women may not be above taking a rise out of a fond lover upon occasion.

"How you do despise Miles, don't you, Siddy?" she mocked. And then: "I should think you'd like him; he has always been so good to me."

"I'd break his blooming neck if he wasn't good to you!" grumbled the athlete. "Just the same, I wish you wouldn't be so chummy with him, Philly. I don't like to say it behind a man's back, but I wouldn't put it beyond him to try to get a nip on me through you. You don't tell him any of the things we talk about, do you?"

"The idea!" she retorted, but even in that blissful moment Livingston remarked that she did not specifically deny the charge—remarked it then and remembered it afterward.

"Because it might make no end of trouble," he went on, "not only for me, but for a lot of other people. I've told you some things that would take the lid off with a vengeance if they should happen to get out."

The girl sat up in the hammock with her lower lip trembling and her eyes suspiciously bright.

"Sidney Livingston, I'd have you remember that I am Mr. John Goodwin's daughter!" she flamed out, and in the after time he was to suffer an additional stab when he recalled that this, too, was not a specific denial.

After this a cool little mist of silence enveloped the pair on the slab-floored porch; a wet blanketing marking one of their few small misunderstandings. It was the young man who first flung the wet blanket aside.

"Forget it, Philly," he begged contritely. "I can't help being a man, and most men'll yelp when you stroke 'em the wrong way. Let's talk about something else."

"Let it be about the Denver agency," she suggested, meeting him gladly at the halfway station. "Do you really think there is a chance of your getting it, Sidney?"

"Sometimes I do, and sometimes I'm not so sure about it. Mr. Romer is my solid friend, and he'll do what he can when Grindley, the present Denver man, gets his step up. But I wouldn't bet quite so high on the new general traffic manager. Somehow, I can't help feeling that he's a—a——"

"I've seen him," the girl interrupted. "He was in Denver a few days ago—on an inspection trip with Mr. McEvoy. I thought he looked like a dear, tired-out old angel."

Livingston became instantly curious.

"How did you happen to meet him?" he queried.

"I didn't 'meet' him, of course; not to be introduced. But he and Mr. McEvoy went to the theater, and afterward, at supper at the Savoy, I had him pointed out to me."

"Did you say your father pointed him out to you?" said Livingston, with the fine subtlety of a steam shovel going into action.

"No; it was Miles." The twilight had fallen, and her face was no longer an open index for everybody to read. But she made the correction calmly, and quite as if there could be no possible reason why she should not have gone to the theater, and afterward to the Savoy, with her cousin.

Livingston found a cigar in his pocket, and drew it out to stare at it thoughtfully; so hard and so thoughtfully that the wrapper curled up and burst between his finger and thumb. One does not lightly suspect the loved one's motives or soberly cast suspicion upon things high and holy. But even the best beloved may be human enough to trip and stumble among the traps and pitfalls in some path of inexpediency. Livingston was groping about in his mind for the gentlest possible way of expressing his rooted disapproval of Glendish as Philippa's escort when a night man from the station in the cañon below came up the porch steps to deliver a telegram.

When the messenger had gone, Livingston tore the envelope across, and the flare of a wax cigar light sufficed for the reading of the message.

"What is it?" demanded the girl, once more sitting up in the hammock. "Don't tell me that they're not going to let you stay over Sunday with me, Sidney."

"You've guessed it, Philly," was his half-mechanical reply. "It's from Mr. Romer, and he thinks I'm still in Denver."

"And he is telling you to hurry back to St. Paul?"

"No; that is the crazy-quilt part of it. He tells me to take the night train from Denver to San Francisco, and when I reach to report *pronto* to a man named Gregory, whose address is in the telegram."

"Oh, dear!" said the girl; "that is always the way. We can never be together for a single day without these wretched telegrams coming to search you out and send you off to the other side of the planet! What will you do?"

Livingston was glancing at the face of his watch, using another wax match for illumination.

"The up train will be along in a few minutes; if I can catch it, I'll still be in time to make the Midland Limited at Leadville. I guess it's another case of 'Hello' and 'Good-by,' little girl." And since his suit case had not yet been unpacked, he got it and took his leave of her on the spot, hurrying away when the desperately inadequate parting was accomplished, to bolt down the path for the train catching.

As Disappointment, in the person of the athletic young railroad man, went stumbling down the path in the darkness, it was met by Surprise coming up; though the surprise was not for Livingston, and in the double shadow of the cliff trail he did not recognize the dark-faced, immaculately dressed man who was toiling upward toward the Armstrong cottage.

A few minutes afterward, the dark-faced one mounted the porch steps, and took the chair beside Miss Goodwin's hammock—the one lately vacated by Livingston. During the leisurely clipping and lighting of a cigar, he did not speak, and when he did it was to say:

"I met Sid Livingston going down the trail with his grip as I came up. I thought he was to stay over Sunday."

"So he was," returned the girl in the hammock, "but he had a telegram from the general freight agent, and had to leave by the first train."

"Called back, eh?" laughed the smoker. "He'll be called down as well as back some fine day if he doesn't quit making his expense account cover so many trips to Denver."

"Miles!" protested the voice from the hammock. "Why is it you can be so nice to everybody else and so vicious when you happen to speak of Sidney? He wasn't called back. Mr. Romer wants him to go on to San Francisco by the first train."

Glendish's start was violent enough to make him drop the freshly lighted cigar. After he had picked it up and frugally wiped the end of it on his pocket handkerchief, he said quietly: "To the Pacific coast, eh? I wonder what that means?"

"Why should you wonder?" queried the lawyer's daughter half pettishly. "What difference does it make to you?"

"Not any difference to me, of course. But I should think it would jar you a little, Philippa. You're not likely to see him again for a long time, are you?"

"Why shouldn't I see him? Perhaps he will stop over again on his way East. I'll never forgive him if he doesn't."

Glendish turned slowly in his chair.

"Then you don't know?—your father hasn't told you?" he asked curiously.

"I haven't heard from poppa since yesterday. What is it that I haven't been told?"

"I don't know as I ought to give it away; perhaps he's saving it for a surprise to you. But I'll take a chance, anyway. I was with your father a few hours ago—just before I left the city. He has been commissioned by the interior department to go to Alaska to investigate the coal-field muddle on the ground, and he is going to take you with him for the run up the coast."

The girl's comment could scarcely be called joyful. It was a half-smothered sob.

"To Alaska—to be gone 'goodness knows how long! And—and I may not even be able to exchange one poor little wire with Sidney! Oh, Miles, I simply *can't* go."

"When so good a father as yours wants to give you a little pleasure trip, you can't very well refuse him, Cousin Philly; and, besides, he needs you to take care of him. He isn't as strong as he used to be," said the dark-faced man, and in her heart of hearts Philippa knew it was true and said no more.

As for the ex-railroad man who had turned traitor to his salt, and whose ambiguous title of "special agent" covered duties ranging all the way from expert examinations of railroad records to "shadow" work in keeping track of reluctant witnesses, he smoked on in thoughtful silence long after Miss

Goodwin had left her hammock and had disappeared within doors.

Later the thoughtful weighing and measuring bore fruit in a hasty consulting of time-tables, followed by a leisurely scramble, gripsack in hand, down the steep path to the small railroad station beside the tumbling river. A Denver-pointed freight was scheduled to come along within the next few minutes, and Glendish put in the waiting time writing a telegram. It was addressed to a certain official in the department of justice, at Washington, and it read:

In re U. S. vs. Choltapec: (Choltapec being the cipher for the name of Livingston's railroad company.) Defendants are trying to run principal witness out of the country. Shall follow, and if no orders to contrary, shall arrest and bring him back. Wire me care Bogota, San Francisco.

GLENDISH, Spl. Agt.

CHAPTER III.

A FLYER IN OREGON PINE.

Livingston had less than five minutes to spare between trains at Leadville Junction, but the Livingston luck was with him, and he made the connection and so saw the sunrise from the crooked reverse curves of the Saguache what time the through train was storming up the steep approach to Hagerman's.

Farther along, after he had breakfasted and the train had threaded the long bore of the Busk Tunnel and was rocketing down the grades of the western slope, he had time to reread the telegram from headquarters, and to consider, if he chose, its wonder-provoking brevity and its hint that an exceedingly curious traffic situation must have developed in San Francisco to make it necessary to send a man measurably unfamiliar with the Pacific-coast end of things two thousand miles out of his way to deal with it.

As for this, however, the seasoned railroad man soon learns to take things pretty much as they come, knowing that each fresh business problem is likely to present all sorts of new angles. An order was an order, and for three days and part of a fourth—there was a washout in the Sierras that cost him twenty-four hours of lost time—Livingston wore out the eastward-racing miles as best he could, and as he had worn out many other miles of business travel; reading a little in his Pullman section, eating at stated intervals, and spending a good bit of the between-meals periods in the smoking compartment, hobnobbing cheerfully with the transient acquaintances to be made in any Pullman smoking room for the asking.

Recalling the uneventful trip afterward, he remembered that none of these smoking-room by-friends had individualized himself specially; and when, on the evening of the fourth day, he landed in the Pacific coast metropolis, it was as a stranger in a city full of strangers. None the less, at the great hotel at which he was presently registering, there was somebody to clap him upon the shoulder at the book-signing moment; namely, one Orson Brent, sometime city passenger agent in Denver, and hence a comrade.

"Well, well, Sidney, old man! What good-natured little old blizzard blew you out here?" was the passenger man's greeting, and Livingston was glad enough to grip hands with some one who was pleasantly remindful of his Denver days.

"Minnesota always means blizzards to you outlanders, even in the middle of summer, doesn't it?" he laughed. And then: "I don't know what sort of an ill wind it was that blew me this far west—not yet, but that will keep. Been to dinner? Don't say you have, because I want you to come in and eat a bite with me while we reminisce a few lines."

"Can't do it," said Brent; "not unless you can find somebody who will lend me another tummy. I'm just out of the dining room."

"All right; then you'll come in and sit down and watch me get my money's worth. I shall blow up if I don't get a chance to talk to somebody I know. No; excuses don't go. I know you're

as busy as a cutworm in a cabbage patch, but that doesn't make any difference."

Brent laughed, and turned to the room clerk.

"If Mr. Farnham comes in, send for me," he directed. "I'll be in the café with Mr. Livingston."

With this for a start, the two young men killed a good half hour over a chummy table in the corner of the big café, bringing things up to date. It was their first meeting for something more than a year, and in the Denver days they had been as David and Jonathan.

"Of course, you chase back to Denver every once in a while," said Brent, when they had worked through the thick of the reminiscences. "How about the little Philippa girl? Didn't somebody tell me that you'd gone and got yourself duly and properly branded up at the Goodwin Ranch?"

"We're engaged, and the date is set for the first week in September," said Livingston, with proper dignity.

"*Hoch der Kaiser!*—put it there!" said the passenger man, reaching a congratulatory hand across the table. "So you did manage to run Cousin Glendish off the reservation, finally, did you? By the way, he's here in Frisco. Did you know that?"

"No!" exclaimed Livingston, and then: "Say—that can't be, Orson. I saw him in Denver the day I left."

"I can't help it. I saw him out yonder in the lobby, not more than half a minute before you came up to register. When I saw you, I was just wondering what sort of a job he was planning to put up on us poor railroad innocents this time."

Livingston was silent for a moment. The twenty-four-hour delay of his own train accounted for Glendish's ability to win if he were racing him to the coast. Then, because Brent was a good friend and a trustworthy, he made a break into the field of the business confidences.

"Of course, you know what Glendish is doing, Orson? They call him a 'special agent' for the commission, but, as a matter of fact, he is a sort of sublimated spotter. And this time I'm more than half inclined to suspect that he is after me."

Whereupon he told Brent briefly of the mysterious order from headquarters, and of his own conclusion that he had been sent into the Western field to cover the tracks of the local freight men in some transaction that would not bear daylight.

"What did you say was the name of the man you were told to hunt up?" asked Brent.

"Mr. Adam Gregory, of Gregory & Bolter."

Brent laughed silently.

"You're up against it this time, Sidney," he asserted. "They are a pair of freaks from Freakville. Lumber people, you know, with a record for skinning the market alive and frying the fat out of every combination that has ever tried to down 'em. Gregory's a little man with the glibbest tongue that was ever hung in the middle and set to wag both ways at once. And Bolter—well, he's a retired sea captain, and if his name wasn't Captain Kidd 'as he sailed, as he sailed,' people around here will tell you that it ought to have been."

"Big business?" queried Livingston.

"A whaling big business. They handle Oregon pine mostly, I believe, and they land contracts everywhere. How they do it is a mystery to me. You wouldn't think old Adam Gregory could ever stop talking long enough to do any business with anybody, and, as for the captain, they'll tell you at the lumber wharves that nobody has ever seen him completely and entirely sober since he's been in business here."

"Ump!" said Livingston, making no attempt to conceal his disgust. "When you fellows out here get hold of something too muddy to touch, you wire East, and rope down some poor fellow out of God's country! Where will I find this talkative Mr. Gregory?"

"It's two to one you'll find him at his shack office down in the lumber district any time up to midnight. He works while his partner carouses. But you don't need to tear off down there to-night, do you?"

"The sooner I go, the sooner I'll be able to get back to civilization," laughed Livingston, good-naturedly sardonic, and just then a waiter came up with a message from the room clerk; the man for whom Brent had been waiting was asking for him at the desk.

The passenger agent got up reluctantly.

"That means that I'll have to vanish," he said. "I'm all kinds of sorry; I'd like to have the evening with you. But business is business. So long, till to-morrow."

After Brent had gone, Livingston took his time about finishing his coffee, and later, when he passed through the lobby to begin the quest for Mr. Adam Gregory, the passenger man had disappeared.

It was after he had left the street car which carried him down to the region of lumber yards and had walked two or three squares toward the water front that he first got the notion that some one was following him. More than once he made sure that he heard footsteps behind him; treadings carefully timed to match his own, but when, at the next lighted corner, he wheeled suddenly to surprise the shadower, there was no one in sight.

As he went on, the leaven set to work by the little confidence with Brent began to foster a huge discontent, and the solution of the mystery which had been hinted at in the talk with the passenger man grew into a conviction. Some freight deal—probably a crooked one—was to be put through with the man Gregory; and to "save the face" of the San Francisco railroad force—to enable its members to go into court, if need be, and swear that they knew nothing about it—he was to be employed as the deal closer.

It made him generously indignant for the moment. Thus far, as he had bluntly told the traffic manager's confidential secretary over the club luncheon, he had fought for business on a straight basis, and his record was clean. Now, as it seemed, the clean sheet was to be marred.

It was a hasty judgment that Livingston passed upon his superiors in the heart of the indignant moment, but Glendish's sudden appearance in San Francisco had the effect of clinching it. A crooked transaction was on the cards; the Interstate Commerce people had got wind of it, and their special agent was on the ground to try to get the evidence. When he reached this point in the broad highway of supposition, Livingston said: "Oh, dammit all!" and he meant it.

It was among the biggest of the lumber piles that he finally found the address he was looking for; a corrugated-iron office shed backed up against a sawed forest of Oregon pine ranged in towering stacks with only narrow wagonways between the rows. There was a light in the office to show that it was occupied, and Livingston went in. At a desk in one corner of the sheet-iron box sat a small, sallow-faced, shrewd-eyed man, seemingly up to his neck in work. But at the door opening he pushed the papers aside, and looked up quickly.

"Ah, it's you, is it, Mr. Livingston?" he said briskly. "We were hardly looking for you until to-morrow. You've made a quick trip across. Draw up a chair, and sit down."

More mystified than ever, Livingston took the indicated chair, and began to search in his pockets for his cigar case. But the small man at the desk forestalled him.

"Try one of mine," he interposed, taking a freshly opened box from a drawer in the desk; and, when Livingston had helped himself to one of the curiously twisted black smokes from the box—which bore no sign of a revenue stamp: "You needn't be afraid of them; there is nothing the matter with them except that they are a fairly famous Mexican brand, and they've somehow got in without paying the customhouse."

Livingston lighted the queer-looking cigar, and the first whiff was delicious. When it was going well, he leaned back in his chair, and took the measure of the man whom he had come so far to meet.

"When you are quite good and ready, Mr. Gregory, perhaps you'll tell me what I'm here for," he began, with the cheerfully challenging smile which made him loyal friends and honest enemies wherever he went.

"Surely! Didn't they tell you at headquarters as you came through?"

"I was already as far west as Denver when Mr. Romer's wire found me, and I was merely told to come here at once and look you up."

The small man tilted his chair, and laughed—cackled, would be the better word.

"If that doesn't beat a hog a-flying wrong end to!" he chuckled. "Came right along, without knowing the first thing about what you were up against? That speaks volumes for the discipline on your railroad, Mr. Livingston; whole libraries, you might say. And all I wanted or asked for was a bit of inside information that they told me you could give me straighter than anybody else this side of Chicago."

"You'll have to show me, Mr. Gregory," said the one who had small use for the methods of indirection. "Who are you?"

"I'm in lumber, as you see—Oregon stuff mostly—and to-morrow you can look me up through the local railroad offices, if you feel like it. They know me pretty well up in Montgomery Street. I've put a good many thousand dollars' worth of freight in their way, first and last. But that's neither here nor there. We're on the edge of a big deal with the heaviest lumber buyer in Minnesota, and, if we can pull it off, we'll make a wad of money, and your road will get the freight. But the thing has got down to a point where we were practically obliged to see and talk with somebody who knows the Minnesota end of the business—somebody we can trust for a straight story about these people who are buying."

"Go on," said Livingston. "I'm beginning to see the hole in the millstone, though I can't see just why you prefer a railroad man's report to a write-up from the commercial agencies."

"All in good time, all in good time, Mr. Livingston," returned the little man genially. "Perhaps, for the present, it will answer if I say that we *do* prefer the personal report." Then, as he sprang up and began to sweep the desk litter into an open drawer: "Let's go out and hunt up my partner. He is really the man who won't trust the commercial agencies, you know; queerest old 'Captain Cuttle' you ever laid eyes on, Mr. Livingston—was skipper of a lumber hooker for years before he made his shore stake, and you'd take him for a retired pirate to this good minute. There's no telling where we'll find him at this time of night; most likely punishing a bottle of rum with some of his old messmates in a waterfront dive."

Livingston's experience hitherto as a railroad solicitor had been rich in incident, but not in any part of it had he found anything to compare with this San Francisco episode. The absurdities were crowding thickly upon him as he forthfared through the deserted streets of the lumber docks with his voluble guide.

Why any business man—even the queerest of Captain Cuttles—should want a personal verbal report on a distant customer before dealing with him, why he should prefer the verbal report to the accurate and detailed information which the commercial agencies could furnish, was a ridiculous mystery.

At this stage of the proceedings, Livingston was charging all of the absurdities up to the account of Gregory & Co. He knew railroading in all of its crooks and turnings—or thought he did—and it did not strike him as being in any sense absurd that his superior should send him a few thousand miles out of his way to gratify the whim of an eccentric shipper.

It was an easy, and a comparatively cheap, way of securing Gregory & Co.'s business, and was, of course—and he reached this conclusion with a profound sigh of relief—a perfectly legitimate way of securing it.

But the ridiculous phase of the incident was still emphasizing itself as he tramped along with the talkative little

lumber dealer; and Gregory himself seemed to feel it, since he interrupted his own stream of commonplace now and then to apologize for his "queer" partner and that partner's occasional lapses into unbusinesslike methods.

Being entirely strange to that part of the city through which his guide was piloting him, Livingston got little idea of directions or distances, but when they came into the peopled streets, he judged that they were still in the vicinity of the water front. At one of the least garish of the many saloons they were passing, the little man stopped, and said something about the extreme dryness of things, and, not to be overrighteous, Livingston went in with him.

Once inside, the lumber merchant seemed to lose sight, temporarily at least, of the business object. A friend of his, a Sonoma vineyardist, had lately put a brand of his own wine on the market, and Livingston must pass an opinion upon it.

At this point, with the slender half of a reasonable excuse, the young man from St. Paul would have deferred the entire adventure to daylight and gone back to his hotel. Without having any hard-and-fast prejudices or predilections worth speaking of, he had no notion of entering upon even the mildest carouse in the company of the voluble little man who dealt in Oregon pine and queer partners.

On the other hand, it seemed an ill thing to flout the little man's attempt at hospitality, and the upshot of the matter was that Livingston presently found himself sitting at a small round table in the barroom, sipping gingerly at a glass of the thin, acrid stuff which passes for wine with some Californians; sipping and listening with forced attention to Gregory's long-winded story of the vineyardist's ups and downs in the business of wine-making.

What followed was by no means easy to recall—after the fact. From listening and putting in the necessary word here and there, Livingston found himself growing unaccountably drowsy as the lumber merchant droned on and on. Somewhere in the dry desert of volubility there was a break; and, after that, a dim recollection of other wanderings, in which Gregory gave him a guiding arm and was always talking like a phonograph wound up and set to run indefinitely.

Beyond this there was a vague mental picture of the interior of a sailors' pothouse, reeking with the odors of bad tobacco and still viler liquor; of falling into a strange, half-comatose condition, in which it seemed quite feasible to stand apart and see himself sitting with his head in his hands and his elbows upon a pig-filthy card table; to see and hear Gregory and a hairy-faced buccaneer and a third man arguing over him, the argument ending with the shoving of a paper across the table and the thrusting of a pen into the hand of the helpless other self.

Without being in any way able to prevent it, Livingston—the part of him that was looking on—saw his dullard self at the table grip the pen and sign; and after that there was a vast and shoreless blank, stormful and troublous only as the vaguest dream may have disturbed the soundest sleeper of the fabled seven.

CHAPTER IV.

"YO, HO, HO, AND A BOTTLE——"

When Livingston awoke, as a single and sane personality instead of in the dual and somewhat uncertain rôle which figured as his latest recollection, he found it difficult to persuade himself that he was not still struggling in the grasp of a dream which was now assuming another and a vastly more disconcerting form.

As nearly as he could determine, he was at sea, apparently the sole occupant of a ship's forecastle. That it was the forecastle, he could see by twisting his head and raising it a little to peer over the boxlike bunk edge; the stuffy, thick-timbered little den was triangular in shape, and the bunks were ranged in tiers of three, completely filling two sides of the triangle.

Having thus in a manner oriented himself, the next thing to claim his attention was a clumsy bandage upon his head; the dressing, as he soon determined by a throbbing pain, of a wound of some kind which was stiff with clotted blood.

Overhead he could hear the trampling of men and the creaking of spars and cordage; and from the regular lift and plunge and the rush of the surges under the ship's forefoot, it was evident that the vesel was in open water, sailing —as he was seawise enough to gather— fairly on the wind.

Even with all these evidences tangible and audible, the fantastic dream notion persisted. Lying back in the box-like bunk, he strove to recall in detail the happenings of the night. They were clear enough, up to a certain point —the point at which the talkative little lumber merchant's story of the vine grower's ups and downs had begun to have a hypnotic effect. Could it be possible that he had been hypnotized?— that he was still under the effect of the spell? Manifestly not. The rough realities were too obtrusive and too painful to be phantasmic.

What then? What had happened to him during the interval between sleeping and waking? Quickly he passed in review all the "shanghai" stories he had heard or read—he had classed most of them as fictions, believing that no shipmaster short of a pirate would take the risk of a kidnaper's penalties.

Then there came to him the recollection of the scene in the ill-smelling saloon; the scene in which he had seemed to stand aside to look on while his other self sat at a card table and signed a paper of some sort. Had he, in the drowsy trance which had robbed him of reason and accountability, been so besotted as to "sign on" with some skipper for a voyage to the unknown? Considered in the light of present evidences, it began to look extremely like it.

It was characteristic of the quality which his business training had developed that he began at once to dig for the primal cause. If he had been kidnaped, there must have been a plot, with some one to be benefited. Who was the beneficiary? Not Gregory certainly; the little man was too evidently only a tool—and not a very willing one, if the hazy recollections counted for anything, since the clearest of the dim pictures was the one which showed Gregory expostulating anxiously with the man for whom the paper had been signed.

But who, then? Livingston gave it up with a groan of exasperation; and, to his astonishment, the groan was echoed from the opposite bunk. Peering over his box edge again in the murky twilight of the place, he made out a haggard face lifting itself into view above the box edge of the opposite sleeping shelf. Then he made sure he was dreaming, for the face was the face of Philippa's cousin, Miles Glendish.

"Hello!" he ejaculated, and the exclamation was fairly jerked out of him in his astoundment at the apparition.

The man in the other bunk answered with a ghastly grin, and raised himself upon an elbow.

"Same to you," was the thick-tongued rejoinder. And then: "I thought they'd got your goat. Knocked you out for keeps."

"Oh, you did, did you?" growled Livingston. "What do you know about it?"

"All there is to know, I guess," was the feeble reply, which was punctuated by a shudder of nausea. "You've signed on for a voyage to God knows where, and I've been shanghaied to keep you company."

Livingston propped himself against the bunkhead, and closed his eyes.

"You'll have to tell it over to me in words of one syllable," he protested. "It's a pure pipe dream, as it stands."

Glendish had another shuddering fit, sitting up in the blankets and doubling himself like a contortionist with his head between his knees.

"It's horrible!" he panted, when the fit had passed. "I—I've never been able to be seasick like other people.

I'm a dead man, Livingston. I'll never live to get out of this!"

"Piffle! That's what they all say," snorted Livingston. "Buck up and be a man!"

"That's all right for you!" was the bickering countershot. "Wait till you get to the point where you're afraid you're going to die one minute, and the next minute you're afraid you won't!"

"I'm not going to get to that point, Glendish. But I'll tell you what I am going to do. I'm going to crawl over there and beat you to ravelings if you don't hurry up and tell me what happened last night."

"You were drunk! That's the first thing that happened!" was the vicious retort.

"That's a lie, Glendish—one of the million or so you've told and sworn to since you quit being a railroad man. But let it go. Drunk or drugged, it's all the same. I don't remember anything beyond sitting in a saloon with a man named Gregory and listening to his stories until I went to sleep."

"I know," said the special agent. "I went with you and stayed with you—more's the pity. That's why I'm here."

"But it doesn't tell me why I'm here," rapped out the victim.

Glendish had another contortion fit, less violent than the first, and, when he got his breath again, he went on, his manner showing that he found some little spiteful pleasure in the narration.

"You were a stumblingblock, and you had to be got rid of; that's all there was to it. I was at the Platte Cañon cottage the night you left, and Philippa told me about your wire from headquarters. You were wanted as a witness in the rebate case against the railroad, and I knew the railroad lawyers would try to put you out of reach of a subpœna. They've done it."

"Good Lord!" said Livingston. "You don't mean to say that Mr. Romer——"

"Most probably Romer didn't know anything about it. The lawyers fix these things up quietly among themselves, and you don't know you're hurt till you're plumb dead. Gregory did actually wire Romer to send you out to Frisco. That much of it was straight and aboveboard."

"And Gregory was hired to kill me off?"

"It shapes up that way. He was in trouble of some sort, tangled up in some crooked business deal, and your railroad people stood in a position to be able to swear him out of it. One good turn deserves another, you know."

"Go on," groaned the stumblingblock.

"You hiked for Frisco on your telegram, and I hiked after you. I was going to get a Federal court warrant and arrest you, if it came down to brass tacks. Then this Gregory man butted in, and that was all new to me. I shadowed you, and was big enough fool to be in at the death."

"Still, you don't tell me what happened, and how I got this broken head."

"I'm coming to that. I guess Gregory doped the sour wine he bought for you; you acted like a drugged man afterward, anyhow. He dragged you around from one sailors' barroom to another until he found his sea-captain partner. The scheme was to put you on one of the lumber schooners bound for Alaska—at least, that was where she was clearing for. But really she was going to British Columbia for a smuggled cargo. Once they got you outside of the jurisdiction of the United States courts, they meant to hold you one way or another until the danger had blown over."

"And we're on the lumber ship now?"

"It's worse than that. At the last minute the captain of the lumber schooner kicked out. It was when he heard your name mentioned. It seems that he knew something about your folks in New York, and he said there'd be the devil to pay when the thing came out. At that, Gregory's old pirate of a partner pulled another man in; the captain of this hooker we're on now. There was some little talk that I didn't catch onto, and Gregory hung off; threatened to wash his hands of the whole business. But in the end they got you to sign the ship's papers, and

started to take you aboard. Then the fun began. You put five of them out of the game before they clubbed you silly, and carried you down to the bay front. It was the prettiest scrap I ever saw."

"Lord, Lord!—and I don't remember a blessed thing about it!" said Livingston weakly.

"You ought to remember it. What you did to that gang of thugs was a-plenty. But they got you, finally, as I say; and then it was up to me to find out what they were going to do with you. I don't love you any too well, Livingston, but I was going to keep you in America if I had to start a revenue cutter after you. But to do that, I had first to find out the name of this scow boat; and, while I was trying to pry that necessary fact loose, they nabbed me."

"Shanghaied you?" queried Livingston.

"That's about it. I overheard the captain's talk—a little of it. It seems he was going out short-handed, anyway, and was sweeping the corners for men."

Just here Glendish fell into another of the shuddering fits, and, when it was over, Livingston said: "Well, what's the answer? What is this ship, and where are we bound?"

The sick man shook his head dejectedly.

"I don't know any more than a goat, Livingston. But it's something crooked. She's a gasoline auxiliary, pretty smartly powered, and she's got the lines of an old-time clipper. She was towed out of her berth as cautiously as if she were stealing off without her clearance papers, and went slipping down the bay under sail. Some time before we got through the Golden Gate, the searchlights began to play, and a harbor tug chased us. Then we got the power on, and made a run for it. That's all I can tell you."

"Much of a crew?"

"I couldn't tell in the dark. But it's a tough bunch, all right, and four times as big as it need be. Just before I keeled over and got kicked into this hole, the mates went through the crowd for weapons. There was a free-for-all fight, and a shot or two fired. I don't know how it came out, and I wasn't in any condition to care very much."

Livingston sat up in the low bunk, and tried to get a fair grasp of the situation.

"You say that I signed the ship's papers. Does that mean that I'm in for the entire voyage and whatever they want to hand out to me—with no hope of squaring things when I get back to earth again? Is that the size of it, Glendish?"

"Same as," was the laconic rejoinder.

"And you haven't any idea as to where we're bound, or how long it will last?"

"No more than you have. At first I thought this hooker might be an illegal sealer; a 'pelagic,' as they call 'em in the treaties. But somehow the notion don't seem to fit. I was awake when the watch below turned in last night—God knows if I shall ever be able to sleep again—and it didn't seem like a sealer's crew, some way. Bad men from Bitter Creek would fit 'em better; and I don't believe there were three sure-enough sailors in the bunch, from their lingo."

"Still, you believe it's something crooked?"

"I hope to thunder it is!" rasped the sick man, in a sudden outburst of vindictiveness. "The crookeder the better. They've got me, but they don't know who or what I am, or what I can do to 'em if they ever make land within shouting distance of a customhouse flag! I'll make 'em sweat, Livingston! I'll put the last black-hearted hobo of 'em on the stone pile till his hair turns white and his teeth drop out! And I can do it. *I didn't sign any papers!*"

Livingston's grin was a strong man's easing of strains.

"First catch your hare," he advised. And then: "Yesterday, and for a good bit back of that, you were trying to cut my throat, Glendish; and I'll be frank enough to say that I wouldn't have missed a good chance to land on you.

We're on opposite teams in the big game, and it's up to each of us to do the other, if he can. That's the status in America; it's for you to say what it's going to be while we are both at the mercy of this hooker captain. What's it to be—peace or war?"

Glendish sat up, and groaned again in one of his recurrent agonies. The light in the forecastle was poor, but Livingston could see the sweat starting in great beads on the sick man's forehead, and for the moment the dark face was ghastly and livid. When the paroxysm was over, Glendish fell back in the bunk, and when he spoke the words came jerkily.

"Big game—nothing!" he panted. "You know well enough why I swung over to the other side; it was to get a better chance to scrag you. And I'll never quit, Livingston—not while you live and Philippa Goodwin lives!"

"I understand," was the careless reply. "That's the status in America, as I say, and I don't know that I'd give a nickel to have it changed. But here and now, Glendish: do we go on feeling for each other's throat—you in your asinine vindictiveness, and I in sheer self-defense? Or shall we call it off for the present and buck up together against the common enemy?"

To this common-sense appeal, Glendish gave only a qualified assent. And behind the assent there were reservations. A stubborn slant toward treachery is not to be overcome in a single yielding to the more generous promptings.

"I'm not an ass," he said sourly. "I stand with you, of course—until we can claw out of this mix-up. All I ask is that you don't let them know who I am. If they should find out that I'm in the government service, they'd never let me get back alive; never in this wide world."

Livingston had a saving sense of humor, and he was able to laugh.

"Don't take yourself too seriously, Glendish," he counseled. "You've dropped out of 'this wide world,' and so have I, and I'll venture to say that neither of us has left more than a ripple to show where he went down. What sort of a splash we'll make when we come up again is another matter. But it's a safe bet that it won't be as big as we'd like to have it."

"Speak for yourself," said the tormented one grittingly, and what more he might have said was lost in a sudden sliding of the forecastle hatch, the inrush of a blinding flood of daylight, and the blotting out of the same by the clambering descent of a big-bodied man in shapeless sea clothes and with a mate's cap to cover an uncombed thatch of tawny hair which bushed down over cheek and jaw in a silky yellow beard.

With only a contemptuous glance for the drawn-up figure in the port box bunk, the yellow-haired giant turned to Livingston.

"Da captain he say you coom vit mae to da cabin, and you coom—vitout any dem monkeyshane dat you bane kickin' oop las' nate," he rumbled, in the broken speech which fitted accurately with the steel-blue eyes, the yellow mane, and the Viking beard. And Livingston, a little unsteady on his legs with the throbbing headache, turned out, and followed the mate's lead to the deck and the welcome outbreadth of sunshine and fresh air.

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN LAMB.

Though Livingston was New York born and bred, his seafaring experience had been limited to a few college-vacation yachting cruises on the Atlantic seaboard. Hence, what with the update into the dazzling sunlight and the strangeness of the surroundings, he was scarcely qualified to take the nautical measure of the stout, weather-beaten Western ocean schooner in the short passage from the fore deck to the main companion at the heels of the yellow-haired mate.

Nevertheless, so far as might be seen, orderly routine seemed to have succeeded to the chaotic mêlée of the night as described by Glendish. The schooner

was going free, with a fair wind, and the course, as nearly as one might guess it from the position of the sun, was a few points west of north. The watch on deck was indistinguishable from the watch off duty.

There was apparently no work to be done, and the men—a pick-up crew, looking more like a nooning gang of railroad laborers than mariners—were idling in little knots and groups, with the usual number of pallid faces to mark the unseasoned landsmen.

Livingston recalled Glendish's descriptive phrase, and acknowledged its aptness. If appearances went for anything, the hooker's crew might have figured as a survival, not of the fittest, but of the flotsam and jetsam; the human skimmings of the great port of call they were leaving behind.

Larscom, the big mate, stopped at the companion stair, and motioned for his follower to go down. At the sudden transition from the bright sunshine to the port-lighted cabin, Livingston went blind again; when he could see, he found himself in a bare little den differing from the heavily timbered forecastle only in shape.

A swinging lamp was describing wabbling ellipses at the end of its chain, keeping time to the reach and lunge of the vessel over the long Pacific surges; there were three sea chests and a stool or two, and a roughly built table under the suspended lamp.

At the table sat a square-shouldered, well-set-up man in a pea-jacket and corduroys, with a yachting cap pulled down over his well-shaped head; a man in his early thirties, Livingston guessed, a pleasant-faced autocrat with a glimpse of humor in the gray eyes to temper the hardness of the straight-lined mouth and the angular jaw which was indifferently masked by a tightly curling brown beard trimmed to a point.

"So," said the waiting autocrat genially, "you were able to get up and come aft, were you, Mr. Livingston? I'm glad of that. Draw up a stool and sit down. You haven't quite got your sea legs yet, or is it the tap on the head we had to give you last night?"

Livingston wanted to explode; it was undeniably his right and privilege as a kidnaper's victim. But short of doing something violent, he could think of no way of beginning a quarrel with the pleasant-faced skipper who had kidnaped him overnight and was now smiling level-eyed at him across the cabin table. So he took the nearest stool, and sat down with his back to the mainmast.

"That's right," approved the kidnaper, still cordially affable. "Ductility—a disposition to save breakages by yielding a little here and there—is the secret of a long and happy life, Mr. Livingston. To be a true philosopher, one must be malleable. I wish you might have realized that last night. It would have relieved us of a very harsh and unfeeling necessity—the necessity of clubbing you into a state of insensibility. However, we won't waste time on the bygones. Your head will doubtless heal, and then you'll be a philosopher again. I'm sure of it."

"Hold on," broke in the victim. "Perhaps it will be just as well if we don't begin by taking too many things for granted, Captain——"

"Lamb, if you please; Ignatius Loyola Lamb, if you want it entire," smilingly interjected the kidnaper.

"Well, then, Captain Lamb, as I say, maybe it will be better if we don't take too much for granted. When we get within hailing distance of a court of law again, I shall do my level best to make you pay—not only for the man-stealing, but for the broken head as well. Let's understand this definitely, right at the start."

The handsome skipper sat back, and buried his hands in his pea-jacket pockets.

"That is a future, Mr. Livingston, and we are too far away from Wall Street to deal in futures—and, incidentally, too far from the courts to let any anxious thought of them disturb the present. I sent Larscom after you a few minutes ago so that we might discuss your status on board the *Colleen Bawn*. Are you aware that you have signed on for a voyage to the Pribilofs as an able-bodied seaman?"

"No," said Livingston briefly. He was still hoping that Glendish's assertion might fall somewhat short of the actual fact.

Captain Lamb drew a paper from his pocket, and passed it across the table.

"See for yourself," he said succinctly, and Livingston looked and saw his signature fairly written under a transcript of the ship's articles.

"That, also, was a necessity which I would gladly have dodged," the captain went on smoothly. "But there seemed to be no possibility of inducing you to come with us voluntarily, and—well, to put it very crudely, we needed you."

"You mean that you needed the money you were paid for getting me out of the way!" was the quick retort.

"Oh, no; you are mistaken—completely mistaken now. Quite the contrary. I bought and paid for the privilege of enlisting you, odd as it may seem. For reasons which you will doubtless understand better than I do or can, somebody did want to get you out of the way, and the price, as I understood it, was to be divided between your friend, Gregory, and the skipper of a certain lumber schooner which was about to sail for some No Man's Land in southern Alaska. At the last moment this hooker captain learned that you are one of the New York Livingstons, and lost his nerve. That was my opportunity, and I took it—purchased it, as a matter of fact. And it was this very bit of information about your personality that made me as eager to step into the breach as the hooker skipper was anxious to step out of it. Odd, wasn't it?"

"So blamed odd that I shall have to ask you to show me," growled the prisoner.

"I can't show you all of it, at the present time," was the even-voiced rejoinder. "Let it be enough if I say that this little expedition of mine needed a man with your equipment, Mr. Livingston; it couldn't sail without him, and I was at my wits' end."

"My equipment? Great Jehu! I'm a railroad man, Captain Lamb. Have you mistaken me for something else?"

"Ah! But before the railroading you were a university man. I do hope you haven't forgotten all you learned in college, Mr. Livingston. That would be an irretrievable misfortune!"

"I've something more than a smattering of engineering, if that's what you mean," said the victim, now thoroughly bewildered and mystified.

"It is precisely what I mean. You are a technical mathematician, and unhappily my acquirements in that field are only those of the amateur navigator. Now we can come down to that present which is trying so spitefully to elude us. I'm going to make you a proposal. As an ordinary seaman—which, according to the ship's articles, is what you have made yourself—you are entitled to pull and haul with the others, to get your meals at the galley door, and to sleep, luxuriously or otherwise, in the forecastle. And at the end of the voyage you get a seaman's pay."

"And you'll get yours at about the same minute!" was the wrathful interruption.

"No; hear me through," said the affable kidnaper mildly. "You will have no legal recourse; none whatever. There were two witnesses who saw you sign on: your friend, Gregory, and his rum-drinking partner. They're both in too deep to pull out, and to save themselves they'll swear that you signed voluntarily. That is what you are in for, Mr. Livingston, and, if I say the word, it's what you will get. But I don't want to make it hard for you. Quite the contrary, I'm going to give you quarters aft and a seat at the cabin table. And besides that, I'm going to hand over a liberal share of the prize money, *when you have helped to earn it.*"

"The prize money?" echoed Livingston. "That sounds like old-fashioned piracy, Captain Lamb. I thought we were past all that nowadays."

The captain's laugh was gently derisive.

"You can say that?—and you a railroad man? Why, my dear fellow, this is the Golden Age of piracy, and our

own glorious America figures as the Spanish Main, par excellence! We are living over again the age that Wordsworth was describing when he said:

"The good old rule
Sufficeth them—the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.

"But that is a trifle beside the mark. The *Colleen Bawn* isn't going to fly the black flag, save in the most modern and approved sense of the phrase, and all the arms she carries are safely under lock and key in my cabin. None the less, Mr. Livingston, there is a prize to be fought for and carried off—with your help—and when we have it safely secured—under hatches, so to speak—you shall have your share."

"No!" shouted Livingston, his anger flashing up again at the other's cool assumption of the entire and complete mastery of the situation. "I have only one thing to say to you, Captain Lamb, and you can take it or leave it. Put in at Victoria or Seattle and set me ashore, and I'll agree to let the kidnaping go as a mistake."

"But, my dear fellow, it *wasn't* a mistake," returned the master of the situation suavely.

"All right. Then you'll take the consequences, Captain Lamb, and I'll try to make them big enough to balance my loss!"

"Your loss of liberty, you mean? Liberty is only a relative thing, Mr. Livingston. At the present moment yours, as well as mine, happens to be circumscribed by the visual limit of a sea horizon, but that is nothing."

"I didn't mean that, as you very well know."

"Well, what did you mean?"

"I mean the loss that must fall upon any fellow who drops out of the ranks and becomes, so far as anybody knows to the contrary, a deserter. You say you've cleared for the Pribilofs; that means three months, more or less—in this schooner. What chance would I have, showing up at the end of that time, with nothing better than an unbelievable fairy tale to tell to account for my drop out?"

"So far as your business prospects are concerned, you may safely ignore them. If we succeed only moderately well in our little enterprise, you will be able to tell your railroad job to go hang, Mr. Livingston."

"Money isn't everything," persisted the unwilling recruit. "A good name is worth something to some of us."

Again the captain's smile was mildly derisive.

"You are a young man, Livingston, but not young enough to excuse that anachronistic point of view," he objected. "Nobody asks nowadays where you got your money; it isn't good form. And the good name commonly goes with the bank account. You know that as well as I do."

"But there are other things!" said the victim, breaking out afresh. "Captain Lamb, I'm engaged to be married, and the day is set for the first week in September!"

"You can regard that as the lightest of your misfortunes," smiled the handsome tyrant on the other side of the square-legged table. "How is it old Tom Bayly puts it:

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder:
Isle of Beauty, fare thee well!"

Livingston swore, and started from his stool to hurl himself across the table at his tormentor.

But in a twinkling the humor died out of the handsome captain's eyes, and the affable smile became a teeth-baring grin of ferocity. Livingston stopped short, and drew back when he found himself staring into the muzzle of a Colt automatic pistol held low along the table top.

"It's only fair to tell you that the bullets are soft-nosed—the kind that make a hole in you big enough for a man's fist to follow," said the kidnaper coolly. And then: "Sit down, and take it easy. I'm master, and, if I choose to insist upon it, you are only a common sailor—with a common sailor's right to be killed if he mutinies. Sit down, I say!"

Livingston was no coward, but neither was he a fool, and he obeyed

the command; though his obedience was entirely without prejudice to an outpouring of bad language designed to embody, tersely and succinctly, his opinion of his captor. Lamb dropped the pistol into his pocket, and waited. When the storm of passionate objurgation had blown itself out, he was smiling again.

"Now we shall get on much better," he said, and he proceeded calmly to define the victim's status. Livingston was to have the port stateroom, a stool at the cabin table, and the standing of a passenger. Failing to accept, he might take his place with the crew, and—the tyrant added significantly—take what was coming to him. "You see you have everything to gain and nothing to lose," was the summing up. "Which shall it be?"

"If you mean that I'm to be a prisoner on parole, I'll take my chances with the men."

The captain waved the condition aside unhesitatingly.

"I don't ask you to give your parole, nor do I withdraw my offer of a few minutes ago. You can participate as a shareholder in our little enterprise, if you like, but if you don't like you'll still do what I tell you to when the time comes—or take your medicine. And the same rule applies here and now. I'm the captain of this hooker, and what I say goes as it lies. You may come in as a friendly enemy, or as the other kind, but in the latter case, if I have to shoot, I'll shoot to kill. Do you fully understand?"

Livingston nodded.

"That's better," said the tyrant, with a return to his former affability. "Now, I'd like to ask a question or two. Who is this fellow who came aboard with you last night?—the fellow who is shamming seasickness."

Livingston took a little time to think. With no special motive for shielding Glendish, he was unwilling to become answerable for the government man's life. In the light of the late vivid object lesson, Glendish's fear of identification seemed less foolish than it had when the sick man voiced it.

"I can't answer that question," he replied shortly.

"Which is another way of saying that you can answer it, but won't. Let it go, and I'll try again. Is the man a friend of yours?"

"No, not so anybody could notice it."

"Would you mind telling me why he was following you?"

"No. By his own admission, he meant to have me arrested."

"Ah! Then he is an officer of some sort?"

Livingston shook his head.

"You've pumped the well dry, Captain Lamb."

Lamb stood up and stretched himself lazily, and Livingston marveled that he had not remarked what a fit figure of a man he made with the squared shoulders and the well-poised head.

"It has been a rather trying interview for you, I'm afraid, Mr. Livingston," he said, still friendly. Then he pointed across the cabin. "That is the door of your stateroom. Make yourself entirely at home, and, if you're lacking anything, ask for it. Luckily we're about the same build, and my sea chest will fit you out with what you'll need to be comfortable. No, don't mention it; I'd do as much for any gentleman in distress. Turn in and nurse that broken head a while. The cook will call you when dinner is on the table. So long, until you've had time to catch up with yourself."

And with a comradely wave of the hand, the captain faced about and went on deck.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAN AT THE WHEEL.

Livingston had his call to the midday meal shortly after the interview with his kidnaper, and Captain Lamb, light-heartedly good-natured and genial, was his host and only tablemate. Livingston was hungry, the food was excellent and well served, and Lamb, who could evidently be anything he chose to

be, made the one-sided table talk genially companionable.

Steering clear of the mysterious voyage and its object, and of their relations as captor and captive, the amateur navigator became the hospitable entertainer, bespeaking himself easily a man of education and world-wide experience. There were well-told stories of his adventures as a prospector in the South African diamond fields, of perils various in the Amazon rubber plantations, and still more wonderful tales of his wanderings as a government naturalist in the unexplored wilds of Borneo and the New Hebrides.

Through it all, Livingston listened shrewdly for the note which might betray the romancing liar or the cheap braggart, and found it conspicuously absent. Whatever his moral twist, the good-looking skipper proved that he had a sense of fitness well developed. Though he figured as the hero in the greater number of the stories, it was never obtrusively, and there was always the neat turn of self-effacement at the climax to mark the artistic raconteur.

Listening partly because he could not help it, and later because the winning personality of the story-telling captain was fairly irresistible, Livingston realized that it was going to be constantly and increasingly difficult to maintain the prisoner-to-jailer attitude toward Lamb. Yet he was angrily determined that it should be maintained.

It was over the black coffee, which was served by the Chinese ship's cook with a fine disregard for the lack of table accessories, that the captain made his single reference to the *status quo*.

"From your silence, Mr. Livingston, I infer that you are still angry enough to be unphilosophical. I am sorry, as sorry as any host ought to be while his guest is still unsatisfied. I'm weak enough, or conventional enough, to prefer your friendship to your enmity. Is there any way in which I can make good?"

Livingston put down his cup, and his eyes were bloodshot.

"You can change the schooner's course and set me ashore at the nearest railroad port, Captain Lamb."

The captain waved the alternative aside with the hand that held the freshly lighted cigar.

"Apart from that, I mean," he said.

Livingston's "No!" was almost explosive.

"You are determined to be aggrieved, then? So be it. I can only lament the harsh necessity which makes us, in a certain sense, enemies when we really ought to be allies. Have you, by any chance, taken a look at your messmates forward?"

"At your crew, you mean? I should think you had swept the San Francisco gutters for it."

The captain's shrug was barely perceptible.

"I had to take what I could get, and run the risk of being able to knock it into shape after leaving port. It's a sorry lot, I must say, with plenty of loose powder lying around and only waiting for the opportune match to fire it. Later on, when the men find out what they are really in for, I should imagine that the right kind of a ringleader wouldn't have much difficulty in stirring up trouble. But I dare say you have already thought of that possibility?"

It was an interrogation, and Livingston answered it baldly.

"Yes; it was one of the things I had thought of."

The captain nodded gravely.

"Don't let your scruples interfere. The mere fact that we occupy the same part of the ship and sit together at the same table needn't make any difference with your plans. Go ahead and stir up a mutiny if you like. I'll promise not to put a straw in your way."

"You think it can't be done?"

"Nothing easier, I should say. But you won't do it."

"Why won't I?"

The autocrat's smile was shrewdly compassionate.

"For one thing, your limitations are in the way. Unless I am much mistaken in you, you are of those who won't admit that two wrongs make a right."

"You've put yourself beyond any pale of fairness, Captain Lamb. I'm under no obligation to observe the rules of the game."

"That's what you think now, but you'll change your mind a little further along—when you've had time to think it over coldly. It's a rather serious thing to father a mutiny; and, besides, the facts are against you; to all intents and purposes, you are a regularly contracted member of the *Colleen Bawn's* crew. That would put you in bad with the courts."

"I'll take my chances with the courts!" snapped the prisoner, losing his temper again.

The captain shot a glance across the table; a searching probe of a look in which Livingston might have read certain signs of triumph, if he had not been too angry to see straight.

"The other restraining factor is more practical, perhaps," Lamb went on smoothly. "If you kill me off, there will be no one left to navigate the schooner."

Livingston, getting a fresh grip upon his fighting coolness, did not reply. Without being a navigator in any technical sense, he still knew enough to take the schooner into port—some port—if the chance should fall in his way. But it was not needful to tell Lamb or to be drawn into confidences of any kind with the man he was determined to outwit.

After this, the talk languished, and a little later the captain went on deck. Left to his own devices, Livingston shut himself into his sleeping den, and threw himself upon the berth to think.

Taking it all in all, the situation was about as bad as it could be. If his immediate superiors were ignorant of the circumstances—as Glendish had hinted they might be—he could never hope to go back after any considerable absence and square himself. He knew the business world, and the facility with which it supplies recruits to fill gaps in the ranks. Long before he could return from the unscheduled voyage another man would have his place on the freight department pay roll, and he would be down and out, with only a fairy story upon which to make the fight for reinstatement.

And larger even than the business disaster loomed the affair with Philippa Goodwin. What would the girl think of him? Crediting her with all the imagination that a loving and trustful fiancée ought to have, what possible explanation could she devise that would come within a thousand miles of accounting for his mysterious desertion and disappearance?

At this point the train of thought took fire, and red wrath sat in the seat of reason. Philippa's distress and misery must be forestalled at any cost, at all costs.

For some few days, at least, the schooner would be within easy sail of the civilized coast and freedom. Livingston was feverishly considering all sorts of expedients, from garroting the captain or scuttling the schooner to swimming ashore, when wearied Nature reasserted her claims and he fell into a troubled sleep to dream of wolves in sheep's clothing and of a particularly vicious and obnoxious lion whose name was Lamb.

When he awoke, the sinking sun was pouring its level-rayed volley through the cabin portlight, and there was no intermission of the long, steady swing of the stout little ship over the unbroken Pacific surges. While he had slept, some one had invaded his privacy. There was a change of clean clothing laid out in the opposite berth, and water for a bath.

After the bath and the change, he made shift to renew the dressing of the broken head and to examine as best he could by means of the cracked looking-glass on the wall the extent of the wounding. It was nothing more serious than a scalp cut with the bruise incident to a blow from some blunt weapon, and, when he had washed it and tied it up with a clean handkerchief, he thought no more of it.

Rested and refreshed by his long sleep and the grateful bath, he was eagerly ready to begin the battle for freedom; and being before all else a

young man of swift action, he went on deck to see what chance there might be for the striking of some preliminary blow.

Emerging from the cabin companion, he was optimistic enough to believe that he had chosen a fortunate moment for the preliminaries. The men, most of them, were lounging forward; the big, yellow-haired first mate was leaning over the windward rail in the waist, and the captain was invisible. Most fortunate of all, the man at the wheel was Glendish; a Glendish pallid and ghastly, with black rings around his sunken eyes, but still able, as it seemed, to take his trick with the others.

Not to arouse suspicion needlessly, Livingston took a staggering turn or two in the open before he went to sit on the break of the raised afterdeck within easy speaking distance of the pale steersman.

"I see they've got you at it," he began, and Glendish's agreement, whispered hoarsely to the swelling bunt of the great mainsail, was luridly and picturesquely profane.

"Yes; dragged me out of my bunk neck and heels, and, when I put up my bleat, they slugged me till I couldn't see any color but black! I'm going to have somebody's life for this, and the somebody is that big, yellow-haired devil hanging over the rail yonder!"

Livingston nursed his bandaged head in his hands, and tried to give the impression to any chance onlooker that he was unconscious of Glendish's presence.

"He isn't the man you want to kill," he returned, matching Glendish's low tones. "He is only the brass knuckle on the fist of the captain." And then: "Have you found out yet where we're cleared for?"

"Nothing but what I've heard the others say—the Pribilofs."

"That would mean a sealing expedition—couldn't mean anything else. We're not after sealskins this trip."

"How do you know?"

Circumstantially, and with his head still propped between his hands, Livingston told the story of his interview with Captain Lamb. There was no reason for concealment, and if Glendish were to be an ally in any break for freedom, the confidence was his due.

"Sniped you because you'd dabbled in engineering, did he?" said the wheelman. "What does that mean?"

"I don't know; I can't imagine."

"It's something crooked; you can bet on that. I've been talking with one of the men—a little, sharp-nosed gutter rat named Gillup that they crimped the same way they did me. He says we're in ballast; no cargo to speak of—nothing but a few cases marked 'Hardware.'"

"That's none of our business; our business is to get away from this hooker before we've sailed past all the chances. How far are we from the coast?"

"The Lord only knows. The course is northwest by north, two points off, and we've been clipping it off at about this gait ever since we left the Farallons. Dig up your geography, and say where that would put us."

Livingston closed his eyes, and tried to reconstruct a mental picture of the California coast. He was only partly successful.

"My geography's no good—outside of a railroad map," he confessed. "I can't remember anything up this way but a cape; Cape—Cape Medicine——"

"Mendocino," corrected Glendish; "that's it—near enough, anyway. What's your idea?"

Livingston was squinting between his fingers at a small boat lying in its chocks on the roof of the deck house. Under the small boat's stern there was a diminutive propeller, and opposite the chocks were the davits for the launching, with the tackle properly clewed down and stoppered with lashings of spun yarn.

"That's a yacht's tender, with some sort of a motor in it," he suggested. "How many men would it take to put it over the side?"

Glendish nodded. "I've been thinking of that, too. Just guessing at things, I believe the two of us could work the davit tackle—with a dark

night and not too much interference. But after we're overboard, it'd be up to you. What I don't know about popboats would fill a ten-story office building."

"Wait a minute," said Livingston, and he got up as one weary of sitting, and took a slow turn around the deck house, passing the Viking mate without earning so much as a nod or a look, and getting a fair sight of the interior of the small boat as he drifted aft again.

"It's a dinkey tub of a thing," he told Glendish, when the slow round had been made. "Picked up at secondhand in a junk yard, I guess. But we'll make it do if you're game for it. When shall it be?"

"The quicker the sooner," said the wheelman, and he said it between his teeth. Then he added: "You told Philippa once that I was a coward—that I'd never hit a man in the face; I'm going to shove that word down your throat some day ahead of my fist, Livingston."

Livingston grunted. "Which is another way of saying that you are game for this jail break of ours?" he asked. "Call it a go, and let's get down to business. Every added day is going to lessen our chance, and probably add to the distance we'll have to cover. How about provisions and water and gasoline?"

"The chink cook has a barrel of ship biscuit in the galley locker, and maybe I can swipe the little water breaker out of the forecastle. I'll try both when I'm off watch, but I'm afraid we'll have to take chances on the gasoline. If I can get the biscuit and water into the launch——"

"That's the notion," was the prompt agreement. "I'll find out about the gasoline. The tender's tank is probably filled. Aside from being a trumpery little villain, you're the right stuff, Glendish, and I'll remember this some time when I'm tempted to break you in two and throw you out of the handiest window. You get the grub together, and I'll figure out the hoisting proposition. Which watch are you in?"

"Port. We have the second dog trick, but I'm off after eight o'clock. Make it nine, and be on deck for a smoke. And if you could manage to scrag the captain before you come up——"

Livingston was grinning joyously when he got up to move away before the yellow-haired giant in the waist should become suspicious. He had known Glendish as a clerk in the passenger office force before he had become a government agent, and the other clerks had called him "pussy-footed" and had made fun of his small fopperies in dress. Livingston's grin grew out of the sudden sea change which had been wrought in Cousin Miles.

In the haggard, wild-eyed steersman of the *Colleen Bawn*, grinding his teeth and thirsting for blood as he held the schooner up to her work, there were few reminders of the office exquisite who was wont to be unhappy if the band on his summer hat did not match perfectly with the tint of his necktie and the royal blazonry of his socks.

CHAPTER VII.

DARK NIGHT AND A YEASTY SEA.

Since time and sufficient daylight still served, Livingston did not go below immediately after leaving Glendish and his seat on the break of the afterdeck. Having been given, tacitly, at least, the liberty of the ship by the kidnaping captain, he made good use of the daylight opportunity, getting the run of the schooner's deck; examining the small boat's davits and hoisting tackle carefully so that he might be able to lay hands upon the lashings and downhauls if need be with his eyes shut, and even going so far into the minutiæ as to pace the distances so that in event of the darkness confusing him he could still find his way about.

Beyond this, he passed and repassed the chocked small boat until he had an accurate mental picture of its furnishings. There was a tiny engine amidships covered with a rag of tarpaulin;

Livingston could only judge of its power by its size—or its lack of size—and he thought it might be overrating it to equal it to a pair of oars in the hands of a stout oarsman.

Besides the engine there was a stump mast with a wisp of sail wound around it, a bailing can, a small coil of harpoon line, and two cork life belts, much frayed and ragged about the edges. The fuel tank he finally located under the triangular bit of foredeck. Since the space it occupied was next to nothing, he argued that the tank was small, even for so small a motor. And he could not make sure that it was filled.

After he had learned what to listen for, he could hear the "slop" of the gasoline keeping time to the schooner's rise and plunge, but this told him nothing save that the tank was not entirely empty.

Having pushed his investigations thus far, he had a final word with Glendish, who had not yet been relieved at the wheel.

"There's gasoline in her tank; how much I don't know," he whispered, in passing the helmsman, and Glendish nodded.

At the next turn, Livingston began again:

"The engine's next door to nothing—as you'd guess by the size of the propeller. But such as it is, it's all we'll have. There are no oars and no rowlocks, and the rag of a sail doesn't amount to anything."

Again Glendish nodded, and at the third passing Livingston went on, stopping to lean over the rail with his back to his listener:

"We've got to have more gasoline. There must be plenty of it aboard the ship, since she's got an engine of her own. Shall I forage for it? Or will you?"

Glendish was staring into the freshly lighted binnacle, and it was to the binnacle that he said: "Keep the captain busy at supper time, and leave it to me. The juice is in cans, and I know where it's stored."

"That's all, then," was the answer. "The moon will rise between ten and eleven. Get word to me when you're ready, and we'll make the break. It's clouding up a little more than I like, and the wind is freshening, but we'll have to take our chances on the weather. Are you still game for it?"

Glendish let the wheel slip through his hands until the *Colleen Bawn's* huge mainsail cracked like a gigantic whip, and the big mate came running aft, bubbling profanity in broken English.

"Hike!" snapped the steersman to his fellow plotter, and as Livingston was moving toward the cabin companion he heard Glendish's parting word: "You'll harp on that string till some time I'll knife you—in the back!"

Livingston left Glendish and the big Swede to fight it out about the slip of the wheel, and went below to shut himself into his cramped little den of a stateroom. Until time should serve, there was nothing more to be done. Sitting in pitchy darkness on the edge of his berth and waiting for the call to the evening meal, the sardonic humor of the thing overtook him again.

Twenty-four hours earlier he had been sitting at a luxuriously appointed table in the San Francisco hotel café, chatting comfortably with Brent, the passenger man, and seeing no farther into the future than the salmon sees when it thrusts its gills into the trawler's net.

And now, with the clock hands only in the final quarter of their second lap around the dial, the San Francisco hotel and the world it stood for had dropped into a fathomless abyss, chaos was come, and he was plotting with Miles Glendish—the last man in the world whom he would have chosen for his second in any battle—plotting and planning a desperate adventure, the most fortunate outcome of which could be only an exchange of jailers; a bartering of the kidnaping captain and his mysterious schooner for an open boat and the shoreless but no less imprisoning ocean.

None the less, for a hard-muscled young athlete of Livingston's make-up—a type in which there is always a good bit of the berserk and the shoulder

hitter—the situation was not without its touch of humor; grim humor mixed up with a certain cheerful lust of battle which had hitherto had to content itself with the bloodless victories of business.

To come to actual, tangible handgrips with one's antagonist is a privilege not to be scoffed at in a world which has taught itself to stab and buffet only with tongue and pen. Livingston locked his hands behind his head, and laughed softly to himself in the darkness.

"I think I'll begin on the captain himself—as Glendish suggested," he mused. "It strikes me that I owe him something. I've been posing as a sulky little boy robbed of his candy, and I guess it's about time to shake hands and put on the gloves with Captain Ignatius Loyola Lamb, man fashion. I'll do it, after supper. I'll need to warm up a little, anyway, before we hit the bunch on deck."

It was only a few minutes after this when the Chinese cook came to tap softly upon the door for the cabin supper call. Livingston made his appearance promptly, and found the genial master of the *Colleen Bawn* waiting for him.

"You're a man after my own heart, Mr. Livingston," was Lamb's greeting. "You don't keep the wedding guests waiting. I hope you've brought a good appetite with you. What is it that Shakespeare puts into Macbeth's mouth?

> "Now good digestion wait on appetite,
> And health on both!

"Draw up and let's see what Ting Foo has conjured up for us. Whatever it may be, we're better off than the murdering Thane of Cawdor was—there won't be any Banquo's ghost to come and sit with us."

"I've brought my appetite with me," laughed Livingston, "which is also going Macbeth one better." Then he made honorable amends. "A few hours ago you predicted that I would get around to the philosophical point of view, captain, and so I have; at least, far enough to be able to put the sour grouch to the wall. Don't mistake me. I'm still determined to make you all the trouble I can. But we needn't let this small fact interfere with our table manners."

With this for a starting point, the table talk lacked nothing but an appreciative audience, and Livingston held up his end like a man and a comrade.

As before, Lamb proved himself the prince of entertainers, and more and more Livingston was led to wonder how and why such a man should have found it either necessary or attractive to exchange the legitimate for the criminal.

That the voyage of the *Colleen Bawn* was in some way a privateering scheme, there could be no reasonable doubt. And that Captain Lamb could be as desperate as any buccaneer of them all was also beyond doubt. And yet——

From one fascinatingly interesting recountal to another, Lamb went on, checking himself finally when Livingston, from pure human interest, had gone speechless again.

"I believe you're good-natured enough to let me go on telling my braggadocio stories till midnight, Mr. Livingston," he laughed, when the abrupt pause brought the listener alive with a start. "Have I bored you stiff?"

"Not at all," said the railroad man, and he meant it. And then: "You are not so very much older than I am, captain, but you've lived the worth of a dozen such lives as mine."

"Only to bring up at last as the skipper of a South Sea Island tramp schooner, as you see," smiled Lamb. And after the coffee-drinking pause: "Come now—be frank with me. Haven't you any curiosity at all to know what kind of an enterprise you've embarked in, Mr. Livingston?"

"No; since I don't expect to take any part in the enterprise, curiosity on my part would be rather out of place, wouldn't it?"

"But you are going to take part in it, my dear fellow; a very important part," protested the other.

"That remains to be seen. I say No."

"And I say Yes. But we won't spoil

our dinner. Will you go on deck to smoke?"

Livingston had been listening against time while Lamb was telling his stories of perils by land and by sea, and he was now willing to delay the rising moment as he could to give Glendish his chance to set the scene for the boat-stealing act, and to give him his cue, though just how Glendish would find some means to pass the word to the cabin was rather beyond imagining.

But at the moment when further delay threatened to involve difficulties, Glendish proved himself amply equal to the emergency. Ting Foo, the Chinese cook, had brought the cigars, and was clearing away the table remains. At Livingston's side he stooped and picked up an open letter with its envelope torn and pocket-soiled.

"Maybeso you losee dis flom pocket?" he said, in his soft Cantonese singsong.

Livingston, making sure that this was the missing cue, nodded and took the letter. When he glanced at it, he was glad that Lamb happened to be lighting a cigar, and was, by consequence, measurably unobservant. That was because the pocket-worn envelope bore the date mark "Denver," and was addressed, in Philippa Goodwin's round, girlish, and most unmistakable handwriting, to "Mr. Miles Glendish, Washington, D. C." Beneath the superscription there was a pencil-scrawled line with one word underscored, and this was in Glendish's hand: "If *you* haven't lost your nerve, get action!"

If Livingston needed an extra flick of the whip to make him fighting fit, the juggled envelope with its address in Philippa's handwriting gave it. Quietly pocketing the letter, he waited only until the Chinaman had vanished, leaving the cabin door ajar.

"You were asking if I'd go on deck, Captain Lamb," he began. "I am going presently—after I have found out whether you are really the man-eater you ought to be as the master of this hooker. Will you put up your hands and fight me fairly?"

The handsome skipper's leap to his feet and his hand pass for the pocketed weapon were gambler swift, but Livingston had the advantage of foreknowledge. "Ah, would you?" he said, with the good-natured grin wrinkling at the corners of his eyes, and he went across the table in a hurdler's plunge. Lamb tried to back for distance and pistol space, but the stool was in the way, and before he could kick it aside Livingston had pinned him in a clever wrestling hold, and the fight was on.

For a gasping minute the two men swayed back and forth, each feeling for the other's weak point. Livingston's gymnasium trainer in a part of his college course had been a Jap wrestler, and it was a subtle Oriental trick that enabled him to twist Lamb's right hand out of the pea-jacket pocket and to force him to drop the hastily clutched weapon.

Breaking his hold for the needful fraction of a second, Livingston kicked the pisol under the table, and, after another straining half minute in which Lamb matched trick with trick and strove by all the arts of a skilled boxer to break the clinch, there was a crashing fall with the captain underneath.

"Will you fight like a man if I let you up?" panted the victor.

Lamb's answer was that of the savage. With a quick jerk of his head, he fastened his teeth into Livingston's shoulder. With less of vindictiveness than the act proclaimed, Livingston wrenched himself free, set a knee upon Lamb's chest, and held him immovable while the quieting blow could be delivered.

It was a cold-blooded thing to do, but Livingston realized that he had crossed the dead line. As an articled member of the *Colleen Bawn's* crew, he had lifted his hand against his captain, and the answer to that was death, with ample justification for Lamb.

The one blow, planted skillfully at the exact juncture of the parietal bone with the sphenoid just above the ear, ended the matter. When Livingston got up, the fight was over, but a new danger was announcing itself in a sound of descending footsteps on the com-

panion stair. Instinctively the flushed victor sprang to the door, and stood beside it, his fists balled and the big veins knotting themselves in his forehead. He had gone too far to retreat now.

It was not the yellow-haired first mate who pushed the jarred door open and came blinking from the outer darkness into the glare of the lighted cabin, as Livingston fully expected it would be. It was Selden, the second officer, a gnarled and twisted little Cornishman with bleary eyes.

At the moment of door opening, he apparently saw nothing but the limp figure on the floor, and Livingston left him kneeling beside Lamb and trying to arouse him. It was the climaxing instant of opportunity, and the winner seized it, darting quickly up the companion and shutting and hasping the slide to gain whatever respite the fastened hatch might give.

Ten seconds later he had groped his way past the corner of the deck house, ignoring the silent figure at the schooner's wheel. Glendish was waiting for him in the shadow of the chocked launch. The wind had freshened to a ten-knot gale, and the schooner, still carrying everything but topsails, was leaping the surges like a thing alive.

"Quick!" urged Livingston. "If we can't make the riffle now, we may as well go overboard with our bare hands! I've taken a biff at the captain, and the English mate's just catching on! Have you got a knife?"

Glendish's reply was a couple of deft slashes at the rope-yarn tackling stoppers, and the davit falls swung free. Hastily the tackles were hooked into the ringbolts at the launch's stem and stern, and the pair of them took the slack and heaved for dear life. It proved to be more than a two-man job to lift the small boat out of the V-shaped chocks, as Livingston had feared it might. By getting a leg hold over the rail and putting both weight and muscle into it, he could barely swing his end free. But at the other tackle, Glendish could only climb the downfall and dangle on it like a mechanical monkey on its cord.

Meanwhile the ship was waking up. Under the cabin companion slide, the angry-eyed second mate was battering with his fists on the obstructing hatch and shouting to the man at the wheel. From forward came the hoarse call of the big Swede turning out the watch below, followed by the quick patter of many feet on the resounding deck.

"Let go, and come here!" panted Livingston. "One end at a time, and heave with the wave lift!"

Under the united effort the stern of the launch rose awkwardly out of its cradle to slam itself with a crash against the reversed davit iron, and in a twinkling Glendish had made fast.

"Now the other end!" Livingston prompted, and, dodging under the swinging menace, they heaved together at the bow tackle. Once again they caught the critical instant of the lift and plunge of the *Colleen Bawn,* and the launch, swinging free, cleared the rail, and hung between wind and water.

"In with you, and stand by to cut the other tackle!" gasped Livingston.

Glendish obeyed like an automaton, and had one leg over the launch's gunwale when the interference, headed by the yellow-haired Viking, closed in upon them. Livingston, hanging to the bow davit tackle and sustaining the full half weight of the suspended small boat, was practically helpless. To let go was to spill the launch, bow foremost, into the smother over the schooner's side. To hold on was to be murdered without striking a blow.

It was Glendish, the postgraduate office man and connoisseur in rainbow-hued ties and clocked hosiery, who rose to the avid demands of the occasion. The cabin companion hatch was yielding in kindling-wood cracklings to the battering from below when he dropped to the deck and flew like an angry cat at the big mate and his followers.

"Get her over the side!" he gurgled, stabbing and slashing with the stolen clasp knife fairly under Livingston's upstretched arms.

But, after all, it was the helmsman of the *Colleen Bawn* who turned the scale, quite without meaning to. At the

wrong moment, the moment when the companion hatch burst upward as from some internal explosion, and the dim glow of the binnacle lamp showed him a bloody-faced man and another fighting for precedence in a mad rush up the companionway, the helmsman—who chanced to be Glendish's "gutter rat" Gillup—lost his head and his grip on the spokes of the wheel at the same instant. Prompt to take the bit in her teeth, the *Colleen Bawn* broached to under her huge spread of canvas, taking one of the swelling surges fairly over the weather rail, and burying her main boom ten feet deep in its fellow to leeward.

It was the slackening of the tackle in his hands as the launch lifted on the crest of the broaching wave that gave Livingston his cue.

"Drop it and come on!" he yelled, in the thick of the smother; and Glendish, choking and sputtering, came up out of the watery pandemonium and flung himself into the stern of the launch to cut and hack at the belayed tackle while the broaching wave took the strain—to slash it through just as the schooner was righting under a fresh hand at the wheel—and the thing was done.

Crouching in the bottom of the tossing launch, the two fugitives had, from the crest of the following wave, a vanishing glimpse of the *Colleen Bawn* racing down the wind to leeward, saw a quick succession of matchlike flashes leap away in their direction from her raised afterdeck and heard the whiplash whine of one bullet and the sullen "spat" of another. But after that there were only the darkling surges and silence.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE KICK BOAT.

It was Livingston who first broke the silence of their sudden isolation.

"Glendish!" he called; "are you hurt?"

The government man was hanging over a thwart, just as he had fallen, in the last stages of exhaustion.

"No; I'm only shamming!" he yapped back. Then he got upon his knees to shake a trembling fist at his fellow conspirator. "Am I game, or am I not?" he yelled shrilly. "If you say I'm not, I'll crawl up there and cut you into fish bait!"

"Easy, old man!" laughed the shoulder hitter, who still had a heart-warming picture of the little ex-clerk cutting in under his guard to slash and stab at the overwhelming odds. "You're a fighting man, all right—even if you don't always remember to fight fair. But, after this, everything goes, Glendish. If we get out of this alive, you may lie about me to your heart's content, and I'll never yip."

"Shut up!" shrieked the rage-maddened knife bearer, and with that he collapsed over the thwart again, and when Livingston reached him his teeth were set and he was gasping as one stricken with death.

There was not much to be done for him, and small chance for the doing of the little. Livingston stretched him out in the bottom of the boat, and stripped the canvas covering from the engine to put under his head for a pillow. Then he got busy for their common safety.

The cockleshell launch was light enough to ride the waves like a dry chip, but with no motive power it was helplessly at the mercy of the big billows, tossing from crest to trough and wallowing like a water-logged derelict.

Since it was obviously impossible to overhaul the engine and its electric-sparking mechanism in the dark, Livingston stepped the stumpy mast, and shook out the bit of sail. The three-cornered scrap of canvas was a poor excuse for driving power, but it sufficed to give the boat steerageway, and when Livingston had propped himself in the stern with a leg over the short tiller he was relieved to find that the little ship answered the helm well enough to permit him to edge a slow course to the eastward.

That the course was to the eastward was largely a guess. The high-flying clouds were thinning somewhat, and now and then a star peeped through.

But until the moon should rise or the pole star become recognizable, there could be no assurance of the compass points, and Livingston was taking his direction from the wind.

The course of the *Colleen Bawn* had been northwest, with the wind on the port quarter; therefore, the wind must be blowing out of the south; therefore, again, if the launch should take the wind on the starboard beam, her course should be—roughly at least—eastwardly.

Having settled this rather dubious question to his own satisfaction, the amateur mariner at the launch's tiller made the bit of straining canvas do its best. Estimating the distance to the nearest land at no more than fifty miles—and it might be twice that—the hazards were still plentiful.

For one thing, the amateur knew motor boats and their engine vagaries, and was heartily suspicious of a stopped motor. For another, he felt sure that Captain Lamb was still to be reckoned with. That the *Colleen Bawn* would come back to look for her launch was a foregone conclusion, and as the horizons gradually widened under the clearing skies, Livingston was glad to find them blank and untenanted.

In due time the moon came up, and with its appearance a good half of the desolation of the watery waste vanished. Also it became apparent that Livingston's dead-reckoning setting of the course had been well reasoned out, since the fair white disk appeared squarely over the launch's bow. Also, again, the force of the half gale was visibly abating, so rapidly, indeed, that the three-cornered sail no longer sufficed to hold the small boat out of the wallowing troughs.

Lashing the tiller with the loose end of the sheet, Livingston began to tinker tentatively with the dead motor. Luckily the battery box was under the stern seat, and it proved to be a rough-weather outfit snugly stowed in a water-tight case. Livingston found the switch plug, and inserted it, and tried the spark coil. It buzzed encouragingly. The batteries were alive.

Next he turned the gasoline on at the tank, crawling cautiously past Glendish to get to the bow. The ex-clerk had apparently passed from the coma of exhaustion into a heavy sleep. He was breathing deeply and muttering to himself as one dreaming. The knife with which he had fought back the big mate and his half-hearted followers had slipped from his fingers, and Livingston picked it up in passing, and stuck it under one of the rib strakes.

With the gasoline turned on, Livingston crept back to the motor and flooded the carburetter. On the thousandth chance he rocked the tiny flywheel, and turned it over. Nothing happening, he tried again, and yet again, with no better results. Any number of things—things which could by no means be investigated by moonlight—might be wrong. The amateur's heart sank when he remembered that the commonest of the wrong things is the sooting of the spark plugs, and without a wrench—as yet the furnishings of the launch had not turned up anything remotely resembling a tool kit—he was helpless.

At that point he would have given up to wait for daylight if he had not been born obstinate. As it was, he went on turning the flywheel and hoping against hope. To the patiently stubborn come sometimes the fruits of the slow-bearing tree of persistence. At the fiftieth turn—or it may have been the eightieth or the hundredth—there was a faint cough in one of the miniature cylinders.

With hope renewed, Livingston spun the weary wheel yet other times. Glendish moved uneasily in his sleep, and began to mutter again. As if his dumb protest were all that was needed to break the spell, the tiny motor started off with half a dozen back firings. Livingston adjusted the spark and throttle, and opened the oil cups. Then he scrambled back to his place at the tiller, and the launch began to plow a modest furrow diagonally over the swelling surges, pointing straight for the heart of the rising moon.

Throughout the long middle watches of the night, while the moon rose high-

er, and the monotonous lift and fall of the billows grew dizzyingly unnerving, Livingston held the course to the eastward, dropping asleep at times with the tiller between his knees and waking again with no sense of the passing of the lapsed minutes.

From hour to hour the miniature motor kept up its steady trampling tune, and, though he had no means of determining the launch's speed, Livingston grew hopeful as the moon climbed slowly to the zenith. Allowing no more than six miles to the hour, the breaking dawn should mark the completion of a long lap in the desperate race, and with another day of good weather and no engine trouble, the worst would be over.

The stars were beginning to pale in the east when Glendish suddenly flung aside the sail with which Livingston had covered him and sat up.

"Hello!" he said, with the bickering rasp still in his voice. And then: "How long have I been dead?"

Livingston pointed to the lightening streak in the east.

"It's morning."

"And we've been doing this all night?"

"Yes; most of the time. I got her going as soon as there was moonlight enough to show me how to find things."

Glendish crawled aft over the hot little motor, burning himself more than once because he was afraid to stand up and step over it.

"You get over there and take your forty winks," he directed sourly. "You ought to have kicked me alive and made me stand watch and watch with you. No signs of the schooner, I suppose?"

"No; no sail of any kind."

"How far have we come?"

"Thirty-five or forty-miles—for a guess. If we can keep it up, we ought to sight land some time to-day."

"All right; you go and chew off a piece of sleep. I guess I can make out to hold the tiller a while."

Livingston rummaged in the stern locker, and was fortunate enough to find a can of engine oil, from which he replenished the feed cups on the engine.

"There isn't anything to do to her," he said. "If she stops, call me." And, rolling himself in the discarded sail, he fell asleep as suddenly as Glendish had awakened.

It was the stopping of the motor, some three or four hours later, that aroused him. When he sat up, blinking sleepily, Glendish was shading his eyes with his hand and staring northward.

"I did it," he explained, without looking around; "pulled out that dodinkus between the wires. There's a ship of some kind out yonder, and it's heading this way."

"Not the *Colleen Bawn?*" gasped Livingston, starting to his feet.

"See what you think. It's a schooner, anyway, and I thought we'd better cut out the *put-put*. What will happen to us if Captain Lamb runs us down will be a-plenty."

Livingston steadied himself by the stump mast, and picked up the sail on the northern horizon.

"It's past me," he confessed, after looking long and earnestly. "But, anyway, you're wrong about the course. She's heading away from us. We'll neither be saved nor sniped this time."

Glendish reached over, and put the switch plug back in its socket.

"Why don't she go?" he demanded.

Livingston grinned, and turned the wheel, and the toy trampling began again. "You have to encourage 'em a little now and then," he said. And then: "How about the grub? Were you lucky enough to find anything last night?"

Glendish nodded toward the forward locker.

"It's in there. Help yourself. I'm not hungry."

Livingston opened the locker, and found a good store of provisions, a bag of ship's biscuit, and plenty of tinned things. Also, there was evidence that Glendish had already eaten; there was an empty meat can, and the biscuit bag had been opened. Livingston broke into a can of salmon, and munched a dry biscuit, while the man at the tiller looked on with evil triumph in his eyes.

"Where's the water?" asked the late breakfaster, when the salt in the salmon began to bite.

"There isn't any," said Glendish coolly. "That's one of the things I couldn't swipe."

Livingston's appetite left him between two swallows.

"No water?"

"That's what I said."

Livingston put the food away, and shut the locker.

"I'm like you—I'm not hungry any more, Glendish. What made you let me open that salmon?"

"I thought maybe it would make you thirsty—as thirsty as I am right now," was the churlish rejoinder. Then: "I'll bet I can outlast you, Livingston. You'll be the first one to go mad; the beefy ones always are."

Livingston was shaking his head.

"It won't take long to shikaree both of us—under this sun. The gasoline's our only hope now. By the way, where's the extra supply of it?"

"That was the other thing I couldn't swipe. It was in ten-gallon tins, and I couldn't muckle it."

"Lord! Then we've got only what's in the boat's tank?"

"That's the size of it."

Livingston got upon his knees, and lowered one end of the harpoon line through the filling plug in the tank top. It came up dry, save for a couple of inches at the extremity. That was bad enough, but the shape of the tank, which was built to fit the prow of the launch, made it worse. Two inches of depth in the narrow bottom meant that the motor might run for an hour longer, more or less.

The situation was beyond words, and there was nothing to do but to wait. Livingston propped himself against a thwart, and fixed his eyes upon the distant, heaving, eastern horizon. Slowly the little boat crept from surge to surge, and the climbing sun beat down hotter and hotter. At the end of a long hour, Glendish lashed the tiller, and crept forward.

"I've been wasting my chance of outlasting you," he said, with the evil grimace. "What little breeze there is blows the engine heat all backward."

Livingston's grin was more than half mechanical.

"I've always thought that you were about half devil, Glendish, but I'm beginning to think now that I've been doing you an injustice. There are times when you don't seem to have more than a negligible trace of humanity in you."

"I'm human enough to owe you more than I can pay while you're alive," was the inhuman retort.

"Don't get over into that part of the field, Miles. Philippa Goodwin and I are engaged to be married. That ought to settle it—would settle it for anybody but a crazy crank like you!"

Glendish's smile showed his teeth.

"I tell you I'm going to outlast you," he reiterated. "By this time to-morrow, you'll be dippy. By this time the day after to-morrow, you'll be taking a header overboard. That's the way they do at the end of it—and the big ones go first."

Livingston's big jaw began to stiffen.

"For Philippa's sake, I'm going to beat you at your own game, Glendish," he announced. "When I go mad and jump over the side, there won't be enough left of you to hurt anybody."

"For Philippa's sake. You say it's settled, but it isn't. You've bullied her into saying 'Yes,' but that doesn't count—only when you're with her."

Glendish was balancing on the edge of a volcano crater, but if he knew it he made no sign. Livingston kept his eyes upon the distant horizon. He was afraid if he looked aside at Philippa's cousin he might lose his self-control irretrievably.

"When I'm with her," he echoed. "You mean that——"

"I mean that when a woman is really in love with a man, she will keep his secrets," said the tormentor evenly.

Without taking his eyes from the hopeful distances, Livingston reached over and laid a hand on Glendish's knee.

"Last night you saved my life, Miles; I don't want to forget that; you mustn't try to make me forget it. But I'll wring

your neck, if you insinuate that Philippa isn't true to me!"

"I insinuate nothing; I'll merely ask a question. How did I know where you had gone that night when you left the Armstrongs' in the Platte Cañon and took the train to catch the Midland?"

"Philippa didn't tell you!" retorted the badgered lover. "I know you told me yesterday morning in the schooner's forecastle that she did, but I knew then that it was a lie. You were in Denver the day I left; I saw you there!"

"I was at Cliff Cottages that night, and I can prove it to you. You left the Armstrongs' just before the up passenger came along, and halfway down the cliff path you met a man going up. I was the man."

"That's enough; cut it out!" stormed Livingston, and his eyes were flaming. But the seed had been sown for the sure harvest of doubt and misgiving, and almost immediately the tares sprang up and the bitter crop began to ripen.

It was in the interval of threatening silence that followed that the motor slowed down, gave a few expiring coughs, and went dead. Livingston roused himself with an effort.

"We agreed to keep the peace until this thing has worked itself out," he said, when the engine stopped, "and it's up to both of us to do it. Help me get this rag up, and we'll make what we can out of the windjamming—which will be little enough. I'll take the first trick at the tiller."

Such was the depressing beginning of a day thickly bestudded with hardships for the castaways. By ten o'clock the brisk half gale of the night had died away to a summer zephyr, the sea had subsided, the sun beat down with tropical fierceness, and the heat, augmented by the reflection from a sea of molten glass, was ovenlike.

After the stopping of the motor, the launch made little headway; at times the three-cornered sail hung limp from the stick, and the small boat's bow swung with the slow surges to all points of the compass. Though there was a fair inference that they were in the track of traffic between the Puget Sound ports and San Francisco, the horizons remained blank, and the vanishing sails of the schooner seen by Glendish in the early hours of the morning were the only break in the disheartening monotony of sea and sky.

Of the land toward which the launch had made such good progress in the night, there were no signs; no drift; no change of coloring in the deep blue of the under depths; no faint cloud line in the east where the crest of the coast range would first lift itself above the burning sea mirror.

Again and again Livingston ransacked his memory in the effort to recall the northern California coast line and its seaport towns, if any there were. But to him, as to many more of the ninety-odd millions, the geographies had told little or nothing. If there were any shipping ports between the Golden Gate and the mouth of the Columbia, he had never heard of them.

It was not until the summer sun was fairly overhead that Livingston began to realize the torments of the thirsty in full measure. Without ever having thought much about it, he had supposed that a strong man could go without drink, as without food, for at least a day or two before the lack would be more than an inconvenience. But the hot day, following the night of fightings and fierce excitement, cruelly shortened the period of endurance. By noon Livingston would have given a fortune for a drink of water, and before the afternoon was half spent his tongue was like a dry stick in his mouth, and he would have bartered life itself, at the rate of a year for a swallow, if the chance had been given him.

That Glendish was suffering no less acutely he could not doubt. From the break at the motor stopping, the clerk had kept his place in the bow, sitting on the boat's bottom with his back to a thwart and maintaining a stubborn silence. If he had accepted the truce, it was apparently a truce under arms, sullen and minatory. The longer the silence lasted, the more Livingston realized that his companion in misery was

settling down in savage earnest to win in the battle of endurance, as he had promised to.

That conviction started another train of tormenting thought for the thirst-maddened lover. Was there anything more than a liar's vindictive stab in Glendish's hint that Philippa had been intentionally faithless? With the sun beating upon his uncovered head and the dry stick tongue to torture him, Livingston could not think straight.

Had Philippa really told her cousin of his intended San Francisco journey, and this while his own farewell kiss was still warm upon her lips? It was incredible, grossly and sickeningly unbelievable. Yet Glendish had found out, in some way; and Philippa had never specifically denied the cousinly confidences, and she had gone about with Glendish—she had even corresponded with him. Was there not the letter which Glendish had sent by the ship's Chinese cook—sent in vindictive triumph, no doubt—to prove it?

Livingston drew the letter from his pocket cautiously, so as not to attract Glendish's attention, and stared gloomily at the round, girlish handwriting of the superscription. And surely it was the thirst mania that made him forget himself so far as to take the folded inclosure from the envelope, yielding to the fierce desire to read it.

As it chanced, he was saved from falling into this final ditch of degradation. The inclosure of the pocket-worn envelope proved to be a sheet of blank paper, folded to take the place of the original letter.

Glendish jerked himself around at the faint rustle of the paper in Livingston's hands, and his laugh was a dry, cackling gibe.

"I thought you'd do that, sooner or later," he mocked. "I'll tell her about it —when I have won out, and you haven't."

Livingston crushed the blank sheet and the envelope into a ball, and half started to his feet with the unshipped tiller in his hand and murder in his heart. But at the moment of uprising, the bow of the launch swung lazily to the west, and across the blazing path of the declining sun Livingston saw a sight to make him forget his wrath.

Clearly outlined against the vivid blue of the sky line and crawling eastward in the light breeze with every stitch of canvas set and drawing, was a fore-and-aft-rigged sailing vessel. Livingston rubbed his hot eyes, and looked again. There was no mistake; it was the *Colleen Bawn*. Before he could speak, Glendish staggered to his feet, and pointed in the opposite direction. On the eastward horizon, standing out as clearly as if it had risen by magic out of the ocean, Livingston saw the coast of desire, backed by its range of sun-tinged mountains.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MIDDLE PASSAGE.

It is a thankless thing to prolong the agonies. Let it speak for itself, the picture of the two thirst-weakened fugitives in the stolen launch pulling down their mast and sail and crouching in the bottom of the boat with only their eyes level with the gunwale, waiting and watching, while some invisible ocean hand drew their little craft slowly landward, and the equally invisible sunset breeze wafted the ship of fate down upon them.

There was nothing to be done. With the sun still an hour high, there was little hope that darkness would come soon enough to shield them, and it did not. After an interval in which the dragging seconds lengthened themselves into minutes and the minutes into ages, they saw the schooner's course change, and after that they did not try to hide.

It was perhaps a minute or two after the sun had dipped below the horizon when the *Colleen Bawn* bore down upon them, and the big mate, with a bandaged arm to show for Glendish's knife slashings, took the launch in tow with a boat hook. The captain, with a strip of adhesive plaster across his temple to mark the placing of Livingston's knock-out blow, was leaning over the low rail.

"Come aboard," he commanded, in the tone of a patient man whose patience has finally been rewarded, and when the fugitives had laboriously climbed the rail: "This is what you might call playing in pretty hard luck, isn't it, Mr. Livingston?—and with the goal fairly in sight, too."

Livingston did not answer. The watch on deck was getting the launch hooked in the davit tackles, and the *Colleen Bawn* was wearing to resume her northward course. Lamb thrust his hands into his pockets, and went on evenly:

"Under the circumstances, I suppose I should be justified in putting you both in irons for the remainder of the voyage. In the eye of the law you are merely a pair of common seamen in revolt against your officers. What have you to say for yourselves?"

It was Glendish who spoke up:

"Nothing! Take your turn while you've got it. When ours comes, you'll find that you've bucked just about the biggest proposition on the planet."

"And that is?"

"The government of the United States."

"Ah? So you're in the government service, are you? I tried to persuade Mr. Livingston to tell me the day after we sailed, but he refused."

Lamb turned to the big Swede, and gave a low-toned order. Then he gave Livingston his chance.

"You seem determined to make it hard for yourself, and for me, Mr. Livingston. After what has happened, you can't blame me for taking ordinary precautions. You may have your former status if you'll promise not to make me kill you in sheer self-defense."

Livingston looked up, hot-eyed.

"You needn't make any distinction between us, Captain Lamb. We stood together last night, Mr. Glendish and I, and we'll stand together now."

The captain's lip curled.

"I thought you said he was not your friend?"

"We are not friends, as people ordinarily use the word, but that doesn't make any difference."

"Suppose I find it necessary, under the peculiar circumstances, to put this no-friend of yours under hatches for the remainder of the voyage; what then?"

"What is good enough for him is good enough for me," snapped Livingston. His mouth was growing dryer with every added word, but he would have died rather than ask for a drink of water.

Lamb shrugged slightly, and turned away.

"As you please," he said, and a moment later the Viking came to push them ahead of him to the opened main hatch.

"You vill go down, or Hae skall t'row you down," he growled, indicating the square of darkness and the black depths below. "Dere iss vater and dere iss breadt. If da skipper tal me, Hae gif you da rope's endt, too."

It was, perhaps, as well for all concerned that the water was below. With the ability to get anything less than a parching simoom into his lungs, Livingston would have tried conclusions once for all with the yellow-haired giant. But since a thirsty man may not fight, he followed Glendish into the black depths, and immediately the darkness was made permanent by the clapping on of the hatch.

Three minutes later two men had made a groping circuit of the practically empty forehold, and had collided violently in the dark over a stoppered earthenware jug.

"After you," said Glendish thickly, and he would not drink until his fellow prisoner had broken his long water fast. Afterward, when they had eaten sparingly of the ship's biscuit which they found beside the water jug, the ex-clerk freed his mind, not without a certain cynical bitterness in his tone.

"Livingston, if you think you're working off any of the old scores by getting yourself chucked in here with me, you're off your base," was the way he began.

"Oh, let up, won't you!" growled the shoulder hitter, who was feeling better, and, by consequence, more nearly hu-

man, now that he had eaten and drunk. "Haven't we got grief enough without your lugging in the other thing at every second breath? What under the heavens is this crazy pirate of a captain trying to do to us? That's what interests me most, just now."

"It's your guess," retorted Glendish briefly.

"I can't guess. If he had put us both back in the crew and worked heart and soul out of us, it would be reasonable to suppose that he nipped us in Frisco because he was short-handed. But to sail for God only knows where with a couple of idle prisoners under hatches —— Suffering Scott! it's enough to drive a man mad."

"Look out," warned the cooler one, and this time the bitterness in his tone was minimized. "You say it's enough to drive a man mad, and, if you keep on saying that often enough and long enough, you'll get there in dead earnest. We've probably got a good many days and nights of this ahead of us, and if so——"

"But the reason, Glendish—the reason!" Livingston broke out, in an access of exasperation. "This is the twentieth century, and we're living in it—or we supposed we were up to three days ago!"

"Lamb has his reasons, and they are probably quite sound ones, from his point of view. He's as good as told you why he kidnaped you; he wanted a mining engineer, and didn't know how else to get one. As for me, I was merely a butt-in, and, now that he's found out that I'm likely to tell a story that will be listened to, he doesn't dare to turn me loose."

"All right," said Livingston, stretching himself wearily upon one of the packing cases which formed part of the *Colleen Bawn's* scanty cargo; "I suppose there's nothing to do but wait. But I shall go mad, Glendish, if this things keeps up very long. Think what I've got at stake."

"Philippa, you mean?"

"Yes; Philippa."

"If I should think much about that, I shouldn't care how soon you went off your nut," was the surly rejoinder. But later, when Livingson was asleep and dreaming that his prison mate had killed him and was preparing to bury him in one of the hardware cases, it was only that Glendish had found a roll of outworn sailcloth and was stuffing it under the sleeper to keep him from slipping off upon the floor.

Also, during the loathsome period of imprisonment to which this first night in the ill-ventilated forehold was the introduction, it was the ex-clerk who preserved the norm of sanity, not only for himself, but for his cellmate. After the first twenty-four hours, during which it was made evident that the hatch was to be lifted only for the renewal of the water and provisions, and now and again for some attempt at ventilation by means of an extemporized wind sail; that at the pleasure of the skipper they were to be immured in darkness and bad air, possibly for the entire voyage; Livingston lost his grip, and there was need for help.

Glendish gave the help unstintingly and entirely, so he declared, without prejudice to the major quarrel. By turns brutal, sardonic, and kindly, he set himself doggedly at the task of brother keeping, giving Livingston free rein when he would talk, and lashing him with abuse when the sullen fits came on.

And once, in the earlier frenzies, when Livingston had stealthily possessed himself of the clasp knife—which Glendish had cleverly managed to conceal when they were overhauled in the launch—there was a struggle, and the half-crazed shoulder hitter was saved from whatever mad thing he meant to do only at the cost of a pretty badly gashed hand on the part of the rescuer.

Meanwhile, through all the days which were indistinguishable from the nights, the *Colleen Bawn* thrashed along on her mysterious course, always under a huge press of sail, as they could determine by the lift and plunge, and more often than not under sail and the auxiliary power. For weather there was everything, from the steadily blowing trades to a fierce hurricane, in

which the schooner lost some of her top-hamper, and Glendish—this time with Livingston turned comforter—had a hideous return of the dumb seasickness.

It was after the hurricane, and far beyond the time when they had lost all count of the days and weeks, that the two prisoners reached what Livingston, borrowing from his engineering profession, called "the periodic moment of combined stresses"; a moment past which the endurance of inaction doggedly refused to go.

"We've got to do something, Glendish, if it's nothing more than to carve ourselves out of this with that knife of yours," was Livingston's summing up of the stresses one evening after they had eaten the third of the meals which were their only means of distinguishing one-half of the twenty-four hours from the other. "I know what you will say; that it's no use so long as Lamb can drive us back again at the point of a pistol. You've done your best, both to save me from going mad, and to hold yourself level-headed. But I know, just as well as if I could see inside of you, that you are about as near the edge as I am. Another day or two will make gibbering idiots of both of us. Don't you believe it?"

"I don't want to believe it," was the slow rejoinder. "I've been fighting for my reason, too, Livingston; perhaps harder than you know. And the motive was the same as it was in the kick boat—I've been saying that I would outlast you."

"Guff!" snorted the one who had been saved from himself. "You can tell that to the marines, Glendish. A brother of my own blood couldn't have been more to me than you have been."

"That's so, too," said the voice in the darkness evenly. And then half brokenly: "I can't understand it, Livingston. God knows, I hate you bitterly enough—or I thought I did. And I've got cause; the old primeval, stone-age cause that has made men hate and fight since the beginning of time. You've robbed me of the woman I love, the woman who, if you hadn't turned up, might have loved me back again. That spells hatred and retaliation in every tongue of man or beast, doesn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose it does—when the male thing is daffy enough to look at it that way," agreed the other lover of the woman.

"Let it go at that, and tell me, if you can, why I can't be consistent. I know we're supposed to be civilized, and civilized people don't ordinarily cut each other's throats in the dark. But I haven't got to do anything but let you alone, Livingston. Why haven't I been able to do that?"

"I'll tell you, Miles; it is because you are not half the spiteful devil that you try to make yourself believe you are. Down under all the vindictiveness that you have been so carefully cultivating, there is something that tells you that Philippa has a right to choose for herself, and that her choice is binding, no less upon you than upon me."

"No, there isn't; there is merely a weak streak—a yellow streak."

"Call it that, if you like; it doesn't change anything. But the big fact remains. If we can't break the monotony of this thing before long, it's going to be strait-jackets and coffee for two. Why, man! do you realize that it's been ten thousand years since we've seen more than the glimpse of a human face we get when they lift the hatch to let the Chinaman pass the grub and water to us?"

"I realize all that you do. But what's the answer? I take it that Lamb will let us out of this hole sooner or later. He's got to do it some time."

"Lamb—yes. Say, Glendish; we've got to square accounts with that fellow somehow, haven't we?"—this with a touch of the vindictiveness he had just been deprecating. "We owe it to ourselves and to the world."

"Sure!"

"Well, he's playing for a big stake of some kind. That's clear, isn't it?"

"A big stake and a crooked one. Go on."

"The way to hit him hardest is to block his game, and to block it we've got to find out what it is. Bring that

knife of yours, and let's do a little whittling."

Like that of most light-tonnage cargo coasters, the fore hold of the *Colleen Bawn* included the greater part of the space between the cabin and the forecastle. Forward and aft, it ended in water-tight bulkheads extending from frame to frame across the ship. It was the after bulkhead that they attacked, taking turns with the knife until they had bored a peephole through the thick planking and the cabin sheathing covering it on the farther side.

It took a long time, and after the hole was made they found that it came out directly in line with the mainmast, which cut off all view of the cabin at large. Finding the hard work a blessed relief after so long a period of enforced idleness, they chose another place by the sense of touch, and optimistically began again, and, before the morning stir on deck warned them to stop, a second spy hole had been opened.

During the day thus ushered in, they took turns sleeping, and the waking one whittled silently and industriously, cutting away the bulkhead around the peephole so that the small slit in the cabin sheathing served all the purposes of a wide-angled lens.

Their first discovery, if it could be called a discovery, was made that evening, after Lamb had eaten his supper in solitary state, and Ting Foo had cleared the cabin table. From one of the double-locked sea chests the captain produced a thick roll of papers, spreading them out upon the table and poring over them studiously for a long time. As nearly as the watchers could determine, the papers were charts or maps of some kind; from time to time Lamb busied himself with scales and dividers, as if he were measuring and computing.

It was deep in the night when the captain returned the roll to the chest and went on deck. All through the day the schooner had been proceeding under sail alone, but shortly after Lamb's disappearance the power went on.

"What do you make of it?" queried Glendish, when Livingston finally took his eye from the peephole.

"You were right; they were maps of some sort—overlapping and crisscrossing mineral claims, for a guess."

"That's where you've got me bested," admitted the ex-clerk. "If they'd been passenger tariffs or something of that sort, I might have caught on. But mineral maps; that fits Alaska, doesn't it?"

"Yes; and I more than half believe we are in the Alaskan inland waters. There hasn't been any swell to speak of for two or three days. We might be sailing in a mill pond right now."

Glendish was thoughtful for a moment.

"Livingston, I've got a hunch that we're coming to the nib of it," he broke out, at length. "Listen!"

The power had gone off, and after a minute or two the *Colleen Bawn's* anchor cable ran out with a hoarse roar. Following quickly came the creaking of blocks and tackle, the splash of something falling into the water, and then a diminuendo drumming of the launch's gasoline motor.

"That means land, at last, and somebody's getting ashore," said Livingston. "Your hunch was right, and there'll be more to follow when that launch comes back."

Once again they stood watch and watch, with the off man sleeping, and it was Glendish who heard, some hour or so later, the drumming return of the schooner's tender. Livingston roused himself immediately at Glendish's touch and whispered call, and put his eye to the peephole. Once more the sea chest with the double locks stood open, and the roll of papers was spread out on the cabin table. But this time there were two to pore over the crisscrossed map lines: Lamb and another.

The stranger was a big man, clean shaven, and well set up. His graying hair was cut rather long, and he had a habit of throwing back the heavy forelock from time to time with a gesture that quickly reminded Livingston of a well-known and prominent senator in the far-away capital on the Potomac. In his dress, also, the stranger might have passed for an American business man who had just stepped out of his

club or his office; the hat thrown aside upon one of the chests was a modish gray felt, and the cut of the fresh-looking business suit was citified and well fitting.

When the stranger sat back in his chair and proceeded to clip the end of a cigar which he took from a gold-monogrammed pocket case, Livingston had a fair sight of the massive face with the teasing forelock falling over the broad forehead.

"Great cats!" he ejaculated, under his breath, and when he dropped to a seat upon the nearest of the cargo boxes beside the government man, he was shaking as if he had been suddenly stricken with an ague fit.

CHAPTER X.

THE BIG BOSS.

When Glendish reached out in the darkness to grip his arm, Livingston could feel that his prison mate was chuckling silently.

"You recognized him, too, did you?" said Glendish, in a low whisper. "I thought maybe you would. What in the name of all the money gods does it mean?"

"I'll never tell you, Miles. If we were anchored off the clubhouse at Newport or Marblehead, he might have come aboard from the *Nauliska*, and there would be nothing wonderful about it. But here—wherever 'here' is—Glendish, we've got to listen in, disgraceful as it may be. Get your ear to one of the lookouts, and I'll take the other. Then we can compare notes afterward."

When Livingston looked again, the gentleman with the teasing forelock, a gentleman whose name was familiar to every newspaper reader in the nation as that of the chief of the malefactors of great wealth, had lighted his cigar, and was sitting on one of the sea chests, with his back to a bulkhead and his shapely hands locked over one knee.

"You've managed it capitally, Lamb," he was saying. "Nobody has yet been able to account for the way in which the papers disappeared, though, as you predicted, there was a pretty shrewd search made before the regular steamer left Seattle. I have it on good authority that private detectives went through every piece of luggage and everybody's belongings—on the dead quiet, of course."

Lamb nodded.

"I had the devil of a time getting hold of them," he acquiesced. "And I knew that all the regular sailings would be watched and searched. That's why I suggested this schooner and clearance papers taken out for a voyage to the Pribilofs. Besides, we had to have some way of getting the laborers on the ground."

"And the man to do the figuring?"

"I've got him," said Lamb briefly.

"Good! There's trouble in the air, and the door is going to be shut and locked before many more weeks or months. The country is more stirred over this thing than it has been over anything since the Spanish War. Our friends in Washington have made a good fight, but it's a losing fight. The president is as stubborn as ever, and he isn't going to go back on his judgment. But in the end the bottom will fall out, and Washington will yield to public opinion—it's got to yield."

"That is the way I had it figured out three months ago," agreed the skipper of the *Colleen Bawn*. And then: "The *Nauliska* came around the horn all right?"

"Like a bird. She was waiting for us when we reached Victoria. I brought a party along, and it's a pleasure trip so far as any of the others know."

"Have you been waiting here long?"

"No; we got into the sound yesterday, and have been standing off and on, taking in the scenery. I hardly expected you would make your date so closely."

"We've had good weather, and we've been burning gasoline pretty freely," said Lamb.

The man on the lid of the sea chest leaned his head back, and blew a leisurely series of smoke rings toward the dingy ceiling of the cabin.

"You don't anticipate any trouble with your crew, I take it?"

"No; I've got a couple of beautiful bullies for mates, and we've had just trouble enough on the way up to show the pick-and-shovel men what to expect if they turn rusty at the pinch. They'll come under."

"And the figuring man—where is he?"

Lamb laughed silently.

"I've had the devil's own time with him, too. I thought once I might have to kill him off, in the interests of peace and quietness. The second night out he jumped me at the supper table, knocked me cold before I had time to shoot him, and he and another fellow fought their way to the schooner's launch, heaved it over the side, and made off. Luckily they didn't have much gasoline, and we picked them up the next day—within eight or ten miles of Punta Arenas."

"And since?"

"Since we've kept both of them under hatches—in the forehold. I would have given the engineer better liberty, if he would have passed me his word to be decent. But he wouldn't do it; elected to share the jail sentence with the other fellow, though I understand they are anything but friends."

"H'm!" said the visitor thoughtfully. "You may find some difficulty with this man when you're on the ground, don't you think? You can hardly put the thing through without him, can you?"

"We could, in a way, but I'm anxious not to leave the smallest possible legal loophole. There'll be a yell long enough to reach from Seattle to Washington when the thing comes out, and, if the reform cranks can get the smallest possible toe hold, they'll pry us loose."

"But if this young man proves obstinate? He surely won't bear you any great amount of good will if you've kept him under hatches all the way up."

"I don't ask for his good will. As for whether he will do his work or not when the time comes, there will be no two ways about it. He is engaged to be married, and he doesn't particularly want to be snuffed out."

The visitor laughed smoothly.

"You are a great villain, Lamb; a capital villain. I was telling Humphreys just the other day when we were speaking of you that you were born a couple of centuries too late. You would have made Morgan and Bluebeard and the other black-flag fellows turn green with envy. I believe you would really be abandoned enough to shoot this young man if he should refuse to knuckle under to you."

"I certainly should—and shall," said the handsome skipper coolly; "shoot him and take the chances of doing the work myself."

Again the visitor laughed.

"Of course, I was only joking. You know your business, no one ever knew it better, and we're banking on you." Then, after another reflective moment of smoke-ring blowing: "When can you send over to the *Nauliska* for the sacked salt?"

"To-morrow. We'll get at it early in the morning. How about your party people? Won't they ask a lot of curious questions?"

"We'll take the big launch and go glacier hunting. How will that do?"

"It will be better. How much of the stuff is there?"

"Ten sacks in all. And it is really mixed with salt—to give it the bulk to fit the weight." The visitor smoked thoughtfully for a little while, and then added half musingly: "Ten thousand dollars' worth of salt; that's a pretty high price to pay for so common a commodity, isn't it, Lamb? I don't wonder that you didn't want to ship it in this schooner at Frisco."

"No," said the captain. "It would have been an unnecesary risk."

The visitor rose, and reached for the modish felt hat.

"I must be getting back to the yacht," he announced. And then: "By the way, we brought 'our friend, the enemy,' along."

"Who is that?" asked Lamb, as one who would not be found lacking in deferential interest.

"A fine old lawyer who is, I suspect, an emissary of the interior department—though he is wise enough to keep his own counsel about his own affairs. He and his daughter were trying to make one of the regular steamers from Seattle, and they miscalculated in some way and got left. Humphreys knows them, and he asked me to tender the hospitality of the *Nauliska*. The girl is a little beauty, and as bright as they make 'em."

"A lawyer, eh?" said the captain, ignoring the reference to the lawyer's daughter. "With any authority to act, do you think?"

"I don't know. But you needn't worry. He is my guest, and, if necessary, the *Nauliska's* engines can break down, or something of the sort. I'll keep him out of your way."

By this time the two in the cabin were moving toward the companion, and Lamb's further comment, if he made any, was lost upon the two eavesdroppers behind the bulkhead. But one of them, at least, had a sharp attack of emotional insanity at the mention of the *Nauliska's* eleventh-hour additions to her passenger list. Glendish was sitting on one of the hardware cases with his head in his hands when Livingston joined him. They were both silent until the sputtering explosions of the schooner's launch had died away.

"Well," said Livingston, at the end of the thought milling; "what do you make of it?"

"I don't know much more now than I knew before I knew so little as I know now," replied the ex-clerk cryptically. "What kind of a deal is it that has got the big boss of all the Wall Street spellbinders for its head pusher?"

"It's far enough beyond me, Miles, but I guess you've got your wish. It's crooked."

"Crooked as a dog's hind leg!" Glendish exulted. "We can't get the big one—we can't climb high enough. But we'll get Lamb; we'll break him first and shove him over the road afterward!"

Livingston fell into a muse again, and Glendish was glad. It gave him time to dwell upon the nearness of Philippa Goodwin.

Looking back over the countless ages which had elapsed since he had seen her swinging in the hammock at the cottage on the brink of Platte Cañon, it seemed blankly incredible that she was only a few hundred yards away, the guest of a multimillionaire in a cruising yacht party.

The evil part of him rejoiced maliciously when he remembered that Livingston must be still thinking of her as waiting, wild-eyed and sorrowful, in Denver; waiting and watching for the lover who had disappeared as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. It was too good a joke to keep, but it was also too good to give away—to present company.

When Livingston came to the surface again, it was to comment upon the most inexplicable of all the mysteries. "Salt—ten thousand dollars' worth of salt," he mused, in speculative perplexity. "What do you make of that, Glendish?"

"I don't know; I'm a driveling idiot, and I don't know anything any more, Livingston," said the government man. And a moment later: "Listen; that's the launch coming back."

It was, and, shortly afterward, Glendish, with his eye to the peephole, whispered that Lamb was once more sitting at the cabin table, which was bare of everything save a bottle, a whisky glass, and a quick-firing pistol.

Before Livingston could climb up to see for himself, there was a stir overhead, the hatch was lifted, and the gruff voice of the Swedish mate projected itself into the forehold.

"You big fella, da skipper he say you coom vit mae on da cabin. He vantin' tal' you somet'ing poorty qvick, *ja!* Coom oonder da hatch, and Hae bane goin' to yerk you oop vit vone hand."

Livingston felt in the darkness, and found and gripped Glendish's cold fingers.

"Good-by, old man," he whispered. "If Lamb gets me, I'm going to die be-

lieving that you'll even things up—for me and for Philippa."

CHAPTER XI.

THE THUMBSCREW.

After his long immurement in the myopic gloom of the forehold, Livingston was thankful that the summons had come in the night. In spite of the favoring circumstance, however, he found the mild half twilight of the far-northern summer midnight sufficiently trying, and the full blaze of the cabin lamp, when he stumbled down the companion stair, was painfully blinding.

It was in a dumb fit of rage—the rage that strikes in and paralyzes because of its utter impotence—that he stood before Lamb, blinking and well-nigh helpless, and with his eyes aching as if they would burst. And it did not help matters when the poignantly returning sight showed him the pistol ostentatiously displayed on the table with its butt toward the captain's hand.

"Sit down, Mr. Livingston," was Lamb's curt command, and the poor prisoner of the darkness had to grope foolishly to find the chest so lately occupied by the malefactor of great wealth.

There was no trace of his former affability in Lamb's tone or manner when he began again:

"You've had your lesson, and I hope you've profited by it, Livingston. I told you in the beginning that I was master aboard this hooker, and I meant it. You've had plenty of time to think things over. Are you willing to listen to reason?"

A few weeks earlier Livingston would have cursed the autocratic skipper like a man and let it go at that. But now he was mindful of the anxious eyes and the listening ears just beyond the forward bulkhead.

"What's your proposition?" he demanded shrewdly.

"It is this: We are needing the services of a mining engineer with enough knowledge of surveying to locate landmarks and establish boundaries. You have the equipment, as I happen to know."

"How do you know?" asked Livingston.

"Because, though you probably don't remember me, I chanced to be 'among those present' at the commencement in the great university when you were graduated. That is why I was so willing to take you off Adam Gregory's hands that night in San Francisco."

"Go on with your proposal," said Livingston brusquely.

"You are to go ashore with us at the designated landing place in the capacity I have indicated—that of engineer. You will be supplied with tools and instruments. Under my direction, you will run certain boundary lines and make certain tests, keeping an accurate and faithful record of all the facts; a record which you will be required to subscribe and swear to. For this service, I am prepared to pay liberally, either in the preferred stock of a company whose securities are already far above par, or in cash."

"And if I refuse?"

"You are not going to refuse. I might turn you over to the courts as a mutineer who has attempted to kill me—in which case you'd get a sentence that would turn you out of a Federal prison after your hair has grown gray, and this in spite of your family and all the influence it could bring to bear. But I'll be frank with you, Livingston; I don't propose to turn you over to the courts; I shall make the more direct appeal. If you are obstinate, the girl will become a widow before she has had a chance to become a wife; that's all."

"In other words, you'd murder me?"

"'Murder' is a harsh word. But we shall presently go ashore in a region where a man's life doesn't count for much, and where most men go armed. If you are sufficiently obstinate, you'll quarrel with me, and I shall have to shoot you. The few who may see it or hear of it will question neither the necessity nor the justice of it."

There were rats in the *Colleen Bawn;* of that fact Livingston had had hide-

ous and disgusting evidence in the long weeks of confinement. When Lamb paused for his answer, there was a faint scratching noise behind the forward bulkhead. Livingston heard and understood. Glendish was trying to signal to him.

"You have said nothing about the other man—the man who has been locked up with me," he said, glancing up quickly. "What will you do with him?"

"That will depend largely upon your own attitude. He has merely been in the way since the first. We can remove him, and, notwithstanding his large threats, I fancy he won't be greatly missed."

"But if I don't make it needful for you to 'remove' either of us?"

"Then we shall simply hold your no-friend until it is safe to release him."

Again Livingston tried to give the impression that he was taking time to think about it, and while he paused the faint scratching came again. This time it took a curiously regular-irregular form. Livingston knew the Morse code, and by listening closely he was able to spell out the words that Glendish was patiently vocalizing in the simulated rat gnawings: "Go to it—go to it—go to it."

"I shall make you no promises, Captain Lamb," was the quiet ultimatum which was finally delivered. "But if you compel me to go with you and to do all these things you have been outlining, I don't see how I am to prevent it."

Lamb poured himself a stiff drink of the red liquor from the table bottle, and swallowed it at a gulp.

"That is the most reasonable thing I've heard you say since our acquaintance began, Livingston, and, if you play the game out and play it fair, you won't lose anything. For the remainder of this one night, I shall have to send you back to the forehold, but, after that, you shall have just as much liberty as you are willing to use judiciously."

"And Glendish?" queried Livingston.

"Your no-friend shall be put upon the same footing, though I shall hold you accountable for him and his acts. Perhaps you'll be able to use him in the surveying, as chain man or stake driver, or something of that sort. That's all for to-night. Larscom will see that you don't stumble overboard on your way back to the main hatch. That's all."

The big Swede was waiting at the head of the companion steps when Livingston stumbled up.

"Feerst you coom oop, and den you bane gone down," he said, in grim facetiousness, and the captive's eyesight was still too uncertain to give him the courage of his fighting convictions. None the less, he could see well enough to get a fair glimpse of the *Colleen Bawn's* anchorage before he was reconsigned to the malodorous den between decks.

"We're lying in what appears to be a landlocked bay," he told Glendish, when he had felt his way to the ex-clerk's side. "There are big cliffs and a glacier, and at the foot of the glacier I got a glimpse of the yacht's riding lights." Then: "You heard what was said?"

"All of it," snapped the other.

"You wired me to give in, and I did it—with as many mental reservations as I pleased." And after a longish pause: "I don't see why you did it, Miles."

"Why I did what?"

"Why you told me to save my neck."

Glendish's laugh was as harsh as it was guarded.

"It was the yellow streak again—the soft spot—the rotten spot, you might call it. I was afraid you'd buck up to him and get the liver shot out of you, right there and then. Why don't I take some of these good chances and let you go under, Livingston? Why in the devil don't I?"

"I've been figuring on that a little," said Livingston thoughtfully. "It isn't because you don't hate me spitefully enough; it's because, deep down inside of you, you're not quite sure it wouldn't break Philippa's heart, after all."

"Rats!" scoffed the unbeliever morosely, and he rolled over in the sail-cloth blanketings and went to sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

TERRA INCOGNITA.

Early the next morning the two prisoners in the forehold of the *Colleen Bawn* were awakened by the overhead noises, which betokened a resumption of the cruising activities. The clank of the power winch announced the heaving short of the anchor chain, and the interrupted sputterings of the launch motor told that some one was trying to tune the small engine—not altogether successfully.

"They're going after the ten-thousand-dollar 'salt' cargo," said Livingston, when the launch finally got away. "I wonder if they'll stow it down here?"

"Not while we're here; you can bet on that," was Glendish's reply.

"No, I guess not—which brings on more talk. Lamb said we were to be given some better sort of jail liberty to-day. I wonder when it's to begin."

"Not until after the freight transfer, and not while the *Nauliska* is in sight," Glendish hazarded. "The game had been worked out too carefully to admit of any bad breaks at this stage of it."

As it transpired, the government man's prophecy was at that moment fairly on the way to its fulfillment, though the factor of delay was to be eliminated. As he spoke, the hatch was lifted, and three of the *Colleen Bawn's* "able seamen," headed by the English second mate, dropped into the hold.

"Cap'n's orders," said the Cornishman, with brittle brutality. "Yer to 'ave the blinkers on an' get hout o' this."

The blindfolding was a rough-and-ready process, and quite possibly—though this was incidental—a merciful one for the two pairs of eyes so long unaccustomed to the glare of daylight. When it was accomplished, the two prisoners were hauled out of the pit of immurement, rushed aft to the cabin companion, and thrust rudely into the stateroom which, for some few hours of the first day out of San Francisco, had been Livingston's. And when they had removed the blindfoldings, they found the door locked upon them; found, also, that a bit of sailcloth had been hung over the side from the deck above to cut off the view through the locked portlight.

A little while afterward there were more tramplings on the companion steps, and Ting Foo, backed by the English mate and his squad of three, came with the breakfast. The meal was no longer the prison fare they had been getting in the forehold. It was better, and there was hot coffee to go with it.

"We're coming up in the scale of civilization—a little at a time and often," laughed Livingston over the better breakfast, but the brave attempt at hilarity fell flat. The weeks of close confinement had told upon both, and each had the other's face for a criterion of his own. And with the prison pallor and the emaciation went a certain grim ghastliness that made them both, each for himself, eat silently and with his half-blinded eyes in his plate.

It was after Ting Foo, again escorted by his formidable bodyguard, had removed the breakfast things, and the two strangely assorted cellmates had stretched themselves luxuriously on the blanketed bunk beds, that Livingston broke the long silence to say:

"If Lamb had only gone a bit farther, and included the tobacco! I wonder if he knows what it means to cut a man out of his one luxury like that—in the hollow half of a minute? Hold on, by Jove!"

His coat, the light topcoat he had been wearing on the night of shanghaings, was still lying where he had left it after the first-day bath and change. Feverishly rummaging in the pockets, he found a single cigar, together with a book of the little safety matches given away by the tobacconists. With the clasp knife, which Glendish had again managed to conceal, the cigar was carefully divided into halves.

"Light up and enjoy yourself, old man," said the wealthy Dives, passing one of the halves to the poor Lazarus, who was looking on hungrily.

Glendish sat up suddenly as if the

bunk blankets had been prickingly electrified.

"Confound you!" he raged weakly, taking the gift, and then: "I warn you, Livingston! We're out of that black hole up forward, and, perhaps, in a few days, we'll be on earth again. I've got a hunch that the soft spot—the rotten spot—is going to heal. If it does, you want to look out for yourself."

Livingston had lighted his sharing of the precious tobacco, and was drawing long and luxurious whiffs.

"You'll have plenty of chances, Miles," he said half musingly, "and the Fates are with you. I haven't a ghost of an idea what time of the year or the month it is—only I know it must be getting along toward the time—the time that——"

"The time that was set for your wedding," Glendish finished for him, adding: "Well, what of it?"

"Philippa is waiting, and by now she has given up hope. I know what she is thinking, Miles; she's thinking that she is a widow. She's settled that for herself long ago. She knows me, and she will say that nothing short of the grave could have blotted me out so suddenly and so effectively. When I think of what she has gone through in these few black weeks—— Glendish, isn't it enough to drive a man stark staring crazy? Think of it!"

If Livingston had been the skilled reader of faces that he sometimes boasted he was, he might have read the story of a still-sharper agony, the agony of a fierce soul struggle, in the face of the man in the opposite berth. He, and he alone, knew that Philippa Goodwin was not eating her heart out in disconsolate misery in far-away Colorado; that she was at hand, almost within call, and was probably enjoying the pleasant summer voyage with her father as she had never expected to enjoy it.

Doubtless she had written to Livingston's St. Paul address—not once, but many times; and doubtless, again, she was borrowing no trouble because she had not heard from him. The irresponsible movements of the multimillionaire's yacht would easily account for the missing of the mails.

Glendish sat chewing his half of the cigar in keen bitterness of spirit. A single sentence of a half dozen words would have changed the stars in their courses for the man who, though he had figured as a hated rival, had proved himself big enough and loyal enough to earn even a rival's tolerance and compassion. The few words of explanation would have lifted the cruel load of wretchedness, and yet Glendish could not bring himself to say them.

"You shouldn't expect me to sympathize with you there," was what he forced himself to say, but, after that, the tobacco gift was bitter in his mouth, and the change from the unspeakable prison to the comforts of the little stateroom were as nothing.

A little way beyond this came the sounds of the launch's return, and the two who had gone silent heard the noises betokening the unloading and stowing of her mysterious cargo. Shortly afterward came the clanking of the winch to let them know that the anchor was being broken out, and other sounds gave warning that the schooner was getting under way. Just as the power went on, the mellow chime of a steamer's siren tooting the farewell came to the listeners in the cramped little cabin.

"What was that?" demanded Livingston, bounding to his feet.

"It was a steam whistle, for a guess," said Glendish coolly. "It's the *Nauliska*, telling us good-by."

"Of course," said Livingston, dropping down again. And then: "Great heavens, Miles, it's unbelievable. To think that a bunch of people—our own kind of people—are just over yonder somewhere, and we can't get word to them!"

"There are more wonderful things than that in this mix-up," Glendish offered, with grim cynicism. But beyond this he did not go.

All day, and far into the half twilight of the subarctic night, the *Colleen Bawn* forged ahead, part of the

time in the open water, as the wave motion indicated, and part of the time, as the two captives guessed, in land-locked stretches where the smart breeze came in knock-down flaws, and the noise of the schooner's auxiliary engine —which was being driven at racing speed—came back as echoes to hint at the nearness of the land heights.

During the day there were some little amelioratings of their condition. One at a time they were taken, under careful guard, to the luxuriously fitted little bathroom adjoining the captain's cabin, and clean clothes were given them. Also, with the late dinner, which they ate in clean and appetizing comfort, there was a box of cigars. But throughout the day they saw nothing of Lamb, and had no word from him.

The looked-for landing came in the early hours of the following morning, and it was Lamb himself who gave them their debarking orders. When they went on deck, it was with the freedom of passage-paid travelers. The *Colleen Bawn* was at anchor in a small bay with mud-flat shores backed by abrupt mountains. Overside, the water was yellow, as if from the silting of a great stream, and on the nearest of the mud flats a camp fire was burning.

As they soon saw, the debarkation had been practically a fact accomplished before they were summoned. The schooner's top-hamper had all been sent down, the main boom was lashed amidships, and the canvas was furled and stoppered under weather housings. One curious detail of the stripping and housing Livingston remarked as they stood waiting for their turn to descend to the launch; the ship's name, which had been painted conspicuously on the wheel, had been carefully erased. Also, there was a smell of fresh paint under the counter, to hint at other erasures.

The beach camp, as they found upon stepping ashore, was merely a rendezvous. In addition to the schooner's absurdly numerous crew, there was a group of flat-faced, thick-lipped Indians; beasts of burden these, with the Viking mate portioning out their loads. On the flat beside the fire was the *Colleen Bawn's* scanty lading. The boxes were open, and their contents proved to be exactly what the markings had indicated—hardware, picks, shovels, knocked-down wheelbarrows, drills, crowbars, dynamite and fuse, and a modest array of camping utensils. And in one of the boxes, carefully packed and swathed in many wrappings, was a set of engineer's instruments, a fine transit with all the accessories.

"Your kit, Mr. Livingston," said Lamb briefly, pointing to the field outfit. "Make it your especial care, bearing in mind the fact that the nearest repair shop is something worse than two thousand miles away."

After much less confusion than the magnitude of the undertaking would have excused, the march inland was begun, and by the time the early-rising summer sun was slanting its rays over the backgrounding mountains, the bay and the mud flats had been left behind, and the human pack train was winding its devious way through mountain defiles and over ridges where the old snow was still visible in spots.

Everywhere, as the two unwilling pioneers noted, there was the desolation of a completely uninhabited region, and to Livingston, who was shrewdly gnawing at the puzzle as the toilsome day wore on, it became evident that Lamb, who acted as the pack train's file leader, was purposely choosing a route which should offer neither the chance of observation nor that of possible desertions.

Another curious thing that Livingston noted was the complete disappearance of the sacked "salt," which had been transshipped the day before from the multimillionaire's yacht. At the noon halt, he had a word with Glendish about this, and the conclusion became obvious. The mysterious cargo had doubtless been divided into small quantities, and distributed in the Indians' packs.

The night camp, the pitching of which was delayed far beyond the limits of the long day, was in a precipitous hill country in the heart of a low moun-

tain range. From the care which Lamb took in the selection of the site, it was obvious that the halt was to be permanent; a prefiguring which was presently clinched by the disappearance of the Indian carriers.

With the two mates acting as his lieutenants, Lamb quickly brought order out of chaos. A clearing was made in the thin foresting, tents were pitched, a camp stove was set up for Ting Foo, and the first full meal of the day was speedily served. Afterward, when the pipes were lighted, the skipper told his late between-decks prisoners that one of the tents was theirs.

"That was his way of showing his contempt for any conspiring that we might do as bunkies," said Glendish, when they had gone to roll themselves in the blankets under their own bit of shelter. "He knows he's got us as safe here in these God-forsaken hills as he had when we were in the schooner's forehold."

"You mean that it would be useless to try to run away in an uninhabited country? Listen, Miles; I'm not so sure that it is uninhabited."

"What! After to-day's tramp? It's a howling desert, and I don't believe anybody but the natives ever saw it before. Where were your eyes?"

"I have been neither blind—nor deaf," said Livingston. "Lamb has been purposely keeping away from the beaten trails. I suspected it when we left the shore. And all day long I've been trying to get my bearings. We've been paralleling a big valley all the way from tidewater; a valley that would have given us much easier marching than we had. At one of the high ridge crossings, I got a glimpse into the valley. You'll say I'm crazy, but, Glendish, I'll swear I saw a bit of railroad grade and something that looked mightily like an up-to-date steel track bridge."

"You dreamed it," scoffed the government man.

"No, I didn't. Neither did I dream, a few miles farther along, that the far away rumbling noise that rose out of the big valley on the right was thunder. It was a dynamite shot—or rather a bunch of them—in pretty hard rock."

Glendish twisted his head until he could see the camp fire, and made sure that Lamb was still sitting beside it.

"We're in Alaska; you've settled that much in your own mind, haven't you?" he asked.

"Yes; in Alaska, and on the mainland."

"All right. There are only two railroads in Alaska that I know anything about: the White Pass and one other—and that other is still under construction. Am I hot or cold?"

"You've guessed it. The general direction of the day's hike fits in, and so does the landscape."

"Humph!" said the ex-clerk. "What do you know about the landscape?"

"It just happens," Livingston explained. "The railroad we have in mind is something of an engineering stunt, and there have been pictures in all the technical magazines."

"All of which is good—bully good," said the doubter. "But again and yet again, what's the answer, Livingston? What are we doing up here, lying hidden, dodging the inhabitants, and toting a wagon load of picks and shovels?"

"That is something that we shall probably find out bright and early to-morrow morning," said the optimist. "And to be ready for it, I think we'd better corral us a few lines of sleep."

CHAPTER XIII.

KING SOLOMON CONSOLIDATED.

As Livingston had predicted, the camp in the hills was stirring early on the morning after the tent-pitching on the chosen plateau, and immediately after breakfast Lamb sent for his newly appointed engineer.

Livingston found the chief of the expedition in his tent, alone and once more poring over the roll of maps. As if the night had bridged all the quarrelsome gaps intermediate, Lamb took up the business in hand briskly, with a complete return of his former affability and a resetting of the genial smile.

"Good morning, Mr. Livingston. I hope you rested well after the long hike. I'm sorry to have to turn you out so early, but time presses. Draw up a camp stool, and let us have a bit of man-to-man talk."

Livingston obeyed, though not without a determination to let the other man do most of the talking, and Lamb went on:

"You will bear me witness that I promised you should know all you needed to know when the proper time should arrive. The time has arrived. We are here on the ground, ready to strike the first blow in an undertaking that will make every other mining venture in the world look like child's play. Are you prepared to believe that?"

"I'm listening," was the noncommittal reply.

"All right, then; I'll heave ahead, as a sailor would say. We are in the Alaska mountains, as I suppose you have guessed. You know something about the wonderful paradoxes, in a mineral way, that this region has turned out, and you won't be too greatly surprised when I tell you that we are at this moment camping in the middle of the most incredible paradox of them all. As a mining engineer, you have probably had your eyes opened from the time we landed. Have you seen anything to indicate that we are in the center of a marvelously rich gold region?"

Livingston looked up sharply. "Nothing at all." And then: "It's impossible, from a geological point of view, Captain Lamb. You might as well expect to find gold in the Pennsylvania anthracite."

"There it is, you see," cut in the autocrat pleasantly. "You are a technically trained man, and, theoretically, your verdict ought to be conclusive. But it isn't. I'm going to prove to you, beyond question of doubt, that it isn't. These hills are simply so many vast placers, Mr. Livingston, and more wealth will be dug out of them in the next decade than has been taken out of any mining district that the world has ever seen."

Livingston was shaking his head incredulously. "You'll have to show me," he asserted.

"I am going to show you. I might dip into history a little, and tell you how the discoveries were made, but that would be hardly worth while. The present standing of the enterprise will be of greater interest to you. Realizing their inability to develop their big find without adequate backing and capital, the discoverers were careful not to advertise the region and raise the hue and cry which would have brought another Nome rush in upon them. They took samples, established their landmarks, and quietly went back to the States to capitalize the thing."

Livingston was listening intently and trying to fit the explanation as he could with the overheard conference in the *Colleen Bawn's* cabin.

"They have succeeded?" he said.

"Naturally. There is money enough behind the venture now to capitalize another Steel Trust. The next thing in order is to perfect the titles legally, and that is what we are here for, Mr. Livingston. Does that clear up all the little mysteries?"

"No," said the shoulder hitter, who was too honest to be even judiciously crafty. "It doesn't explain the secrecy —or the violence."

"The secrecy was the most vital part of the thing. One whispered word, with the titles unperfected and no assessment work done, would have spelled disaster, total and complete. Surely you can understand that?"

"Possibly. But the violence. Why should you find it necessary to shanghai your engineer, Captain Lamb?"

"Thereby hangs a tale, Mr. Livingston. I had a man engaged, and because I wouldn't tell him all the things I've just told you, he went back on us. We were up against it. Everything had been timed to a day, and we simply couldn't wait. I don't deny that your appearance on the scene was in the nature of a windfall, but when I found out who you were, I made up my mind to make your fortune for you—forcibly, if I had to. Does that satisfy you?"

Livingston did not say whether it did or not. He was too busy trying to hold clear-sighted reason and calm judgment aloof, to the end that the plausible explanation which fitted so cleverly with the known facts should not blind him to whatever other facts the future might develop.

"I can't forget that I am still your prisoner, Captain Lamb," he returned, "or that you made a slave ship of the *Colleen Bawn* on the voyage out. Whatever I do for you will be done without prejudice to my own opinions, without prejudice to a very natural determination to make you pay for the shanghai business when I can get you within reach of United States law."

The captain waved the disclaimer aside as a matter entirely incidental.

"We'll get to work, if you're ready," he said, rising. "My job will be to show you the landmarks left by the lucky discoverers; yours will be to survey the claims and to make the necessary notebook records for the patenting of them. Get out your instruments, and call your assistant, and we'll get busy."

Then and there began the most mysterious of all the mysteries surrounding and befogging the cruise of the *Colleen Bawn*. From point to point in the hills, the captain led the way, designating each stopping place quite at haphazard, as it seemed to Livingston, and waiting patiently at each halt until the full-sized gold-mining claim had been laid off and the stakes driven.

Curiously enough, as Livingston and his silent helper both observed, the narrow strips they were surveying soon began to zigzag in a roughly described circle inclosing a considerable area, but more curious still was the fact that in not one of the many locations was there the slightest indication or outcropping to point to any possible gold-bearing strata beneath the surface. On the contrary there was every evidence that the region was not auriferous; that it belonged most unmistakably to the carboniferous period.

Doing his work conscientiously and faithfully, and maintaining a judicious silence throughout the greater part of it, Livingston could not help commenting on the stubbornly persisting barrenness of the field.

"If you find any gold here, every mining engineer in the known world will have to relearn his trade, Captain Lamb," he commented, when they were laying off one of the most unpromising of the barren strips.

Lamb smiled leniently, and pointed down the hill to where the *Colleen Bawn's* pick-up crew, divided into two shoveling gangs, each under the leadership of one of the mates, was making the dirt fly in the opening excavations.

"To-morrow we shall follow up the trail of those men, who are doing the necessary allotment of assessment work on each claim. You shall see for yourself, Mr. Livingston, and the seeing will be believing."

In such apparently thankless toil the long Alaskan summer day wore itself away, and after supper, with Glendish to help, the notebook records were carefully worked out and verified. For his own information, Livingston made a roughly plotted map of the ground gone over, working it up from the transit compass readings, and thus verifying his conviction that the criss-crossing locations were gradually assuming the form of an inclosing circle.

"Putting a fence around it, eh?" commented the ex-clerk, who had been an interested onlooker in the map sketching.

"It looks that way, doesn't it? But we are also covering the interior region pretty thoroughly, as well. It won't be worth while for anybody else to come in here after we're through, you'd say."

Glendish was sucking reflectively at a clay pipe which he had begged from one of the men. There was a box of Lamb's cigars on the rudely constructed drawing table, but the pipe was stronger.

"I tell you we're not at the bottom of this thing, by a thousand miles, Livingston!" he protested earnestly. "It's a colossal graft of some kind, just as sure as you live!"

"Lamb has promised us that we shall

be convinced to-morrow. If we are, I shall never get over being thankful that I threw up engineering and took to the more exact science of freight soliciting," chuckled the railroad man.

"You still think it's impossible?" queried the helper.

"As baldly impossible as the hope of finding gold in the street sweepings of Chicago."

Glendish's pipe had gone out, and he began to arrange his blankets for the night.

"We'll see—to-morrow," he said, and before Livingston could carefully destroy and scatter the bits of the telltale map, the government man was asleep and dreaming.

As Lamb had promised, the proof conclusive was offered on the following day, and it was as convincing as a blow on the head from a policeman's nightstick. Equipping himself with an ordinary camp skillet and a shovel, the captain led the way to the first of the excavations made by the shovelers and dynamiters the day before. The narrow drift into the side of the hill was deserted, the men having gone on to the claims staked out above.

"I want to convince you both fairly," Lamb began, in the friendliest manner, "and the best way to do it is to let you make your own tests. Pitch out, Mr. Livingston, and show us how you high-priced experts go at it. Take anything you like from the bottom of the drift."

Livingston climbed down into the narrow, gravelike hole, and got his samples, digging them here and there to secure a fair average. From these samples a shovelful of the marly, barren-looking earth was taken at random, and in the rivulet at the foot of the hill Livingston washed this final shovelful, a handful at a time, in the camp skillet, with Lamb and Glendish looking on.

When the last of the clay and silt had been dexterously dissolved and flooded out over the edge of the pan, there remained a few shining particles of flake gold and two tiny nuggets.

"Well?" inquired Lamb, with a short laugh. "Are you convinced?"

"Not yet," Livingston denied, and he went back to the opening on the hillside and took another sample, averaging it still more carefully than he had the first. At the test the result was practically the same. There were no nuggets this time, but there was a greater quantity of the finer gold.

"How about it now?" demanded the captain, good-naturedly triumphant.

Livingston looked up with a puzzled frown. "You win, Captain Lamb—or, at least, you seem to. Everything that we have learned in geology and mineralogy is against you, but the fact appears to remain. Your marl claims, which have never been nearer the earth's great smelting fires than they are at this minute, seem to be fairly rich in at least one product of the smelting fires; or at all events this first one is. What next?"

"More of the same," said the captain shortly. "But first make a notebook record of this. Of course, without an assayer's outfit, you can do nothing more than to guess at the values. Make your estimate as conservative as you like. All we want is a mining engineer's certificate to the effect that we have a real gold proposition here that is worth working. You can safely say that, can't you?"

"I can state the facts as I find them."

"That is sufficient. To ease your conscience, I can assure you that no attempt will be made to sell stock in the King Solomon Consolidated on the strength of your certificates. For that matter, there isn't a single share of it for sale—and there won't be. Shall we try the next opening?"

Livingston tried the next, and a goodly number of others. The results varied considerably. Some of the claims appeared to be exceedingly rich. Others revealed only traces of the precious metal, a few "colors" to the pan. But in none of them was the gold entirely lacking.

When the morning's testings were completed, the three of them took to the field again with the transit and surveyor's chain, and again the captain made his selections of the sites ap-

parently offhand. But, as before, both Livingston and the stake driver observed that the sightings and chainings were tending more and more to the inclosing of a many-acred tract, or rather to the crisscrossing of the tract, so that practically the whole of it could be claimed and patented under the United States mining laws.

"Speaking of hogs," said Glendish, when they were once more collaborating over the field notes under the twittering lights of the candles in their tent, which they had to keep closed to shut out the mosquitoes, "our captain has them all beaten to a finish. When the rush comes, the new people won't be able to get in edgewise; what?"

"It looks that way," said Livingston, out of the depths of a mathematical calculation.

There was a silence for a little time, broken only by the slurring of the pencils. Then Glendish began again.

"You're going on in good faith?—just the same as if you were a hired engineer?"

Livingston looked up with an absent scowl.

"I'm digging to try to get at the bottom of it, Miles, and so are you. If I could only get my troubles out of my head so that I could put my mind to it——"

"Still harping on that string, are you?" said the ex-clerk unsympathetically. "Why can't you let sleeping dogs lie?"

"The dog in my case isn't asleep; he is very much awake, as you know. And every added day makes it worse."

Glendish's eyes were half closed, and he was chewing absently at the end of his pencil.

"I'm wondering if you'd think less hard of me in the end, when I do you up, if I should give you a grain or two of comfort right now," he said, abstractedly speculative.

"Try me," said Livingston eagerly. "You saw Philippa after I left her. And as for the grouch, Glendish, I shall never live long enough to forget what you did for me in that pitch-black hell on board the *Colleen Bawn*—that and the knife scar on your hand."

"Drop it!" said the other sourly. And then: "I'm selfish about this present mix-up—as usual. You may be able to forgive and forget, but *I'm* going to play even. As it stands, you're no good to scheme; no good on earth; your head's too full of other things."

"Empty it, Glendish! For God's sake, empty it, if you can!" pleaded the wretched lover.

"Well, then, listen: Philippa isn't worrying about you. She doesn't even suspect that you have disappeared. Does that help out any?"

"Glendish, do you mean that? But how, *how* can it be?"

"I'm not going to tell you the 'how.' But it's God's own truth, Livingston. You may know it is, because I've been saying all along that I'd die before I'd tell you."

Livingston put his head in his hands, and sat for five full minutes staring at the flickering candles. At the end, he said: "I can't figure it out; I can't begin to figure it out. You're sure, Miles? You wouldn't put the knife into me like this unless you were sure?"

"I am sure. It will figure out as the simplest thing in the world when you come to know about it. But I'll tell you again: I'm not going to throw away a single one of my poor chances by telling you the details. Get what comfort you can out of the fact; trust your luck for the future; and then put your brains at work on this puzzle of ours. Will you do it?"

"I've been doing it all along; you may be sure I shan't do it any less pointedly for what you've just told me."

"You're convinced that it's a fake of some kind?"

"I was, at first. But this day's experience has shaken me. This is a land of wonders, Miles. Of course, it looks like a fairy tale on the face of it. Yet both of us have seen and handled the stuff."

"Still, I tell you it's a fake!" insisted the pessimist. "I don't pretend to know anything about your geological impossibilities, and all that, but I do pretend

to know a faker when I see one. I tell you, it's a put-up job, and somebody is going to get cinched to beat the band!"

"I can't imagine where it's going to branch off into the faking part," said Livingston. "So far, everything is as straight as a string; we are locating the claims, we are proving that they are *bona-fide* placers, and we are doing a liberal amount of assessment developing. I see no reason why Lamb can't go ahead and get his patents and establish his rights. I'm like you; I'd like to be able to prove that it's a fake. But you've got to get a wedge started before you can drive it."

"I'll start the wedge, and I'll drive it, too—if it's the last thing I ever do!" promised the ex-clerk spitefully.

But in what manner chance, the final arbiter in so many human perplexities, was presently going to open the preliminary rift, neither the spiteful one nor his no less belligerent tentmate could by any means foresee as they resumed their work on the field records.

CHAPTER XIV.

A BULLET AND A BRIBE.

For a strenuous fortnight after the firing of the first dynamite blast in the long string of placer claims, the work was pushed at top speed, the two bullying mates, who were serving as foremen, driving the wretched crew mercilessly. Though Lamb said nothing to the two who were in the rush but not of it, it was evident that cruel haste was the watchword, and it was Glendish's guess that the speeding-up process was due quite as much to pressure from without as to Lamb's own irritable impatience.

By the end of the fortnight, the surveying was completed, and there remained only the final reworking of the field notes and the writing up of the record of tests. Under Lamb's supervision, the pan washings had gone on from day to day, and each in its turn had added something to disprove the "geological impossibility." Beyond all manner of doubt, the King Solomon Consolidated claims were in rich placer ground; so rich that the daily testings became monotonous, and the veil of mystery grew so opaque that it began to figure as a solid background of fact for the two doubters.

As it so often happens in the critical tilting of the scale beam of chance, it was the smallest of incidents that suddenly reopened the entire problem for the two who were baffled. On the day following the final test taking, Livingston and Glendish were working in their tent. With the exception of the ship's Chinese cook, the camp was deserted; and from far around to the westward came the sharp detonations of the dynamite as the excavators drove their job. Glendish, weary with the pen pushing on the records, got up, and stepped to the open tent flap. A moment later he came back with the skillet in his hand; the "pan" they had been using for the test washings.

"Livingston," he broke in abruptly, "what makes this frying pan always rust white?"

Livingston put his pencil down, and paid attention.

"If we were in the Nevada desert, I should call it alkali. It's something in the soil, I suppose."

Glendish transferred a bit of the white deposit to the tip of a forefinger, and tasted it. "It isn't alkali; it's—say, by Jove, it's salt!" he declared, and Livingston nodded.

"That isn't singular. Many of the marl soils carry salt in them. Have you never seen the cows licking a clay-bank?"

"Yes; and also, about two weeks ago, I heard one man tell another that ten thousand dollars' worth of something which they had both been calling 'salt' had been mixed with real salt to give it bulk according to its weight."

Livingston bounded to his feet as if one of the faintly heard dynamite blasts had gone off directly under him.

"Suffering Moses!" he ejaculated. And then: "Glendish, I ought to hire somebody to kick me all the way back to the coast. Heavens and earth! Lamb's job has been as easy as taking

the pennies out of a blind man's hat! I certainly had the right kind of a hunch when I got out of the engineering business, didn't I? Why, the biggest lunkhead that ever ponied through the labs would have caught on before this!"

"You mean that Lamb has been 'salting' these holes, both ways, all along?"

"Of course, he has! And it never entered my head! Come running, and bring that pan!"

Together they slipped out of the rear of the tent, and hurried down to the first of the excavations, the one nearest the rivulet in the gulch. There was no one in sight, and hurriedly, almost feverishly, they put the discovery to the proof. The fraud was quickly made plain. Earth taken from the bottom of the drift yielded gold "colors" and even one small nugget, and it was unmistakably salty to the taste. Earth taken from the sides and ends of the cutting yielded nothing.

"Now what?" queried Glendish, squatting on his heels at the water's edge after the final test had been made.

Livingston was sitting on the bank of the rivulet, absently prying little landslides of the soft tufa soil into the stream with the handle of the frying pan. Suddenly he stooped, and picked up a small black object like a bit of the marly shale that had been dipped in ink. An instant later he was digging frantically under the overhanging bank, using the frying pan for a shovel. When the soil had been scraped away, he grabbed Glendish and shoved his face into the small excavation.

"What do you see?" he demanded excitedly.

"Nothing but a ledge of black rock that you've partly uncovered. No, hold on! By George, it's—*coal!*"

Livingston was grinning fiercely.

"Are you on? Have you got your eye on the sights so you can see the nigger in this biggest of all the woodpiles?"

It was Glendish's turn to leap to his feet with his narrow black eyes ablaze.

"The pirates! The robbers! The buccaneers!" he shrilled. "Don't you see what they're doing? This is a part of the disputed coal land, and they've got a sure tip that the whole business is going to be withdrawn from entry—I heard about it when I was in Washington the last time! And they're hedging; hedging by covering the coal claims with a lot of bogus gold mines! Livingston, it's up to you and me to put the dynamite to this thing and blow it to——" He stopped short, with the hot eyes blazing and his jaw hanging loosely. On the bank above them stood the chief of the buccaneers, with his hands in the pockets of his khaki shooting jacket and his strong, even teeth bared in a mirthless smile of complete comprehension.

"I suppose you know where you stand, both of you," he said slowly, after the pause had grown heartbreaking. And then to Livingston: "Don't try the jujutsu this time; you can't jump this far, and, besides, I've got you both covered."

Livingston threw up his head defiantly. The fortnight of hard work in the open had made a man of him again, and he looked, and felt, fighting fit.

"The game's up," he said tersely. "Shoot, and be done with it. If you don't get us, we'll get you!"

"All in good time," was the significant answer, and it was followed by a curt command. "Climb out of there, both of you, and go up to camp—ahead of me."

They obeyed soberly, because there was nothing else to do, climbing the slight acclivity out of the rivulet ravine silently side by side, with Lamb keeping even step a few paces in the rear. Just before they came in sight of the tents and Ting Foo's cooking fire, the captain called a halt, and when they turned to face him he flashed out at Glendish.

"You've been a spy and a backcapper from the first, and you may as well quit here and now!" he said, in curt decision. And with catlike quickness he whipped a pistol from the pocket of the khaki coat, and coldly shot the ex-clerk as he stood.

For the instant which cost him his chance to fling himself, bare-handed, upon the murderer, Livingston stood frozen with the incredible, unspeakable horror of the thing. Glendish had fallen as one falls from the impact of a body blow, doubled and contorted, and with a queer look of shocked wonder in the beady little eyes. Then there was a single convulsive shudder, and the eyes closed.

"You cold-blooded devil!" yelled Livingston, crouching for the spring. But his moment was gone. Lamb had stepped back, and the pistol was at his hip.

"Go on up to the camp!" he commanded sharply, and with a mighty effort Livingston made himself obey. His life had suddenly grown precious; it must not be wasted now until justice should be done.

The quick march in single file paused, by Lamb's command, at the entrance to Livingston's tent. Livingston stole a quick glance at the deserted camp. The men were all out, and there was only the blank-faced Chinaman pottering at the fire.

Lamb summoned the cook, and said a few words to him in his own tongue. When the Chinaman had shuffled off over the shoulder of the hill, the two, captor and captive, were alone in the circle of tents.

"Turn in!" snapped the man with the weapon, and once more Livingston took counsel of prudence and obeyed. At the step inside, Lamb pushed him rudely to a seat on one of the pole-built bunks.

"There are two kinds of fools, Livingston," he said, with brutal crispness; "those who know too little, and those who know too much. Your no-friend has just paid the penalty which usually falls, sooner or later, upon the latter class. Where do you stand?"

"I stand precisely where the man you have just killed was standing when you shot him down."

"Which means that you have become one of the fools who know too much. Livingston, I'm going to give you about five minutes in which to change your mind. You had your warning long ago, and it's your own fault if you did not pass it on to that snapping little cur out yonder. Where is your report?"

Livingston nodded toward the rough-hewn drawing table. Lamb glanced over the report, turning the leaves with his left hand and keeping the weapon in his right pointed at Livingston's stomach. At the end he shoved the paper across the table.

"Sign it," he directed briefly.

"Not in a thousand years, you grafter!" was the explosive refusal.

"Then you'd rather die—and break the girl's heart? Listen a minute; you are young, with a fair prospect of life and happiness before you, and the happiness of the one woman to consider as well. Lay hold of your common sense, and look the thing fairly in the face. Ask yourself if it is worth while. I know what you've found out, and I'll tell you more. A bunch of wild-eyed conservation fanatics in the States have made up their minds that they're going to have the coal fields of this country locked up indefinitely. We are merely trying to put one across on them—it's as good as done at the present moment, and you can't stop it."

He waited for a reply, and when there was none forthcoming, he went on:

"I don't care anything about your signature on that paper. We can file on the gold claims without it—or I could forge it, if needful. But your mouth must be closed, one way or another. I'll close it painlessly if you'll say the word. It is worth one hundred thousand dollars to you, to be placed to your credit in any New York bank you name, and no questions asked, if you'll agree to keep still. Think a minute of what that means—say three or four times your late railroad salary as an assured income."

Livingston lifted his head with a jerk.

"Why don't you shoot and have it over with?" he rasped. "You know you can't afford to let me get out of Alaska with this information that I have stumbled upon."

"You may go to-morrow," said Lamb definitely, "and I'll ask nothing more than your word—and your signature on that paper."

"Ah! I thought so. You would certainly be safe enough if you could make me an accomplice in your dirty scheme! You can't do it, Captain Lamb. Neither can you kill me in cold blood, as you'd like to. *You haven't got the nerve!*" and he fixed Lamb's eyes with a defiant stare that was like a triumphant wrestler's lock hold.

The captain backed away, and half raised the pistol. Just then Ting Foo's expressionless face appeared in the slit of the tent flap.

"I dlag him down an' belly him in one, two, tlee hole, allee samee top side Melican man undeltakee," he sing-songed. And Lamb, apparently changing his mind, gave another brief order in the Quang-Tung dialect. The Chinaman vanished, but he returned almost immediately, jingling a pair of handcuffs with the accompanying leg irons.

"Clamp him," was Lamb's command, and he made resistance impossible, or at least futile, with the pointed pistol.

When the Chinese deputy had done his office and had gone back to his cooking fire, Lamb turned away.

"Don't think you have won out with a brash word or two," he said, turning on his heel in the tent opening. "The clean fact of the matter is that I don't want to kill you, Livingston, if I can avoid it. You ought to know why—you're a full-grown man, which is more than could be said for the bit of carrion we left behind on the other side of the hill. Take a few hours to consider. Your word and your signature, and you are footloose, with a hundred thousand dollars of your own to spend on your wedding, if you choose. Think it over, remembering that if you refuse you're only a common housefly trying to block the way for a steam road-roller. Send me word by Ting Foo when he brings your supper, and make it the word of ordinary prudence and common sense."

And with that he was gone.

CHAPTER XV.

CHAOS AND OLD NIGHT.

It was between three and four o'clock in the afternoon of the day of illuminating discoveries and tragic happenings when Livingston was given his conditional reprieve; a respite which he knew would be only a short one if he should remain obstinate. None the less, there was time for the reflective weighing of all the arguments, pro and con, and he strove to do it calmly.

The choice between the two alternatives was not so easy to make as it had seemed to be in the first flush of retaliatory rage. Unquestionably Lamb and the potential coal barons who were behind him were buccaneers, deserving the execration of all honest men; public enemies toward whose overthrow and defeat the efforts of all good citizens should be directed. But these were abstract considerations. The concrete reality fined itself down to this: Was he, Sidney Livingston, called upon to defend the abstract principle at the price of his life and of the happiness of one whose welfare was dearer to him than even life itself?

There could be no doubt of Lamb's necessity, or of the sincerity of his threat. Self-preservation is the primal law, and, while there remained a single living witness to the colossal fraud, that witness must be either bribed effectively or silenced otherwise.

Livingston tried to get above the mere personalities and to look the broad facts fairly in the face, but the effort was only partly successful. What he was asked to do was scarcely more criminal than some of the lawless things he had been practically ordered to do in the railroad service. Even in a democracy, capital has some rights that a sovereign people may be bound to respect, and it was quite credible that Lamb's backers were trying to hold what they might plausibly assert was their own.

It is nothing to Livingston's discredit to say that the argumentative battle was desperately prolonged; that for a long time decision hung in the balance. Nor

should he be judged too harshly if it be admitted that at the end of the ends the personal equation figured more potently than did the purely ethical question of abstract right and wrong.

Again and again he came back to the sharp apex of the thing—he had been kidnaped and bullied and driven at the muzzle of a gun to serve the purpose of the buccaneers; and Glendish, at the worst only a compulsory onlooker, had been shot down in cold blood. Lamb was the pitiless aggressor, and he must be made to pay. Livingston strained at his manacles, and swore a great oath. Though he should never see Philippa again, while he lived he would strive and fight for the squaring of the long account with the captain of the *Colleen Bawn*.

Just what was to be done in a retaliatory way was not so evident. With a pair of modern handcuffs snapped upon his wrists, and a pair of heavy leg irons clamped around his ankles, even the strongest of young Samsons may recognize his handicap and be hampered by it. But while there was life, there was hope, and after the militant decision was reached he awaited the coming of the Chinaman with his supper with a firmer degree of courage and with every faculty alert and on the defensive.

For a reason which was presently made manifest, to the ear, at least, the supper bringing was delayed. At the quitting hour, Livingston heard the men come into camp, not in the sullen silence of toilers who had been driven like galley slaves in the ditches, but uproariously and more like a pay-day mob of drunken grade laborers.

Instantly, if one might judge from the clamor, there were half a dozen fights in progress around the camp fire, and Livingston could hear above the din the biting profanity of the two bullying mates as they strove to bring order out of the suddenly precipitated chaos.

After a few minutes of the clamor, there was a lull, as if the mates, with their pick-handle clubs, had succeeded in quelling the belligerents. Then the rioting broke out again more furiously than before, with a crackling of pistol shots and the heavy *dunch* of body blows mingled with fierce yells, which translated themselves into a mob's war cry of curses and mad shoutings for vengeance to be wreaked upon somebody.

Livingston edged along on the bunk to reach with his fettered hands for the closed tent flap. In the act the Chinese ship's cook came headlong through the slit in the canvas, his face cut and bleeding and his slanting eyes saucerlike in their terror.

"Me come fo' liting papers!" he gasped; "Bucko cap'n say you givee me liting papers!" And without waiting to be helped or hindered, he swept the reports and records of the fraudulent gold entries from the table into the ample folds of his shirtlike upper garment, and darted out again.

Livingston fell back, raging at his own impotent helplessness. The long, high-latitudes summer day was still only in its early evening, but the surrounding wood cut off the level rays of the slanting sun, and the shadows were already gathering under the canvas. As if the battleground were shifting, the medley of discordant yells and gun cracklings grew fainter, and presently died away altogether, and a silence profound and ominous settled down upon the deserted clearing.

Livingston got a purchase on the short chain uniting his manacles, and twisted until the pain blinded him. When sight returned, he made sure that he was losing his hold upon sanity. Crouching at the foot of the opposite bunk, as if it had just floated noiselessly through the tent wall, was the ghost of Miles Glendish.

"Miles!" he gasped, and at that one side of the parchmentlike face of the ghost wrinkled in a horrible grin.

"It's half of me," whispered the apparition; "the half that's alive bringing along the other half that's dead. I've come back to get you to help me to kill Lamb. Where is he?"

"But you're dead, Glendish!" shuddered the one who was at least constructively alive, covering his eyes with

his hands. "Good heavens! Didn't I stand by and see you die?"

"You saw half of me die," said the ghost, and the words came out of one side of its mouth with twistings and face contortions frightful to behold. "The bloody devil shot straight enough, but my watch happened to be in the way. Look at that!"—it was the mere wreck of a heavy silver watch, smashed as if by a hammer blow, that lay in the palm of the one live hand—"I guess I was all dead until the little chink came to drag me off down the hill," he went on. "Then one side of me came alive enough to scare him. He dropped me, and took to the timber. Now, I've come back to kill the man who did it. Where is he?"

"I don't know. There has been a horrible scrap of some kind. The whole show fought itself out of hearing just before you—just before I looked up and saw you."

Glendish wagged his head feebly. "A scrap?" he echoed.

"Yes. The men came in at quitting time, yelling like a lot of drunken savages. From what I could hear, I gathered that Larscom and Selden waded in with their pick handles. They got it under for a minute or two, and then it broke out again worse than before. I've got a notion that the worm has turned and the men are trying to square things with Lamb and his bucko mates."

Glendish was no longer paying attention. He was rummaging in a knotted handkerchief bundle which contained the few extra bits of clothing he had contrived to bring with him from the schooner. Out of the dunnage he fished a tiny pocket mirror, vanity's sole holdover from the days of the accurately matched hatbands and clocked hosiery. He held the mirror up to the fading light, and peered into it. One glimpse of the distorted face was enough. With a wild-beast cry, he flung the bit of silvered glass down, and set the living heel upon it to grind it into the earth. Then he laughed, and the laugh was hideous, both to sight and sound.

"You w-win, Livingston," he gurgled. "No woman will ever look twice at me again."

"No, you are wrong," was the grave rejoinder. "We both lose," and in a few brief sentences he recounted the happenings of the afternoon. "Lamb will get away," he predicted, in conclusion. "He has the papers, and he will forge my name to them, if he needs to—he said he would. But before he goes back to the coast he will make sure that we are both dead. You can't run away, and neither can I."

"I'm dead enough now," grinned the paralytic, "but I've got the knife left, and one hand to hold it. When he comes back to massacre you, I'll get him, if it's the last thing I ever do in this world."

"If I could only get these clamps off!" groaned the athlete.

Glendish crept to the front of the tent, and cautiously drew the flap.

"Nobody has come back yet," he announced. "I'm going to crawl over to the blacksmith's shed and see if I can't find a file."

Livingston held the tent flap open, and watched Glendish's slow progress across the clearing. It was pitiful. As he had said, the shock of the bullet had left him paralyzed on one side; his left arm and leg were merely dragging hindrances. Yet he would not give up, and after a time Livingston saw him come clawing back with the file between his teeth.

They fell to work at once, or rather Livingston did, though Glendish made shift to hold the file with one end in a crack of the slab table top, while Livingston sawed his fetters back and forth across its edge. It was a slow task, and, before the first of the fetters was cut through, the men were coming back to the camp by twos and threes, and replenishing the fire and raiding the commissary.

What attitude the mutineers would assume toward them, neither Livingston nor Glendish could guess, but as a precautionary measure they dropped the tent flap and toiled on in the gathering gloom. It was a race against time,

and they both knew it. If Lamb and the bucko mates had not been overtaken and slain, there would be a reckoning, and it would not tarry.

By the time the firelight without showed them the reassembled rioters, or a goodly number of them, gorging themselves around the fire, Livingston had his hands free and was attacking the leg irons. Now that he could use the file as a hand implement and put his strength to it, there were better results; moreover, Glendish was free to crawl to the tent flap and keep watch.

"They didn't get Lamb or the mates," was the first bit of information passed back to the sweating file sawyer. "They've got pickets out, and they're looking to be jumped at any minute. The silly fools! Lamb and his buckos have the guns, and the first notice they'll get will be a gunplay notice to quit."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a jet of red fire spurted from the nearest of the placer driftings, and one of the mutineers lurched forward and fell with his face in the hot ashes of the camp fire. Instantly pandemonium leaped alive again with a wild panic to urge it on. The "gutter rats" of the San Francisco water front were game. As one man they rushed the makeshift breastwork fiercely, deploying as they ran to thin their ranks and dodge the fire spurtings.

Glendish dropped the canvas flap, and rolled over to grope for a handhold on the leg of the tent table.

"Hurry!" he gasped. "Lamb's got help! There are more than three of them pumping lead over that pile of dirt yonder! Hurry—hurry!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HIKE.

The battle at the breastwork was still raging hotly when Livingston got the second of the leg fetters cut and sprang up a free man.

"This is our time to fade away!" he cried out, and then he remembered Glendish's helplessness. "Can you walk if I give you a shoulder?"

"Not on one leg," gritted the ex-clerk. And then: "Pitch out for yourself, Sidney. I'm only a has-been."

"What do you take me for?" was the gruff retort, and, laying hold of the cripple, Livingston dragged him bodily under the canvas on the side away from the fighting.

Once in the open, the obstacles in the way of escape rose up on every side. The camp and the clearing, to say nothing of the flying bullets, cut them off from the downhill flight. Their best chance, as Livingston saw it, was to make for the great valley where he had seen the railroad. But to get at the downhill trail a wide circuit in the rear of the placer ditchings must be made. Livingston did not hesitate. Gathering the cripple in his arms, he made the dash, hoping that they might not be seen.

The hope was a vain one. When they were halfway to the nearest cover, one of the three men in the makeshift breastwork—there were only three, after all—rolled over and opened fire on them with a short-barreled repeating rifle. Twice Livingston felt the sting of the lead; one of the missiles scorched his shoulder in passing, and the other left a smarting score on his right hand. When he staggered into the welcome cover of the wood, it was as the blind carrying the blind.

"Just a minute, old man—until I can get my second wind!" he panted, putting Glendish down tenderly, and he was relieved to hear the helpless one burst out in a babblement of curses.

"Leave me! Leave me, I tell you!" raved the cripple. "Ten thousand devils! Haven't you got a lick of sense left? Lamb will pick those fellows off, one at a time, and then he'll trail us. Don't you see that he *can't* let either one of us reach the coast alive? Drop me and outrun him, Sidney. For the love of God, get out of this while you can!"

"Not without you, Miles; that's settled once for all. Hold your grip a minute while I dodge around behind this scrimmage and raid the commissary." And propping Glendish on the

safe side of a tree, Livingston made a quick detour to the rear of the yelling, stone-hurling mob charging the breastwork.

He was back in a few minutes, with a sailor's dunnage bag slung over his shoulder.

"It's plenty hot back there, and I had to take what I could get," he gasped. "I stumbled over the Chinaman as I was breaking in. He's dead, and I've got the papers that he swiped for Lamb. It seems that he didn't live long enough to finish the errand."

"That's one more reason why Lamb can't afford to let you get away alive!" snapped the ex-clerk. "If you weren't the biggest fool that ever breathed——"

Livingston cut the protest short. The crackling shots were coming at longer intervals, and the minutes were precious. Stooping to get the lifting hold, he swung the dead weight of the paralytic to his back, and the flight was begun.

Because the twilight arctic night was hazy and the stars were obscured, and also because it was sharply necessary to choose the easier trails, Livingston soon lost his sense of direction; lost it partly while the sound of the dropping shots could still be heard, and completely after the huge silence of the hills had shut down upon them.

Though Glendish was small and light, and Livingston, rising to his full stature of a man and an athlete, put forth his strength like a young giant, the handicap promised soon to make the retreat a toiling, slow march, and the covering of the first few miles, even with rest intervals thickly interspersed, proved that their best hope lay rather in evading than in running. It became evident that many hours must elapse before they could hope to break out of the uninhabited wilderness, and at the midnight halt, while they ate sparingly from the scanty provision bag, Glendish renewed his importunities to be left behind.

"You're crazy, Livingston," he protested. "It would be different if there were the least living chance of my ever being a whole man again. But there isn't; you know there isn't, and I know it. So what's the use?"

"Put yourself in my shoes, Miles, and you'll see."

"I'd quit you in a minute!" was the rasping rejoinder.

"Yes," said the athlete; "that is just what you've been doing all along—quitting me—isn't it? It's what you did when I went mad in the schooner's hold, and it's also what you did a few hours ago when you put off dying long enough to crawl into camp to see what had become of me. You can rest easy, old man. If Lamb gets one of us, he'll get both."

"Blast you!" sobbed the quitter, with another of the dreadful face twistings, "why can't I hate you the way I ought to! Man, man! If it wasn't for the love of a girl—— Sidney, promise me one thing. If by some crooked miracle you should happen to get me out alive, don't let her see me. It would kill me to see the look in her eyes, and torment me in hell afterward!"

Livingston's grin was merely a mask for the upheaval of mingled emotions that sent the tears to his eyes.

"Shut up!" he commanded, with a break in his voice that he could not control; and then, the simple meal being dispatched, he set up as an amateur physician, stripping Glendish to the waist and turning him upon his face to give the paralyzed nerve branchings a vigorous massaging. "Tell me, if I hurt you," he said, but it was not until after he had lost all hope that Glendish began to wince.

"Ouch!" said the patient. "Don't forget that I've got some feeling left in one side of me."

Livingston's sigh of relief was almost a sob. Propping his patient with his back to a tree, he began to chafe the useless arm roughly, and again Glendish winced.

"If I didn't know that that side is as dead as Pharaoh——" he began. And then: "Oh, suffering humanity! How it hurts!"

"You're sure of that, are you?" queried the amateur, redoubling the roughnesses.

"Sure? Good blazes! It's like a million needles! Let up, man; let up, I say! You're murdering me!"

"Hit me," said Livingston triumphantly. "Double up your fist, and give me a good one."

Glendish tried it, and the fingers of the dead hand obeyed jerkily, though the flexors and extensors of the upper arm would not. "Oh, God!" he whispered, in ecstatic happiness, and again: "Oh, my God!"

For a long time after Livingston had desisted through sheer weariness, the wounded man lay with his back to the tree bole, crooking and straightening the halting fingers and staring amazedly at them in the misty twilight of the Alaskan dawn.

"It's creeping down," he averred, at length. "It's in my toes now, stabbing like a hundred thousand little knives." And then abruptly: "Livingston, do you believe in God?"

"Of course," said the shoulder hitter. "Everybody does."

Glendish shook his head slowly. "No, not everybody; I didn't—not until a few minutes ago. I've been saying—it doesn't matter much what I've been saying, only it wasn't true, any of it. And now I've been to hell, and I'm coming back. I know what you'll say—that the bullet shock knocked some nerve center out of commission temporarily, and all that; but *I* know a bigger thing than that, and—and, Sidney, it breaks my heart!"

Livingston was sitting up and staring at the slowly reddening sky in the northeast.

"That's our compass point, and, if Lamb got out of last night's scrap alive, we'd better be moving along," he said. "Do you want to try that leg? Or shall I give you a lift again?"

Glendish got up, with the proffered help, but to go with the returning sensibility there were excruciating pains.

"I'm paying all the back debts now," he gasped weakly. "I think there is a broken rib where the watch dug into me. Just the same, we'll go on, if you'll give me a shoulder," and in such manner the flight was resumed.

Now that he had his bearings, Livingston faced about, and headed in the direction of the great valley where the railroad was; this though the changed course would, he feared, take them back over much of the distance so painfully gained in the night, and might take them perilously near to the camp of the bloody shambles. But to undertake the long march to the coast, or even to make a long detour, would be beyond Glendish's slowly returning strength, and safety lay in reaching civilization by the shortest route.

Once in communication with the world, they would have nothing to fear, and Lamb would become the outlaw. But so long as the secret of the bogus gold claims remained a secret kept, Lamb, if he were still alive, could be trusted to stick at nothing in the fight for its preservation and for the recovery of the papers upon which the securing of the claims under the mining law depended. So Livingston argued, and Glendish agreed as to the fact, though the direct push for the railroad was against his judgment.

"We're not fooling him any—unless he's dead," was the way the ex-clerk put it. "And if he's alive enough to scheme, he'll have the arms and the ammunition, and he'll try to head us off from the railroad. But we can feel our way—we can't do much more than that, anyhow, until I get a better leg under me."

It was late in the afternoon of this first day when they came out of the ridges and could see in the nearer distance the breaking away of the land toward the great drainage valley. But the glimpse was all they had. From far down the slopes ahead of them, two dustlike little clouds sprang up, and they heard the whine of the bullets before the distance-flattened reports of the guns came to them.

"Duck!" said Livingston shortly, and when they reached the first sheltering ravine they changed their plans.

"It's the coast or nothing," was Livingston's summing up of the new hazard. "Failing to pot us from some safe place in the trail, they'll be care-

ful to keep between us and the railroad. Let's be moving. One or another of them will be piking out this way to see if either of the shots made a bull's-eye."

Once more the weary line of march was resumed, this time at right angles to the former course and with a bearing, as nearly as they could judge from the position of the sun, to the southward. Since the *Colleen Bawn's* party had covered the entire distance from shore to camp in a single long day, they argued that two days would suffice for their return, even at the slow pace made necessary by Glendish's condition, and the detours they might have to make to dodge their pursuers. For the present, a safe place in which to camp was the one thing needful, and they found it finally in a thicket of spruces deep in the heart of a great coulée, though even here they did not dare to make a fire.

"Pretty well tuckered?" was Livingston's sympathetic asking, when they had munched a dry portion of the rapidly diminishing food store, and the one who was able had broken a few of the spruce boughs for a bed.

"I'm all right," Glendish asserted, but in the fading light his face was ashen with weariness and drawn with pain.

"And the broken rib?"

"It isn't as bad as being paralyzed."

"But you've set your heart on sticking it out? There's a lot in that, you know."

Glendish's smile was a mere teeth-baring of fatigue.

"One time you thought I might not be game, Sidney. You're not worrying any about that now, are you?"

"Great Scott—no! Miles, if I'm ever happy enough to see Philippa again, I'll take back everything that I've ever said about you, and tell her the truth—that you're the better man."

"Like fits you will!" said the ex-clerk, but this time there was no bitterness in the scoffing.

After that they spoke of other things; of the probable distance to the sea, and of what they should find in the way of succor when they should reach the coast. Thrashing this out, Livingston half humorously lamented his ignorance of geography.

"If I didn't dream that I saw that railroad embankment and bridge on the way in, we ought to know about where we are; we would know if we had brains enough between us to keep us from being sent to a home for incurable idiots!" he said.

Glendish nodded gravely.

"Valdez is the town, isn't it? But that would be on the other side of the river and the railroad. And Lamb will see to it that we don't get a chance to take any short cuts."

"Lamb will live to take the kinks out of a piece of new rope—if he doesn't come to his end in some more respectable way while the rope is getting itself twisted," growled the athlete, and then they composed themselves to sleep.

On the morning of the second day they were astir early, and Glendish would not admit that the pain of the broken rib had kept him awake most of the night. But before the day's work was fairly begun, he was fighting for breath, and was once more urging Livingston to go on and leave him.

"That part of it was settled long ago," said the one who had settled it. "If you stop, I stop. Take my shoulder, and bear down as hard as you like. I'm feeling like a fighting man this morning."

Hour after hour the slow march went on, with the way made more difficult by the necessity, or the fancied necessity, of keeping to the hills and the spruces. At intervals that grew hourly shorter, Glendish had to stop and rest, and by the middle of the afternoon Livingston understood that the plucky little man who was stumbling and reeling drunkenly with a grip on his shoulder was keeping up only by the sheerest effort of will; that, lacking rest and skillful attention, he could not last through another day. None the less, there was hope ahead. By all the signs they knew, they must be nearing the coast. The smell of the salt water was in the glacial air, and once they saw a flock of sea birds.

As it chanced, they were nearer than

they thought they were, and their first sight of the longed-for goal came upon them unawares. They were slowly making their way down an old moraine where the spruces grew thin, and the side slopes, polished and worn smooth by the ancient ice plane, rose in bare cliffs on either hand, when the vista suddenly opened out upon a dead level of mud flats and the bight of a small bay. At anchor in the bay lay a clipper-built schooner, with her sails clewed down and stoppered in their weather housings and her topmasts lowered. By some mysterious leading, they had retraced, in its seaward portion, at least, the blind trail to the interior over which Lamb had piloted his human pack train on the march to the coal fields.

"The *Colleen Bawn!*" said Glendish faintly, and even as he spoke a bullet from the right-hand cliff bit the earth at their feet, and another from the left glanced from a smooth bowlder beside them. Instantly Livingston swept the sick man into his arms, and dashed back to the cover of the trees. With the goal in sight, they were not to be permitted to reach it.

Glendish was the first to speak after they had regained the shelter of the wood.

"I told you so," he said wearily. "Lamb isn't specially trying to pot us; he's merely herding us. He knew we couldn't get anywhere without breaking cover, and he also knows that we'll starve to death in a little while if he keeps us rounded up in this barren wilderness. He's betting on a sure thing, Sidney, and he's held all the face cards from start to finish. Let's not go back. This is as good a place to die in as any we'll find in a day's hike. And I don't believe—I could make—the—hike."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MUTINEERS.

For an hour or more they lay under the sheltering overhanging of a great bowlder, while Lamb and his two bucko mates took random shots from above the thin cover of the moraine bottom. Why the three men, with weapons in their hands, did not come down to flush the game and make an end, they did not know, but that this would come, sooner or later, neither of them doubted.

"Say, Sidney, this is the wind-up, don't you think?" queried the sick man, in one of the longer intervals between the shots.

Livingston shook his head. "Never say die till you're dead. But I'll admit that it looks pretty bad."

"So bad that we might as well close the books and strike the balance. Before we pass out, I've got a hard thing to say—hard, because it'll make you think I've turned yellow at the last. I—I don't hate you any more, Sidney; if by crawling out there in the sunshine and letting Lamb plug me, I could give you back alive and well to Philippa, I'd do it."

"God bless you, old man; don't I know it?" said Livingston, in generous warmth.

"But in the back-time days I did hate you, and I tried my level best to do you up. When I heard of your engagement, I said I'd be the dog in the manger, and I have been—a dirty dog, Livingston. Philippa has never intentionally given you away to me, but I've schemed and set traps for her and led her to tell me a lot of things about your railroad business that she wouldn't have told if I hadn't been her cousin. I want to square things if I can. I've been little and mean, and I'd like to die a few inches bigger, if I could."

Livingston reached down, and gripped the hand that bore the knife scar.

"It's square and more than square, old man; it has taken this stripped plunge of ours into the raw things to make us know each other; that's all. If Philippa were here, she should have another go at it, and I'd tell her what I said I would, Miles—that you're the better man."

Glendish wagged his head impatiently.

"That's nonsense," he said. "I've never stood a ghost of a show, and I

knew it all along. But even a dog can be stubborn and vindictive."

"Drop it," said Livingston, in gruff good nature. "That's past and gone, and here goes another thing," and he took the file of field notes and reports from his pocket and was going to destroy them.

"Hold on, don't do that," interposed the one whose blood ran cooler. "That's the evidence against the buccaners, the best evidence that could be found! Don't——" He stopped short, and then began again in a hoarse whisper: "What is that white thing coming in across the bay? It's—it's—look quick, Livingston; it's the *Nauliska!* She's been lagging behind to give Lamb his chance, and to keep Goodwin—— Oh, good Lord! That's another thing that I'd forgotten you didn't know. Philippa's on that yacht, Sidney, or she was a couple of weeks ago—Philippa and her father. John Goodwin got a wire appointment from the interior department to come up here and look the coal-field matter over on the ground and take evidence. They left the day after you started for Frisco, and that's why I was able to tell you that Philippa wasn't worrying about you!"

Livingston was staring at the upcoming yacht like a man in a trance, and it took another spatting shot from the cliffs above to shock him alive.

"Philippa?" he gasped—"and her father? Stay where you are, Miles; I'm going to signal that yacht!"

It was his last ounce of strength that Glendish put into the clinging grip that saved the shoulder hitter from committing quick suicide.

"Hold up!" he panted; "don't do that! Something may happen——"

Something was happening simultaneously, as it seemed, on both of the cliff-edge lips of the old moraine. To the listeners below it sounded like a sudden renewal of the evening battle in the camp of the bogus gold claims. Shots were spattering, and hurled stones came smashing into the ravine. Then the gun fire stopped short, and a knot of men, clutching and striking out savagely, came into view on the right-hand brink. Out of the knot shot over the brink as if by the blow of a battering-ram, came first the body of the big Swedish mate, and then that of the Cornishman. A yell of triumph went up, and it was answered from the opposing cliff.

"They've got Lamb!" panted the sick man, still clinging to Livingston. "Don't show yourself!"

The warning came none too soon. As Livingston drew back, another body was whirled into the air, this time from the left-hand cliff, and it dropped, a crushed and mangled thing, within a few feet of their hiding place. Livingston parted the spruce boughs for one horrified glance. It was Lamb.

"Heavens! What savages!" he exclaimed, and then: "What are they doing now?"

The mutineers, or rather the fighting remnant of them, were answering the query for themselves by rushing down to the mud-flat level and the sea brink and signaling frantically to the schooner. Almost immediately the launch put off and took them aboard. Followed a swift ripping of the weather housings from the furled sails, and the hoarse drumming of the gasoline auxiliary. The mutineers had dropped the anchor cable overboard, and were getting away.

There was need for haste, as the two cramped fugitives could see when they made their way out of the moraine of death and got the wider outlook. The big yacht was feeling her way across the bay with the sounding lead going, and she was signaling to the schooner. Livingston stripped his coat, and ran out to wave it despairingly. It seemed foolish to hope that they would see him from the decks of the *Nauliska.*

"They've seen us!" panted Glendish, coming up at the hopeless moment. "They're lowering a boat!"

It was a smart motor tender that was dropped from the starboard davits of the yacht and came shooting ashore. To the natty young officer in command, Livingston made no explanations. With succor in sight and assured, Glendish toppled over, and was out of it for the time being.

"You've got a doctor?" snapped Livingston to the launch officer. "Then get us aboard quickly. It's a matter of life and death, I'm afraid."

During the swift dart and return of the launch, the yacht had kept on at half speed, and the signals were still flying for the schooner, which was edging seaward. When the launch came alongside, the davit falls were hooked on, and a minute later Livingston was turning Glendish over to a portly gentleman with kindly eyes and a professional air that went oddly with his white flannels and a jaunty yachting cap.

"It's a gunshot wound," Livingston explained hurriedly, while the members of the yacht party crowded around in sympathetic curiosity. "It's two days old, and the bullet struck his watch; for a time he was paralyzed on one side. Don't let him die!"

"It seems to be only a swoon," said the kindly eyed member of the yacht's party who was acting as ship's doctor. "We'll get him up, all right, I guess."

Livingston looked around while they were carrying Glendish down to the sick bay. "Where's your captain?" he asked hurriedly, and a bearded man who looked as if he might be the commander of an Atlantic liner came down from the bridge.

"You belong to that schooner?" he asked brusquely, without waiting for Livingston to begin. "What is her name? It seems to have been painted out."

"She is the *Colleen Bawn*, cleared from San Francisco for the Pribilofs. Her crew has mutinied and killed the captain and the two mates. Their bodies are lying over there in that moraine."

It was at this juncture that the *Nauliska's* owner came up.

"What is that?" he asked. "Is Lamb dead? Was that the meaning of the shots we heard?"

"It was."

"And you? Who are you?" inquired the money king.

Livingston looked the great man fairly in the eye.

"A fortnight or so ago, in a talk with Captain Lamb, you referred to me as 'the figuring man,'" he said coolly.

The yacht owner turned to his sailing master. "Put on the speed and run those fellows down," he ordered. "If they won't heave to and surrender, cut them in two and sink them."

Without knowing what the chase meant, the yacht's party began to gather forward on the promenade deck to look on. Livingston drew aside, and waited, while the multimillionaire conferred briefly with his sailing master. Then an order was passed to the foredeck, and the little gun which was used for firing salutes was swiftly charged with a blank cartridge and made to speak.

The effect of the blank shot upon the fleeing mutineers was wholly unlooked for. At the eastern headland of the narrow bay, the entrance was contracted by a rocky promontory, which was presently seen to be an island cut off from the mainland by a narrow strait, through which the ebbing tide was boiling like a torrent. At the gun signal to heave to, the mutineers put the schooner short about, and made for the narrow tide rip with all the speed they could get out of their gasoline auxiliary. The sailing master of the *Nauliska* threw up his hand.

"There are charted ledges at the entrance to that gut!" he said, and then the climax came. With a crash that sounded like an explosion, the schooner struck, rebounded, crashed forward again, and began to fill. The cruise of the *Colleen Bawn* was ended.

Livingston turned, and walked slowly aft when the yacht's engines were slowed, and the order was passed to lower away the two power tenders for the picking up of the survivors. Before he had gone ten steps, the *Nauliska's* owner was at his elbow. "Come down to my stateroom with me," said the great man, and Livingston followed, with the muscles of his big jaw setting themselves in hard lines of defiance.

"You have it all now, I think," Livingston said quietly, at the end of his circumstantial story of the inland expe-

dition. "Lamb made two mistakes; one of them was the very capital one of underrating the temper of his scoundrelly crew."

"And the other?" queried the great man, who had listened silently to the narration.

"The other was in assuming that my comrade and I could be frightened and bought."

At this point the stateroom telephone buzzed, and the great man answered the inquiring call briefly: "You picked up five, you say? All right; place them under guard, and put back to Valdez." Then again to Livingston: "You are a young man, Mr. Livingston, and I have learned, from a charming young woman whom we met ashore with her father at Valdez a week ago, that you are about to be married. What are your financial prospects, if I may ask?"

Livingston rose, and cut the prospective negotiation short in two brittle sentences, which entirely ignored the tentative query.

"We are speaking of Captain Lamb and his attempt to perpetrate a great fraud upon the people of the United States," he said evenly. "One of two things will happen—the attempt to claim the coal lands under bogus gold-mining patents will be abandoned, or Mr. Glendish and I will go before the proper authorities in Valdez and tell what we know."

"With only your unsupported word? You are both strangers in a land of strangers, Mr. Livingston, and your tale is almost incredible, even to me."

Livingston struck back smartly.

"But it will not be to Mr. John Goodwin, when I lay these day-to-day reports before him"—taking the papers from his pocket—"and make affidavit to their accuracy."

"Ah," said the listener, with a grave smile, "that was why Lamb was chasing you, was it?" Then he took defeat as only the mighty ones of earth know how to take it. "Keep your papers, Mr. Livingston. They may serve as an interesting souvenir to show your grandchildren some day when you tell them the tale of the cruise of the *Colleen Bawn*."

They were married a week later in the little mission church in Valdez, Livingston and Philippa Goodwin, and Glendish, with a queer, twisted smile wrinkling at the corners of his beady black eyes, was Livingston's best man. Also, a fortnight later, it was Glendish, resolutely refusing the multimillionaire's invitation and stubbornly insisting that he really wanted to wait for the regular steamer, who saw the bride and groom aboard the *Nauliska* and cheerfully wished them a safe voyage home.

It was at the very moment of the yacht's departure that the best man, still wearing the twisted smile, pressed a cablegram into the bridegroom's hand.

"I've been doing a little wiring," he said, "just to keep up my reputation as a butt-in. I happened to remember our multimillionaire friend here owns the biggest part of your railroad, and thinking perhaps a word from him to your boss might help things out a bit, I got him to cable. Good-by, and God bless you both!"

When the *Nauliska* was fairly under way, Livingston smoothed out the crumpled cablegram, and read it, with Philippa looking on with him. It was dated from his railroad headquarters in the far-away Middle West, and it said:

> Didn't understand that you went West to be married. Cut wedding trip short and come home. Holding Denver general agency for you at good increase. Wire me from Seattle. ROMER.

"There!" said the bride. "Haven't I always told you that Cousin Miles had the kindest heart in the world when you could get him to stop puzzling over his ties and hatbands?"

"Your cousin is the noblest fellow that ever stood in shoe leather, Philly, dear—a much better man than I can ever hope to be." And then with young-husband solicitude: "Shall we go below? This breeze will soon get too chilly for you without your coat."

Christmas Day

IT is the day of kindness, and for this day we're freed from all the sordid blindness of selfishness and greed; we have a thought for others, we'd ease their load of care; and all men are our brothers, and all the world is fair.

THIS is the day of laughter, wherein no shadows fall; and 'neath the cottage rafter, and in the mullioned hall, are happy cries ascending, and songs of joy and peace; why should they have an ending? Why should the music cease? The music! When we hear it, we old men softly sigh: "Could but the Christmas spirit live on, and never die!"

THIS is the day of giving, and giving with a smile makes this gray life we're living seem doubly worth the while. When giving we're forgetting the countingroom and mart, and all the workday fretting—and this improves the heart; forgetting bonds and leases, and every sordid goal—this sort of thing increases the stature of the soul!

THIS is the day of smiling, and faces stern and drear, on which few smiles beguiling are seen throughout the year, are lighted up with pleasure, and eyes are soft today, and old men trip a measure with children in their play. And graybeards laugh when pelted with snow by springalds flung, and frozen hearts are melted, and ancient hearts are young.

IT is a day for singing old songs our fathers knew, while gladsome bells are ringing a message sweet to you; a day that brings us nearer to heaven's neighborhood, that makes our vision clearer for all that's true and good.

ON with the Christmas revels in cottage and in hall! While from the starry levels smiles Christ, who loves us all!

WALT MASON.

A Man of Business

By Artnur Train

Author of "Beriberi," "The Butler's Story," "True Stories of Crime," Etc.

A Christmas story by Arthur Train. A story of the underworld by a man who, through his legal practice, knows the underworld thoroughly and has put his experiences into the most readable books on the stands. He tells here how Christmas comes to a thief—a remarkable sort of thief, by the way; a home-loving, truth-telling fellow who "has a distaste for violent crime, and steals only that he may live and as a business, and not as a means to indulge in vice."

LEFTY" ROYLE was getting old. No longer could he spring up the four long flights to his little flat without wheezing; and once in a while a twinge in his left hip told him that one could not linger on the streets in slush and rain, or loiter on icy corners and in damp hallways, with soaking feet without, sooner or later, paying toll to outraged nature. But doing that was all in the day's work, and he had no option. He had done it for thirty-five years, and would do it until he died—not so much from necessity as from love and habit.

Lefty was a slender, quiet little man—very quiet, and the thin hair on the sides of his baldish head was turning gray. He walked with a slight stoop, yet with a springiness of gait that passed him far down the street while others had progressed but half that distance; and his movements were quick, with the unexpectedness of a polo pony too old to play, yet trained to an instant celerity of action which it could never forget. He was smooth-shaven, slightly gaunt, his mouth determined, and his glance direct and good-natured. You see just such men dropping canoes over quick water on Maine rivers, or uncomplainingly carrying loads bigger than themselves through the weary portages of the Canadian forests—hard-working men of undying fire, who will drop in the traces—true to the standards of the life into which they were born.

It was seven o'clock in the evening of December 24, 188—, for this is history, that Lefty Royle, panting a little, and shaking off the few snowflakes that still clung to the shoulders of his pepper-and-salt suit, opened the kitchen door of his flat, and stood in the mellow light of the big kerosene lamp on the red-clothed table.

"Evenin', Mary," said he, hanging his black derby on a hook back of the door. "It's getting cold again. It'll be a raw Christmas."

His wife, a stout, cheery woman, whose hair was also beginning to turn white, looked up with a welcoming nod from the stove at which she was busy cooking.

"Good evening, Dick," she answered, turning something that sputtered in the frying pan. "Have any luck?"

Royle sniffed the air appreciatively.

"I done a good day's work," he replied. "The best in years."

"How much?" asked the woman, coming over to the table and wiping her hands in her apron.

"Nearly three hundred, I reckon."

He ran his hands through his pockets and tossed a miscellaneous assortment of bills, old and new, in a heap under

the lamp. Then she brought a wadded smoking jacket from the bedroom, and helped him into it, handed him his pipe and pouch from the mantel, and took his carpet slippers from a "catch-all" near the stove.

"Your feet must be awful wet!" she said anxiously.

"Not so very," he answered, drawing off his boots and placing them carefully at a distance from the stove, where they would not dry too rapidly. Then he inserted his feet in the carpet slippers, filled his pipe, and lighted it, threw himself into a wooden armchair with a sigh of relief, and picked up the evening paper. On the windows, the thickening snowflakes gathered and slid slowly downward; but on the range the kettle hummed and rattled, the pans and china shone brightly in the lamplight, and the whole kitchen was warm with comfort. Over the bedroom door hung a red-worsted motto in a maplewood frame:

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

Mrs. Royle spread out the bills, and counted them carefully.

"Three hundred and forty—just!" she announced. Then she vanished into the bedroom, and returned with a pillow in its case, into which she slipped the bills somehow, without disturbing the snowy smoothness of the cover.

"Where are the children?" asked her husband, as he ran his eye over the police news.

"Over to the Sunday-school Christmas-tree celebration and supper at St. Bartholomew's Mission—they're crazy about it."

"See they got their stockin's up already," remarked Lefty, casting his eye toward the stove, near which two stockings, one long and red, and the other, short and black, had been attached to hooks screwed into the wall.

"We'll have to wait till after they get back to fill 'em," she commented. "How many winners did you pick? Or did you make your killing on a long shot?"

"I—I played Bonny Bell for a place and Shopgirl to win in the Whirlpool—five to one, and fifteen to six. Got 'em both," he replied glibly.

"Good!" she exclaimed. "What a lucky boy you are, Dick!"

"Sure," answered Lefty, "I can't lose! By the way, I bought Sam a silver shaving set at Tiffany's."

His wife rescued the bundle, and opened it with interest.

"My, ain't that fine!" she cried, at sight of the gleaming silver. "It must have cost something, now!"

"He's the only brother you've got," replied Lefty.

"That's so!" she assented. "And a hard-working man at that. Regular as a clock."

"As regular as me!" answered her husband; "and I ain't taken a vacation for ten years."

"What's the use?" inquired the woman from the stove. "You ain't anywhere's near so comfortable as to home. Those country hotels give me a pain."

"Nothin' to do there!" grunted Lefty. "You just have to sit around and make talk with a lot of dopes. I'd rather be closer to the ponies."

"Do you mind when we went to the Catskills? The flies and mosquitoes drove us nearly to death!" she mused. "I'd like to go to Europe, though—if it wasn't for the children!"

"Why not take 'em along?" asked her husband. "We've got money enough. It'll do 'em good—they need something of that sort. I've made big money this autumn."

"What's more, you need a rest!" she continued. "You've worked hard all your life, and you're entitled to it. It's little enough pleasure you get."

"I get all I want," he answered. "Not many men have as handsome a wife as I've got, or as fine a pair of kids. We're gettin' old! We don't get the enjoyment we used to out of going to plays and stuffing at restaurants. There ain't anything in it, anyhow. A good home and a man's own family is enough for *me*."

"You always were a home-keeping man," said his wife. "By the way, don't forget your medicine."

She poured out a glass of hot water, and added a few drops of some alcoholic liquid.

Lefty drank it off, and made a wry face.

"The stuff nearly makes me sick!" he gagged. "How fellows can drink is beyond me. I'd rather swallow carbolic than most whisky!"

"Many's the time I've thanked God you wasn't a drinking man!" said his wife.

"I ain't a damn fool, that's all!" he answered. "If I sat up swiggin' rum half the night, I couldn't pick a single winner. Same way with smokin'. Look at all them youngsters that ruin their nerves with cigarettes. It's downright shameful. It leads 'em into all sorts of bad habits!"

"There ain't many men as sensible as you, Dick," nodded his wife. "This steak's done! Come along now and have supper!"

In a moment more the two were seated at the table and about to enjoy a hearty meal of juicy sirloin, creamy-baked potatoes, fragrant coffee, and hot, spongy rolls—for Mary Royle was as expert in her own calling as Lefty was in his. He had hardly raised his fork to his lips, however, before steps on the stairs and a rapid knock caused him to spring from his seat with the wariness of a cat.

"Who's there!" he cried.

For answer, the door was thrust open, and a man with a closely cropped mustache and heavy jaw stepped sideways into the room.

"Evening, Mrs. Royle," he remarked, adding shortly: "Want to speak to you a minute, Lefty."

He bent over, and whispered something in Royle's ear.

Lefty's face took on an angry tinge, and he stepped outside to the landing, and closed the door.

"Look here, Murphy," he cried sharply. "This is crowding the mourners. I won't go out again to-night for any man. I don't work evenings any more, and you know it. Besides, it's Christmas Eve."

"Aw, slush!" sneered the other. "Christmas Eve! What's Christmas Eve to a 'dip,' when there's a guy with a big roll in his pocket!"

"Christmas Eve is Christmas Eve," answered Royle. "And I'm no dog to be driven in and out by you 'fly cops' whenever you feel like it. I'm a family man, and mind my own business. What's more, I pay up regular and split on the level. I ain't even had my supper."

"Sorry, Lefty!" retorted the other. "You're on the level, all right—that's why we want you. But here's a big stake for just stretching out your hand. You've got to come!"

"And if I don't?" growled Royle.

The grin on the plain-clothes man's face faded, and his jaw set.

"We'll turn you up!" snapped the officer. "Now get a move on! Where's your hat?"

Royle cast a look of hatred at him.

"Look here, Murphy," he retorted angrily, "I won't stand for this kind of thing much longer. You agreed to stay away from here and not give me away to my wife and kids. She still thinks I'm a bookie; and she's going to keep on thinking so. My house is my own, and outside of business hours so is my time. You can't turn me up without giving yourself dead away, and you know it. Your record ain't any too good, as it is. It would make fine readin' in the papers how you stood for the robbery of the Grand Street Trust——"

"S-sh!" cried Murphy, turning color. "Keep still, you fool. I'm not goin' to turn you up. But the guy has got ten thousand if he's got a cent!"

"Ten thousand!" whispered Royle. "Why didn't you say so?"

He detested Murphy and his side partners, since they did not conform to his own peculiar standards of honor. They took the city's money and played in with the "guns," thus "selling out"—the most heinous of crimes. But ten thousand——

Lefty turned the handle of the door, and reopened it.

"All right, Murph!" he answered genially. "Be with you in a minute."

"Goin' out again, Dick?" inquired his wife, in a disappointed tone.

"Friend of mine's in trouble," he replied. "Got to go and bail him out."

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed ruefully. "And lose your supper!"

Lefty went over and kissed his wife on the cheek.

"Never mind, mother," he said soothingly. "I'll be back soon. Just keep my supper hot for me, will you?"

There was a little stampede upon the stairs just as Mrs. Royle was wiping her eyes upon the edge of her apron, and a girl and boy burst into the room.

"Hello, kids!" cried Lefty. "Have a good time?"

"Great!" they shouted, in chorus.

"And look what we got!" added the girl, who was a vigorous young lady of twelve.

She held up a huge cornucopia, a doll, and a book. Her brother, a sturdy little chap of six, grabbed his father's hand and danced round him.

"Dey gave us all de candy we could swaller!" he shouted. "I like Christmas trees—dey's fine!"

"Hurry up!" ordered Murphy.

Lefty bent over and imprinted a kiss on the lips of each child. He felt very old, indeed, and very, very wicked.

"Going away, popper?" asked the girl.

"Just for a little while," he answered nervously.

"Father's got to go out with the gentleman on business," added her mother.

The boy's face changed, and he thrust his little fists into his eyes.

"I know," he wailed. "De man's a cop! We won't never see fader no more!"

Lefty Royle came honestly by his professional skill. His grandfather had been the most celebrated "britch" man in England, and had died full of years and honors without ever having served a day in prison. His thin, triangular knife—like an oyster knife—with which he had slit the breeches of his victims and removed their wallets, had descended to his son William—Lefty's father.

William had possessed an almost equal dexterity, united with a calm and singularly studious disposition. He, too, slit breeches; but, in addition thereto, he occasionally did a bit of second-story work, in which the triangular knife sometimes served to remove one of the thin door panels which give the ordinary sleeper such a sense of security.

But he did not like the work, and he bequeathed to Lefty a distaste for violent crime and a love of simple, straightforward thieving, in which the crook pits his wits against those of the victim in fair, open contest—an instinct akin to that of the hunter of big game—the still hunter of the snows.

He taught Lefty to steal, draw the bow, and, to an extent, to speak the truth. Lying, except strictly along professional lines, was a contemptible thing. Fair dealing was essential to a clear conscience. Vice was abhorrent. A comfortable home and a good wife the best that life had to offer.

Thus Lefty grew up, inheriting the skill of a line of ancestors of which any thief might have been proud, with the advantage that he stole to live, and as a matter of business, and not as a means to indulge in vice.

Lefty scorned degenerate crooks, just as he scorned crooked cops. He bitterly resented a system under which, for a license to work, he was obliged to give one-half of what booty he secured. The corrupt partnership of officialdom with the lower world of crime was highly distasteful to him. But its imperative character had made him the possessor of a score of secrets, the disclosure of any one of which might have sent a dozen police officials behind prison walls for a long time.

"The guy is over at Lipton's blowing in the yellow bellies," said Murphy. "He says he's from Pittsburg, and he's half full already. He ought to be easy."

"He doesn't have to be easy—for me," returned Lefty. "I guess you know that I'm no 'moll buzzer.'"

"Sure thing," assented the other. "You could pull a leather if it was chained to a lamp-post."

They paused outside of Lipton's, and peered through the snow-mottled windows. The place was half filled, and a row of citizens at the bar were noisily celebrating. Resplendent among them

was a gentleman in a tall hat, which sagged dangerously over one ear, and who was calling loudly for drink, and still more drink. His face bore that fatuously wise expression usually described as "knowing"; and he was standing treat for the crowd. But he had reached the stage where standing at all was difficult, and for this reason was swaying heavily against the railing.

"Oughta be like takin' candy from children," remarked Murphy. "I'll wait here with Devlin."

The crowd at the bar hardly noticed the newcomer as he slipped among them, and, nodding familiarly to the bartender, asked for "one of my own." "One of his own" was a concoction composed of equal parts of French vichy and a mild tincture of raspberry shrub.

It was easy for Lefty to gain the place next to the Pittsburger and engage him in conversation. The whereabouts of the stranger's money was not more difficult to ascertain, as he carried it tightly in his right hand. One could see that the roll contained several thousand-dollar bills. Ocasionally the Pittsburger removed one, waved it in the air, and demanded what was the matter with Hannah!

Now, it is harder to trim a man who has his money in his hand than if he has it on any other part of his person, for it usually requires some strong-arm work, even if only a little, and the drunker and noisier the stranger became, the tighter he clung to the wad between his fingers.

Lefty engaged him in conversation and argument, followed him from bar to table, and back again to the bar a dozen times. The Pittsburger became friendly, intimate, affectionate, even effusive, but did not relax his hold.

The hands of the saloon clock crept round and round, and yet Lefty had made no progress. The fellow would *not* put his money in his pocket, but clung to it as the castaway clings to the proverbial plank. Eye glazed, maudlin, unable to articulate his limbs, the man half sat, half lay at a small table clasping his money in his hand as in a vise.

It was now nearly ten o'clock, and Lefty, without his supper, had worked two hours and a half overtime in obeying the behest of his masters, the police. Moreover, he had been so assiduous in his attentions to the Pittsburger that he felt himself to be an object of suspicion to many in the place.

Outside, Murphy and Devlin, with upturned collars, stood numb and furious. They could not leave the job to Lefty, because they must be on hand to make sure that he did not cabbage the whole swag for himself. Half frozen, they had long since ceased either to smoke or swear at one another. The wind had risen, and the snow turned to a fine sleet, which worked its way through their clothes and increased their misery.

"It's the toughest job I ever got up against," ejaculated Lefty, as he slipped through the door to report. "The guy is fastened as solid to his roll as a hydrant to the sidewalk. I can't touch it. Say, I'm sick of the business. Let me go home, can't yer?"

"Aw, shut up!" snarled Murphy. "Do you think we've been standin' here all night for nuthin'? Forget it! Go back there and pry out his wad with a nutcracker, if you can't get it any other way!"

Once more Lefty returned to the saloon, and to the society of the gentleman from the Alleghenies, who seemed glad to see him again. Once more Royle availed himself of every ruse in his power to induce the man to let him hold the money or put it in some "safe" place, such as his pocket. No, the stranger wanted it where he could *see* it. It struck eleven. Lefty had been too busy to eat. He was cross and tired; and he longed for his quiet home and the society of his wife out of which he had been cheated by the police. Again he retired outside.

"I tell you it's no use," he insisted. "Nothing but strong-arm work can get that fellow's roll."

Murphy whispered to Devlin, and Devlin whispered to Murphy.

"Get him out here, somehow, and we'll attend to it ourselves," said the latter.

"Part of the job?" asked Lefty.

"Sure thing—only hurry!" answered Devlin.

Back again into the saloon went Lefty. With ready tongue, he described to his victim the glories and delights of still another palace of refreshment not far away, where there was music and dancing. The stranger listened with what attention he could assemble, and became convinced that progress was desirable.

Leaning heavily upon Lefty's shoulder, he staggered to the door. A few pairs of eyes followed them significantly, then the door closed, and they were forgotten. Halfway down the block in the blinding sleet they were overtaken by the plain-clothes men. A shove from one of them sent the Pittsburger headlong, his hat rolling in the gutter.

"Here, you!" cried Devlin. "What are you doing here!"

He threw himself heavily upon the man, jerked him to his feet, and jammed his hat over his eyes. Coincidentally Murphy seized his arm, quickly bent the wrist, and forced the roll of bills from his hand. The man uttered a loud cry, and fought furiously. Nightsticks swung in the air, and a blow from Devlin sent him to the sidewalk like an ox. The two officers again dragged their victim to his feet, and half carried him toward the station. The man was whispering now, begging for his money, imploring to be let go, promising to give them half of all that he had. But they paid no attention to his outcries.

At a distance followed Lefty. It was not in his line, this brutal sort of performance. The night was too cold for bystanders, and the party reached the lamps of the station house unaugmented. The arrested man, battered and bruised, was pushed into the house and thrust before the sergeant.

"Found him raising Cain in front of Lipton's!" said Devlin tersely.

The sergeant yawned, opened his book, and began laboriously copying the charge.

The two detectives now made a great show of going through the man's pockets, and deposited the result in a conglomerate pile in front of the sergeant—keys, wallet, handkerchief, cigar cutter, small change.

"That all?" queried the superior officer. "No wad?"

"I——" began the Pittsburger; but a blow in the vicinity of his kidneys and a pair of knuckles thrust into the back of his neck warned him to keep the peace.

"Well, lock him up, Mac," said the sergeant. "Got anything to chew?"

"Sure," answered Devlin, thrusting his hand into his trousers pocket. The yellow glint of the Pittsburger's roll showed through the slit of the side pocket of his coat. Murphy relieved Devlin, while the latter handed the tobacco to the man at the desk, and led the prisoner toward the inner room of the station house beyond which lay the cells. The fellow was frightened now, almost sober, and apprehensive of more physical violence. His collar hung by a single end, his necktie had slipped into a tight knot, and dangled loose over his waistcoat, and his hat no longer bore any resemblance to a hat. He crawled rather than walked, with Murphy's fist upon his neck.

As Devlin crossed the room in their wake, Lefty, anxious to be off, pulled his sleeve.

"Say, Mac," he coaxed, "slip me my bit, will yer? I want to get along."

"Your what?" rasped Devlin.

"My bit of the swag," explained Lefty.

"What swag?" snarled the other. "What are you doing here, anyhow? Get moving, or I'll throw you out."

The sergeant, having inserted a couple of square inches of "Sailors' Joy" into his cheek, had closed his eyes, and now reclined half asleep upon his chair, his feet gracefully crossed upon the desk. Lefty felt a hot wave rise through his body. Was this low grafter, this brute of a cop, this crook, going to "welsh" on him, cheat him out of his share of the evening's work! It was preposterous.

"Say, Devlin, are you kiddin' me?"

he asked quietly, although his voice trembled.

"Kid your grandmother," replied Devlin, turning half from him.

Lefty uttered a quick oath. "This is the limit!" he cried, turning white. "I give up my whole evening. I run the chance of a collar by some 'bull.' I put my neck in a noose, and now you give me the merry ha-ha! Not much, Mr. Thomas Nelson Devlin. Gimme my money, and gimme it quick. I've always been on the level with you, and treated you on the square, and now you want to try to do me dirt. No, you don't! You can't play Lefty Royle for a sucker. If you don't gimme what's mine, I'll pipe you and Murphy off to the commissioner, you and the whole grafting gang in this precinct."

Devlin turned on him like a flash.

"Shut your mouth!" he growled. "Don't you see the sergeant over there?"

"Shut nothing!" retorted Lefty, raising his voice. "You're a dirty pair of crooks—you two! There ain't an honest man in your bunch. Talk about stealin'—why, you make a 'dip' look like an archangel. I'm a crook, all right. Oh, yes. But I don't welsh on an honest bargain or lie to my pals. My word goes; see? When I say a thing, I stick to it. I never squealed yet. But look at *you!* You ain't even loyal to the feller that gets your dirty money for you! You make me sick, you low-down, miserable——"

He shook his right fist in Devlin's red face, as if for two stivers he would tear the two-hundred-pound Irishman limb from limb. Devlin, choking with anger, seized Lefty's wrist with one hand and grasped his throat with the other.

"You bum!" he hissed.

That same instant Lefty's other hand whipped the roll of bills from Devlin's pocket and slipped it within his cuff. The two men swayed toward the door of the inner room; and the detective, with an oath, hurled the little man from him, and sent him spinning against the wall. Lefty's escape was cut off.

"Murphy!" he gasped, apparently in tears. "Devlin won't give me my bit."

Murphy glared at him in speechless wrath.

"I say," whined Royle. "He won't split with me—after me doin' all the work and losin' my Christmas Eve!" He knew it was only a question of seconds before Devlin would miss the money. If he valued his life, he must get rid of the roll at any cost. Between him and Murphy, the Pittsburger sat in a disconsolate heap, his head in his hands.

"Murphy," he begged, "you'll see fair play. You won't let him *do* me, *will* you?"

He stretched out his hands appealingly, and laid one of them on the officer's shoulder. With the other, he slipped the roll into the prisoner's outside coat pocket.

"*Will* you, Murphy?" he cried again beseechingly.

"Aw, ferget it!" snarled Murphy. "You ain't got no money comin' to yer! You didn't do nuthin'. Get out of here, or you'll be thrown out; see? Say, Mac, give the bum a taste of your heel if he don't step lively."

But, under the flaring yellow light of the unshaded lamps, Devlin's red face had grown white. With a torrent of oaths, he searched furiously through his pockets.

"It's gone!" he faltered.

Murphy looked at him sharply under lowering brows.

"What's gone?"

"The wad!" whispered Devlin, putting his hands to his forehead. Suddenly he sprang at Lefty.

"You've trimmed me!" he yelled.

In another instant they had Lefty against the wall, choking him helpless, and going through every stitch of his clothes.

"Ain't there!" exclaimed Devlin. "I couldn't 'a' lost it!"

Murphy looked at him meaningly.

"No, you couldn't 'a' *lost* it!" he said.

Devlin flushed a deep crimson.

"Eh?" he stammered. "What do you mean by *that?*"

"I said you couldn't 'a' *lost* it," repeated Murphy cynically.

"By Heaven, I believe *you've* got it!"

cried Devlin. "Suppose you let me take a look in *your* pockets, Mr. Murphy?"

He took a step threateningly toward the other officer.

Murphy broke out. "It's a lie—a lie, you——"

The phrase was never finished, for Devlin sprang forward and struck him heavily in the face. Lefty dodged for the door as the two men, clawing, biting, kicking, crashed from side to side. There was no attempt at pugilism. They fought as they had learned to fight—to kill. What blows were struck were at short range, jabs at the face and fierce uppercuts.

The mutual distrust and hatred of years, which had smoldered like the cotton in some vessel's hold, burst into flame. With hoarse roars, they gripped each other's hair, and tried to gouge out each other's eyes. They were both strong men, evenly matched, hard as iron, schooled to violence. They knew that unless something happened one of them would be maimed for life, and each resolved that it should not be he.

The door leading to the entrance hall of the station was shut; but had it been open, the somnolent sergeant would still have nodded in his chair, inured by long experience to similar noises. If the sounds entered his domain, they but signified that some drunk was getting a little punishment for having made unnecessary trouble for the officer who had arrested him.

But the sergeant slept, and Murphy and Devlin, streaming with sweat and blood, their coats ripped from their backs, their hands feeling for each other's mouths and eyes, the breath whistling through their nostrils, crashed from wall to wall. The impact of fist on flesh, the scuffle of heavy boots, and the panting of the combatants filled the air.

Lefty watched them with an elated curiosity. If they should kill each other, no particular harm would have been done. With each blow, he felt that a just retribution was being meted out in his behalf.

At last Murphy wrenched loose, and swung a terrific blow, which reached Devlin's chin, and sent him spinning into the corner. In a flash, Murphy had followed up his advantage, and planted blow after blow upon the unprotected face. Then, as his adversary sank helpless to the floor, he fell upon him and clenched his throat tightly between his hands. Devlin's eyes started from his head, and his tongue was forced from between his lips. Lefty knew the signs. There was hardly a minute, if murder was to be prevented. Murphy was like a wild man. He saw naught but the face of the treacherous Devlin. Now and again he shook him as a terrier would a rat, and snarled into the eyes that glared so glassily into his.

"Sergeant! Sergeant!" shouted Lefty, bursting into the other room. "Murphy's murdering Devlin!"

"Hey?" yelled the sergeant, and, vaulting over the rail, he lumbered to the door. In an instant he realized the situation. He was an old hand, this sergeant. He had played safe for nineteen years. He would not have touched Murphy in his present frenzy for all the golden belts in New York, presented by the most beautiful of blushing maidens. The cataracts were forming in Devlin's eyes. In half a minute he would be past recall.

On the wall hung a fire extinguisher charged with some chemical to the sergeant unknown. In a jiffy he had wrenched it free, and, reversing it, had sent a jet of poisonous gas and liquid into Murphy's face and eyes.

For an instant he strangled, making terrible faces, and coughing in a paroxysm of baffled rage; then, releasing his hold, he hurled Devlin from him, and rolled to his feet, a ghastly spectacle himself.

"Are you crazy!" yelled the sergeant, as he rushed for the limp body in the corner and dragged it to the door, which he threw open wide. Then he swept up some of the fallen snow from the doorstep, and rubbed it upon Devlin's face.

Lefty watched, fascinated. Was he dead, this ruffian—this pirate? He felt hardly more interest or concern in either of them than in two wolves, which, quarreling over a carcass, had torn each

other's throats, and were dying beside their victim. Murphy had disappeared. Perhaps already he was trying to make good his escape. The sergeant grunted. Devlin gave a choking sigh and opened his eyes.

"Nearly croaked him!" remarked the sergeant, as he unceremoniously gripped the officer by the shoulders of his coat and hauled him back into the station house.

Lefty had had enough of it. "S'-long!" he muttered. "Merry Christmas!"

Then, without waiting for a reply, he turned up the collar of his coat and slipped into the street.

The storm had ceased, and through the blue-black patches between the housetops the big stars glimmered as they only glimmer on Christmas Eve. The streets were silent, and the snow upon the sidewalks untrodden. As Royle strode toward his home, he left behind the only spots upon its virgin whiteness.

Across the city rang out the first bells telling the glad tidings of peace and good will to men. Others took up the joyous refrain, echoing and reëchoing it above the housetops, till all the frosty air was filled with it. Lefty's heart, full of ancient memories, echoed in response.

He passed Lipton's. It was closed, and the lights were out. There was nothing to indicate the violence that had been done there less than one hour before. At rare intervals, he passed a stiff patrolman, hands in pockets. To each he gave a terse greeting. Presently he arrived at the tenement house where he dwelt. He did not run up the stairs, but climbed them wearily. As he neared the top, a welcome smell of tea and toast crept down the banisters. The faithful Mary was waiting for him. A flood of light poured down the stairs from the open kitchen door.

"Merry Christmas!" she remarked. "You were gone a long while."

"Yes," he answered, putting on his smoking jacket. "The guy was locked up, after all."

"Never mind," she said. "Your supper's ready for you."

She made him a cup of tea, and he ate hungrily. The kettle was singing just as it had sung at seven o'clock.

"Did you buy the books for the children?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. "I got 'Little Women' for Nellie, and 'The Pilgrim's Progress' for Dickie. They're all right."

Lefty opened the bedroom door and glanced inside. Nellie and Dickie lay locked in each other's arms, their heads resting side by side upon a single pillow. A warm glow filled Royle's heart. Outside, the bells continued their refrain of peace.

"Tell you what," said he, returning to the kitchen, "there ain't nothing meaner on God's earth than a mean cop. They're the dishonestest lot alive. I swear, the way things are getting to be now, a business man don't get half a chance."

"That's so!" answered his wife. "And this Christmas business! Everybody expects something. I had to give the janitor five dollars this afternoon."

"And I had to give a feller ten thousand dollars this very evening," returned Lefty, with a whimsical look.

"You're joking, Dick," said Mrs. Royle.

"Well, maybe I am," he answered.

And then they started to fill the children's stockings.

'A PATRON OF POETRY

B. H. Warner, a prominent business man of the national capital, is very fond of poets and their work. Whenever he comes across a poem which strikes him as particularly good he has several hundred copies made of it, and distributes them to his friends.

Good Indian

By B. M. Bower

Author of "Chip of the Flying U," "Lonesome Land," Etc.

Speaking of Christmas presents—here is a Bower story. We don't think there is anything we could have put in your stocking that will bring you more cheer in the festive season. If you are one of the "old guard" we know that your feelings will be akin to the kiddies who wake up on Christmas morning and find that Santa Claus has visited over night. If you are among the squad of new recruits we want to say to you that Bower is one of the oldest and one of the most popular of our staff of Western writers. Therefore you ought to get acquainted.

CHAPTER I.

IT was somewhere in the seventies when old Peaceful Hart awoke to a realization that gold-hunting and lumbago do not take kindly to one another, and that the fact that his pipe and dim-eyed meditation appealed to him more keenly than did his prospector's pick and shovel and pan seemed to imply that he was growing old. He was a silent man, by occupation and by nature, so he said nothing about it; but, like the wild things of prairie and wood, instinctively began preparing for the winter of his life. Where he had lately been washing tentatively the sand along Snake River, he built a ranch. His prospector's tools he used in digging ditches to irrigate his new-made meadows, and his mining days he lived over again only in halting recital to his sons when they clamored for details of the old days when the Indians were not mere untidy neighbors to be gossiped with and fed, but enemies to be fought upon occasion.

They felt that fate had cheated them —did those five sons; for they had been born a few years too late for the fun. Not one of them would ever have earned the title of "Peaceful" as had his father. Nature had played a joke upon old Peaceful Hart; for he, the mildest-mannered man who ever helped to tame the West when it really needed taming, had somehow fathered five riotous young males to whom fight meant fun—and the fiercer, the funnier.

He used to suck at his old, straight-stemmed pipe and regard them with a bewildered curiosity sometimes; but he never tried to put his puzzlement into speech. The nearest he ever came to elucidation, perhaps, was when he turned from them and let his pale-blue eyes dwell speculatively upon the face of his wife, Phœbe. Clearly he considered that she was responsible for their dispositions.

The house stood cuddled against a rocky bluff so high it dwarfed the whole ranch to pygmy size when one gazed down from the rim, and so steep that one wondered how the huge, gray bowlders managed to perch upon its side instead of rolling down and crushing the buildings to dust and fragments. Strangers used to keep a wary eye upon that bluff, as if they never felt quite safe from its menace. Coyotes skulked there, and tarantulas and "bobcats" and snakes. Once an outlaw hid there for days, within sight and hearing of the

house, and stole bread from Phœbe's pantry at night—but that is a story in itself.

A great spring gurgled out from under a huge bowlder just behind the house, and over it Peaceful had built a stone milk house, where Phœbe spent long hours in cool retirement on churning day, and where one went to beg good things to eat and to drink. There was fruit cake always hidden away in stone jars, and cheese, and buttermilk, and cream.

Peaceful Hart must have had a streak of poetry somewhere hidden away in his silent soul. He built a pond against the bluff; hollowed it out from the sand he had once washed for traces of gold, let the big spring fill it full and seek an outlet at the far end, where it slid away under a little stone bridge. He planted the pond with water lilies and cress and rainbow trout, and on the margin a rampart of Lombardy poplars, which grew and grew until they threatened to reach up and tear ragged holes in the drifting clouds. Their slender shadows lay, like gigantic fingers, far up the bluff when the sun sank low in the afternoon.

Behind them grew a small jungle of trees—catalpa and locust among them—a jungle which surrounded the house, and in summer hid it from sight entirely. Not content with their shade, it would seem, he afterward built a porch all around, so broad that on the eastern side one end of it overhung the tiny pond so that the trout would come and lie beneath it, a hungry school waiting patiently for a shower of crumbs.

With the spring creek whispering through the grove and away to where it was defiled by trampling hoofs in the corrals and pastures beyond, and with the roses which Phœbe Hart kept abloom until the frosts came, and the bees and humming birds which somehow found their way across the parched sagebrush plains and foregathered there, Peaceful Hart's ranch betrayed his secret longing for girls, as if he had unconsciously planned it for the daughters he had been denied.

It was an ideal place for hammocks and romance—a place where dainty maidens might dream their way to womanhood. And Peaceful Hart, when all was done, grew old watching five full-blooded boys clicking their heels unromantically together as they roosted upon the porch and threw cigarette stubs at the water lilies while they wrangled amiably over the merits of their mounts; saw them drag their blankets out into the broody dusk of the grove when the nights were hot, and heard their muffled swearing under their "tarps" because of the mosquitoes which kept the night air twanging like a stricken harpstring with their song.

They liked the place well enough. There were plenty of shady places to lie and smoke in when the mercury went sizzling up its tiny tube. Sometimes, when there was a dance, they would choose the best of Phœbe's roses to decorate their horses' bridles; and perhaps their hatbands, also. Peaceful would then suck harder than ever at his pipe, and his faded blue eyes would wander pathetically about the little paradise of his making, as if he wondered whether, after all, it had been worth while.

A tight picket fence, built in three unswerving lines from the post planted solidly in a cairn of rocks against a bowlder on the eastern rim of the pond, to the road which cut straight through the ranch, down that to the farthest tree of the grove, then back to the bluff again, shut in that tribute to the sentimental side of Peaceful's nature. Outside the fence dwelt sturdier, Western realities.

Once the gate swung shut upon the grove one blinked in the garish sunlight of the plains. There began the real ranch world. There was the pile of sagebrush fuel, all twisted and gray, pungent as a bottle of spilled liniment, where braided, blanketed bucks were sometimes prevailed upon to labor desultorily with an ax in hope of being rewarded with fruit new-gathered from the orchard or a place at Phœbe's long table in the great kitchen.

There was the stone blacksmith shop, where the boys sweated over the nice

adjustment of shoes upon the feet of fighting, wild-eyed horses, which afterward would furnish a spectacle of unseemly behavior under the saddle.

Farther away were the long stable, the corrals where broncho-taming was simply so much work to be performed, hayfields, an orchard or two, rocks and sand and sage which grayed the earth to the very sky line.

A glint of slithering gray showed where the Snake hugged the bluff a mile away, and a brown trail, ankle-deep in dust, stretched straight out to the west, and then lost itself unexpectedly behind a sharp, jutting point of rocks where the bluff had thrust out a rugged finger into the valley.

By devious turnings and breath-taking climbs, the trail finally reached the top at the only point for miles where it was possible for a horseman to pass up or down.

Then began the desert, a great stretch of unlovely sage and lava rock and sand for mile upon mile, to where the distant mountain ridges reached out and halted peremptorily the ugly sweep of it. The railroad gashed it boldly, after the manner of the iron trail of modern industry; but the trails of the desert dwellers wound through it diffidently, avoiding the rough crust of lava rock where they might, dodging the most aggressive sage bushes and dipping tentatively into hollows, seeking always the easiest way to reach some remote settlement or ranch.

Of the men who followed those trails, not one of them but could have ridden straight to the Peaceful Hart ranch in black darkness; and there were few, indeed, white men or Indians, who could have ridden there at midnight and not been sure of blankets and a welcome to sweeten their sleep. Such was the Peaceful Hart ranch, conjured from the sage and the sand in the valley of the Snake.

CHAPTER II.

There is a saying—and if it is not purely Western, it is at least purely American—that the only good Indian is a dead Indian. In the very teeth of that, and in spite of the fact that he was neither very good, nor an Indian—nor in any sense "dead"—men called Grant Imsen "Good Indian" to his face; and if he resented the title, his resentment was never made manifest—perhaps because he had grown up with the name, had rather liked it when he was a little fellow, and with custom had come to take it as a matter of course.

Because his paternal ancestry went back and back to no one knows where among the race of blue eyes and fair skin, the Indians repudiated relationship with him, and called him white man—though they also spoke of him unthinkingly as "Good Injun."

Because old Wolfbelly himself would grudgingly admit under pressure that the mother of Grant had been the half-caste daughter of Wolfbelly's sister, white men remembered the taint when they were angry, and called him Injun. And because he stood thus between the two races of men, his exact social status a subject always open to argument, not even the fact that he was looked upon by the Harts as one of the family, with his own bed always ready for him in a corner of the big room set apart for the boys, and with a certain place at the table which was called his—not even his assured position there could keep him from sometimes feeling quite alone, and perhaps a trifle bitter over his loneliness.

Phœbe Hart had mothered him from the time when his father had sickened and died in her house, leaving Grant there with twelve years behind him, in his hands a dirty canvas bag of gold coin so heavy he could scarce lift it, which stood for the mining claim the old man had just sold, and the command to invest every one of the gold coins in schooling.

Old John Imsen was steeped in knowledge of the open; nothing had ever slipped past him and remained mysterious—nothing of the great outdoors, that is. But when he sold his last claim—others he had which promised little and so did not count—he had signed his name with an X. Another had written the word John before that

X, and the word Imsen after; above, a word which he explained was "his," and below the word "mark." John Imsen had stared down suspiciously at the words, and he had not felt quite easy in his mind until the bag of gold coins was actually in his keeping. Also, he had been ashamed of that X. It was a simple thing to make with a pen, and yet he had only succeeded in making it look like two crooked sticks thrown down carelessly, one upon the other. His face had gone darkly red with the shame of it, and he had stood scowling down at the paper.

"That boy uh mine's goin' to do better'n that!" he had sworn.

When, two months after that, he had faced—incredulously, as is the way of strong men—the fact that for him life was over, with nothing left to him save an hour or so of labored breath and a few muttered sentences, he did not forget that vow. He called Phœbe close to the bed, placed the bag of gold in Grant's trembling hands, and stared intently from one face to the other.

"Mis' Hart, he ain't got—anybody—my folks—I lost track of 'em years ago. You see to it—git some learnin' in his head. When a man knows books—it's like bein' heeled—good gun—plenty uh ca'tridges—in a fight. When I got that gold—it was like fightin' with my bare hands—against a—gatlin' gun. They coulda cheated me—whole thing—on paper—I wouldn't know—luck—jest luck they didn't. So you take it—and git the boy schoolin'. Costs money—I know that—git him all it'll buy. Send him—where they keep—the best. Don't yuh let up—ner let him—whilst they's a dollar left. Put it all—into his head—then he can't lose it, and he can—make it earn more. An'—I guess I needn't ask yuh—be good to him. He ain't got anybody—not a soul—Injuns don't count. You see to it—don't let up till—it's all gone."

Phœbe had taken him literally. And Grant, if he had little taste for the task, had learned books—and other things not mentioned in the curriculums of the schools she sent him to—and when the bag was reported by Phœbe to be empty, he had returned with inward relief to the desultory life of the Hart ranch and its immediate vicinity.

His father would probably have been amazed to see how little difference that schooling made in the boy. The money had lasted long enough to take him through a preparatory school and into the second year of a college; and the only result apparent was speech a shade less slipshod than that of his fellows, and a vocabulary which permitted him to indulge in an amazing number of epithets and in colorful vituperation when the fancy seized him.

He rode, hot and thirsty and tired, from Sage Hill one day and found Hartley empty of interest, hot as the trail he had just now left thankfully behind him, and so absolutely sleepy that it seemed likely to sink into the sage-clothed earth under the weight of its own dullness. Even the whisky was so warm it burned like fire, and the beer he tried left upon his outraged palate the unhappy memory of insipid warmth and great bitterness.

He plumped the heavy glass down upon the grimy counter in the dusty far corner of the little store and stared sourly at Pete Hamilton, who was apathetically opening hatboxes for the inspection of an Indian in a red blanket and frowsy braids.

"How much?" The braided one fingered indecisively the broad brim of a gray sombrero.

"Nine dollars." Pete leaned heavily against the shelves behind him and sighed with the weariness of mere living.

"Huh? All same buy one good hoss." The braided one dropped the hat, hitched his blanket over his shoulder in stoical disregard of the heat, and turned away.

Pete replaced the cover, seemed about to place the box upon the shelf behind him, and then evidently decided that it was not worth the effort. He sighed again.

"It's almighty hot," he mumbled languidly. "Want another drink, Good Injun?"

"I do not. Hot toddy never did ap-

peal to me, my friend. If you weren't too lazy to give orders, Pete, you'd have cold beer for a day like this. You'd give Saunders something to do beside lie in the shade and tell what kind of a man he used to be before his lungs went to the bad. Put him to work. Make him pack this stuff down cellar where it isn't two hundred in the shade. Why don't you?"

"We was going to git ice t'-day, but they didn't throw it off when the train went through."

"That's comforting—to a man with a thirst like the great Sahara. Ice! Pete, do you know what I'd like to do to a man that mentions ice after a drink like that?"

Pete neither knew nor wanted to know, and he told Grant so. "If you're goin' down to the ranch," he added, by way of changing the subject, "there's some mail yuh might as well take along."

"Sure, I'm going—for a drink out of that spring, if nothing else. You've lost a good customer to-day, Pete. I rode up here prepared to get sinfully jagged—and here I've got to go on a still hunt for water with a chill to it—or maybe buttermilk. Pete, do you know what I think of you and your joint?"

"I told yuh I don't wanta know. Some folks ain't never satisfied. A feller that's rode thirty or forty miles to git here, on a day like this, had oughta be glad to git anything that *looks* like beer."

"Is that so?" Grant walked purposefully down to the front of the store, where Pete was fumbling behind the rampart of crude pigeonholes which was the post office. "Let me inform you, then, that——"

There was a swish of skirts upon the rough platform outside, and a young woman entered with the manner of feeling perfectly at home there. She was rather tall, rather strong and capable looking, and she was bareheaded, and carried a doorkey suspended from a smooth-worn bit of wood.

"Don't get into a perspiration making up the mail, Pete," she advised calmly, quite ignoring both Grant and the Indian. "Nine-two is an hour late—as usual. Jockey Bates always seems to be under the impression he's an undertaker's assistant, and is headed for the graveyard when he takes nine-two out. He'll get the can, first he knows—and he'll put in a month or two wondering why. I could make better time than he does myself." By then she was leaning with both elbows upon the counter beside the post office, bored beyond words with life as it must be lived—to judge from her tone and her attitude.

"For Heaven's sake, Pete," she went on languidly, "can't you scare up a novel, or chocolates, or gum, or—*anything* to kill time? I'd even enjoy chewing gum right now—it would give my jaws something to think of, anyway."

Pete, grinning indulgently, came out of retirement behind the pigeonholes, and looked inquiringly around the store.

"I've got cards," he suggested. "What's the matter with a game uh solitary? I've knowed men to put in hull winters alone, up in the mountains, jest eatin' and sleepin' and playin' solitary."

The young woman made a grimace of disgust. "I've come from three solid hours of it. What I really do want is something to read. Haven't you even got an almanac?"

"Saunders is readin' 'The Broken-hearted Bride'—you can have it soon's he's through. He says it's a peach."

"Nine-two is bringing up a bunch of magazines. I'll have reading in plenty two hours from now; but my heavens above, those two hours!" She struck both fists despairingly upon the counter.

"I've got gumdrops, and fancy mixed——"

"Forget it, then. A five-pound box of chocolates is due—on the nine-two." She sighed heavily. "I wish you weren't so old, and hadn't quite so many chins, Pete," she complained. "I'd inveigle you into a flirtation. You see how desperate I am for something to do!"

Pete smiled unhappily. He was sensitive about all those chins, and the general bulk which accompanies them.

"Let me make yuh acquainted with my friend, Good In—er—Mr. Imsen." Pete considered that he was behaving with great discernment and tact. "This is Miss Georgie Howard, the new op'rator." He twinkled his little eyes at her maliciously. "Say, he ain't got but one chin, an' he's only twenty-three years old." He felt that the inference was too plain to be ignored.

She turned her head slowly and looked Grant over with an air of disparagement, while she nodded negligently as an acknowledgment to the introduction. "Pete thinks he's awfully witty," she remarked. "It's really pathetic."

Pete bristled—as much as a fat man could bristle on so hot a day. "Well, you said you wanted to flirt, and so I took it for granted you'd like——"

Good Indian looked straight past the girl, and scowled at Pete.

"Pete, you're an idiot ordinarily, but when you try to be smart you're absolutely insufferable. You're mentally incapable of recognizing the line of demarcation between legitimate persiflage and objectionable familiarity. An ignoramus of your particular class ought to confine his repartee to unqualified affirmation or negative monosyllable." Whereupon he pulled his hat more firmly upon his head, hunched his shoulders in disgust, remembered his manners, and bowed to Miss Georgie Howard, and stalked out, as straight of back as the Indian whose blanket he brushed, and who may have been, for all he knew, a blood relative of his.

"I guess that ought to hold you for a while, Pete," Miss Georgie approved under her breath, and stared after Grant curiously. "'You're mentally incapable of recognizing the line of demarcation between legitimate persiflage and objectionable familiarity.' I'll bet two bits you don't know what that means, Pete; but it hits you off exactly. Who is Mr. Imsen?"

She got no reply to that. Indeed, she did not wait for a reply. Outside, things were happening—and, since Miss Georgie was dying of dullness, she hailed the disturbance as a Heaven-sent blessing, and ran to see what was going on.

Briefly, Grant had inadvertently stepped on a sleeping dog's paw—a dog of the mongrel breed which infests Indian camps, and which had attached itself to the blanketed buck inside. The dog awoke with a yelp, saw that it was a stranger who had perpetrated the outrage, and straightway fastened its teeth in the leg of Grant's trousers. Grant kicked it loose, and when it came at him again, he swore vengeance and mounted his horse in haste.

He did not say a word. He even smiled while he uncoiled his rope, widened the loop, and, while the dog was circling warily and watching for another chance at him, dropped the loop neatly over its front quarters, and drew it tight.

Saunders, a weak-lunged, bandy-legged individual, who was officially a general chore man for Pete, but who did little except lie in the shade, reading novels or gossiping, awoke then, and, having a reputation for tender-heartedness, waved his arms and called aloud in the name of peace.

"Turn him loose, I tell yuh! A helpless critter like that—you oughta be ashamed—abusin' dumb animals that can't fight back!"

"Oh, can't he?" Grant laughed grimly.

"You turn that dog loose!" Saunders became vehement, and paid the penalty of a paroxysm of coughing.

"You go to the devil. If you were an able-bodied man, I'd get you, too—just to have a pair of you. Yelping, snapping curs, both of you." He played the dog as a fisherman plays a trout.

"That dog, him Viney dog. Viney dog heap likum. You no killum, Good Injun." The Indian, his arms folded in his blanket, stood upon the porch watching calmly the fun. "Viney all time heap mad, you killum," he added indifferently.

"Sure it isn't old Hagar's?"

"No b'long um Hagar—b'long um Viney. Viney heap likum."

Grant hesitated, circling erratically

with his victim close to the steps. "All right, no killum—teachum lesson, though. Viney heap *bueno* squaw—heap likum Viney. No likum dog, though. Dog all time come along me." He glanced up, passed over the fact that Miss Georgie Howard was watching him, and clapping her hands enthusiastically at the spectacle, and settled an unfriendly stare upon Saunders.

"You shut up your yowling. You'll burst a blood vessel and go to heaven, first thing you know. I've never contemplated hiring you as my guardian angel, you blatting buck sheep. Go off and lie down somewhere." He turned in the saddle and looked down at the dog, clawing and fighting the rope which held him fast just back of the shoulder blades. "Come along, doggie—*nice* doggie!" he grinned, and touched his horse with the spurs. With one leap, it was off at a sharp gallop, up over the hill and through the sagebrush to where he judged the Indian camp must be.

Old Wolfbelly had but that morning brought his thirty or forty followers to camp in the hollow where was a spring of clear water—the hollow which had for long been known locally as "the Indian Camp," because of Wolfbelly's predilection for the spot. Without warning save for the beat of hoofs in the sandy soil, Grant charged over the brow of the hill and into camp, scattering dogs, papooses, and squaws alike as he rode.

Shrill clamor filled the sultry air. Sleeping bucks awoke scowling at the uproar; and the horse of Good Indian, hating always the smell and the litter of an Indian camp, pitched furiously into the very wikiup of old Hagar, who hated the rider of old. In the first breathing spell he loosed the dog, which skulked, limping, into the first sheltered spot he found, and laid him down to lick his outraged person and whimper to himself at the memory of his plight. Grant pulled his horse to a restive stand before a group of screeching squaws, and laughed outright at the panic of them.

"Hello, Viney! I brought back your dog," he drawled. "He tried to bite me —heap *kay bueno** dog. Mebbyso you killum. Me no hurtum—all time him Hartley, all time him try hard bite me. Injun tell me him Viney dog. Me likum Viney, me no kill Viney dog. You all time mebbyso eat that dog—*sabe?* No keep—*kay bueno*. All time try for bite. You cookum, no can bite. *Sabe?*"

Without waiting to see whether Viney approved of his method of disciplining her dog, or intended to take his advice regarding its disposal, he wheeled and started off in the direction of the trail which led down the bluff to the Hart ranch. When he reached the first steep descent, however, he remembered that Pete had spoken of some mail for the Harts, and turned back to get it.

Once more in Hartley, he found that the belated train was making up time, and would be there within an hour; and, since it carried mail from the West, it seemed hardly worth while to ride away before its arrival. Also, Pete intimated that there was a good chance of prevailing upon the dining-car conductor to throw off a chunk of ice. Grant, therefore, led his horse around into the shade, and made himself comfortable.

CHAPTER III.

Down the winding trail of Snake River bluff straggled a blanketed half dozen of old Wolfbelly's tribe, the braves stalking moodily in front and kicking up a gray cloud of dust which enveloped the squaws behind them, but could not choke to silence their shrill chatter; for old Hagar was there, and Viney, and the incident of the dog was fresh in their minds.

The Hart boys were assembled at the

*Author's Note.—The Indians of southern Idaho spoke a somewhat mixed dialect. *Bueno* (wayno), their word for "good," undoubtedly being taken from the Spanish language. I believe the word "*kay*" to be Indian. It means "no," and thus the "*kay bueno*" so often used by them means literally "no good," and is a term of reproach. On the other hand, "heap *bueno*" is "very good," their enthusiasm being manifested merely by drawing out the word "heap." In speaking English they appeared to have no other way of expressing, in a single phrase, their like or dislike of an object or person.

corral, halter-breaking a three-year-old for the pure fun of it. Wally caught sight of the approaching blotch of color, and yelled a wordless greeting; him had old Hagar carried lovingly upon her broad shoulders with her own papoose when he was no longer than her arm; and she knew his voice even at that distance, and grinned—grinned and hid her joy in a fold of her dingy red blanket.

"Looks like old Wolfbelly's back," Clark observed needlessly. "Donny, if they don't go to the house right away, you go and tell mum they're here. Chances are the whole bunch'll hang around till supper."

"Say!" Gene giggled with seventeen-year-old irrepressibility. "Does anybody know where Vadnie is? If we could spring 'em on her and make her believe they're on the warpath—say, I'll gamble she'd run clear to the Malad!"

"I told her, cross my heart, this morning that the Injuns are peaceful now. I said Good Injun was the only one that's dangerous—oh, I sure did throw a good stiff load, all right!" Clark grinned at the memory. "I've got to see Grant first, when he gets back, and put him wise to the rep he's got. Vad didn't hardly swallow it. She said: 'Why, Cousin Clark! Aunt Phœbe says he's perfectly lovely!'" Clark mimicked a girl's voice with relish.

"Aw—there's a lot uh squaws tagging along behind!" Donny complained disgustedly from his post of observation on the fence. "They'll go to the house first thing to gabble—there's old Hagar waddling along like a duck. You can't make that warpath stick, Clark—not with all them squaws."

"Well, say, you sneak up and hide somewhere till yuh see if Vadnie's anywhere around. If they get settled down talking to mum, they're good for an hour—she's churning, Don—you hide in the rocks by the milk house till they get settled. And I'll see if—— Git! *Pikeway*, while they're behind the stacks!"

Donny climbed down and scurried through the sand to the house as if his very life depended upon reaching it unseen. The group of Indians came up, huddled at the corral, and peered through the stout rails.

"Howdy! Howdy!" chorused the boys, and left the horse for a moment while they shook hands ceremoniously with the three bucks. Three Indians, Clark decided regretfully, would make a tame showing on the warpath, however much they might lend themselves to the spirit of the joke. He did not quite know how he was going to manage it, but he was hopeful still. It was unthinkable that real live Indians should be permitted to come and go upon the ranch without giving Evadna Ramsey, straight from New Jersey, the scare of her life.

The three bucks, grunting monosyllabic greetings, climbed, in all the dignity of their blankets, to the top rail of the corral, and roosted there to watch the horse-breaking; and for the present Clark held his peace.

The squaws hovered there for a moment longer, peeping through the rails. Then Hagar, she of much flesh and more temper, grunted a word or two, and they turned and plodded on to where the house stood hidden away in its nest of cool green. For a space they stood outside the fence, peering warily into the shade, instinctively cautious in their manner of approaching a strange place, and detained also by the Indian etiquette which demands that one wait until invited to enter a strange camp.

After a period of waiting which seemed to old Hagar sufficient, she pulled her blanket tight across her broad hips, waddled to the gate, pulled it open with self-conscious assurance, and led the way soft-footedly around the house to where certain faint sounds betrayed the presence of Phœbe Hart in her stone milk house.

At the top of the short flight of wide, stone steps they stopped and huddled silently, until the black shadow of them warned Phœbe of their presence. She had lived too long in the West to seem startled when she suddenly discovered herself watched by three pair of beady, black eyes, so she merely nodded, and laid down her butter ladle to shake hands all around.

"Howdy, Hagar? Howdy, Viney? Howdy, Lucy? Me heap glad for see you. *Bueno* buttermilk—mebbyso you all time drinkum?"

However diffident they might be when it came to announcing their arrival, their bashfulness did not extend to accepting offers of food or drink. Three brown hands were eagerly outstretched—though it was the hand of Hagar which grasped first the big, tin cup. They not only drank, they guzzled, and afterward drew a fold of blanket across their milk-white lips, and grinned in pure animal satisfaction.

"*Bueno.* He-e-ap *bueno!*" they chorused appreciatively, and squatted at the top of the stone steps, watching Phœbe manipulate the great ball of yellow butter in its wooden bowl.

After a brief silence, Hagar shook the tangle of unkempt, black hair away from her moonlike face, and began talking in a soft monotone, her voice now and then rising to a shrill singsong.

"Mebbyso Tom, mebbyso Sharlie, mebbyso Sleeping Turtle all time come along," she announced. "Stop all time corral, talk yo' boys. Mebbyso heap likum drink yo' butter water. *Bueno.*"

When Phœbe nodded assent, Hagar went onto the thing which had brought her so soon to the ranch—the thing which satisfied both an old grudge and her love of gossip.

"Good Injun, him all time heap *kay bueno,*" she stated emphatically, her beady eyes fixed unwaveringly upon Phœbe's face to see if the stab was effective. "Good Injun come Hartley, all time drunk likum pig. All time heap yell, heap shoot—*kay bueno.* Wantum fight man-that-coughs. Come all time camp, heap yell, heap shoot some more. Ketchum dog—Viney dog—heap dragum through sagebrush—dog all time cry, no can get away—me thinkum kill that dog. Squaws cry—Viney cry—Good Injun"—Hagar paused here for greater effect—"makum horse all time buck—ridum in wikiup—Hagar wikiup—all time breakum—no can fix that wikiup! Good Injun, hee-e-ap *kay bueno!*" At the last her voice was high and tremulous with anger.

"Good Indian mebbyso all same my boy Wally." Phœbe gave the butter a vicious slap. "Me heap love Good Indian. You no call Good Indian, you call Grant. Grant *bueno.* Heap *bueno* all time. No drunk, no yell, no shoot, mebbyso"—she hesitated, knowing well the possibilities of her foster son—"mebbyso catchum dog—me think no catchum. Grant all same my boy. All time me likum—heap *bueno.*"

Viney and Lucy nudged each other and tittered into their blankets, for the argument was an old one between Hagar and Phœbe, though the grievance of Hagar might be fresh. Hagar shifted her blanket and thrust out a stubborn under lip.

"Wally boy, heap *bueno,*" she said; and her malicious old face softened as she spoke of him, dear as her own first born. "Jack *bueno,* mebbyso Gene *bueno,* mebbyso Clark, mebbyso Donny all time *bueno.*" Doubt was in her voice when she praised those last two, however. She stopped short to emphasize the damning contrast. "Good Injun all same mebbyso yo' boy Grant, hee-ee-eap *kay bueno.* Good Injun Grant all time debbil!"

It was at this point that Donny slipped away to report that "Ma and old Hagar are scrappin' over Good Injun again," and told with glee the tale of his misdeeds as recounted by the squaw.

Phœbe in her earnestness forgot to keep within the limitations of their dialect.

"Grant's a good boy, and a smart boy. There isn't a better-hearted fellow in the country, if I have got five boys of my own. You think I like him better than I like Wally is all ails you, Hagar. You're jealous of Grant, and you always have been, ever since his father left him with me. I hope my heart's big enough to hold them all." She remembered then that they could not understand half she was saying, and appealed to Viney. Viney liked Grant.

"Viney, you tell me. Grant no come Hartley, no drunk, no yell, no catchum you dog, no ride in Hagar's wikiup? You tell me, Viney."

Viney and Lucy bobbed their heads

rapidly up and down. Viney, with a sidelong glance at Hagar, spoke softly.

"Good Injun Grant, mebbyso come Hartley," she admitted reluctantly, as if she would have been pleased to prove Hagar a liar in all things. "Me thinkum no drunk. Mebbyso ketchum dog—dog *kay bueno*, mebbyso me killum. Good Injun Grant no heap yell, no shoot all time—mebbyso no drunk. No breakum wikiup. Horse all time *kay bueno*, Hagar——"

She was interrupted by Hagar's shrill contradictions, and relasped into silence, her thin face growing sullen under the upbraiding she received in her native tongue. Phœbe, looking at her attentively, despaired of getting any nearer the truth from any of them.

There was a sudden check to Hagar's shrewish clamor. The squaws stiffened to immobility and listened stolidly, their eyes alone betraying the curiosity they felt. Off somewhere at the head of the tiny pond, hidden away in the jungle of green, a girl's voice was singing; a girl's voice, and a strange voice—for the squaws knew well the few women voices along the Snake.

"That my girl," Phœbe explained, stopping the soft pat-pat of her butter ladle. "My girl heap sing."

"Where ketchum yo' girl?" Hagar forgot her petulance, and became curious as any white woman.

"Me ketchum 'way off, where sun come up. All time me have heap boys—mebbyso want girl all time, no ketchum. My mother's sister's boy have one girl, 'way off where sun come up. My mother's sister's boy die, his wife all same die, that girl mebbyso heap sad; no got father, no got mother—all time got nobody. *Kay bueno.* That girl send one letter, say all time got nobody. Me want one girl. Me send one letter, tell that girl come, be all time my girl. Five days ago, that girl come. Me heap glad; boys all time heap glad, my man heap glad. *Bueno.* Mebbyso you glad me have one girl?" Not that their approval was necessary, or even of much importance; but Phœbe was accustomed to treat them like spoiled children.

Hagar's lip was outthrust again. "Yo' ketchum one girl, mebbyso yo' no more like my boy Wally. *Kay bueno.*"

"Heap like all my boys jus' same," Phœbe hastened to assure her, and added with a hint of malice: "Heap like my boy Grant all same."

"Huh!" Hagar chose to remain unconvinced and antagonistic. "Good Injun *kay bueno.* Yo' girl, mebbyso *kay bueno.*"

"What name yo' girl?" Viney interposed hastily.

"Name Evadna Ramsey." In spite of herself, Phœbe felt chilled by their lack of enthusiasm. She went back to her butter-making in offended silence.

The squaws blinked at her stolidly. Always they were inclined toward suspicion of strangers, and perhaps to a measure of jealousy as well. Not many whites received them with frank friendship as did the Harts, and they felt far more upon the subject than they might put into words, even the words of their own language.

Many of the white race looked upon them as beggars, which was bad enough, or as thieves, which was worse; and in a general way they could not deny the truth of it. But they never stole from the Harts, and they never openly begged from the Harts. The friends of the Harts, however, must prove their friendship before they could hope for better than an imperturbable neutrality. So they would not pretend to be glad. Hagar was right—perhaps the girl was no good. They would wait until they could pass judgment upon this girl who had come to live in the wikiup of the Harts. Then Lucy, she who longed always for children and had been denied by fate, stirred slightly, her nostrils aquiver.

"Mebbyso *bueno*, yo' girl," she yielded, speaking softly. "Mebbyso see yo' girl."

Phœbe's face cleared, and she called, in mellow crescendo: "Oh, Va-ad-*nice?*" Immediately the singing stopped.

"*Who*—who?" answered the voice, with the soft lilt of a wood bird.

The squaws wrapped themselves

afresh in their blankets, passed brown palms smoothingly down their hair from the part in the middle, settled their braids upon their bosoms with true feminine instinct, and waited. They heard her feet crunching softly in the gravel that bordered the pond, but not a head turned that way; for all the sign of life they gave, the three might have been mere effigies of women. They heard a faint scream when she caught sight of them sitting there, and their faces settled into more stolid indifference, adding a hint of antagonism even to the soft eyes of Lucy, the tender, childless one.

"Vadnee, here are some new neighbors I want you to get acquainted with." Phœbe's eyes besought the girl to be calm. "They're all old friends of mine. Come here and let me introduce you—and don't look so horrified, honey!"

Those incorrigibles, her cousins, would have whooped with joy at her unmistakable terror when she held out a trembling hand and gasped faintly: "H—how do you—do?"

"This Hagar," Phœbe announced cheerfully; and the old squaw caught the girl's hand and gripped it tightly for a moment in malicious enjoyment of her too-evident fear and repulsion.

"This Viney."

Viney, reading Evadna's face in one keen, upward glance, kept her hands hidden in the folds of her blanket, and only nodded twice reassuringly.

"This Lucy."

Lucy read also the girl's face; but she reached up, pressed her hand gently, and her glance was soft and friendly. So the ordeal was over.

"Bring some of that cake you baked to-day, honey—and do brace up!" Phœbe patted her upon the shoulder.

Hagar forestalled the hospitable intent by getting slowly upon her fat legs, shaking her hair out of her eyes, and grunting a command to the others. With visible reluctance they rose also, hitched their blankets into place, and vanished, soft-footed as they had come.

"Oo-oo!" Evadna stared at the place where they were not. "Wild Indians—I thought the boys were just teasing when they said so—and it's really true, Aunt Phœbe?"

"They're no wilder than you are," Phœbe retorted impatiently.

"Oh, they *are* wild. They're exactly like in my history—and they don't make a sound when they go—you just look, and they're gone! That old fat one—did you see how she looked at me? As if she wanted to—scalp me, Aunt Phœbe! She looked right at my hair and——"

"Well, she didn't take it with her, did she? Don't be silly. I've known old Hagar ever since Wally was a baby. She took him right to her own wikiup and nursed him with her own papoose for two months when I was sick, and Viney stayed with me day and night and pulled me through. Lucy I've known since she was a papoose. Great grief, child! Didn't you hear me say they're old friends? I wanted you to be nice to them, because if they like you there's nothing they won't do for you. If they don't, there's nothing they *will* do. You might as well get used to them——"

Out by the gate rose a clamor which swept nearer and nearer until the noise broke at the corner of the house like a great wave, in a tumult of red blanket, flying black hair, the squalling of a female voice, and the harsh laughter of the man who carried the disturbance, kicking and clawing, in his arms. Fighting his way to the milk house, he dragged the squaw along beside the porch, followed by the Indians and all the Hart boys, a yelling, jeering audience.

"You tell her you heap big liar! Ah-h—you can't break loose, you old she wild cat. Quit your biting, will you? By all the big and little spirits of your tribe, you'll wish——"

Panting, laughing, swearing also in breathless exclamations, he forced her to the top of the steps, backed recklessly down them, and came to a stop in the corner by the door. Evadna had taken refuge there; and he pressed her hard against the rough wall without in the least realizing that anything was behind him save unsentient stone

"Now, you sing your little song, and be quick about it!" he commanded his captive sternly. "You tell Mother Hart you lied. I hear she's been telling you I'm drunk, Mother Hart—didn't you, you old beldam? You say you heap sorry you all time tellum lie. You say: 'Good Injun, him all time heap *bueno.*' Say: 'Good Injun no drunk, no heap shoot, no heap yell—all time *bueno.*' Quick, or I'll land you headforemost in that pond, you infernal old hag!"

"Good Injun hee-eeap *kay bueno!* Heap debbil all time." Hagar might be short of breath, but her spirit was unconquered, and her under lip bore witness to her stubbornness.

Phœbe caught him by the arm then, thinking he meant to make good his threat—and it would not have been unlike Grant Imsen to do so.

"Now, Grant, you let her go," she coaxed. "I know you aren't drunk—of course, I knew it all the time. I told Hagar so. What do you care what she says about you? You don't want to fight an old woman, Grant—a man can't fight a woman——"

"You tell her you heap big liar!" Grant did not even look at Phœbe, but his purpose seemed to waver in spite of himself. "You all time *kay bueno.* You all time lie." He gripped her more firmly, and turned his head slightly toward Phœbe. "You'd be tired of it yourself if she threw it into you like she does into me, Mother Hart. It's got so I can't ride past this old hag in the trail but she gives me the bad eye, and says things into her blanket. And if I look sidewise, she yowls all over the country that I'm drunk. I'm getting good and tired of it!" He shook the squaw as a puppy shakes a shoe—shook her till her hair quite hid her ugly old face from sight.

"All right—Mother Hart she tellum mebbyso let you go. This time I no throw you in pond. You heap take care next time, mebbyso. You no tellum big lie, me all time heap drunk. You *kay bueno.* All time me tellum Mother Hart, tellum boys, tellum Viney, Lucy, tellum Charlie and Tom and Sleeping Turtle you heap big liar. Me tell Wally you lie. Him all time my friend—mebbyso him no likum you no more. Huh. Get out—*pikeway* before I forget you're a lady!"

He laughed ironically, and pushed her from him so suddenly that she sprawled upon the steps. The Indians grinned unsympathetically at her, for Hagar was not the most popular member of the tribe by any means. Scrambling up, she shook her witch locks from her face, wrapped herself in her dingy blanket, and scuttled away, muttering maledictions under her breath. The watching group turned and followed her, and in a few seconds the gate was heard to slam shut behind them. Grant stood where he was, leaning against the milk-house wall; and when they were gone, he gave a short, apologetic laugh.

"No need to lecture, Mother Hart. I know it was a fool thing to do; but when Donny told me what the old rip said, I was so mad for a minute——"

Phœbe caught him again by the arm and pulled him forward. "Grant! You're squeezing Vadnie to death, just about! Great grief, I forgot all about the poor child being here! You poor little——"

"Squeezing who?" Grant whirled, and caught a brief glimpse of a crumpled little figure behind him, evidently too scared to cry, and yet not quite at the fainting point of terror. He backed, and began to stammer an apology; but she did not wait to hear a word of it. For an instant she stared into his face, and then, like a rabbit released from its paralysis of dread, she darted past him and fled up the stone steps into the house. He heard the kitchen door shut, and the click of the lock. He heard other doors slam suggestively; and he laughed in spite of his astonishment.

"And who the deuce might that be?" he asked, feeling in his pocket for smoking material.

Phœbe seemed undecided between tears and laughter. "Oh, Grant, *Grant!* She'll think you're ready to murder everybody on the ranch—and you can be such a *nice* boy when you want to be! I did hope——"

"I don't want to be nice," Grant ob-

jected, drawing a match along a fairly smooth rock.

"Well, I wanted you to appear at your best; and, instead of that, here you come, squabbling with old Hagar like I don't——"

"Yes—sure. But who is the timid lady?"

"Timid! You nearly kill the poor girl, besides scaring her half to death, and then you call her timid. I'll bet she thought there was going to be a real Indian massacre, right here, and she'd be scalped——"

Wally Hart came back laughing to himself.

"Say, you've sure cooked your goose with old Hagar, Grant! She's right on the warpath, and then some. She'd like to burn yuh alive—she said so. She's headed for camp, and all the rest of the bunch at her heels. She won't come here no more till you're kicked off the ranch, as near as I could make out her jabbering. And she won't do your washing no more, mum—she said so. You're *kay bueno* yourself, because you take Good Injun's part. We're all *kay bueno*—all but me. She wanted me to quit the bunch and go live in her wikiup. I'm the only decent one in the outfit." He gave his mother an affectionate little hug as he went past, and began an investigative tour of the stone jars on the cool rock floor within. "What was it all about, Grant? What did yuh do to her, anyway?"

"Oh, it wasn't anything. Hand me up a cup of that buttermilk, will you? They've got a dog up there in camp that I'm going to kill some of these days—if they don't beat me to it. He was up at the store, and when I went out to get on my horse, he tried to take a leg off me. I kicked him in the nose, and when I mounted I just dropped my loop over Mr. Dog. Sleeping Turtle was there, and he said the dog belonged to Viney, so I just led him gently to camp."

He grinned a little at the memory of his gentleness. "I told Viney I thought he'd make a fine stew, and they'd better use him up right away before he spoiled. That's all there was to it. Well, Keno did sink his head and pitch around camp a little, but not to amount to anything. He just stuck his nose into old Hagar's wikiup—and one sniff seemed to be about all he wanted. He didn't hurt anything."

He took a meditative bite of cake, finished the buttermilk in three rapturous swallows, and bethought him of the feminine mystery.

"If you please, Mother Hart, who was that Christmas angel I squashed?"

"Vad? Was Vad in on it, mum? *I* never saw her." Wally straightened up with a fresh chunk of cake in his hand. "Was she scared?"

"Yes," his mother admitted reluctantly, "I reckon she was, all right. First the squaws—and, poor girl, I made her shake hands all around—and then Grant here, acting like a wild hyena——"

"Say, *please* don't tell me who she is, or where she belongs, or anything like that," Grant interposed, with some sarcasm. "I smashed her flat between me and the wall, and I scared the daylights out of her; and I'm told I should have appeared at my best. But who she is, or where she belongs——"

"She belongs right here." Phœbe's tone was a challenge, whether she meant it to be so or not. "This is going to be her home from now on; and I want you boys to treat her nicer than you've been doing. She's been here a week almost; and there ain't one of you that's made friends with her yet, or tried to even. You've played jokes on her, and told her things to scare her—and my grief! I got her out here thinking she'd have a softening influence on you, and make gentlemen of you. And far as I can make out, just having her on the place seems to put the Old Harry into every one of you! It ain't right. It ain't the way I expected my boys would act toward a stranger—a girl especially. And I did hope Grant would behave better."

"Sure, he ought to. Us boneheads don't know any better—but Grant's *educated*." Wally grinned and winked elaborately at his mother's back.

"I'm not educated up to Christmas angels that look as if they'd been stepped on," Grant defended himself.

"She's a real nice little thing. If you boys would quit teasing the life out of her, I don't doubt but what, in six months or so, you wouldn't know the girl," Phœbe argued, with some heat.

"I don't know the girl now." Grant spoke dryly. "I don't want to. If I'd held a tomahawk in one hand and her flowing locks in the other, and was just letting a war whoop outa me, she'd look at me—the way she did look." He snorted in contemptuous amusement, and gave a little, writhing twist of his slim body into his trousers. "I never did like blondes," he added, in a tone of finality, and started up the steps.

"You never liked anything that wore skirts," Phœbe flung after him indignantly; and she came very close to the truth.

CHAPTER IV.

Phœbe watched the two unhappily, sighed when they disappeared around the corner of the house, and set her bowl of butter upon the broad, flat rock which just missed being overflowed with water, and sighed again.

"I'm afraid it ain't going to work," she murmured aloud; for Phœbe, having lived much of her life in the loneliness which the West means to women, frequently talked to herself. "She's such a nice little thing—but the boys don't take to her like I thought they would. I don't see as she's having a mite of influence on their manners, unless it's to make 'em act worse just to shock her. Clark *used* to take off his hat when he come into the house most every time. And great grief! Now he'd wear it and his chaps and spurs to the table, if I didn't make him take 'em off. She's nice—she's most *too* nice. I've got to give that girl a good talking to."

She mounted the steps to the back porch, tried the kitchen door, and found it locked. She went around to the door on the west side, opposite the gate, found that also secured upon the inside, and passed grimly to the next.

"My grief! I didn't know any of these doors *could* be locked!" she muttered angrily. "They never have been before that I ever heard of." She stopped before Evadna's window, and saw, through a slit in the faded, green blind, that the old-fashioned bureau had been pulled close before it. "My grief!" she whispered disgustedly, and retraced her steps to the east side, which, being next the pond, was more secluded. She surveyed dryly a window left wide open there, gathered her brown-and-white calico dress close about her plump person, and crawled grimly through into the sitting room, where the carpet was always well sanded with the tread of boys' boots fresh from outdoors, and where cigarette stubs decorated every window sill and the stale odor of Peaceful's pipe was never absent.

She went first to all the outer rooms, and unlocked every one of the outraged doors which, unless in the uproar and excitement of racing, laughing boys pursuing one another all over the place with much slamming and good-natured threats of various sorts, had never before barred the way of any man, be he red or white, came he at noon or at midnight.

Evadna's door was barricaded, as Phœbe discovered when she turned the knob and attempted to walk in. She gave the door an indignant push, and heard a muffled shriek within, as if Evadna's head was buried under her pillow.

"My grief! A body'd think you expected to be killed and eaten," she called out unsympathetically. "You open this door, Vadnie Ramsey. This is a nice way to act with my own boys, in my own house! A body'd think——"

There was the sound of something heavy being dragged laboriously away from the door; and in a minute a vividly blue eye appeared at a narrow crack.

"Oh, I don't see how you dare to *l-live* in such a place, Aunt Phœbe!" she cried tearfully, opening the door a bit wider. "Those Indians—and that awful man——"

"That was only Grant, honey. Let me in. There's a few things I want to say to you, Vadnie. You promised to help me teach my boys to be gentle—it's

all they lack, and it takes gentle women, honey——"

"I *am* gentle," Evadna protested grievedly. "I haven't done a thing to them, and I've been—but they're horrid and rough, anyway——"

"Let me in, honey, and we'll talk it over. Something's got to be done. If you wouldn't be so timid, and would make friends with them, instead of looking at them as if you expected them to murder you—I must say, Vadnie, you're a real temptation; they can't help scaring you when you go around acting as if you expected to be scared. You —you're *too*——" The door opened still wider, and she went in. "Now, the idea of a great girl like you hiding her head under a pillow just because Grant asked old Hagar to apologize!"

Evadna sat down upon the edge of the bed and stared unwinkingly at her aunt. "They don't apologize like that in New Jersey," she observed, with some resentment in her voice, and dabbed at her unbelievably blue eyes with a moist ball of handkerchief.

"I know they don't, honey." Phœbe patted her hand reassuringly. "That's what I want you to help me teach my boys—to be real gentlemen. They're pure gold, every one of them; but I can't deny they're pretty rough on the outside sometimes. And I hope you will be——"

"Oh, I know. I understand perfectly. You just got me out here as a—a sort of sandpaper for your boys' manners!" Evadna choked over a little sob of self pity. "I can just tell you one thing, Aunt Phœbe, that fellow you call Grant ought to be smoothed with one of those funny axes they hew logs with."

Phœbe bit her lips because she wanted to treat the subject very seriously. "I want you to promise me, honey, that you will be particularly nice to Grant; *particularly* nice. He's so alone, and he's very proud and sensitive, because he feels his loneliness. No one understands him as I do——"

"I hate him!" gritted Evadna, in a whisper which her Aunt Phœbe thought it wise not to hear.

Phœbe settled herself comfortably for a long talk. The murmur of her voice as she explained and comforted and advised came soothingly from the room, with now and then an interruption while she waited for a tardy answer to some question. Finally she rose and stood in the doorway, looking back at a huddled figure on the bed.

"Now dry your eyes and be a good girl, and remember what you've promised," she admonished kindly. "Aunt Phœbe didn't mean to scold you, honey; she only wants you to feel that you belong here, and she wants you to like her boys and have them like you. They've always wanted a sister to pet; and Aunt Phœbe is hoping you'll not disappoint her. You'll try; won't you, Vadnie?"

"Y-yes," murmured Vadnie meekly from the pillow.

"I know you will." Phœbe looked at her for a moment longer rather wistfully, and turned away. "I do wish she had some spunk," she muttered complainingly, not thinking that Evadna might hear her. "She don't take after the Ramseys none—there wasn't nothing mushy about them that I ever heard of."

"Mushy! *Mushy!*" Evadna sat up and stared at nothing at all while she repeated the word under her breath. "She wants me to be gentle—she preached gentleness in her letters, and told how her boys need it, and then—she calls it being *mushy!*"

She reached mechanically for her hairbrush, and fumbled in a tumbled mass of shining, yellow hair quite as unbelievable in its way as were her eyes —Grant had shown a faculty for observing keenly when he called her a Christmas angel—and drew out a half dozen hairpins, letting them slide from her lap to the floor. "*Mushy!*" she repeated, and shook down her hair so that it framed her face and those eyes of hers. "I suppose that's what they all say behind my back. And how the deuce can a girl be nice *without* being mushy?" She drew the brush meditatively through her hair. "I *am* scared to death of Indians," she admitted, with analytical frankness, "and tarantulas and snakes—but—*mushy!*"

Grant stood smoking in the doorway of the sitting room, where he could look out upon the smooth waters of the pond darkening under the shade of the poplars and the bluff behind, when Evadna came out of her room. He glanced across at her, saw her hesitate, as if she were meditating a retreat, and gave his shoulders a twitch of tolerant amusement that she should be afraid of him. Then he stared out over the pond again. Evadna walked straight over to him.

"So you're that other savage whose manners I'm supposed to smooth, are you?" she asked abruptly, coming to a stop within three feet of him, and regarding him carefully, her hands clasped behind her.

"Please don't tease the animals," Grant returned, in the same impersonal tone which she had seen fit to employ—but his eyes turned for a sidelong glance at her, although he appeared to be watching the trout rise lazily to the insects skimming over the surface of the water.

"I'm supposed to be nice to you—par-*tic*-ularly nice—because you need it most. I dare say you do, judging from what I've seen of you. At any rate, I've promised. But I just want you to understand that I'm not going to mean one single bit of it. I don't like you—I can't endure you!—and if I'm nice, it will just be because I've promised Aunt Phœbe. You're not to take my politeness at its face value, for back of it I shall dislike you all the time."

Grant's lips twitched, and there was a covert twinkle in his eyes, though he looked around him with elaborate surprise.

"It's early for mosquitoes," he drawled; "but I was sure I heard one buzzing somewhere close."

"Aunt Phœbe ought to get a street roller to smooth *your* manners," Evadna observed pointedly.

"Instead, it's as if she hung her picture of a Christmas angel up before the wolf's den, eh?" he suggested calmly, betraying his Indian blood in the unconsciously symbolic form of expression. "No doubt the wolf's nature will be greatly benefited—his teeth will be dulled for his prey, his voice softened for the night cry—if he should ever, by chance, discover that the Christmas angel is there."

"I don't think he'll be long in making the discovery." The blue of Evadna's eyes darkened and darkened until they were almost black. "Christmas angel—well, I like that! Much you know about angels."

Grant turned his head indolently and regarded her.

"If it isn't a Christmas angel—they're always very blue and very golden, and pinky-whitey, and I went by the general effect—but if it isn't a Christmas angel, for the Lord's sake what *is* it?" He gave his head a slight shake, as if the problem was beyond his solving, and flicked the ashes from his cigarette.

"Oh, I could pinch you!" She gritted her teeth to prove she meant what she said.

"It says it could pinch me." Grant lazily addressed the trout. "I wonder why it didn't, then, when it was being squashed?"

"I just wish to goodness I had! Only I suppose Aunt Phœbe——"

"I do believe it's got a temper. I wonder, now, if it could be a *live* angel?" Grant spoke to the softly swaying poplars.

"Oh, you—there now!" She made a swift little rush at him, nipped his biceps between a very small thumb and two fingers, and stood back, breathing quickly and regarding him in a shamed defiance. "I'll show you whether I'm alive!" she panted vindictively.

"It's alive, and it's a humming bird. Angels don't pinch." Grant laid a finger upon his arm and drawled his solution of a trivial mystery. "It mistook me for a honeysuckle, and gave me a peck to make sure." He smiled indulgently, and exhaled a long wreath of smoke from his nostrils. "Dear little humming birds—so simple and so harmless!"

"And I've promised to be nice to—*that!*" cried Evadna, in bitterness, and rushed past him to the porch. Being a

house built to shelter a family of boys, and steps being a superfluity scorned by their agile legs, there was a sheer drop of three feet to the ground upon that side. Evadna made it in a jump, just as the boys did, and landed lightly upon her slippered feet.

"I hate you—hate you—*hate you!*" she cried, her eyes blazing up at his amused face before she ran off among the trees.

"It sings a sweet little song," he taunted, and his laughter followed her mockingly as she fled from him into the shadows.

"What's the joke, Good Injun? Tell us, so we can laugh too." Wally and Jack hurried in from the kitchen and made for the doorway where he stood.

From under his straight, black brows Grant sent a keen glance into the shade of the grove, where, an instant before, had flickered the white of Evadna's dress. The shadows lay there quietly now, undisturbed by so much as a sleepy bird's fluttering wings.

"I was just thinking of the way I yanked that dog down into old Wolf-belly's camp," he said, though there was no tangible reason for lying to them. "Mister!" he added, his eyes still searching the shadows out there in the grove, "we certainly did go some!"

CHAPTER V.

"There's no use asking the Injuns to go on the warpath," Gene announced disgustedly, coming out upon the porch where the rest of the boys were foregathered, waiting for the ringing tattoo upon the iron triangle just outside the back door which would be the supper summons. "They're too lazy to take the trouble—and, besides, they're scared of dad. I was talking to Sleeping Turtle just now—met him down there past the grade."

"What's the matter with us boys going on the warpath ourselves? We don't need the Injuns. As long as she knows they're hanging around close, it's all the same. If we could just get mum off the ranch——"

"If we could kidnap her—say, I wonder if we couldn't!" Clark looked at the others tentatively.

"Good Injun might do the rescue act and square himself with her for what happened at the milk house," Wally suggested dryly.

"Oh, say, you'd scare her to death. There's no use in piling it on quite so thick," Jack interposed mildly. "I kinda like the kid sometimes. Yesterday, when I took her part way up the bluff, she acted almost human. On the dead, she did!"

"Kill the traitor! Down with him! Curses on the man who betrays us!" growled Wally, waving his cigarette threateningly.

Whereupon Gene and Clark seized the offender by heels and shoulders, and with a brief, panting struggle heaved him bodily off the porch.

"Over the cliff he goes—so may all traitors perish!" Wally declaimed approvingly, drawing up his legs hastily out of the way of Jack's clutching fingers.

"Say, old Peppajee's down to the stable with paw," Donny informed them breathlessly. "I told Marie to put him right next to Vadnie if he stays to supper—and, uh course, he will. If maw don't get next and change his place, it'll be fun to watch her; watch Vad, I mean. She's scared plum to death of anything that wears a blanket, and to have one right at her elbow—wonder where is she?"

"That girl's got to be educated some if she's going to live in this family," Wally observed meditatively. "There's a whole lot she's got to learn, and the only way to learn her thorough is——"

"You forget," Grant interrupted him ironically, "that she's going to make gentlemen of us all."

"Oh, yes—sure. Jack's coming down with it already. You oughta be quarantined, old-timer; that's liable to be catching." Wally snorted his disdain of the whole proceeding. "I'd rather go to jail myself."

Evadna by a circuitous route had reached the sitting room without being seen or heard; and it was at this point in the conversation that she tiptoed out

again, her hands doubled into tight little fists, and her teeth set hard together. She did not look, at that moment, in the least degree "mushy."

When the triangle clanged its supper call, however, she came slowly down from her favorite nook at the head of the pond, her hands filled with flowers hastily gathered in the dusk.

"Here she comes—let's get to our places first, so maw can't change Peppajee around," Donny implored, in a whisper; and the group on the porch disappeared with some haste into the kitchen.

Evadna was leisurely in her movements that night. The tea had been poured and handed around the table by the Portuguese girl, Marie, and the sugar bowl was going after, when she settled herself and her ruffles daintily between Grant and a braided, green-blanketed, dignifiedly loquacious Indian.

The boys signaled one another to attention by kicking surreptitiously under the table, but nothing happened. Evadna bowed a demure acknowledgment when her Aunt Phœbe introduced the two, accepted the sugar bowl from Grant and the butter from Peppajee, and went composedly about the business of eating her supper. She seemed perfectly at ease; too perfectly at ease, decided Grant, who had an instinct for observation. It was unnatural that she should rub elbows with Peppajee without betraying the faintest trace of surprise that he should be sitting at the table with them. Grant took to watching her unobtrusively.

"Long time ago," Peppajee was saying to Peaceful, taking up the conversation where Evadna had evidently interrupted it, "many winters ago, my people all time brave. All time hunt, all time fight, all time heap strong. No drinkum whisky all same now." He flipped a braid back over his shoulder, buttered generously a hot biscuit, and reached for the honey. "No brave no more—*kay bueno*. All time ketchum whisky, get drunk all same likum hog. Heap lazy. No hunt no more, no fight. Lay all time in sun, sleep. No sun come, lay all time in wikiup. Agent, him givum flour, givum meat, givum blanket, you thinkum *bueno*. Me tellum you, *kay bueno*. Makum Injun lazy. All time eat, all time sleep, playum cards all time, drinkum whisky. *Kay bueno*. Huh." The grunt stood for disgust of his tribe, always something of an affectation with Peppajee.

"My brother, my brother's wife, my brother's wife's—ah——" He searched his mind, frowning, for an English word, gave it up, and substituted a phrase. "All them people b'longum my brother's wife, heap lazy all time. Me no likum. Agent one time givum plenty flour, plenty meat, plenty tea. Huh. Them folks no eatum. All time playum cards, drinkum whisky. All time otha fella ketchum flour, ketchum meat, ketchum tea—ketchum all them thing b'longum." In the rhetorical pause he made there, his black eyes wandered inadvertently to Evadna's face. And Evadna, the timid one, actually smiled back.

"Isn't it a shame they should do that?" she murmured sympathetically.

"Huh." Peppajee turned his eyes and his attention to Peaceful, as if the opinion and the sympathy of a mere female were not worthy his notice. "Them grub all gone, them Injuns mebbyso ketchum hungry belly." Evadna blushed, and looked studiously at her plate.

"Come my wikiup. Me got plenty flour, plenty meat, plenty tea. Stay all time my wikiup. Sleep um my wikiup. Sun come up"—he pointed a brown, sinewy hand toward the east—"eatum my grub. Sun up there"—his finger indicated the zenith—"eatum some more. Sun go down, eatum some more. Then sleepum all time my wikiup. Bimeby, mebbyso my flour all gone, my meat mebbyso gone mebbyso tea—them folks all time eatum grub, me no ketchum. Me no playum cards, all same otha fella ketchum my grub. *Kay bueno*. Better me playum cards mebbyso all time.

"Bimeby no ketchum mo' grub, no stopum my wikiup. Them folks *pike-way*. Me tellum 'Yo' heap lazy, heap *kay bueno*. Yo' all time eatum my grub,

yo' no givum me money, no givum hoss, no givum notting. Me damn' mad all time yo'. Yo' go damn' quick!'" Peppajee held out his cup for more tea. "Me tellum my brother," he finished sonorously, his black eyes sweeping lightly the faces of his audience, "yo' no come back, yo'——"

Evadna caught her breath, as if some one had dashed cold water in her face. Never before in her life had she heard the epithet unprintable, and she stared fixedly at the old-fashioned, silver castor which always stood in the exact center of the table.

Old Peaceful Hart cleared his throat, glanced furtively at Phœbe, and drew his hand down over his white beard. The boys puffed their cheeks with the laughter they would, if possible, restrain, and eyed Phœbe's set fact aslant. It was Good Indian who rebuked the offender.

"Peppajee, mebbyso you no more say them words," he said quietly. "Heap *kay bueno*. White man no tellum where white woman hear. White woman no likum hear; all time heap shame for hear."

"Huh," grunted Peppajee doubtingly, his eyes turning to Phœbe. Times before had he said them before Phœbe Hart, and she had passed them by with no rebuke. Grant read the glance, and answered it.

"Mother Hart live long time in this place," he reminded him. "Hear bad talk many times. This girl no hear; no likum hear. You *sabe?* You no make shame for this girl." He glanced challengingly across at Wally, whose grin was growing rather pronounced.

"Huh. Mebbyso you big chief all same this ranch?" Peppajee retorted sourly. "Mebbyso Peaceful tellum, him no likum."

Peaceful, thus drawn into the discussion, cleared his throat again.

"Wel-l-l—*we* don't cuss right hard before the women," he admitted apologetically. "We kinda consider that men's talk. I reckon Vadnie'll overlook it this time." He looked across at her beseechingly. "You no feelum bad, Peppajee."

"Huh. Me no makum squaw talk." Peppajee laid down his knife, lifted a corner of his blanket, and drew it slowly across his stern mouth. He muttered a sentence in Indian.

In the same tongue Grant answered him sharply, and after that was silence broken only by the disconsolate table sounds. Evadna's eyes filled slowly until she finally pushed back her chair and hurried out into the yard and away from the dogged silence of that blanketed figure at her elbow.

She was scarcely settled in the hammock, ready for a comforting half hour of tears, when some one came from the house, stood for a minute while he rolled a cigarette, and then came straight toward her.

She sat up, and waited defensively. More baiting, without a doubt—and she was not in the mood to remember any promises about being a nice, gentle little thing. The figure came close, stooped, and took her by the arm. She knew him then. It was Grant.

"Come over by the pond," he said, in what was almost a command. "I want to talk to you a little."

"Does it occur to you that I might not want to talk to you?" Still, she let him help her to her feet.

"Surely. You needn't open your lips if you don't want to. Just 'lend me your ears, and be silent that ye may hear.' The boys will be boiling out on the porch, as usual, in a minute; so hurry."

"I hope it's something very important," Evadna hinted ungraciously. "Nothing else would excuse this high-handed proceeding."

When they had reached the great rock where the pond had its outlet, and where was a rude seat hidden away in a clump of young willows just across the bridge, he answered her.

"I don't know that it's of any importance at all," he said calmly. "I got to feeling rather ashamed of myself is all, and it seemed to me the only decent thing was to tell you so. I'm not making any bid for your favor—I don't know that I want it. I don't care much about girls, one way or the other. But,

for all I've got the name of being—several things—a savage among the rest—I don't like to feel such a brute as to make war on a girl that seems to be getting it handed to her right along."

He tardily lighted his cigarette and sat smoking beside her, the tiny glow lighting his face briefly now and then.

"When I was joshing you there before supper," he went on, speaking low that he might not be overheard—and ridiculed—from the house, "I didn't know the whole outfit was making a practice of doing the same thing. I hadn't heard about the dead tarantula on your pillow, or the rattler coiled up on the porch, or any of those innocent little jokes. But if the rest are making it their business to devil the life out of you, why—common humanity forces me to apologize and tell you I'm out of it from now on."

"Oh! Thank you very much." Evadna's tone might be considered ironical. "I suppose I ought to say that your statement lessens my dislike of you——"

"Not at all." Grant interrupted her. "Go right ahead and hate me, if you feel that way. It won't matter to me—girls never did concern me much, one way or the other. I never was susceptible to beauty, and that seems to be a woman's trump card, always——"

"Well, upon my word!"

"Sounds queer, does it? But it's the truth, and so what's the use of lying just to be polite? I won't torment you any more; and if the boys rib up too strong a josh, I'm liable to give you a hint beforehand. I'm willing to do that—my sympathies are always with the under dog, anyway, and they're five to one. But that needn't mean that I'm—that I——" He groped for words that would not make his meaning too bald; not even Grant could quite bring himself to warn a girl against believing him a victim of her fascinations.

"You needn't stutter. I'm not really stupid. You don't like me any better than I like you. I can see that. We're to be decent as possible to each other—you from 'common humanity,' and I because I promised Aunt Phœbe."

"We-e-ll—that's about it, I guess." Grant eyed her sidelong. "Only I wouldn't go so far as to say I actually dislike you. I never did dislike a girl, that I remember. I never thought enough about them, one way or the other." He seemed rather fond of that statement, he repeated it so often. "The life I live doesn't call for girls. But that's neither here nor there. What I wanted to say was, that I won't bother you any more. I wouldn't have said a word to you to-night, if you hadn't walked right up to me and started to dig into me. Of course, I had to fight back—the man who won't isn't a normal human being."

"Oh, I know." Evadna's tone was resentful. "From Adam down to you, it has always been 'The woman, she tempted me.' You're perfectly horrid, even if you have apologized. 'The woman, she tempted me,' and so——"

"I beg your pardon; the woman didn't," he corrected blandly. "The woman insisted on scrapping. That's different."

"Oh, it's different! I see. I have almost forgotten something I ought to say, Mr. Imsen. I must thank you for—well, for defending me to that Indian."

"I didn't. Nobody was attacking you, so I couldn't very well defend you, could I? I had to take a fall out of old Peppajee just on principle. I don't get along very well with my noble red cousins. I wasn't doing it on your account, in particular."

"Oh, I see." She rose rather suddenly from the bench. "It wasn't even common humanity, then?"

"Not even common humanity," he echoed affirmatively. "Just a chance I couldn't afford to pass up, of digging into Peppajee."

"That's different." She laughed shortly and left him, running swiftly through the warm dusk to the murmur of voices at the house.

Grant sat where she left him, and smoked two cigarettes meditatively before he thought of returning to the house. When he finally did get upon his feet, he stretched his arms high

above his head, and stared for a moment up at the treetops swaying languidly just under the stars.

"Girls must play the very deuce with a man if he ever lets them get on his mind," he mused. "I see right now where a fellow about my size and complexion had better watch out." But he smiled afterward, as if he did not consider the matter very serious, after all.

CHAPTER VI.

At midnight, the Peaceful Hart ranch lay broodily quiet under its rock-rimmed bluff. Down in the stable, the saddle horses were but formless blots upon the rumpled bedding in their stalls —except Huckleberry, the friendly little pinto with the white eyelashes and the blue eyes, and the great, liver-colored patches upon his sides, and the appetite which demanded food at unseasonable hours, who was now munching and nosing industriously in the depths of his manger, and making a good deal of noise about it.

Outside, one of the milch cows drew a long, sighing breath of content with life, lifted a cud in mysterious, bovine manner, and chewed dreamily. Somewhere up the bluff a bobcat squalled among the rocks, and the moon, in its dissipated season of late rising, lifted itself indolently up to where it could peer down upon the silent ranch.

In the grove where the tiny creek gurgled under the little stone bridge, some one was snoring rhythmically in his blankets, for some of the boys had taken to sleeping in the open air before the earliest rose had opened buds in the sunny shelter of the porch. Three feet away, a sleeper stirred restlessly, lifted his head from the pillow, and slapped half-heartedly at an early mosquito that was humming in his ear. He reached out, and jogged the shoulder of him who snored.

"Say, Gene, if you've got to sleep at the top of your voice, you better drag your bed down into the orchard," he growled. "Let up a little, can't yuh?"

"Ah, shut up and let a fellow sleep!" mumbled Gene, snuggling the covers up to his ears.

"Just what I want *you* to do. You snore like a sawmill. Darn it, you've got to get out of the grove if yuh can't——"

"Ah-h—*ee-ee!*" wailed a voice somewhere among the trees, the sound rising weirdly to a subdued crescendo, clinging there until one's flesh went creepy, and then sliding mournfully down to silence.

"What's that?" The two jerked themselves to a sitting position, and stared into the blackness of the grove.

"Bobcat," whispered Clark, in a tone which convinced not even himself.

"In a pig's ear," flouted Gene, under his breath. He leaned far over and poked his finger into a muffled form. "D'yuh hear that noise, Grant?"

Grant sat up instantly. "What's the matter?" he demanded, rather ill-naturedly, if the truth be told.

"Did you hear anything—a funny noise, like——"

The cry itself finished the sentence for him. It came from nowhere, it would seem, since they could see nothing; rose slowly to a subdued shriek, clung there nerve-wrackingly, and then wailed mournfully down to silence. Afterward, while their ears were still strained to the sound, the bobcat squalled an answer from among the rocks.

"Yes, I heard it," said Grant. "It's a spook. It's the wail of a lost spirit, loosed temporarily from the horrors of purgatory. It's sent as a warning to repent you of your sins, and it's howling because it hates to go back. What you going to do about it?"

He made his own intention plain beyond any possibility of misunderstanding. He lay down and pulled the blanket over his shoulders, cuddled his pillow under his head, and disposed himself to sleep.

The moon climbed higher, and sent silvery splinters of light quivering down among the trees. A frog crawled out upon a great lily pad and croaked dismally.

Again came the wailing cry, nearer than before, more subdued, and for that

reason more eerily mournful. Grant sat up, muttered to himself, and hastily pulled on some clothes. The frog cut himself short in the middle of a deep-throated *arr-rr-umph* and dove headlong into the pond; and the splash of his body cleaving the still surface of the water made Gene shiver nervously. Grant reached under his pillow for something, and freed himself stealthily from a blanket fold.

"If that spook don't talk Indian when it's at home, I'm very much mistaken," he whispered to Clark, who was nearest. "You boys stay here."

Since they had no intention of doing anything else, they obeyed him implicitly and without argument, especially as a flitting white figure appeared briefly and indistinctly in a shadow-flecked patch of moonlight. Crouching low in the shade of a clump of bushes, Grant stole toward the spot.

When he reached the place, the thing was not there. Instead, he glimpsed it farther on, and gave chase, taking what precautions he could against betraying himself. Through the grove and the gate and across the road he followed, in doubt half the time whether it was worth the trouble. Still, if it was what he suspected, a lesson taught now would probably insure against future disturbances of the sort, he thought, and kept stubbornly on. Once more he heard the dismal cry, and fancied it held a mocking note.

"I'll settle that mighty quick," he promised grimly, as he jumped a ditch and ran toward the place.

Somewhere among the currant bushes was a sound of eery laughter. He swerved toward the place, saw a white form rise suddenly from the very ground, as it seemed, and lift an arm with a slow, beckoning gesture. Without taking aim, he raised his gun and fired a shot at it. The arm dropped rather suddenly, and the white form vanished. He hurried up to where it had stood, knelt, and felt of the soft earth. Without a doubt there were footprints there—he could feel them. But he hadn't a match with him, and the place was in deep shade.

He stood up and listened, thought he heard a faint sound farther along, and ran. There was no use now in going quietly; what counted most was speed.

Once more he caught sight of the white form fleeing from him like the very wraith it would have him believe it. Then he lost it again; and when he reached the spot where it disappeared, he fell headlong, his feet tangled in some white stuff. He swore audibly, picked himself up, and held the cloth where the moon shone full upon it. It looked like a sheet, or something of the sort, and near one edge was a moist patch of red. He stared at it dismayed, crumpled the cloth into a compact bundle, tucked it under his arm, and ran on, his ears strained to catch some sound to guide him.

"Well, anyhow, I didn't kill him," he muttered uneasily as he crawled through a fence into the orchard. "He's making a pretty swift get-away for a fellow that's been shot."

In the orchard the patches of moonlight were larger, and across one of them he glimpsed a dark object, running wearily. Grant repressed an impulse to shout, and used the breath for an extra burst of speed. The ghost was making for the fence again, as if it would double upon its trail and reach some previously chosen refuge. Grant turned and ran also toward the fence, guessing shrewdly that the fugitive would head for the place where the wire could be spread about, and a beaten trail led from there straight out to the road which passed the house. It was the short cut from the peach orchard; and it occurred to him that this particular spook seemed perfectly familiar with the byways of the ranch. Near the fence he made a discovery that startled him a little.

"It's a squaw, by Jove!" he cried, when he caught an unmistakable flicker of skirts; and the next moment he could have laughed aloud if he had not been winded from the chase. The figure reached the fence before him, and in the dim light he could see it stoop to pass through. Then it seemed as if the barbs had caught in its clothing and

held it there. It struggled to free itself; and in the next minute he rushed up and clutched it fast.

"Why didn't you float over the treetops?" he panted ironically. "Ghosts have no business getting their spirit raiment tangled up in a barbed-wire fence."

It answered with a little exclamation, with a sob following close upon it. There was a sound of tearing cloth, and he held his captive upright, and with a merciless hand turned her face so that the moonlight struck it full. They stared at each other, breathing hard from more than the race they had run.

"Well—I'll—be——" Grant began, in blank amazement.

She wriggled her chin in his palm, trying to free herself from his pitiless staring. Failing that, she began to sob angrily without any tears in her wide eyes.

"You—you shot me, you brute!" she cried accusingly at last. "You—*shot* me!" And she sobbed again.

Before he answered, he drew backward a step or two, sat down upon the edge of a rock which had rolled out from a stone heap, and pulled her down beside him, still holding her fast, as if he half believed her capable of soaring away over the treetops, after all.

"I guess I didn't murder you—from the chase you gave me. Did I hit you at all?"

"Yes, you did! You nearly broke my arm—and you might have killed me, you big brute! Look what you did—and I never harmed you at all!" She pushed up a sleeve, and held out her arm accusingly in the moonlight, disclosing a tiny, red furrow where the skin was broken and still bleeding. "And you shot a big hole right through Aunt Phœbe's sheet!" she added, with tearful severity.

He caught her arm, bent his head over it—and for a moment he was perilously near to kissing it; an impulse which astonished him considerably, and angered him more. He dropped the arm rather precipitately; and she lifted it again, and regarded the wound with mournful interest.

"I'd like to know what right you have to prowl around shooting at people," she scolded, seeing how close she could come to touching the place with her finger tips without producing any but a pleasurable pain.

"Just as much right as you have to get up in the middle of the night and go howling all over the ranch wrapped up in a sheet," he retorted ungallantly.

"Well, if I want to do it, I don't see why you need concern yourself about it. I wasn't doing it for your benefit, anyway."

"Will you tell me what you *did* do it for? Of all the silly tomfoolery——"

An impish smile quite obliterated the Christmas-angel look for an instant, then vanished, and left her a pretty, abused maiden who is grieved at harsh treatment.

"Well, I wanted to scare Gene," she confessed. "I'll bet I did, too. I just know he's a cowardly cat, because he's always trying to scare *me*. It's Gene's fault—he told me the grove is haunted. He said a long time ago, before Uncle Hart settled here, a lot of Indians waylaid a wagon train here and killed a girl, and he says that when the moon is just past the full, something white walks through the grove and wails like a lost soul in torment. He says sometimes it comes and moans at the corner of the house where my room is. I just know he was going to do it himself; but I guess he forgot. So I thought I'd see if he believed his own yarns. I was going to do it every night till I scared him into sleeping in the house. I had a perfectly lovely place to disappear into, where he couldn't trace me if he took to hunting around—only he wouldn't dare." She pulled down her sleeve very carefully, and then, just as carefully, she pushed it up again, and took another look.

"My best friend *told* me I'd get shot if I came to Idaho," she reminded herself, with a melancholy satisfaction.

"You didn't get shot," Grant contradicted for the sake of drawing more sparks of temper where temper seemed quaintly out of place, and stared hard at her drooping profile. "You just got

nicely missed; a bullet that only scrapes off a little skin can't be said to hit. I'd hate to hit a bear like that."

"I believe you're wishing you *had* killed me! You might at least have some conscience in the matter, and be sorry you shot a lady. But you're not. You just wish you had murdered me. You hate girls—you said so. And I don't know what business it is of yours, if I want to play a joke on my cousin, or why you had to be sleeping outside, anyway. I've a perfect right to be a ghost if I choose—and I don't call it nice, or polite, or gentlemanly for you to chase me all over the place with a gun, trying to kill me! I'll never speak to you again as long as I live. When I say that I mean it. I never liked you from the very start, when I first saw you this afternoon. Now I hate and despise you. I suppose I oughtn't to expect you to apologize or be sorry because you almost killed me. I suppose that's just your real nature coming to the surface. Indians love to hurt and torture people! I shouldn't have expected anything else of you, I suppose. I made the mistake of treating you like a white man."

"Don't you think you're making another mistake right now?" Grant's whole attitude changed, as well as his tone. "Aren't you afraid to push the white man down into the dirt, and raise up—the *Indian?*"

She cast a swift, half-frightened glance up into his face and the eyes that glowed ominously in the moonlight.

"When people make the blunder of calling up the Indian," he went on steadily, "they usually find that they have to deal with—the Indian."

Evadna looked at him again, and turned slowly white before her temper surged to the surface again.

"I didn't call up the Indian," she defended hotly; "but if the Indian wants to deal with me according to his nature —why, let him! But you don't *act* like other people! I don't know another man who wouldn't have been horrified at shooting me, even such a tiny little bit; but you don't care at all. You never even said you were sorry."

"I'm not in the habit of saying all I think and feel."

"You were quick enough to apologize, after supper there, when you hadn't really done anything; and now, when one would expect you to be at least decently sorry, you—you—well, you act like the savage you are! There, now! It may not be nice to say it, but it's the truth."

Grant smiled bitterly. "All men are savages under the skin," he said. "How do *you* know what I think and feel? If I fail to come through with the conventional patter, I am called an Indian —because my mother was a half-breed." He threw up his head proudly, let his eyes rest for a moment upon the moon, swimming through a white river of clouds just over the tall poplar hedge planted long ago to shelter the orchard from the sweeping west winds; and, when he looked down at her again, he caught a glimpse of repentant tears in her eyes, and softened.

"Oh, you're a girl, and you demand the usual amount of poor-pussy talk," he told her maliciously. "So I'm sorry. I'm heartbroken. If it will help any, I'll even kiss the hurt to make it well— and I'm not a kissing young man, either, let me tell you."

"I'd die before I'd let you touch me!" Her repentance, if it was that, changed to pure rage. She snatched the sheet from him and turned toward the fence. He followed her, apparently unmoved by her attitude; placed his foot upon the lower wire and pressed it into the soft earth, lifted the one next above it as high as it would go, and thus made it easier for her to pass through. She seemed to hesitate for a moment, as though tempted to reject even that slight favor, then stooped, and went through. As the wires snapped into place, she halted and looked back at him.

"Maybe I've been mean—but you've been meaner," she summed up, in self-justification. "I suppose the next thing you do will be to tell the boys. Well, I don't care what you do, so long as you never speak to me again. Go and tell them if you want to—tell. *Tell,* do you hear? I don't want even the favor of

your silence!" She tucked the bundle of white under the uninjured arm, caught the loose folds of her skirts up in her hands, and ran away up the path, not once stopping to see whether he still followed her.

Grant did not follow. He stood leaning against the fence post, and watched her until her flying form grew indistinct in the shade of the poplar hedge; watched it reappear in a broad strip of white moonlight, still running; saw it turn, slacken speed to a walk, and then lose itself in the darkness of the grove.

Five minutes, ten minutes, he stood there, staring across the level bit of valley lying quiet at the foot of the jagged-rimmed bluff standing boldly up against the star-flecked sky. Then he shook himself impatiently, muttered something which had to do with a "doddering fool," and retraced his steps quickly through the orchard, the currant bushes, and the strawberry patch, jumped the ditch, and so entered the grove and returned to his blankets.

"We thought the spook had got yuh, sure." Gene lifted his head turtlewise and laughed deprecatingly. "We was just about ready to start out after the corpse, only we didn't know but what you might get excited and take a shot at us in the dark. We heard yuh shoot—what was it? Did you find out?"

"It wasn't anything," said Grant shortly, tugging at a boot.

"Ah—there was, too! What was it you shot at?" Clark joined in the argument from the blackness under the locust tree.

"The moon," Grant told him sullenly. "There wasn't anything else that I could see."

"And that's a lie," Gene amended, with the frankness of a foster brother. "Something yelled like——"

"You never heard a screech owl before, did you?" Grant crept between his blankets and snuggled down, as if his mind held nothing more important than sleep.

"Screech owl my granny! You bumped into something you couldn't handle—if you want to know what *I* think about it," Clark guessed shrewdly. "I wish now I'd taken the trouble to hunt the thing down; it didn't seem worth while getting up. But I leave it to Gene if you ain't mad enough to murder whatever it was. What was it?"

He waited a moment without getting a reply.

"Well, keep your teeth shut down on it, then, darn yuh!" he growled. "That's the Injun of it—I know *you!* Screech owl—huh! You said when you left it was an Indian—and that's why we didn't take after it ourselves. We don't want to get the whole bunch down on us like they are on you—and if there was one acting up around here, we knew blamed well it was on your account for what happened to-day. I guess you found out, all right. I knew the minute you heaved in sight that you was just about as mad as you can get—and that's saying a whole lot. If it *was* an Indian, and you killed him, you better let us——"

"Oh, for the Lord's sake, *will you shut up!*" Grant raised to an elbow, glared a moment, and laid down again.

The result proved the sort of fellow he was. Clark shut up without even trailing off into mumbling to himself, as was his habit when argument brought him defeat.

CHAPTER VII.

"Where is the delightful Mr. Good Indian off to?" Evadna stopped drumming upon the gatepost and turned toward the person she heard coming up behind her, who happened to be Gene. He stopped to light a match upon the gate and put his cigarette to work before he answered her; and Evadna touched tentatively the wide, blue ribbon wound round her arm and tied in a bow at her elbow, and eyed him guardedly.

"Straight up, he told me," Gene answered sourly. "He's sore over something that happened last night, and he didn't seem to have any talk to give away this morning. He can go to the dickens, for all I care."

"*What*—happened last night?" Evad-

na wore her Christmas-angel expression; and her tone was the sweet, insipid tone of childlike innocence.

Gene hesitated. It seemed a sheer waste of opportunity to tell her the truth when she would believe a falsehood just as readily; but, since the truth happened to be quite as improbable as a lie, he decided to speak it.

"There was a noise when the moon had just come up—didn't you hear it? The ghost I told you about. Good Injun went after it with a gun, and I guess they mixed, all right, and he got the worst of it. He was sure on the fight when he came back, and he's pulled out this morning——"

"Do you mean to tell me—did you see it, really?"

"Well, you ask Clark, when you see him," Gene hinted darkly. "You just ask him what was in the grove last night. Ask him what he *heard*." He moved closer, and laid his hand impressively upon her arm. Evadna winced perceptibly. "What yuh jumping for? *You* didn't see anything, did you?"

"No; but—was there *really* something?" Evadna freed herself as unobtrusively as possible, and looked at him with wide eyes.

"You ask Clark. He'll tell you—maybe. Good Injun's scared clean off the ranch—you can see that for yourself. He said he couldn't be hired to spend another night here. He thinks it's a bad sign. That's the Injun of it. They believe in spirits and signs and things."

Evadna turned thoughtful. "And didn't he tell you what he—that is, if he found out—you said he went after it——"

"He wouldn't say a blamed thing about it," Gene complained sincerely. "He said there wasn't anything—he told us it was a screech owl."

"Oh!" Evadna gave a sigh of relief. "Well, I'm going to ask Clark what it was—I'm just crazy about ghost stories, only I never would *dare* leave the house after dark if there are funny noises and things, really. I think you boys must be the bravest fellows, to sleep out there—without even your mother with you!"

She smiled the credulous smile of ignorant innocence and pulled the gate open.

"Jack promised to take me up to Hartley to-day," she explained over her shoulder. "When I come back, you'll show me just where it was, won't you, Gene? You don't suppose it would walk in the grove in the daytime, do you? Because I'm awfully fond of the grove, and I do hope it will be polite enough to confine its perambulations to the conventional midnight hour."

Gene did not make any reply. Indeed, he seemed wholly absorbed in staring after her and wondering just how much or how little of it she meant.

Evadna looked back, midway between the gate and the stable; and, when she saw him standing exactly as she had left him, she waved her hand and smiled. She was still smiling when she came up to where Jack was giving those last, tentative twitches and pats which prove whether a saddle is properly set and cinched; and she would not say what it was that amused her. All the way up the grade, she smiled and grew thoughtful by turns; and, when Jack mentioned the fact that Good Indian had gone off mad about something, she contented herself with the simple, unqualified statement that she was glad of it.

Grant's horse dozed before the store, and Grant himself sat upon a bench in the narrow strip of shade on the porch. Evadna, therefore, refused absolutely to dismount there, though her errand had been a post-office money order. Jack was already on the ground when she made known her decision; and she left him in the middle of his expostulations and rode on to the depot. He followed disapprovingly afoot; and, when she brought her horse to a stand, he helped her from the saddle, and took the bridle reins with an air of weary tolerance.

"When you get ready to go home, you can come to the store," he said bluntly. "Huckleberry wouldn't stand here if you hog-tied him. Just remember that if you ever ride up here alone—it might

save you a walk back. And say," he added, with a return of his good-natured grin, "it looks like you and Good Injun didn't get acquainted yesterday. I thought I saw mum give him an introduction to you—but I guess I made a mistake. When you come to the store, don't let me forget, and I'll do it myself."

"Oh, thank you, Jack—but it isn't necessary," chirped Evadna, and left him with the smile which he had come to regard with vague suspicion of what it might hide of her real feelings.

Two squaws sat cross-legged on the ground in the shade of the little red depot; and them she passed by hastily, her eyes upon them watchfully until she was well upon the platform and was being greeted joyfully by Miss Georgie Howard, then in one of her daily periods of intense boredom.

"My, my, but you're an angel of deliverance—and by rights you should have a pair of gauze wings, just to complete the picture," she cried, leading her inside and pushing her into a beribboned wicker rocker. "I was just getting desperate enough to haul in those squaws out there and see if I couldn't teach 'em whist or something." She sat down and fingered her pompadour absently. "And that sure would have been interesting," she added musingly.

"Don't let me interrupt you," Evadna began primly. "I only came for a money order—Aunt Phœbe's sending for——"

"Never mind what you came for," Miss Georgie cut in decisively, and laughed. "The express agent is out. You can't get your order till we've had a good talk and got each other tagged mentally—only I've tagged you long ago."

"I thought you were the express agent. Aunt Phœbe said——"

"Nice, truthful Aunt Phœbe! I am, but I'm not—officially. I'm several things, my dear; but, for the sake of my own dignity and self-respect, I refuse to be more than one of them at a time. When I sell a ticket to Shoshone, I'm the ticket agent, and nothing else. Telegrams, I'm the operator. At certain times I'm the express agent. I admit it. But this isn't one of the times."

She stopped and regarded her visitor with whimsical appraisement. "You'll wait till the agent returns, won't you?" And added, with a grimace: "You won't be in the way—I'm not anything official right now. I'm a neighbor, and this is my parlor—you see, I planted you on that rug, with the books at your elbow, and that geranium also; and you're in the rocker, so you're really and truly in my parlor. I'm over the line myself, and you're calling on me. *Sabe?* That little desk by the safe is the express office, and you can see for yourself that the agent is out."

"Well, upon my word!" Evadna permitted herself that much emotional relief. Then she leaned her head against the cherry-colored head rest tied to the chair back with huge, cherry-colored bows, and took a deliberate survey of the room.

It was a small room, as rooms go. One corner was evidently the telegraph office, for it held a crude table, with the instruments clicking spasmodically, form pads, letter files, and mysterious things which piqued her curiosity. Over it was a railroad map and a makeshift bulletin board, which seemed to give the time of certain trains. Beside the table was the door through which she had entered; and in the corner behind that was a small safe, with door ajar, and a desk quite as small, with "Express Office: Hours, 8 a. m. to 6 p. m." on a card above it.

Under a small window opening upon the platform was another little table, with indications of occasional ticket-selling upon it. And in the end of the room where she sat were various little adornments—"art" calendars, a few books, fewer potted plants, a sewing basket, and two rugs upon the floor, with a rocker upon each. Also there was a tiny, square table, with a pack of cards scattered over it.

"Exactly. You have it sized up correctly, my dear." Miss Georgie Howard nodded her head three times, and her eyes were mirthful. "It's a game. I made it a game. I had to, in self-

defense. Otherwise——" She waved a hand conspicuous for its white plumpness and its fingers tapering beautifully to little, pink nails immaculately kept. "Look at the job and the place just as it stands, without anything in the way of mitigation. Can you see yourself holding it down for longer than a week? I've been here a month."

"I think," Evadna ventured, "it must be fun."

"Oh, yes. It's fun—if you make fun *of* it. However, before we settle down for a real visit, I've a certain duty to perform, if you will excuse my absence for a moment. Incidentally," she added, getting lazily out of the chair, "it will illustrate just how I manage my system."

Her absence was purely theoretical. She stepped off the rug, went to the "express office," and took a card from the desk. When she had stood it upright behind the inkwell, Evadna read in large, irregular capitals:

OUT. WILL BE BACK LATER.

Miss Georgie Howard paid no attention to the little giggle which went with the reading, but stepped across to the ticket desk and to the telegraph table, and put other cards on display. Then she came back to the rug, plumped down in her rocker with a sigh of relief, and reached for a large, white box—the five pounds of chocolates which she had sent for.

"I never eat candy when I'm in the office," she observed soberly. "I consider it unprofessional. Help yourself as liberally as your digestion will stand—and for Heaven's sake, gossip a little! Tell me all about that bunch of nifty lads I see cavorting around the store occasionally—and especially about the polysyllabic gentleman who seems to hang out at the Peaceful Hart ranch. I'm terribly taken with him. He—excuse me, chicken. There's a fellow down the line hollering his head off. Wait till I see what he wants."

Again she left the rug, stepped to the telegraph instrument, and fingered the key daintily until she had, with the other hand, turned down the "out" card. Then she threw the switch, rattled an impatient reply, and waited, listening to the rapid clicking of the sounder. Her eyes and her mouth hardened as she read.

"Cad!" she gritted under her breath. Her fingers were spiteful as they clicked the key in answer. She slammed the current off, set up the "out" notice again, kicked the desk chair against the wall, and came back to the "parlor" breathing quickly.

"I think it must be perfectly fascinating to talk that way to persons miles off," said Evadna, eying the chittering sounder with something approaching awe. "I watched your fingers, and tried to imagine what it was they were saying—but I couldn't even guess."

Miss Georgie Howard laughed queerly. "No, I don't suppose you could," she murmured, and added, with a swift glance at the other: "They said, 'You go to the devil.'" She held up the offending hand and regarded it intently. "You wouldn't think it of them, would you? But they have to say things sometimes—in self-defense. There are two or three fresh young men along the line that can't seem to take a hint unless you knock them in the head with it."

She cast a malevolent look at the clicking instrument. "He's trying to square himself," she observed carelessly. "But, unfortunately, I'm out. He seems on the verge of tears, poor thing."

She poked investigatively among the chocolates, and selected a delectable morsel with epicurean care.

"You haven't told me about the polysyllabic young man," she reminded. "He has held my heart in bondage since he said to Pete Hamilton yesterday in the store—ah——" She leaned and barely reached a slip of paper which was lying upon a row of books. "I wrote it down so I wouldn't forget it," she explained parenthetically. "He said to Pete, in the store, just after Pete had tried to say something funny with the usual lamentable failure—um—'You are mentally incapable of recognizing the line of demarcation between legitimate persiflage and objectionable familiarity.' Now, I want to

know what sort of a man, under fifty and not a college professor, would—or *could*—say that without studying it first. It sounded awfully impromptu and easy—and yet he looks—well, cowboyish. What sort of a young man is he?"

"He's a perfectly horrid young man." Evadna leaned to help herself to more chocolates. "He—well, just to show you how horrid, he calls me a—a Christmas angel! And——"

"Did he!" Miss Georgie eyed her measuringly between bites. "Tag him as being intelligent, a keen observer, with the ability to express himself——" She broke off, and turned her head ungraciously toward the sounder, which seemed to be repeating something over and over with a good deal of insistence. "That's Shoshone calling," she said, frowning attentively. "They've got an old crank up there in the office—I'd know his touch among a million—and when he calls he means business. I'll have to speak up, I suppose." She sighed, tucked a chocolate into her cheek, and went scowling to the table. "Can't the idiot see I'm out?" she complained whimsically. "What's that card for, I wonder?"

She threw the switch, rattled reply, and then, as the sounder settled down to a steady *click-clickety-click-click,* she drew a pad toward her, pulled up the chair with her foot, sat down, and began to write the message as it came chattering over the wire. When it was finished and the sounder quiet, her hand awoke to life upon the key. She seemed to be repeating the message, word for word. When she was done, she listened, got her answer, threw off the switch with a sweep of her thumb, and fumbled among the papers on the table until she found an envelope. She addressed it with a hasty scrawl of her pencil, sealed it with a vicious little spat of her hand, and then sat looking down upon it thoughtfully.

"I suppose I've got to deliver that immediately, at once, without delay," she said. "There's supposed to be an answer. Chicken, some queer things happen in this business. Here's that weak-eyed, hollow-chested Saunders, that seems to have just life enough to put in about ten hours a day reading 'The Duchess,' getting cipher messages like the hero of a detective story. And sending them, too, by the way. We operators are not supposed to think; but all the same——" She got her receipt book, tucked it under her arm, and went up and tapped Evadna lightly upon the head with the envelope. "Want to come along? Or would you rather stay here? I won't be more than two minutes."

She was gone five; and she returned with a preoccupied air which lasted until she had disposed of three chocolates and was carefully choosing a fourth.

"Chicken," she said then quietly, "do you know anything about your uncle and his affairs?" And added immediately: "The chances are ten to one you don't, and wouldn't if you lived there till you were gray."

"I know he's perfectly lovely," Evadna asserted warmly. "And so is Aunt Phœbe."

"To be sure." Miss Georgie smiled indulgently. "I quite agree with you. And by the way, I met that polysyllabic cowboy again—and I discovered that, on the whole, my estimate was incorrect. He's emphatically monosyllabic. I said sixteen nice things to him while I was waiting for Pete to wake up Saunders; and he answered in words of one syllable; one word, of one syllable. I'm beginning to feel that I've simply got to know that young man. There are deeps there which I am wild to explore. I never met any male human in the least like him. Did you? So absolutely—ah—inscrutable, let us say."

"That's just because he's part Indian," Evadna declared, with the positiveness of youth and inexperience. "It isn't inscrutability, but stupidity. I simply can't bear him. He's brutal, and rude. He told me—*told* me, mind you—that he doesn't like women. He actually warned me against thinking his politeness—if he ever is polite, which I doubt—means more than just common humanity. He said he didn't want me to misunderstand him and think he

liked me, because he doesn't. He's a perfect savage. I simply loathe him!"

"I'd certainly see that he repented, apologized, and vowed eternal devotion," smiled Miss Georgie. "That should be my revenge."

"I don't want any revenge. I simply want nothing to do with him. I don't want to speak to him even."

"He's awfully good-looking," mused Miss Georgie.

"He looks to me just like an Indian. He ought to wear a blanket, like the rest."

"Then you're no judge. His eyes are dark; but they aren't snaky, my dear. His hair is real wavy, did you notice? And he has the dearest, firm mouth. I noticed it particularly, because I admire a man who *is* a man. He's one. He'd fight and never give up, once he started. And I think"—she spoke hesitatingly—"I think he'd love—and never give up; unless the loved one disappointed him in some way; and then he'd be strong enough to go his way and not whine about it. I do hate a whiner! Don't you?"

A shadow fell upon the platform outside the open door, and Saunders appeared, sidling deprecatingly into the room. He pulled off his black, slouched hat and tucked it under his arm, smoothed his lank, black hair, ran his palm down over his lank, unshaven face with a smoothing gesture, and sidled over to the telegraph table.

"Here's the answer to that message," he said, in a limp tone, without any especial emphasis or inflection. "If you ain't too busy, and could send it right off—it's to go C. O. D. And make 'em repeat it, so as to be sure——"

"Certainly, Mr. Saunders." Miss Georgie rose, the crisp, businesslike operator, and went to the table. She took the sheet of paper from him with her finger tips, as if he were some repulsive creature whose touch would send her shuddering, and glanced at the message. "Write it on the regular form," she said, and pushed a pad and pencil toward him. "I have to place it on file." Whereupon she turned her back upon him, and stood staring down the railroad track through the smoke-grimed window until a movement warned her that he was through.

"Very well—that is all," she said, after she had counted the words twice. "Oh—you want to wait for the repeat."

She laid her fingers on the key and sent the message in a whirl of chittering little sounds, waited a moment while the sounder spoke, paused, and then began a rapid clicking, which was the repeated message, and wrote it down upon its form.

"There—if it's correct, that's all," she told him in a tone of dismissal, and waited openly for him to go. Which he did, after a sly glance at Evadna, a licking of pale lips, as if he would speak but lacked the courage, and a leering grin at Miss Georgie.

He was no sooner over the threshold than she slammed the door shut, in spite of the heat. She walked to the window, glanced down the track again, turned to the table, and restlessly arranged the form pads, sticking the message upon the file. She said something under her breath, snapped the cover on the inkwell, sighed, patted her pompadour, and finally laughed at her own uneasiness.

"Whenever that man comes in here," she observed impatiently, "I always feel as if I ought to clean house after him. If ever there was a human toad—or snake, or—ugh! And what does he mean sending twenty-word messages that don't make sense when you read them over, and getting others that are just a lot of words jumbled together, hit or miss? I wish—only it's unprofessional to talk about it—but, just the same, there's some nasty business brewing, and I know it. I feel guilty, almost, every time I send one of those cipher messages."

"Maybe he's a detective," Evadna hazarded.

"Maybe." Miss Georgie's tone, however, was extremely skeptical. "Only, so far as I can discover, there's never been anything around here to detect. Nobody has been murdered, or robbed, or kidnaped that I ever heard of. Pete Hamilton says not. And—I wonder, now, if Saunders could be watching

somebody! Wouldn't it be funny, if old Pete himself turned out to be a Jesse James brand of criminal? Can you imagine Pete doing anything more brutal than lick a postage stamp?"

"He might want to," Evadna guessed shrewdly, "but it would be too much trouble."

"Besides," Miss Georgie went on speculating, "Saunders never does anything that any one ever heard of. Sweeps out the store, they say—but I'd hate to swear to that. *I* never could catch it when it looked swept—and brings the mail sack over here twice a day, and gets one to take back. And reads novels. Of course, the man's half dead with consumption; but no one would object to that, if these queer wires hadn't commenced coming to him."

"Why don't you turn detective yourself and find out?" Plainly, Evadna was secretly laughing at her perturbed interest in the matter.

"Thanks. I'm too many things already, and I haven't any false hair or dark lantern. And, by the way, I'm going to have the day off, Sunday. Charlie Green is coming up to relieve me. And—couldn't we *do* something?" She glanced wearily around the little office. "Honest, I'd go crazy if I stayed here much longer without a play spell. I want to get clear out, away from the thing—where I can't even hear a train whistle."

"Then you shall come down to the ranch the minute you can get away, and we'll do something or go somewhere. The boys said they'd take me fishing—but they only propose things so they can play jokes on me, it seems to me. They'd make me fall in the river, or something, I just know. But if you'd like to go along, there'd be two of us——"

"Chicken, we'll go. I ought to be ashamed to fish for an invitation the way I did, but I'm not. I haven't been down to the Hart ranch yet; and I've heard enough about it to drive me crazy with the desire to see it. Your Aunt Phœbe I've met, and fallen in love with—that's as a matter of course. She told me to visit her just any time, without waiting to be invited especially. Isn't she the dearest thing? Oh, that's a train order, I suppose—sixteen is about due. Excuse me, chicken."

She was busy then until the train came screeching down upon the station, paused there while the conductor rushed in, got a thin slip of paper for himself and the engineer, and rushed out again. When the train grumbled away from the platform and went its way, it left a man standing there, a fish basket slung from one shoulder, a trout rod carefully wrapped in its case in his hand, a box which looked suspiciously like a case of some bottled joy at his feet, and a loose-lipped smile upon his face.

"Howdy, Miss Georgie?" he called unctuously through the open door.

Miss Georgie barely glanced at him from under her lashes, and her shoulders indulged themselves in an almost imperceptible twitch.

"How do you do, Mr. Baumberger?" she responded coolly, and very, very gently pushed the door shut just as he had made up his mind to enter.

CHAPTER VIII.

Baumberger—Johannes was the name he answered to when any of his family called, though to the rest of the world he was simply Baumberger—was what he himself called a true sport. Women, he maintained, were very much like trout; and so, when this particular woman calmly turned her back upon the smile he cast at her, he did not linger there angling uselessly, but betook himself to the store, where his worldly position, rather than his charming personality, might be counted upon to bring him his meed of appreciation.

Good Indian and Jack, sitting side by side upon the porch and saying very little, he passed by with a careless nod, as being not worth his attention. Saunders, glancing up from the absorbing last chapter of "The Broken-hearted Bride," also received a nod, and returned it apathetically. Pete Hamilton, however, got a flabby handshake, a wheezy laugh, and the an-

nouncement that he was down from Shoshone for a good, gamy tussle with that four-pounder he had lost last time.

"And I don't go back till I get him —not if I stay here a week," he declared, with jocular savagery. "Took half my leader and my pet fly—I got him with a peacock-bodied gray hackle that I revised to suit my own notions—and, by the great immortal Jehosophat, he looked like a whale when he jumped up clear of the riffle, turned over, and——" His flabby, white hand made a soaring movement to indicate the manner in which the four-pounder had vanished.

"Better take a day off and go with me, Pete," he suggested, getting an unwieldy-looking pipe from the pocket of his canvas fishing coat, and opening his eyes at a trout fly snagged in the mouthpiece. "Now, how did that fly come there?" he asked aggrievedly, while he released it daintily for all his fingers looked so fat and awkward. He stuck the pipe in a corner of his mouth, and held up the fly with that interest which seems fatuous to one who has no sporting blood in his veins.

"Last time I used that fly was when I was down here three weeks ago—the day I lost the big one. Ain't it a beauty, eh? Tied it myself. And, by the great immortal Jehosophat, it fetches me the rainbows, too. Good mind to try it on the big one. Don't see how I didn't miss it out of my book—I must be getting absent-minded. Sign of old age, that. Failing powers and the like." He shook his head reprovingly and grinned, as if he considered the idea something of a joke. "Have to buck up—a lawyer can't afford to grow absent-minded. He's liable to wake up some day and find himself without his practice."

He got his fly book from the basket swinging at his left hip, opened it, turned the leaves with the caressing touch one gives to a cherished thing, and very carefully placed the fly upon the page where it belonged; gazed gloatingly down at the tiny, tufted hooks, with their frail-looking five inches of gut leader, and then returned the book fondly to the basket.

"Think I'll go on down to the Harts'," he said, "so as to be that much closer to the stream. Daylight is going to find me whipping the riffles, Peter. You won't come along? You better. Plenty of—ah—snake medicine," he hinted, chuckling so that the whole, deep chest of him vibrated. "No? Well you can let me have a horse, I suppose—that cow-backed sorrel will do—he's gentle, I know. I think I'll go out and beg an invitation from that Hart boy—never can remember those kids by name—Gene, is it, or Jack?"

He went out upon the porch, laid a hand upon Jack's shoulder, and beamed down upon him with what would have passed easily for real affection while he announced that he was going to beg supper and a bed at the ranch, and wanted to know, as a solicitous afterthought, if Jack's mother had company, or anything that would make his presence a burden.

"Nobody's there—and, if there was, it wouldn't matter," Jack assured him carelessly. "Go on down, if you want to. It'll be all right with mother."

"One thing I like about fishing down here," chuckled Baumberger, his fat fingers still resting lightly upon Jack's shoulder, "is the pleasure of eating my fish at your house. There ain't another man, woman, or child in all Idaho can fry trout like your mother. You needn't tell her I said so—but it's a fact, just the same. She sure is a genius with the frying pan, my boy."

He turned and called in to Pete, to know if he might have the sorrel saddled right away. Since Pete looked upon Baumberger with something of the awed admiration which he would bestow upon the president, he felt convinced that his horses were to be congratulated that any one of them found favor in the eyes of—well, say Providence's understudy. For Baumberger, had he been so minded, might have called in certain notes and a mortgage or two, and set Pete Hamilton adrift with nothing much but the clothes he owned.

And Baumberger, to the intense gratitude of Pete, was never so minded;

even such details as interest he seemed much inclined to overlook, and when pressed upon him, he invariably received payment with a protest and the urgent question:

"Sure you don't need the money yourself, Pete? Because I don't—and even if I am a law sharp, I ain't a hog."

Pete, therefore, came as near to roaring at Saunders as his good nature and his laziness would permit, and waited in the doorway until Saunders had, with visible reluctance, laid down his book and started toward the stable.

"Needn't bother to bring the horse down here, my man," Baumberger called after him. "I'll get him at the stable and start from there. Well, wish me luck, Peter—and say! I'll expect you to make a day of it with me Sunday. No excuses, now. I'm going to stay over that long, anyhow. Promised myself three good days—maybe more. A man's got to break away from his work once in a while. If I didn't, life wouldn't be worth living. I'm willing to grind—but I've got to have my playtime, too. Say, I want you to try this rod of mine Sunday. You'll want one like it yourself, if I'm any good at guessing. Just got it, you know—it's the one I was talking to yuh about last time I was down.

"Well—I reckon my means of conveyance is ready for me—so long, Peter, till Sunday. See you at supper, boys."

He hooked a thumb under the shoulder strap of his basket, pulled it to a more comfortable position, waved his hand in a farewell, which included every living thing within sight of him, and went away up the narrow, winding trail through the sagebrush to the stable, humming something under his breath with the same impulse of satisfaction with life which sets a cat purring.

Some time later, he appeared, in the same jovial mood, at the Hart ranch, and found there the welcome which he had counted upon—the welcome which all men received there upon demand.

When Evadna and Jack rode up, they found Mr. Baumberger taking his ease in Peaceful's armchair on the porch, discussing, with animated gravity, the ins and outs of county politics; his fishing basket lying on its flat side close to his chair, his rod leaning against the house at his elbow, his heavy pipe dragging down one corner of his loose-lipped mouth; his whole gross person surrounded by an atmosphere of prosperity leading the simple life transiently and by choice, and of lazy enjoyment in his own physical and mental well-being.

TO BE CONTINUED

This story will be continued in the first February number, on sale two weeks hence, January 10th.

SOMETHING NEW BY HEINL

ROBERT D. HEINL, the writer, comes from an Indiana town, and, although he spends most of his time in the East, his native city is still proud of him. Occasionally, he writes a "learned piece" for one of the two newspapers in his town.

One day the rival publication printed his photograph with a highly complimentary article, explaining how the son of Indiana had gone to New York and shown all the Yankees how to write. The paper had not been on the street ten minutes, when the "printer's devil" of the paper Heinl had favored with his effusions rushed up to the managing editor, and, pointing to the flattering sketch of the author, said excitedly:

"I don't think this is fair. Mr. Heinl ought to have written this for us. Just look what he says about himself!"

Adventure of Prince Pozzanceit and the Pearl Necklace

By Daniel Steele

Author of "The Good Man's Double," "Pawn to Queen's Eighth," Etc.

In Daniel Steele's last story you had a good man and his double. Here you have three personalities bound up in one—painter, prince, and self-confessed thief; a curious Old World character, ingenious, profound and alluring

CHAPTER I.

THE PERFUMED REVOLVER.

ROBERT ELLIS glanced up at the clock in the tower. It was a quarter of five. The great fingers of gilded steel traveling around the heroic-size dial overhead made large display of this fact to a city full of owners of little hidden timepieces. Ellis mechanically took his watch out and compared it.

In the vestibule of the building, he nodded, in passing, to a police officer who had stepped just inside out of the rain.

At the top floor he left the elevator, climbed still higher a flight of stairs, and pushed a button. A little man opened the door; opened it scantily, and peered out.

He was old, with thick, long gray hair, and a singularly placid and saintlike face.

"Prince Pozzanceit, I believe?"

The old man bowed courteously, acknowledging the appellation, and threw the door wide open.

Admitted to the studio, Ellis gazed around him curiously upon the half-finished canvases, which seemed to shrink out of sight in the waning light of a dull day. The prince, who had offered him a chair, now waved aside a letter of introduction which Ellis produced, and opened the conversation himself. He spoke with a trace of foreign accent.

"You have come, Monsieur——"

"Ellis," said the visitor.

"——Monsieur Ellis, from Mr. H. A. Van Glaze, the millionaire. Is it not so? Good! It please' me to make guesses."

Ellis bowed his assent. "I have a letter from Mr. Van Glaze," he said.

The prince smiled benignly. "And it is, perhaps," he continued, "that I should paint the portrait of some one that bring' you here—yes? But I am sorry, Monsieur Ellis, I am already engage' on the portrait of the—ah—charmante Madame Van Glaze, and because I cannot finish it without that beautiful pearl necklace—which is become lost—it shall be, perhaps, much time before I consider to attempt another. *Voilà*—we have now dispose of all that, and so let us what you call 'get down to business.'"

"May I venture," interposed Ellis at last, "to ask what you mean by 'business'?"

"I mean what you lawyers—you are a lawyer, Monsieur Ellis? Yes? What you call 'relevance.' Ha, ha! What you have really come to see me about is the necklace, that rope of pearls. Madame Van Glaze have bought them in Europe last summer. She wear them in my portrait—behold, they have been missing since her last sitting, Wednesday afternoon."

Ellis laughed. He was beginning to wonder how much adroitness lay behind the placid countenance of his vis-à-vis. "Suppose," he said, "I admit that Mr. Van Glaze, whose personal attor-

ney I am, has—ah—mentioned to me the fact that the pearls are missing?"

"Ah, indeed, then I should add," said the little old man quietly, "that you suspect me to have steal them."

Ellis started. "I hope you are not serious, prince," he said.

The other went on as though unaware of the fact that he had said anything unusual: "It is what you of America would not understand," he said half to himself. "Monsieur Van Glaze has sold poison' candy to children for many years. It is so that Monsieur Van Glaze is rich. Ver' good. But his father is what you call peasant. As for me, I am of ancien' lineage. My family have been wicked and powerful for as many generation' as that Van Glaze money have of itself years. But all that does not matter. No. The exile' nobleman who paint' portraits for living, behold me, perhaps, a common thief. *Voilà*—all is of to-day merely."

The old prince gazed ruminantly out of the window. There was a touch of reminiscent sadness in his manner.

From the street below, mellowed by the distance, half-audible noises arose. He listened a while in reverie, as though some Old World sorrow had him in its grasp. Then, as if apologizing for the digression, he resumed with sudden directness: "Let us say that it is known to me how the lost rope of pearls can be found for what we shall agree a modes' reward of five thousand dollar'."

"You stole them yourself!" flashed Ellis.

"Yes, I admit it. Why not?"

"Prince, your directness charms me," observed Ellis.

The other acknowledged this with a bland smile. He turned in his chair with an air of having at last closed a trifling preliminary subject, and waved his hand toward a piano whose keyboard loomed a white streak, the only thing distinctly visible in the dim light at the far end of the studio.

"Now, Monsieur Ellis, as painter of portraits, it is for my business to study people. Already in this short interview your eyes have wander' to the piano. You would like to play for me?"

Ellis began to feel some curiosity in regard to this strange personality. He was mystified a little at the turn events had taken. Hardly knowing just how to proceed at the moment, he decided to humor his host. "I can't resist a Steinway grand," he said.

"Ah, but you should hear a Bechstein," replied the prince.

Ellis drew up a chair, and struck several soft chords. Then he played a Chopin waltz. The prince had not been mistaken in his guess. The young attorney touched the piano at first with a certain amateur incompleteness of technic. It was, however, soon balanced by the instinctive control of expression of the natural musician.

The music of the Polish wizard filled the large studio from the wooden rafters overhead and the panes of glass covered by drawn shades, to the bare floor with its rugs, so that creatures of fantasy seemed to come out of the shadows in the corners and dance. The waltz ended in an upward run of notes like the cool drops of a sunlit fountain, as though it had blown itself off into silence. Ellis paused, hands on his lap.

"Why," said his listener, in a soft voice, "do you play at the law?"

Ellis felt, in spite of himself, a flush of pleasure at the genuineness of the compliment. He was beginning to feel a strong attraction for this creature of the Old World, utterly different from any person he had heretofore encountered, this prince, painter, thief, perhaps, underneath the mystery of whose queer personality there seemed to live a genuine sincerity. He swung around. A girl had entered silently, carrying a tray upon which were glasses. The girl was of the satin-complexioned type, with black eyes and hair. She set down the tray demurely, and went out.

Over a glass of Scotch and soda, Ellis' host reverted, after a while, to the subject of the pearls. "You are thinking, Monsieur Ellis, that I am much insane," he suddenly announced. "As my lawyer, maybe you would have deplore' my confession. But let me now defend my sanity. Consider that it is easy for me to say that I read the suspicion in

your face, and that I determine' to have revenge by a little joke. As lawyer, you believe, doubtless, of the frailty of an unsupported admission, and of the danger that I shall myself bring an action for false imprisonment." The prince smiled blandly.

"Of course," said Ellis.

"And where are the pearls?"

"Where, indeed?" assented Ellis.

After a pause, during which Ellis continued to pursue his policy of waiting, not seeing his way clear to any definite line of action, the prince observed suddenly, without the slightest change of expression: "Do you feel that in the event that the pearls should ever be found, Monsieur Van Glaze might consider the propriety of a reward such as I have suggest'?"

"You are laughing at me," Ellis replied.

"As a pianist never. You play too well."

Ellis made a wry face.

The prince continued: "You will say that it is neither as pianist or lawyer, but as detective you have come to see me. Ver' well. Let us again be direct. It is so much simplest, and I pay you compliment of simplicity. Suppose, to convince you of what you will call my guilt, I shall show you the pearls, what will you say then, Monsieur Ellis, about a reward for that they have been found?"

"I should phone for the police," Ellis rejoined.

"That would be mos' stupid!" cried the prince. "I should hide them before your police could arrive."

"How?"

The prince laughed. "And not all your private detectives could find them."

"I'm not so sure," countered Ellis.

The prince studied the rug a moment. His long, thin fingers played upon the arms of his chair. Then he looked up quickly. "Good! I shall give you the chance. I am what you call, perhaps, gambler with fate. Why? I seek to avoid the monotony. I am born a prince. What do your little bourgeois moralities mean to me? Courage and beauty are the only virtues. I am a gambler in adventure. You shall see. Marie!"

The girl entered the studio from an adjoining room.

"Come here, my child. Unfasten your collar. Remove it. *Voilà*—stand in the light. Ah, *mon Dieu!* Is it not a ver' wonderful adornment; and how much better than on the Van Glaze do they appear now upon the beautiful throat of youth."

The old man fell back with a gesture of admiration; and Ellis felt now a thrill stranger than any that he had as yet experienced in the presence of this queer being as he gazed upon the dazzling and almost priceless pearls thus suddenly and unexpectedly flashed upon his vision.

The girl had removed a sort of detachable yoke, and now appeared in a square-cut neck. A triple row of pearls encircled her perfect throat, bare above and below them. This sudden transformation and setting off of her beauty, which had been half hidden before under her quiet demureness of manner, held him for the moment spellbound.

He recovered himself. He rose and took a step toward the girl.

"I'm sorry——" he began.

"Stop!" He turned in the direction of the voice, and looked down the muzzle of a revolver. The prince's eyes flared, his face was distorted. Ellis stood motionless, and returned his gaze outwardly unafraid, but inwardly quaking. Was the prince insane, after all?

"Allow me to invite you that you again sit down." The voice was again bland.

Ellis dropped into a chair near a little stand upon which stood a telephone. He reached out and coolly picked up the receiver and put it to his ear. The other raised the muzzle of the revolver again.

"All right," said Ellis, replacing the receiver on the hook. "I see you have me. I give in."

The prince laid the revolver upon the mantel behind him. "As I have said, Monsieur Ellis," he remarked, "this is all a little joke, a ver' little

joke; but I do not want that it go too far."

He walked over to the piano with a resumption of his former attitude as sudden as had been his first change of demeanor. He sat down, and allowed his long, thin, bony fingers to run idly over the keys.

"Frédéric Chopin and my grandfather were ver' good friends," he said, as though nothing had happened.

At that instant a ring at the door broke in upon them. Marie, the pearls still about her neck, fled from the room. In a moment there was the noise of the door at the end of the hallway being opened, and then Marie returned. She was followed by the uniformed policeman whom Ellis had nodded to in passing in the basement. With him was an insignificant-looking, dried-up little man and a middle-aged woman with a wet umbrella. Ellis' quick eye noticed at once that Marie's neck was still bare but the pearls were gone.

The prince, after exchanging a glance of meaning with the girl, turned to Ellis, and said quickly in a low tone:

"I have underrate' you. How did you do it?"

Ellis laughed back at him. "Oh," he replied, "when I took that receiver off the hook, it was a signal to the officer at the switchboard downstairs."

The prince gave him a swift look of admiration.

"Good! I owe you the apology," he returned. Then, in a louder voice, he asked: "And who may these people be?" He glanced with distant coldness upon the strange trio that, like denizens of some lower world, had invaded his studio, with its dim atmosphere of pictures and its dying echoes of Chopin.

"Allow me, prince," said Ellis. "This is Mr. Dennis Horgan, of the —— Precinct. Mr. Jacob Poulsen, of Poulsen's Detective Agency, and Mrs. MacBinney of the same."

The prince continued to stare coldly upon the newcomers. "Ah, I see," he observed. "Monsieur Le Gendarme will accompany me to the police station. Monsieur Poulsen will have search' the apartment, and Madame MacBinney will search also Marie. It is of a completeness ver' good. But may I suggest, monsieur, you carry this ver' little joke too far?"

"Joke!" cried Ellis. "Was it a joke when you covered me with that revolver a moment ago?"

"My friend, do not become excite'. If you will examine that pistol, you will see that it only look like a pistol. Ha, ha, it is not! It has within it smelling salts!"

Ellis, completely puzzled, reached for the weapon. He fingered it a moment, as the newcomers crowded about, and then unscrewed the end of the barrel. Inside there appeared the end of a glass tube. He put this to his nose. It was as the prince had said.

"A little toy, the invention of myself," explained the old man. Then he laughed unrestrainedly for the first time at the curious piece of burlesque of which Ellis was the victim; and Ellis joined him as well as Officer Horgan. Indeed, the joke seemed to appeal in a peculiar manner to the last named.

"Yes," continued the prince gayly, "a ver' useful invention, especially where the fair sex are concern'. I could—but another time. It is now to business."

With a gesture of Old World grandeur, he turned to the officer. "Monsieur Le Gendarme, I have the honor to accompany you. And, Monsieur Ellis," he added, his lean fingers waving gayly in adieu, "I leave you to your expert search."

Some little time after, Ellis, wearing a tired, crestfallen look, went down in the elevator and left the building. Out on the street, he turned and looked up at the clock in the tower. It was twenty minutes of six. He drew out his watch mechanically and glanced at it. Then he replaced it and hurried away.

CHAPTER II.

THE BANDAGED BEGGAR.

"It's almost a week since we arrested Prince Pozzanceit and he furnished bail and went back to his studio," said Ellis; "and we haven't a suspicion of a clew

about those pearls. Perfectly bully mystery, isn't it?"

"Huh? I'm glad you like it. Shouldn't call it bully, though," answered Van Glaze.

They were sitting in huge leather chairs in the library of Van Glaze's club, speculating for the dozenth time on the case of the missing pearl necklace. Outside the plate-glass window-panes people hurried by as if blown by the brisk afternoon wind up and down the avenue.

Ellis, from where he sat, could look down the narrow cañon alive along its bottom with the black stream of traffic and bordered by tall buildings whose various tones of gray and white stood out overhead against the clear turquoise blue of the sky.

Several squares below, the graystone tower with the clock in it reared its fragile perfection aloft against the blue, the tower in which was the prince's studio.

In that light, it seemed to Ellis that it was a more appropriate habitation for the prince of a fairy tale. He sighed, and came back to the present.

"I'm afraid we are up against it," he said. "The preliminary examination of the case comes up to-morrow at Jefferson Market Police Court. Suppose I go on the stand and testify to the prince's admission that he took the pearls, and to the further fact that I saw them there. On cross-examination, I have to admit I can't identify them positively under oath as your pearls. Which, of course, I can't, though I'm morally certain. Where are we, then? And on top of that, Poulsen is willing to stake his professional reputation as a detective, which is considerable, on the fact that one minute after I say I saw them on Marie's neck they were not in the studio on or off her. Nor was any pearl necklace there, for that matter. Poulsen went over every inch of that place—rugs, piano, canvases, every piece of furniture and bric-a-brac, and pried into every joint of the woodwork from floor to ceiling. You know how thorough he is. If he says they're not there, they're not."

"How about the MacBinney woman who searched Marie?"

"Poulsen vouches for her."

"The girl must have swallowed them."

"She hid them somehow while she was going to the door to let Poulsen in," admitted Ellis; "and that's where the joke comes in. There are no outlets except the one door and the windows. It is a suite of three rooms. The bath is outside down the hall, and there is no gas, only electricity. That eliminates plumbing and similar fixtures as places of concealment. The windows open on to a sheer drop of three hundred feet to the street."

"That's it," exclaimed the millionaire suddenly. "Why didn't we think of it before?"

"What?"

"She chucked them out into a net below. Confederate caught them leaning out of lower window. Eh?"

"Poulsen had a man in the building across the street covering the windows with opera glasses," said Ellis.

"Oh!" said Mr. Van Glaze, crestfallen.

"I'm afraid," continued Ellis, "all the possibilities are exhausted. Poulsen has, as you know, shadowed them both minutely outside the studio. Nothing doing there. The girl goes to school up on West Seventy-ninth Street. The prince drops over to the Singers' Club or walks up the avenue. The whole thing is going to subside into a joke—a joke on me like the perfumed revolver. It is easy to see the defense to our case. Suppose we do jam through an indictment—practical joke of an eccentric foreign nobleman. They'd have the court and jury laughing at us. And yet, by George, I swear he's got those pearls all the time!"

"What does his honorable high-mightiness say about it now?" asked Mr. Van Glaze.

"The prince? Oh, I called at the studio again yesterday. He was in high spirits. Told me stories of his grandfather and Chopin. After a while, he again intimated the possibility of find-

ing the lost pearls for a reward of five thousand dollars."

The millionaire's eyes glared in anger. "Never!" he growled, and brought his fist down so hard on the mahogany arm of his chair that he crushed and utterly spoiled a freshly lighted cigar between his short, stubby fingers.

In the meantime, while Ellis and Van Glaze were thus occupied, the subject of their discussion was quietly painting away in his studio in the tower building down the street, pausing now and then to exchange a word with Marie, who, with a volume of Lägerloff in her lap, was curled up on the couch by the window.

In the midst of all this, the old man paused, brush in hand, as though startled. "Marie, have you hear' anything in the hall?"

The young girl slowly closed her book, uncurled her legs, got up, and went toward the door. As she reached the curtained partition, she gave a sudden shriek, but quickly recovered herself.

There emerged from behind the curtain a little, old, shrunken, bent man clad in rags. His long gray beard almost reached his knees as he waddled flat-footed into the studio. One hand and arm were done up in a heavy, clumsy-looking bandage.

"How did you get in here?" demanded the prince.

The intruder gazed upward with watery eyes. "The door was open, sir," he wheezed.

"And I suppose you want to pose for me; yes? Well, I do not require models, and I have been annoy' so much lately with models. No, you can go. Here is ten cents."

The beggar turned, grumbling to himself, and waddled slowly out. Marie shut the door.

"Oh," she cried, "wasn't he awful!"

Let us now return to the club, where we find Ellis and Van Glaze still seated in the leather chairs by the library window.

About an hour after the incident just narrated, Mr. Jacob Poulsen, of Poulsen's Private Detective Agency, joined these two gentlemen. He was evidently expected, for he sat down in a proffered chair, and plunged at once into the business in hand.

"No," he said, in answer to the unspoken question in Van Glaze's eye, "I haven't got anything. Nothing to speak of. I let myself in with a key, as usual; got behind the curtain there, and listened to their conversation for an hour before I was discovered and kicked out. I had to go as a beggar of some kind, so that I'd have an excuse when I was lit on. Here it is. It has the first reference to the pearls I have been able to get. Here's the whole thing verbatim." He handed the millionaire as he spoke a bunch of typewritten sheets.

Van Glaze glanced at it. "What's this—their conversation? How on earth did you remember all that?"

"I didn't," replied the little dried-up detective, something almost bordering on an expression of enjoyment flitting across his inscrutable features. "It's a little invention of my own, as this Prince Pozzanceit would say. I'll show it to you gentlemen some time down at the office, if you care to come. You see, I got my hand and arm all bandaged up as if it was lame. Inside is a little roll of paper, and a thing that turns it with my little finger, see; and I carry a stub of a pencil between my thumb and first finger; my hand rests flat on the paper so; and I take anything I want to down in shorthand. I just dictated this to the typewriter down at the office."

The detective ceased. His countenance bore not a trace of interest or enthusiasm; but Ellis and Van Glaze burst into laughter.

"For absolute mechanical completeness, Poulsen," said Ellis, "you're a wonder."

"It is my business to produce facts—all the facts obtainable, Mr. Ellis," replied Poulsen. "It is for you lawyers to use them as you see fit."

Van Glaze meanwhile was reading. "Why, none of this relates to the necklace," he said. "It's all a useless con-

versation about school and pictures. Oh, yes—here at the end. Ahem!" And he read:

"Uncle, what time do you think they will come for the pearl necklace?"

"At twenty minutes past five, my child."

"Yes, of course it's got to be then; but what day?"

"To-morrow. But say nothing. We might possibly be overheard."

"That's all. Well, what of it?"

He finished with a note of disappointment in his voice.

"It's mighty little, Mr. Van Glaze," admitted the detective; "but it's all I have to date. Good day, sir."

The millionaire turned to Ellis. "Well, it's absolutely meaningless. Isn't it?"

Ellis sat and smoked a while in silence. He appeared not to have heard what the other had said. His eyes followed Poulsen as he descended the outside steps of the club and walked briskly away down the avenue. He studied the gray tower against the turquoise blue sky as though lost in admiration of the picture. Then he leaned away back, and blew rings of smoke up toward the heavy gilt ornamented ceiling above him.

Suddenly he gave a start. He sat up with a jerk.

"By George!" he exclaimed.

"What is it?" asked the millionaire.

"I've doped it out!" he cried, as he suddenly sprang to his feet and bolted from the room.

CHAPTER III.

"TWENTY MINUTES PAST FIVE."

Let us now leave for a short interval the society of princes and millionaires, and follow the fortunes of a less pretentious character who has invaded the precincts of this narrative. Mr. Dennis Horgan, transferred from his proud post on the avenue to one on the water front, was lamenting this change of attitude in the Fates toward himself at about the same time that Ellis and Van Glaze, as outlined in the last chapter, were discussing their troubles at the club.

Mr. Horgan stood inside of a certain ferryhouse and watched with an official eye the trucks and other vehicles which moved slowly down the gangway to the ferryboat, between hurrying groups of foot passengers. At last, the gates were shut, clanging chains drawn across, moorings cast off, and Officer Horgan was left alone on the covered pier, viewing, without enthusiasm, the commonplace spectacle of the departing ferryboat, and the ever-widening strip of water between, a monotonous incident, indeed.

But stop! A woman standing near the chain on the rear deck of the boat might have been seen to drop her handkerchief and step over the chain after it, at which instant a gust of wind took it to the edge.

"She ought not to do that," said Officer Horgan to himself, catching sight of her as, thrusting open the gate, she followed the fluttering handkerchief, and stooped over to pick it up. There was a sudden scream and a splash. The woman was overboard.

Two men standing on the after deck had observed her, and had sprung to grab her as she slipped; but they were too late. One of them now prepared to spring overboard; but the other laid a hand on his shoulder, and pointed to the ferry slip, upon which he hesitated, and then desisted.

Officer Horgan, however, did not hesitate. He ripped off his long blue coat, nearly removing therefrom in his haste several brass buttons, threw his helmet and nightstick aside, and prepared to get his name not only on the station-house blotter, but in the daily news as well.

"Howld on," he cried, "till I get yez!" Though what there was for the unfortunate woman to hold onto at this juncture would have been a mystery to any un-Hibernian intellect.

Fortunately the accident occurred no great distance from the edge of the landing place, so that the gallant officer's deficiency in the art of swimming was easily made up by strength and valor, as with a vast amount of churning, and aided by a rope thrown by a

deck hand, the rescue was accomplished.

A cheer went up from the now crowded after deck of the ferryboat, which by this time was several hundred feet away. But it was still possible for those on her to see and make sure that rescuer and rescued were at last, with much ado, hauled up over the slimy, water-soaked beams to the level of the planked roadway and safety.

There the officer cast his dry coat over the drenched and shivering woman, and, without a second's wait, went to telephone for an ambulance, leaving a trail of water behind him as he ran. Seeing, however, a few minutes later, a brother officer on the same errand, he straightway ran back.

The rescued was sitting down, leaning against the heavy, curved beam which formed the railing beside the plank roadway. She was the center of a rapidly forming pool of water which ran down from her drenched garments, over which she clutched tightly the officer's coat and shivered. She was still alone, for the gates leading to the street beyond were shut. And she was evidently in no need of resuscitation, at least. Officer Horgan took one look at her.

"Well, be oll th' saints," he exclaimed, "it's you!"

"I d-don't w-want an ambulance," said Marie; "get a t-t-taxi."

So this little incident concludes with a rapid and somewhat damp ride across town, with such explanations on the way as Marie chose to give her gallant rescuer, which may be condensed into the fact that she was going to take dinner and spend the evening with a school friend, and her handkerchief blew away, and n-now she would have to phone that she c-couldn't come.

Early the next morning, Mr. Van Glaze, glancing up at the studio building, noticed that the clock in the tower, possibly owing to some one's neglect, had run down. The gilded steel hands, usually so dependable, now, at nine o'clock in the morning, pointed to but a few minutes before five.

Hardly giving it a thought, the millionaire hurried into the entrance of the building and proceeded at once up to the prince's studio, where, outside the door, he met Detective Poulsen, Officer Horgan, and Ellis waiting for him. Poulsen unlocked and opened the door, and the four men filed in.

Inside, Ellis glanced around the studio. It was empty. He looked at his watch. Then he walked over to the piano, and without a word, with his eyes fixed dreamily on the high ceiling, began to run his fingers over a series of soft arpeggios, apparently in utter oblivion of the presence of any one else.

The millionaire stood and regarded him with some astonishment. "You seem to feel no anxiety about the passage of time," he observed at last, with a note of sarcasm in his voice.

"What's that?" asked Ellis. His eyes were still on the ceiling, and his arpeggios had taken form gradually in a Schumann nocturne.

Van Glaze repeated his remark.

"Oh," said Ellis, as he went on playing. "I sent my clerk over to adjourn the case to two o'clock this afternoon."

The millionaire waited some little time with an impatient frown on his face. Finally he spoke again.

"I hate to break in on anything that seems to afford you such evident comfort as that music does, Ellis; but I beg respectfully to remind you that, since you got up and galloped away from me yesterday, I haven't had the honor of a word of explanation from you. What I want to know now is, why am I sent for to come here?"

Ellis wound up his playing with a couple of soft chords and swung around in his chair. "Oh," he laughed, "I beg your pardon. I thought I had told you." He crossed his legs, took out a cigarette, tapped it on his wrist, and lit it.

"Well," he explained, "to begin with, I hurried away from you yesterday so as to get the prince on the phone, and then, when I got through talking to him, I forgot about you, so I went home."

Mr. Poulsen here permitted himself the ghost of a smile, while Mr. Van

Glaze observed: "Memory evidently isn't your strong point."

"It isn't," admitted Ellis. "Well, as I am telling you, I called Pozzanceit up on the phone. 'Mr. Van Glaze offers that reward of five thousand dollars,' I told him. 'When will you produce the necklace?' Well, Pozzanceit wanted to know if it was in good faith, and all that, and if the case would be dropped. Then he said: *'Be at my studio tomorrow at twenty minutes past five.'*"

"What did you do that for?" broke in Van Glaze. "I didn't authorize——"

"If *we* find the pearls before twenty minutes past five to-day," Ellis interrupted, "how is he going to claim any reward? And if we don't find the necklace, and the case is thrown out of court, he's going to raise his reward. You told me except for the principle of the thing you would pay even more than five thousand dollars to have them back. And then this is your night at the opera, and Mrs. Van Glaze positively insists that she must wear them."

"That's so," admitted the millionaire. "I forgot about her. Um—all right. I see. You've doped out how he has hidden those pearls. And while he's at court we've taken the opportunity to come around here and get them. Is that it?"

"Exactly," said Ellis. "If I hadn't been pretty sure, I wouldn't have acted so quickly in offering the reward to the prince. I wanted to see what he would say."

"I see," remarked Van Glaze.

"And," continued Ellis, glancing at his watch, "we have just fifteen minutes to wait."

"No, I don't see," said Van Glaze.

Ellis smiled, and blew a couple of smoke rings upward toward the ceiling. Then he spoke.

"Prince Pozzenceit agreed to have the necklace here at twenty minutes past five this afternoon. Well, I've arranged to have twenty minutes past five happen at a convenient time this morning."

Detective Poulsen had maintained throughout his usual noncommittal silence. But at this his lips parted slightly, and he flashed a quick look of understanding at Ellis. Then, as suddenly, the expression of his face subsided into its usual inscrutable lines. But Mr. Van Glaze simply stared blankly at the young lawyer, who seemed to take the solution of the mystery so calmly.

"You've got *me*," he said.

"Do you remember at the club yesterday afternoon," continued Ellis, "I was trying to analyze this thing out, beating my brains out against it as I had for a week past, when Poulsen came in with his report. You remember it was something about 'twenty minutes past five' he had overheard the prince and Marie say? Well, that day last week, when I first called on the prince, it was somewhere between five and half past when that necklace did its magical disappearing act. 'Why,' I asked myself, 'should the time of day have anything to do with it? And why did Marie say, 'Of course' when the prince told her we would come for the necklace at that particular time?"

He glanced rapidly from Van Glaze to Poulsen and back, and took another puff at his cigarette.

"Well," he continued, "as I sat there in the club with you, looking down the avenue, at this building with the clock in the tower, an idea of the whole thing flashed over me. It was the only possible thing left to guess. Of course, I don't *know* yet. That's what we're here for now."

Ellis leaned forward quickly, and pointed with the half-burned cigarette between two fingers to the room opening off the studio. "That little circular window in there," he said, "looks out through the dial face of the clock midway between the figures five and six. From the street it looks like a small keyhole. At twenty minutes past five, twice every twenty-four hours, the hour hand passes close outside that window, covers it up for several minutes, and then for the rest of the twelve hours, save for the brief hourly passage of the minute hand, the window looks out upon the street."

"By heavens!" cried Van Glaze, as the force of this announcement came over him. "You mean that pearl neck-

lace is attached somehow to the under side of that big ton weight of a steel bar that does duty for an hour hand, and has been flopping around and around outdoors there for the past week!"

He ran to the window and looked out, in vain as yet; then came back and sat down with a sudden ejaculation of complete astonishment.

"Yes," said Ellis, "I tried with an opera glass to see if it is possible to glimpse anything from the street; but you can't. But I arranged with the owners of the building to stop the clock early this morning. If you looked up as you came in this morning, you saw it about four hours slow. Been up there myself in the works, watching the man set it going again, just before you came in. Got myself covered with grease, too. In about fifteen minutes, it will be 'twenty minutes past five.'"

So saying, Ellis swung around again on his chair, and was soon lost to the world in the dreamy Schumann nocturne, leaving Van Glaze to pace nervously up and down the studio, puffing furiously on his cigar, with his eye on the little circular window. Poulsen sat watchful, imperturbable, inscrutable, exhibiting no sign of interest or impatience.

When the moment at last arrived, the four men, crowding around the little circular window, watched until a section of the great steel hand, like a heavy shutter, slowly, silently, and mysteriously, as if moved by an invisible force, slipped across from left to right, and darkened it. A tiny eyebolt had been drilled into the surface; and, sure enough, as Ellis had guessed, the priceless pearl necklace hung suspended there.

Minute by minute, hour by hour, for a week it had been traveling slowly around, hidden on the under side of what had probably been one of the most patent and looked-at objects in the city.

A curious contrast, indeed, between the apparent openness and the actual security of this unique hiding place.

Something of the ingenuity required to have devised it, its simplicity, and yet utter effectiveness as a hiding place struck all three men, though it was Van Glaze who voiced the thought. The millionaire dangled his recovered pearls from one hand, while he alternately surveyed them and looked at the window now open again to the light, from which the mysterious steel hand, having delivered its priceless burden, had now vanished as silently as it had come. "I'll be hanged, Ellis," he exclaimed, "if that Prince Pozzenceit isn't some kind of a genius!"

"The prince thank' you for your high compliment!"

The four men turned at the voice, to see the little gray-haired foreigner standing in the door, observing them with smiling countenance and with an expression of saintlike mildness. Marie was behind him.

"Though the pleasure is to me somewhat unexpect', I beg messieurs that you make yourselves at home in my poor apartments."

"I'm afraid that's what we've been doing," said Ellis, his sympathy going out, in spite of himself, to the little old man in whose manner and bearing not a trace of chagrin or fear was depicted. He seemed, indeed, to ignore utterly the fact that he was caught in a trap.

Even Van Glaze felt some admiration for his gameness as he confronted the situation without a sign of weakness. Something in it all made Van Glaze feel a little uncomfortable, as though he, and not the prince, had been caught in mischief.

"Well," he blurted out, with a forced laugh, "I guess you don't want that five thousand now. Do you?"

Prince Pozzanceit looked coolly back at him. "I still ask it."

"What?"

"The pearls are not all there."

Van Glaze's under jaw dropped slightly. He examined the necklace in his hand.

"There is one yet that is missing," continued the prince. "This last pearl can, perhaps, be found if Monsieur Van Glaze consider' still his promise to give the reward at twenty minutes past five

this afternoon." He smiled benignly. "Perhaps," he added, "it can now be done even more soon because of what has just now happen'. Perhaps the messieurs will permit me to explain.

"I am exile' foreign nobleman. Poor because of the troubles in my own country. I escape away to America, and I paint portraits. I am engage' to paint the portrait of Madame Van Glaze. Ver' good. The portrait is nearly finish'. In it madame wear a pearl necklace. That pearl necklace have a history. A ver' ancient history, which I will not relate, but only to say it belong to my cousin. Monsieur Van Glaze do not know this, that the owner from whom he bought the pearls last summer when he travel in Europe is my cousin. And so monsieur tell me that he make good bargain. When I am painting portrait, he boast' to me about how he fool' my cousin. My cousin is a nobleman. He is not good for what you say 'business.' I believe, monsieur, that my cousin get fool'. He say it should be worth, the necklace, five thousand dollars more of American money than he pay for it. Monsieur boast also to me how well he is guard' by American detectives at his house, and how no one can steal from him. I make what you call bet for fun. I say to him one day: 'Monsieur Van Glaze, I bet you five thousand dollars that pearl necklace can be stole.' He laugh. He think me joking. Is it not so?" He turned, and looked for the first time square at the millionaire.

"Yes," said Van Glaze sourly, "I thought you were joking."

"And so I am. It is all a joke, my friend. For a joke I take that necklace. I hide it so all American detectives cannot find, only Mr. Ellis here, and he find not all, the rest is still hide'. It amuse me to do this. I think it good joke to make Monsieur Van Glaze pay to my cousin what that necklace is worth. Ha, ha! A ver' good little joke like an American joke, is it not?"

"What's the use of all this?" growled Van Glaze. "Cut the fellow short and let's go on with the case."

The prince swung around on his heel, and his placid, saintlike countenance suddenly hardened with an access of dignity and power, while his eyes glared upon the millionaire.

"Maker of poison' candy—*canaille,*" he hissed. "Is this to be permit'? I am nobleman, at least in this country a man, older man than you. But not too old to fight! No." Van Glaze laughed. "Yes, fight with sword, as you wish, or with your weapons, my friend, money! Perhaps then my exile may have recently change'; who knows? Perhaps I, the Prince Pozzanceit, have to-day more what you call money than you!" He snapped his fingers at the other, who grew suddenly red in the face, and said nothing.

"Yes," continued the prince, "we shall, if you please, 'go on with the case.' Suppose I see the legation in Washington? Suppose I have power, too? It will amuse me also to 'go on with the case.' And for that insult I shall not talk longer to you. Take your choice, make your check to my cousin, and madame shall at the opera to-night wear all the pearls—or go on with the case, and you do not get the last pearl at all. I shall like for to fight."

The prince strode over to the window and looked out.

Van Glaze was nonplused. He discussed quite a long time in whispered tones with Ellis. At the end of perhaps five minutes, sheepishly and somewhat crestfallen, he drew out his check book. Ellis took the check and walked over to the prince.

The latter took it without a word, bowed, and put it in his pocket. Then his air changed. He smiled, and glanced in the direction of Officer Horgan.

"Here we have the brave officer. He save' the life of my little Marie, or he try to, and for that I shall reward him. He shall have the honor to bring back the pearl." The prince gayly beckoned the officer to him. "With Marie it is also to love adventure. And it is to her that I have trust' to hide that last pearl. It is necessary that I shall have thus taken more precaution than even Monsieur Ellis can guess, and when de-

tectives follow her on the ferryboat, Marie, who is ver' good swimmer, decide on quick way to leave them. Perhaps others follow her, but Marie is also of a brightness."

He seized the officer by the lapel of his coat, produced a pocketknife with his other hand, opened it, and before the astonished officer could draw back, he had cut off the top one of the row of brass buttons on his uniform. Disregarding a gasp of astonishment from the group, who, pressed around him in breathless silence, he laid the button down on the table and pried into a small, jagged slit that appeared in its under surface. He widened this, and, turning the hollow button upside down, there rolled out upon the table—the last pearl!

"That is one thing that Monsieur Ellis could not guess," he said, laughing gayly.

"How on earth did you get it in there?" said Ellis.

"It was Marie," said the prince, "who found a knife in the coat pocket when that brave officer left her sitting upon the dock, and made this hole in the button. It was of her quickness to think of it at such a time."

All eyes turned to the young girl. She flashed a look back at the prince.

"*Je avait beaucoup de peine*—I had much trouble not to swim away and leave such great excitement and splashing in the water," she laughed. "And where," she asked, turning to Officer Horgan, "did you learn to swim?"

The officer blushed. "At night school last month, mom," he answered.

Suddenly she sobered. "Is that all you knew, and you jumped in after me? Thank you. You are a brave man!" She gave him her hand.

Dennis Horgan took it; and, though ignorant of Marie's rank, he felt none the less the graciousness and sincerity of her personality. He turned still redder. "Thank you, mom," he said.

Meanwhile, Prince Pozzanceit walked over to the piano, and sat down. He touched a few chords, looking back over his shoulder with a benign smile on his placid, saintlike face.

"Marie, my child," he observed, "perhaps the messieurs would now enjoy refreshment. And Monsieur Ellis, you will pardon what you call 'an old fellow' for perhaps some conceit, if I should show you how it really ought to be play'—that nocturne of Schumann."

DASHING THE CUP FROM HIS LIPS

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER gets a lot of fun out of his money. Of late years he has chosen as his friends several young newspaper writers, and one day, playing a game of golf with a reporter, he let out this howl:

"I enjoy being with young men so much that I wish I could seek their society more freely, but it is a hard thing for me to do. You see, I meet people, and begin to like them, and just when I do that they hit me in the back with a contribution box."

The young man agreed with the millionaire that such a practice was discouraging, not to say disgusting, appalling, and frightful. This cheered Rockefeller immensely.

"By the way," said the oil magnate graciously, "how are you getting on financially?"

The reporter immediately had a vision of tumbling into a pile of money, but he was too crafty to give any sign of his elation.

"Oh," he said airily, "I'm doing about as well as a man of my age could expect."

Then Mr. Rockefeller, without cracking a smile, resumed the game.

The Sparring Partner

By Charles E. Van Loan

Author of "Battling Pete," "Mr. Joseph Egan, Amateur," Etc.

This story might have been called "The Worm Will Turn," for that's what it is all about—the worm being the man who is paid to be thumped, the human punching bag, the fellow who is hired not to show what he can do, but to demonstrate what can be done to him

ALL they ever say about the poor worm is that he *will* turn. Turn? Of course! And what then? Why have we never had any further information touching the conduct of that worm?

What he does after he turns ought to make the best part of the story; but upon that subject we have had nothing but silence—unsatisfactory and disappointing silence. Shakespeare might have gone a little further with that worm while he was about it. Think how exasperating it is to have a proverb go out of business at the precise point where the referee throws out his chest and bawls:

"Gen'lemen! This will be a twinty-r-round contesht, straight Marchiss d' Queensbury rules, an' br-reak at d' ar-rder 'v d' riferee! All set there? Clancy, ring d' bell!"

That's a nice place for a proverb to quit, isn't it? No fight by rounds. No flash from the ringside. No way of finding out what happened to the worm—whether he won, lost, or got a draw. Just when we were beginning to be interested in him, too!

This story has to do with the worm after he got turned around.

We will now crack the ringmaster's whip and introduce the worm. Come to think of it, we will quit calling him a worm here and now, because he is still alive and healthy enough to resent liberties. For the matter of that, he was never a real worm. He was a centipede masquerading.

Arthur Simms was born in a Middle Western State, and, if parentage and early training count for anything, he should have been a perfectly respectable citizen who would have voted the Republican ticket and attended the Presbyterian church.

The Simmses were "nice people"; but how were they to suspect that in the veins of the son ran the hot blood of some swashbuckling progenitor, some great-ditto-ditto-grandfather or other who rode with robber barons and whetted his sword on stone mileposts?

Arthur was a born swashbuckler, and the open road talked to him o' nights. There were no mailed gentlemen campaigning in Missouri in those days—unless you count the James Brothers—and no fair ladies to be rescued from castle towers, so Arthur Simms did the next best thing.

He ran away with a circus.

Arthur wanted to see the country, and he had his wish. The swashbuckling strain soon asserted itself. Swords were out of style, so Arthur did the best he could with his two bare fists; and his best was enough to make him the untamed terror of the canvas gang. When a young man can fight his way through a circus canvas gang and out on the other side, he is ripe for better things. Swinging a heavy sledge-hammer developed the tremendous back and shoulder muscles, and put the power behind his locked fists. At eighteen, he was ready to change his name to "Kid Smiley."

At twenty-two, he turned up in the training camp of the middleweight champion of the world, asking for work as a sparring partner.

What Kid Smiley was doing in that four years between eighteen and twenty-two will always remain more or less of a secret, though there may be some who remember the mysterious middleweight who never fought twice under the same name and whipped all the bucolic champions as fast as he could get at them.

It is enough to say that when Kid Smiley presented himself at Tug Riley's training quarters, he was as lean as a razorback and as hard as Pharaoh's heart, with a leanness and a hardness which could have come from nothing in the world but constant training.

In those early days, Kid Smiley was a silent, unobtrusive young man, with a pair of melancholy eyes which seemed always asking everybody's pardon, and a manner which was a perpetual apology. When he spoke at all, it was in a stammering half whisper.

Tug Riley, the champion, was not particularly impressed by the appearance of the applicant for the job; but a man who is as rough with his sparring partners as was this champion has to take what he can get.

The position of sparring partner to a champion of the world is a job which will never be rated A-a-1 in boxing circles. In the first place, a sparring partner is not hired to show what he can do, but to demonstrate what can be done to him. He is hired as a punching bag, and treated with just about as much human consideration. Nobody ever heard of a sparring partner having feelings. Nobody ever heard of one who was particularly clever. Cleverness is not expected of him. He is paid to be thumped; and if he does any thumping himself, it must be on the shoulders or the arms, or on the sides of the head, where it can do no damage. Many a sparring partner has blasted his career by forgetting himself and slipping over a solid wallop—before company.

"Well, I'll try you out this afternoon," said the world's champion, with a yawn. "Come around at two o'clock. You got any clothes—trunks and things?"

Kid Smiley said that he had some clothes.

"All right," said the great man. "If you deliver the goods you'll land the job."

That last sentence was badly worded. What the champion meant was that if the Kid survived the delivery of the goods he would get the job.

Tug Riley was notoriously careless with his sparring partners, and, to further complicate matters, he was something of a grand-stand player. If distinguished spectators were present to watch him at work—newspaper men or actors, for instance—Tug was prone to forget himself and let drive with his justly celebrated right hand for the chin. Down would go the poor sparring partner as if struck by lightning. Why not? That famous right hand had dropped a world's champion and a dozen aspirants to the title.

Tug's little habit of forgetfulness was responsible for the vacancy in the training quarters. The last sparring partner remarked when the smelling salts were taken from under his nose that he liked a rough guy first rate, but if he was to be murdered twice a week, twelve dollars would not be considered an adequate compensation. So he went away.

The first work-out with the champion took place behind closed doors. For all his innocent, boyish expression and the unspoken apology in his eyes, Kid Smiley allowed few things to escape him. He knew what he had been hired to do, and he did it to perfection. He sparred four cautious rounds with the middleweight champion, feeling his way, seldom attempting to land the lightest sort of a blow, and working entirely upon the defensive. Tug was well pleased.

Toward the end of the fourth round, it occurred to the champion to ascertain whether his twelve-dollar-a-week man was game. No man has any right to expect gameness for twelve dollars a week; but Tug did not think of that. Without the slightest warning, the world's champion let drive with his

never-to-be-sufficiently-appreciated right hand. The glove was as big as a pillow, but Kid Smiley went down like a log, rolled over twice, and came up, grinning foolishly.

"Why didn't you say you was going to cut loose?" he asked, in his funny half whisper. "You took me by surprise. I didn't know you was going to hit hard."

"Huh!" said Tug. "*That* wasn't hard. You all right now?"

Smiley shook his head a few times with the jerking motion of a swimmer who clears the sea water from his hair.

"I wasn't hurt," he said. "I was surprised. Come on."

The champion was busy wondering why Kid Smiley had not stayed on the floor, so he never fully understood how it happened; but, just before the end of the round, the new sparring partner came tumbling into a clinch, and, in some accidental fashion, his left fist went crashing into the pit of the champion's stomach. It was a vicious blow, which lost nothing of its effectiveness by reason of being totally unexpected. Tug Riley grunted loudly, his knees spread apart, and he hung on, panting with open mouth.

"Excuse me," said Kid Smiley, in his low, apologetic tone. "I don't know how I came to do that. Just sort of jammed the left straight in ahead of me. I thought sure you'd block it——"

By this time Tug had recovered his breath, and he cut off that apology with a flow of the sort of language which might have been expected from a champion of the world under such distressing circumstances.

"And don't try any more of that funny business!" he snarled, in conclusion. "If you do, I'm liable to tear into you and move your face over on the back of your head. You nailed me that time when my stomach muscles was all relaxed."

The Kid murmured that he was very sorry, and would not do it again.

"And don't forget this," was the champion's warning. "You ain't being hired to slip over any of that stuff on me."

"Then I get the job?"

"I'll try you for a week."

At the end of the first week, Kid Smiley was a fixture in Riley's camp. The boy was a willing worker, and a willing worker is always welcome around the training quarters. In the morning there was road work to be done; and, as the champion did not like to trot his seven or eight miles alone, Kid Smiley went with him, trailing along doggedly.

Each day Tug would try to "lose" his sparring partner in the final two-mile sprint. Each day he was disappointed. The Kid never so far forgot himself as to finish in front of the champion; but he was always there, a stride or two to the rear, never entirely pumped out, and always able to go farther. In the matter of physical condition, it would have troubled an expert to decide between the champion and his hired man; but, as it happened, none of the condition connoisseurs paid the slightest attention to the satellite. They were all watching the star.

In the afternoons, Kid Smiley sparred several rounds, winding up his day's work by taking his place at the rubbing table. He was a deft manipulator, and seemed to know a great deal about the various muscles.

He never repeated his blunder of the first day; and he never gave Riley a chance to catch him napping again with that crushing right-hand drive to the chin. Tug tried it every day or two, but Kid Smiley was wary, and he watched the champion's right glove like a hawk. When it moved with mischief behind it, the young man from nowhere would hunch his left shoulder or pull his jaw out of range with a quick, sidewise jerk of the head—a pretty trick which any champion might have copied.

The Kid managed to evade a second knockdown; but it was another matter to keep the champion from landing his left rip to the face. A man could not do that without fighting back, and the Kid was not hired to do any fighting. Tug got the worth of his twelve a week out of his left hand, and, after the second day, the sparring partner was never

without some distinguishing token of that clever fighting tool—a bruised nose, a cut lip, or at least one discolored eye.

It was all in the game, of course; but Kid Smiley did not relish having to carry his bruises and discolorations into the dining room of the little hotel where the black-haired Irish girl waited upon the table set apart for the champion and his hirelings. The girl's eyes were grayish-green, and her name was Milly McAvoy. She reminded Kid Smiley of a girl he had known in Macon County, Missouri; and there were times when he felt that Milly was pitying him because of his bruises, and the thought made him very uncomfortable.

As for Milly, she considered herself vastly superior to any fighter in the world—which she undoubtedly was—but she could not help noticing that the soft-voiced sparring partner never failed to address her as "Miss Milly"; and he did not call her "dearie," as the world's champion did.

She sometimes wondered why such a pleasant and well-mannered young man should be wasting his time with "low-down pugs," as she called fighters; but she kept all her speculations to herself. Her interest was not deep enough to make any difference, for there was a switchman down in the railroad yards whose name was Tom MacSherry, and the switchman was saving his money to pay the first installment on some furniture. (If you were figuring on a love story, you might as well stop now, for Milly would not have traded her switchman for all the champions in the pugilistic deck. Quite right, too.)

The time of preparation slipped away, and the fight for which the champion was in training loomed close at hand. It seemed to be the consensus of opinion that Tug Riley was in perfect trim and fit to defend his title. Kid Smiley was also in fighting trim; but, having no championship to defend or no particular reputation to sustain, the fact of his fitness interested nobody. None of the sporting writers ever said that Kid Smiley was ready to battle for a king's ransom; and some kings are pretty cheap at that. The sparring partner was just a walking gentleman in the cast of characters—a walking gentleman with two black eyes, a blue nose, and a split lip. Who cared anything about him? You have the correct answer—nobody.

It was not for twelve dollars a week that Kid Smiley's eyes wore mourning. He was making an exhaustive study of the champion's style of boxing, and paying for his course of instruction with his bruises and the thin stream of blood which often trickled from his nose. The Kid wanted to know all about the middleweight champion; and he was willing to pay the price. For all his modesty, his quiet, retiring nature, his unspoken deference, the sparring partner was analyzing the professional personality of Tug Riley—literally taking him apart, blow by blow, to see what made him great.

There is as much individuality about a man's boxing as there is in his gait, his handwriting, or a photograph which has not been retouched. It would be as easy to find two men of the same physical proportions and physiognomy as it would be to find two skilled boxers with the same tricks and the same way of using them. Every great boxer or fighter has his own distinctive style, and must be studied as an individual. Every boxer has a weakness of some sort. It is the skill with which that weakness is defended that marks the topnotcher.

Kid Smiley had seen many boxers, and he had learned something from every one of them. He may have been colorless, apologetic, and a mere background against which a champion displayed himself; but Tug Riley would have been unpleasantly surprised had he known how accurately his stock in trade was being appraised by a twelve-dollar-a-week sparring partner.

The Kid looked guileless enough to suit any one; but he was more crafty than he looked. He was a fox disguised as a sheep. He had his reasons for wishing to know all about Riley's style, and still more reasons for keeping Riley from finding out anything about Kid Smiley's tactics. He saw every card in the champion's hand without

exposing one of his own, and, since his first day, he had not landed a single blow with any power behind it. His punches were clean, deft, and well timed; but there was nothing but an apology behind them.

"If you could only hit, Kid," said the great man, as he sprawled upon the rubdown table at the end of a day's work, "you'd lick a lot of these third-raters around here."

"What do you want for twelve dollars a week?" asked Kid Smiley sorrowfully. "A Charley Mitchell?"

The period of training drew to a close. Upon the last afternoon, spurred on by a distinguished assemblage of wine agents, actors, sporting writers, and heavy betters, the champion waded into poor Smiley and hammered him all around the ring.

"That's it! Show us something!" came from the audience.

The Kid wriggled out of corners, ducked into clinches, used a meek, straight left upon occasions, and managed to escape a finishing punch.

"Put him out!" "Knock his head off!" chorused the wine agents.

The Kid rolled a malevolent eye toward the corner whence came that cry; but the other eye never left the champion's right glove. Smiley lasted the stipulated distance, which was a great disappointment to the audience. He sneaked away to the rubbing table, dazed and bleeding from the nose and mouth. The champion, unmarked, removed his gloves in the middle of a knot of admiring friends.

"I didn't want to cut him up too much," said he generously. "Of course, I could have got him any time, but what's the use? It ain't worth it."

This humane view brought forth a murmur of approbation.

The champion won his fight in the eleventh round; and, though there were sharp eyes at the ringside, no man watched Tug Riley any closer than the scarred sparring partner, who swung a towel between rounds in the champion's corner.

When it came time to settle with his hired men, Tug tendered Smiley the full amount of his wages, to which he added a ten-dollar note. The champion's share of the purse had been something above eight thousand dollars.

"What's this for?" asked Smiley, curiously fingering the bill.

"That's a present," answered the champion.

"Oh!" said the Kid. He seemed to reflect for a few seconds, and then he passed it back. "You better keep that," he said. "It's going to be a hard winter, and you may need it."

The quiet, matter-of-fact air with which this was done astounded Riley.

"Making a play for more, are you?" he sneered. "Well, just for that, you get nothing! Understand? Nothing!"

"Why, that's all right," said the Kid, with his old apologetic stammer. "*That's* all right, Tug. I never asked you to give me anything, did I?"

"No; and you'd better not!" snarled the middleweight champion.

Yet, the very next time the men met, Kid Smiley asked for something, and got it.

Riley spent the next six months waiting for some chesty youngster to challenge for the title; but chesty young middleweights were scarce, and Riley had leisure to regret that he had not "saved" a few aspirants for encores.

Tug was a frugal soul. He had his faults, but prodigality was not among them. He did not believe in releasing "the imprisoned laughter of the peasant girls of France." His wake could never be traced by bobbing champagne corks. Tug was a business man, and his method was simple. He fought as often as any man could be found to meet him, and he put his end of the purse into the bank. Frenzied finance had not yet entered the prize ring; but Tug's bank balance had no reason for shame. Considering his limitations, he had done well, and he intended to do better before the time came for him to say good-by to the ring.

This period of enforced idleness distressed the thrifty Tug. He felt that he was living upon his capital, and, as

he would have expressed it, "laying up nothing for old age."

In the midst of this lean season arrived Kid Smiley with a business proposition—and a tearing, racking cough.

"Hello, bo!" said the champion, not unkindly. "What are you doing here?"

"Nothing," said the Kid. "Nothing much." He was, if anything, more furtive and apologetic than ever; and as he spoke he twisted his dirty old cap in his hands.

"I've had a couple of fights since I saw you last," said Smiley.

"So I see by the papers," said Tug. "Did you get any coin?"

"None to speak of," said Smiley, in a whisper. "But I know a way for us both to get some—a bunch for you and a few hundred for me."

Here he stopped to cough; and, when the champion was assured that his visitor was not going to choke to death upon the spot, he signified his interest in the proposition with a single word.

"Well?"

"I had my fights before the Apollo Club," said the Kid. "Of course, it ain't a big town; but a good show would draw a lot of money. You could draw enough to make the fighters' end close to five thousand. I think they'd stand for a match between us; and there's a sucker down there who wants to back me for a thousand——" He paused, and the cough shook him as a terrier shakes a rat.

"A side bet, eh?" said the champion, with a grin.

"Of course," said the Kid miserably, "I wouldn't *want* to burn up that money, and you wouldn't have to cover it; but every little bit helps, you know. You could pick up that thousand on the side and make your end just that much bigger."

"But you're all shot to pieces," objected Tug. "No club would give you a fight in your condition."

"Yes," said Smiley. "I've been sick. The doc says I've got to go out West somewhere—Arizona or New Mexico, and I haven't got the price. I can go away and train on the quiet; and there's some dope I can take that will stop this cough for the time being." Once more he barked hollowly. "I think I can get away with it," he concluded. "These club people ain't very wise."

"How much would you want?" asked Tug.

"Anything will suit me," said the Kid humbly. "You are the champion, and you can write your own ticket. Make the winner's end as long as you like. All I want is car fare West and money for doctor's bills."

Tug's tough heart was touched by the miserable spectacle before him.

"If the club will stand for it," he said, "I'll give you a match. But the winner's end will have to be eighty-five per cent."

"That's pretty long, ain't it?" pleaded the Kid. "If I rib up this mark to bet a thousand on me, you ought to consider that as something."

"Eighty-five per cent," said Tug firmly. "That or nothing; and this guy can bet or not, just as he likes."

"All right," said the Kid dispiritedly. "All right. You're the champion. I suppose I'm lucky to take a licking at any price. It'll be pretty soft for you, Tug. You won't have to train very hard for a sick man."

Tug smiled.

"I wouldn't train very hard for *you*, sick or well," was his graceful remark. "But, of course, with you the way you are—it'll be a saving, of course."

The Kid coughed sadly.

"All you'll need in the way of preparation will be a shave and a hair cut," said he. "It's pretty soft to be a champion."

"You shake that cough for a while if you can," advised the champion. "We mustn't make this look too raw."

"I'll stall through, somehow," said the Kid.

A week later, the men met in the office of the Apollo Club, and the articles were signed—two-thirds of the gate receipts, twenty-five rounds, the fighters' share to be split eighty-five and fifteen.

The Kid's angel appeared with one thousand dollars in good green bills, and all he asked was that the champion should give him odds of seven to five.

Tug Riley was not a betting man, but he did not object to a sure thing, so he brought out his check book and wrote his check for fourteen hundred dollars.

"Put it through your bank," said he to the newspaper man who was selected as the stakeholder, "collect the money, and post it with the other."

While the negotiations were pending, Kid Smiley sat doubled up at one end of the table, offering no suggestions, making no objections, and agreeing to everything by nodding his head.

"All I want is the chance to fight," he said to the club management. "I ain't looking for a shade anywhere."

The period of training was a short one; the champion insisting upon an early date. He felt that he was going into the petty-larceny business, and it might be just as well to waste as little time upon it as possible.

Kid Smiley retired to a country road house to do his training and the champion stayed in town, boxing at a gymnasium in the afternoon and doing his road work along the local Rialto in the evening. Wise ones who watched him in his meager preparation felt certain that he was holding his opponent "too cheap"; and they pointed out that after the champion had sparred a few rounds he began to puff heavily. A few of them took it upon themselves to warn Riley.

"I know my business," he said. "One punch for this fellow."

A day or so before the fight, the champion had a chat with the manager of the boxing club—a cross-eyed man named McCloskey.

"How's the Kid getting along with his cough?" asked Tug. "He had a little cold or something the last time I saw him."

"Cough!" said McCloskey. "He ain't had no cough. Where do you get that stuff about him having a cold?"

"So he did get away with the stall?" thought Tug; but aloud he remarked that he hoped the Kid would be in good shape.

"Well, you'll have your hope," said McCloskey grimly. "Smiley has been around here ever since he quit you, and if he's been sick a day in the last six months, I don't know where you'd go to find a well man."

"You think he's right, do you?" asked Tug carelessly.

"Right?" said McCloskey. *"He's as right as a dictionary!"*

Tug grinned at McCloskey's back as the manager departed.

"No wonder," reflected the champion, "that fighters frame up all sorts of things with the likes of this fellow running fight clubs!"

Tug attached no significance whatever to McCloskey's statement, save that it went to lower his opinion of the manager's intelligence. Tug had made it the rule of his life to believe nothing which he had not seen. He had seen Kid Smiley when that unfortunate was coughing like a mogul engine on a three per cent grade; and seeing was believing with the champion every time. Not the shadow of a doubt disturbed his serene confidence. One punch—and it would be over.

A roaring welcome greeted the middleweight champion of the world as he climbed through the ropes and offered his hand to Kid Smiley, who had preceded him by several minutes.

The Kid rose from his chair, muffled from neck to ankle in a heavy bath robe.

"H'are you, Kid?" said the champion casually.

"Howdy, Tug?" said Kid Smiley.

Neither expected an answer to his question. Neither gave one; and the champion barely glanced into the face of his opponent. The crowd cheered again at this expression of professional courtesy.

The preliminaries proceeded with an immense amount of pomp, which is usually the case when a champion enters the ring to defend his title.

New gloves were produced and donned under twofold inspection. The men were introduced to those who needed no introduction; and the champion drew another burst of applause by dropping his robe and standing forth, stripped for action, a twisted flag about his waist.

"Take off your blanket, Kid," whispered the referee, as he led the challenger toward the center of the ring.

"Not yet," said Smiley. "I don't want this fellow to get a flash at me until the bell rings."

The Kid was still wearing his bath robe when the referee began reeling off the customary instruction. Though the fighters were close enough to touch hands, neither looked at the other or at the referee. It was their way of showing that they had been there many times before, and knew the game thoroughly. If the principals seemed bored, their lack of interest was more than made up by the breathless pose and attention of the crowding seconds, towel swingers, and limelight hunters, who hung on every syllable in an attempt to seem indispensable and vastly important.

"I guess that's all," said the referee at last.

Immediately there was a scattering of the smaller fry, a whisking of stools from the corners, and the three principals were left alone in the ring. In a hoarse, barking monotone, the referee stated the terms and conditions of the match, while the fighters edged back toward their corners, waiting for the bell.

Just as the club official expended the last of his breath in a command to "Let 'er go!" Kid Smiley twitched off his bath robe and tossed it behind him through the ropes. Then the bell rang.

The champion of the world, trotting toward the center of the ring, his hands hanging at his sides, all but paused in his battle stride. Was this the sick man he was to beat in a punch—this trim, flat-muscled, brown-skinned individual who came dancing so confidently to the scratch? Could this be the same coughing wreck of a fighter whom he was to defeat for eighty-five per cent of the purse and a side bet of twenty-four hundred dollars?

Tug Riley was as game as a man need be; but the sight of Kid Smiley, stripped to fight, sent a cold chill down the champion's spine. No man ever reached a championship without the ability to think quickly and see clearly. Tug saw it all in a twinkling. He had been tricked into a bad match, and he knew it. Worse than that, he had come unprepared to "go the route."

The Kid left his former employer no time in which to curse his folly and lack of training. Smiley had played for the shock to follow the surprise. He saw the dazed look in Tug's eyes, and attacked instantly without preliminary sparring. Two lightning lefts shot out for the head, up came the champion's guard, and in went Smiley with a sledge-hammer right to the stomach. Tug tumbled into a clinch and held on hard.

"What is this?" he mumbled. "The double cross?"

"You'll mighty soon find out what it is!" whispered the Kid. "I've got over my cough. Maybe you've noticed it."

"Br-reak!" bellowed the referee.

The Kid broke at the word; but, as he slipped out of the clinch, he slashed an uppercut home, and the champion's head snapped back as if his neck had been a hinge. Half the spectators roared with delight. The other half, having bet two to one on the champion of the world, leaned back comfortably, and remarked that the game was young yet.

Of course, Tug lost his temper and began rushing, determined to annihilate Smiley with a single blow. That was exactly what the Kid thought that he would do, and that was where the weeks of sparring experience stood him in good stead.

Tug might as well have been rushing a sunbeam. The younger man ducked, sidestepped, jerked his head out of danger, or stepped inside the wild swings; and every time the champion missed, he received a shower of cutting, stinging jabs in the face.

Smiley was doubly armed. He knew every trick in the champion's repertoire; while the champion, to all intents and purposes, was boxing with a total stranger—a stranger who was a master of defensive tactics and a swarm of hornets in attack.

Not all the Kid's blows were light ones. He had a trick of dropping his knees together and lifting in his entire

weight behind the glove; and when he did that Tug grunted aloud.

"If I could hit," said the challenger during the second round, "I'd be quite a fighter, eh? But I can't hit hard enough to break a clay pipe."

Then he loosened three of Tug's front teeth with a jab which did not travel more than twelve inches.

It was John L. Sullivan and Jim Corbett all over again—blind rage, bull strength, and shortness of breath on one side; sarcastic coolness, science, and tantalizing attack on the other. Tug put his head down and charged like a Sonora bull, swinging his pile-driver right hand for general results, and disturbing nothing but the smoke-laden atmosphere.

"You couldn't hit me with a handful of birdshot," sneered the Kid. "Say, Tug. Do you remember you paid me twelve dollars a week? And made me eat ham and eggs three times a day? Well, here's some ham and eggs for you. And a little claret—from the nose."

Throughout the fight, the Kid kept up his annoying monologue. In the fourth round he developed a great curiosity about the champion's bank balance.

"You won't have so much money now, old horse. Your end to-night won't make up for the fourteen hundred you bet on the side. I suppose you didn't know that thousand was my money, did you?"

And Tug could only grit his teeth and plow in, chasing shadows. Every rush and every swing which failed to find its mark, drew heavily upon his slender store of endurance. At the end of the fifth round, the champion of the world was leg weary, arm weary, and breathing heavily through puffed nostrils. His face was a sorry sight.

"Now, then," said the Kid, as the sixth round opened, "I've got you right where I want you. Fifteen per cent to the loser, Tug. That's what you get for trying to hog everything from a poor sick guy. Fifteen per cent. There's a good house here to-night, too. You won't lose more than five hundred bucks, Tug—and the championship. It might have been worse. You might have run up a lot of training expenses. But you don't have to train for a sick guy, do you?"

This monologue was punctuated with punches—left jabs for commas and heavy right-handers for question marks and exclamation points.

Once more the champion plunged forward, swinging his right hand like a scythe. It was a good right hand—it had won all his fights; but that was because he had never failed to hit his man with it. The best right hand in the world cannot disturb a shadow.

"Well, I guess this will be about all," said the Kid, who had been watching the champion like a hawk. "I want to go and count up the house and see how much eighty-five per cent comes to. *Fight, you big tramp, because I'm coming after you now!* No more monkey business."

Those at the ringside could not hear the words, but they saw the transformation. The careless sneer left Smiley's lips, the fun went out of his eyes, and the dancing went out of his feet. Tug was practically helpless. There was now nothing to fear from his right hand. The last shot in the locker had been fired. In a flash, Kid Smiley, the boxer, became a fighting man, bent on a knock-out.

A left uppercut straightened the champion and drew his guard upward, and, when the elbows were clear of the stomach, Kid Smiley, with the cool deliberation of a man punching a sandbag, stepped in, and sent the right fist crashing under the heart. Riley's gloves dropped to his sides, his head rocked, his knees knocked together, and his feet shuffled uncertainly on the canvas. With the last blind instinct of the fighting brute, the champion of the world remained upright, even after his defense was gone.

Kid Smiley looked at the referee.

"I ain't stuck on this," he said; "but I suppose, as he's a champion, he'll have to be knocked out, or he'll say you stopped the fight when he had a chance."

The referee nodded.

"Clean up, quick!" he said.

"Quick she is!" said Smiley.

Tug Riley, his battered nose pressed against the canvas floor of the ring, remained a champion of the world only so long as it took the referee to count ten seconds. He never twitched a muscle during the operation, for the Kid's last punch had been a merciful one.

The new middleweight champion sat in his dressing room, dangling his long legs from the rubbing table. There was not a mark on his face and not a bruise on his body; and he received the congratulations of the newspaper reporters calmly.

"What does he say?" asked Smiley. "What's his excuse?"

"He says he wasn't in condition and wants another match."

"Not in condition, hey?" sneered the new champion. "Does he expect to get by with that squeal?"

"He says you bunked him," remarked one brave spirit.

Kid Smiley chuckled.

"You go back and tell Riley," he commanded, "that a match well made is half won. I may be a fighter, and again I may not; but leave it to him if I ain't a bird of a matchmaker!"

The message was delivered, and, though all this happened fifteen years ago, Riley has not laughed at it yet.

SOMETHING NEW IN FINANCIERING

GEORGE M. BAILEY, whose editorial paragraphs in the Houston *Post* are known all over the country, believes that the Southern negro has a good head for business and finance.

"Rastus," said Bailey, in upholding his claim, "was an old darky who worked two acres of land on a big plantation, and got his foodstuffs from the big commissary which supplied everything to the tenants. Rastus, having poor land as his share, was continually in debt, because he could never raise enough cotton to pay off his bill at the store. There came a season, however, when cotton grew and flourished on Rastus' acres, and when the storekeeper measured up the cotton he told Rastus:

"'You've got nine dollars coming to you.'

"'Look hyuh, white man!' exclaimed Rastus. 'Go back dar an' look at dem books ag'in. You don' owe me no nine dollars.'

"The clerk complied, and returned with the statement that he had been mistaken, and that Rastus still owed the store nine dollars.

"'Now you talkin' sense,' said Rastus contentedly. 'Come on back hyuh an' give me a strip ob bacon.'

"You see," explained Bailey, "that old fellow knew that as long as he kept in debt to the store they would give him credit, and he was afraid that if he ever got out of debt the store might refuse him credit the next time he asked for it. Hence his pleasure because of his financial difficulty."

THE SOLDIER AMONG THE FLOWERS

GENERAL FRED FUNSTON, who made himself famous by his exploits in the Philippines, particularly by his organization of the expedition that captured Aguinaldo, is an authority on flowers. In 1893 he was commissioned by the Department of Agriculture to study and make a report on the plants and flowers of Alaska. He was caught in the grip of the Northern winter, and in the spring of 1894 he had to float down the Yukon River in a canoe all by himself.

An Incident of Alcatraz

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "The Lady and the Man For'ard," "The Assignment that Failed," Etc.

An unusually strong story of army life. How it happens that the son of one of the biggest capitalists on the Pacific slope enters the army as a "buck private" and starts a-soldiering on the seven-acre rock in the harbor of San Francisco. He aspires to a commission, but instead lands in the military prison. What happens afterward will stir you as few things have done. It is the kind of yarn that lingers in your mind long after you have put the magazine aside.

WHEN a man enlists in the regular army of the United States under such a name as A. Chisholm St. Clair, he must be prepared to withstand some bantering in barracks. There are two ways for a recruit to deal with the chaffing of the seasoned, and therefore sardonic, swaddies of the outfit to which he is assigned. One way is to take it so good-naturedly that he becomes the fixed and permanent butt of his company, troop, or battery, if not of the entire command; for unto the soldier who taketh much is given. The other way is for the rookie to seize the first whispered word of kidding in mid-air and beat the kidder to the barracks floor with fists bestowed by Heaven for that and other handy purposes—if he can.

A. Chisholm St. Clair could, and did, having chosen the second and better method by instinct, and without the least instruction as to the advantage thus to be gained.

On the first day that he joined the battery, a buck who had been a St. Louis levee rat, and who had the obsession that he was the barracks stringer, lay on his bunk, and, in a high, piping tone, squealed the name of the new man as if it had been the name of a girl.

A. Chisholm St. Clair, who at the moment was arranging the gear in his box, strolled slowly over to the bunk where lay, lazily kicking his heels, the man who had thus malevolently emasculated his name.

"Get up," said A. Chisholm St. Clair to the man, just as succinctly as that, only with a calmness of tone which the written words cannot express.

The man got an elbow under his weight, and stared blinkingly at the rookie.

"What's that?" he inquired, as one inquires when he feels certain that he hasn't heard aright.

"Get up, I said," repeated A. Chisholm St. Clair, still in the tone of somebody asking for a match.

The man got up. He was tall and husky. A. Chisholm St. Clair was of medium height, and looked a bit slight in uniform; but he knew a lot. His left shot out and burrowed deeply in the pit of the stringer's stomach. Bending forward under the anguish of this, the man's jaw made a wonderfully inviting target. A. Chisholm St. Clair's right landed flush thereon, and the husky one went down between two bunks, and lay quiet. It took the hospital steward fifteen minutes to disentagle him from his ensuing trance.

A. Chisholm St. Clair, after his man

hit the floor, examined the skinned knuckles of his right hand, blew ruefully upon them, and strolled back to his box to look over the rookie gear that had been dished out to him by the quartermaster sergeant.

"Good boy, rookie," pronounced the barracks as one man; and thenceforth A. Chisholm St. Clair's name was no more taken in vain than that of Butch Magee, the battery bully. The man to whom he had given the lesson in manners felt better about it when the fact trickled out later that A. Chisholm St. Clair had been the champion middleweight boxer of the leading amateur boxing club of San Francisco.

As a matter of fact, a good many interesting things about A. Chisholm St. Clair became very widely known within four days after he had joined the battery on the Rock of Alcatraz.

The San Francisco papers were full of his enlistment and the reasons therefor. When the son of one of the great capitalists of the Pacific slope takes on in the regular army as a buck private and starts a-soldiering on the seven-acre rock in the harbor of San Francisco, it is natural enough that the San Francisco papers should bank their headlines atop of such a morsel. When such a recruit has been one of the leading members of the Bohemian Club—about which you are asked in Rangoon and Shanghai, though at such places nobody ever inquires about the Union League, of Philadelphia—the matter is bound to be worked up into a daily journalistic dainty for the delectation of the Native Sons of the Golden West—to say nothing of the Daughters.

Additionally, and as a matter of course, there was a Girl in it. And you must know that it is the Girl in an affair of this sort that keeps the story on the papers' front pages for a week or more.

Sifting out the gossipy prolixity of the reporters who were "on the story" during that time, one can etch in a few lines the reasons why Alcwyn Chisholm St. Clair—nobody in the battery ever blamed him for initializing his first name when they found it was Alcwyn—had enlisted under the ægis and the eagle of Uncle Sam.

The Girl, as you may have guessed, if not actually forecasted, was a milliner. There is something subtly fascinating about milliners, even the least pretty among them. A king of France discovered that, and was so wrought upon by it that poor, piteous Du Barry had her ride in the tumbril to the guillotine. Many young men of breeding and wealth have discovered it since.

This Girl was a milliner because her father was a Poet. The connection may not be immediately obvious; but that is because you do not know, perhaps, how many poets there are who never by the remotest chance get any of their poems printed and paid for.

So, while her father poetized, and watched for the postman to fetch his poems back—and in this, at least, he was never disappointed—the Girl made hats that had more real poetry in them than her father could express in the six languages with which he was acquainted.

To keep the larder filled for herself and a versifying father who believes in his soul that all of the editors in the world are leagued in a conspiracy against him, a girl must do something; and this Girl, though talented and accomplished—two very different matters, by the way—found that she had no head whatever for stenography; so she became a trimmer of hats.

A. Chisholm St. Clair, yawnfully accompanying a married sister one day to the millinery establishment where the Girl was employed, saw her and loved her before the married sister had tried on the nineteenth hat. She was a good and a very beautiful Girl. Young St. Clair—he was twenty-four to her nineteen—had very engaging manners, in addition to great ardor. He was a trig, clean, wholesome boy, as sound all through as an Oregon apple.

She loved him. He married her a fortnight after he met her. His father, as might have been expected from a millionaire by the name of St. Clair, showed his son the door when the boy went to tell him about it. The boy

would not permit his wife to work. He himself knew as much about work as a testifying criminologist knows about crime. So he made a start as a book agent, selling "Picturesque Turkestan," in 114 volumes, a dollar down and a dollar a month for the rest of your life.

Nothing happened. So, after one blank week of that, he tried accident insurance. He could have sold accident insurance to his friends; but he preferred to ask strangers to buy it. They would not.

Therefore he became an advertising solicitor. There is a patter to this trade which few men quickly grasp. A. Chisholm St. Clair did not grasp it at all. Moreover, he was not a handshaker. So his commissions at the end of that two weeks could have been expressed by a goose egg had anybody taken the trouble to figure them up.

Thereupon, A. Chisholm St. Clair, with a wife whom he dearly loved, and a poetizing father-in-law whom he tolerated for her sake—with these two to provide for, the boy got a job as a motorman. His daily trick aggregated about fourteen hours of work and two dollars and a quarter in money. His married sisters tried to force him to abandon that and to take money from them. He asked them if they considered him a duffer, and refused.

He grew pretty thin in about a month, and the Girl became very sad. She thought it over and over; and she concluded that she was an encumbrance to him; that she stood in his way; that she was ruining his life. He was her brave and beloved husband; but she could not permit him to go on wrecking himself on her account.

So, one night when he came home to the three little rooms dog tired, he found her sad little note pinned to the mantel, and she and her father gone. "It is because I love you—it is for your happiness——" This was the gist of the note.

The boy, his reason nearly gone, got a detective friend of his, the head of an agency, to scour California for the Girl. The search went on for two weeks, but no tiniest clew was found. Then A. Chisholm St. Clair, who had gained the reputation of being the most abstemious member of the Bohemian Club, became monolithically drunk for the period of a week. Emerging from this, he clapped eye upon the ornate sign in front of a recruiting office on Mission Street. It was one of those dun-hued San Francisco days. The United States had a wrangle on with Chile at the moment. There might be war. He might get a chance to mingle up in the war.

And so, moneyless, friendless, as he boyishly thought; but, worse than all, wifeless—this was the gnawing ache in him—A. Chisholm St. Clair enlisted, and was assigned to one of the two batteries of heavy artillery stationed on Alcatraz Island.

The reporter who first reached the elder St. Clair to tell him about his son's enlistment, sketched that interview privately, as follows:

"The old cock was huddled in a deep chair in his library when I got to him.

"'The boy's taken on, sir,' I said to him, without any preliminary stalling.

"'Boy? What boy? Taken on? What the devil are you talking about, sir?' he hurled at me, gripping the sides of his chair.

"'Why, sir, your son, Alcwyn Chisholm St. Clair,' said I, 'has enlisted in the army, and is now a private in Battery F of the Sixth Artillery, over yonder on the Rock of Alcatraz.'

"You savvy Tyrian purple? Well, Tyrian purple's a washed-out pink to the old boy's face when I pulled that on him. I wondered if, in blowing up, he'd make a noise like a busted automobile tire. I was glad the library door was open. I began to think about my get-away. He tried to say something; but it sounded like a Kanaka whistling on a Honolulu coal lighter. So I concluded I'd help him out.

"'Of course, you'll be taking measures to get him out of the service at once, sir?' said I—of course having a wholly different hunch; and the hunch won.

"'Get him out of the service—*me!*' he spluttered. Then he took a grip on

himself long enough to ask me: 'How long is the term of service?'

"'Three years' said I.

"'I'm sorry it's not three hundred years!' he roared, leaping out of his chair.

"'He'll have the privilege, with good conduct, of buying out of the army at the end of two years,' I cut in, concluding that I might as well go through with it. 'If he chose to do that, of course you'd be supplying the funds for——'

"'Stop that, dammit—stop it, I say!' he thundered at me. '*Buy* the ruffian out! *Me!* Why, by all the feathered gods of Yucatan, if I could buy him *in* for the remainder of his natural life, I'd——' He broke off and glared at me. 'Here, you, get out!'

"I started for the door. But I thought I'd ease him a final jab, just to hear the finish of his spout.

"'If he goes in to get a commission from the ranks,' said I, trying to be soothing, 'and gets it, why, I figure that he might become a major general by the year nineteen hundred and twenty-nine, and——'

"'Get *out!*' he bawled; and I came away with a distinct impression that Alcwyn Chisholm St. Clair had the most adipose kind of a chance to go right on a-soldiering on the rock."

Nor did the sire of Alcatraz's latest rookie in the least modify his views as to his son's enlistment. On the contrary, he clamped them. When the boy's married sister—the two were pals—got both of California's senators worked up to a point where they had to promise that they would ask the secretary of war to release her brother from the army "by special order," and the elder St. Clair heard about it, he came down upon the scheme with the weight of a fifteen-foot bronze Buddha. He summoned the two senators—they were summonable senators when pelf served the call—and he told them that if they turned a hand to get his son out of the army, he'd—he'd——

They thoroughly understood, and neither of them turned a finger. To clinch it, the sore old gentleman, who leaned almost as heavily upon his name as upon his wealth, telegraphed to the secretary of war, whom he knew, that the latest recruit of Battery F, of the Sixth Artillery, stationed on Alcatraz Island, harbor of San Francisco, was to remain in the service until the final minute of his enlistment had expired, no matter what pressure was brought to bear to the contrary.

"So be it," chummily wired back the secretary of war; and that settled it.

It should have been said a page or so back that the main, underlying reason for the old boy's wrath was that he had picked out a wife for his son when that young gentleman attained the age of eleven years, and that, as a perfectly natural and inevitable matter of course, from the day that he had his first shave, the boy had resolutely declined to so much as look at the unprepossessing and somewhat sharp-tongued young person who had been selected as a spouse for him by his sire. But, after all, this fact has little or no bearing upon the way the thing worked out.

A. Chisholm St. Clair developed, within six or eight months, into a top-notch soldier. Even the grizzled duty sergeants, habitually and justifiably skeptical about gentlemen rankers, approved of him after they had taken the time to measure him.

Soldiering on Alcatraz is soldiering. It is a grim, fog-wrapped, precipitate rock somewhere near the middle of the harbor of San Francisco, crowned by an ancient Spanish citadel, atop of which a sentinel, during the daylight hours, eternally clomps to see that no boat, barring the army tug, comes within two hundred yards of the island; for there is a general military prison on the rock, huddled partly over the water, and military convicts doing long sentences and working foot-loose around the island have, on many occasions, shown a strong liking for the get-away possibilities of the fishermen's boats that, under cover of the fogs rolling heavily in through the Golden Gate, sometimes inadvertently work close to the rock.

It is mean soldiering, too, because there is nowhere to go and nothing to do except to watch the seagulls and speculate upon how many of them will be made into hot tamales by the Chinamen within, say, a week, and sold as the genuine barnyard-fowl articles on the streets of San Francisco.

A. Chisholm St. Clair went about his work very quietly and self-possessedly, asking no favors and playing the game to the hilt. But he made an unwitting mistake when, at the end of six months' service, he concluded that, as long as he was in the outfit, he might as well put in the odd time trying for a commission. He had got through Yale with more than fair credit; and he figured that, by hard boning, he might make the epaulets.

The unwittingness of the mistake consisted in his captain's dislike of the scheme when the top sergeant told him that St. Clair was studying for a commission. The captain was a West Pointer whose mind was cluttered with antipathy to "mustang" officers—officers, that is, who gained their straps from the ranks. He summoned the boy to the orderly room for a talk about it.

"I hear, St. Clair, that you're going after a commission," drawled the captain.

"Yes, sir," said the boy, at attention.

"Er—uh—d'ye think you'll make it?" asked the captain, purposely disagreeable about it.

"No harm trying, sir, I suppose?" answered the young man.

"Er—better forget it, St. Clair," said the captain, doing all he knew to make his tone as significant as a downright order. "The army—uh—really has no need for—er—officers from the ranks. Um—our government provides a proper training establishment for the making of officers. Er—I'd cancel that plan if I were you, St. Clair."

The young man's teeth came together with a click. He knew that no officer had a right thus to discourage an enlisted man ambitious for a commission. He wanted, moreover, to show his father that the thing could be done, and that he could do it.

"Thank you, sir, for your advice," he said, taut as a ramrod. "I'll try for the commission."

The captain's eyes blazed up.

"You may go," he said, in a tone husky with anger.

A. Chisholm St. Clair saluted and left the orderly room. From that hour he had a captain who was something more than unfriendly. And an officer who "waits" for an enlisted man whom he dislikes never needs to watch the clock.

One day, a few weeks later, the boy was patrolling the top of the old Spanish citadel. The fog was rolling through the gate in woollike gobs. The sentinel could see about ten feet through the choking, yellowish, clinging murk. When a corporal and a file of the guard suddenly loomed out of the fog before him as he humped his post, he thought that his two hours were up, and that he was about to be relieved.

"Your gun and belt," said the corporal.

The boy handed over his gun and belt before he asked what had happened.

"Boat got in on you, northeast end of island," chopped the corporal. "You're under arrest."

"But," said St. Clair, not argumentatively, but merely by way of stating the manifest fact, "I could scarcely see the end of my bayonet in this fog."

"Captain's orders," said the corporal. "He happened to be at that end of the island, and he saw the boat—Greek fisherman's boat—slip in. Captain ordered your arrest for not reporting boat to sergeant of guard."

"I wonder if the captain knew," said St. Clair, as if to himself, "that I was on the citadel post?"

"Reckon he did," said the corporal. "He mentioned you by name when he ordered you to be relieved and stuffed into the clink."

Whereupon the prisoner knew that he had been "had" through no fault of his own, but because his battery commander had watchfully bided his time.

"Get your blankets," said the sergeant of the guard when he was escorted down from the citadel's roof

to the guardhouse; and presently, because, firstly, he had wanted to show his father that he could win a commission; and, secondly, because the fog enshrouding the citadel's top had been too thick to be cut with a cleaver, he was in the clink, awaiting a general court-martial for neglect of duty on post.

And only a week before, because there had been too many cases of genuine neglect of duty on post, the commanding general of the Department of California had written some blazing words in a general order on the subject, severely reproving general courts-martial that had not dealt pulverizingly with that particular violation of the articles of war. So that it looked exceedingly dark for A. Chisholm St. Clair when he should face his court.

With a sentry at his back, A. Chisholm St. Clair was kept at work emptying the swill cans back of the officers' quarters for two months before he got his general court-martial. (His captain was in charge of the job of apportioning the work for the guardhouse prisoners.)

Then, one day, he was taken, under guard, on the army tug over the bay to the Angel Island infantry post, where he made his appearance before the yawning, bored group of officers who were to try him. He told his straight story about the thickness of the fog. That story was corroborated by the corporal of the guard who had arrested him, and by the file of the guard who had relieved him atop of the citadel.

But the captain spake differently. The members of the court-martial drummed on the table with their fingers, and yawned at the ceiling while the non-com and the buck private were testifying as to the thickness of the fog under which the Greek fisherman's boat had crept close to the island; but they sat still and listened while the captain told how anybody with one-eighth of an eye could have seen the boat through the "slight mist" had he been in a captive balloon a mile in the air.

After the "trial," back to the swill cart for A. Chisholm St. Clair for another fortnight while he awaited the court's verdict. Then, a little before retreat one evening, the commanding officer's orderly ambled down the hill, and, through the sergeant of the guard, gave the prisoner a little printed order, showing how he had, for neglect of duty on post, been "bobtailed"—that is, dishonorably discharged—from the army, and, in addition, been sentenced to a year's imprisonment in the military prison on the rock, with forfeiture of all pay and allowances.

Thus was a clean and thoroughly wholesome boy, with an abiding and an aching love for a lost wife always pressing like a thorn into his heart, made into a military convict. And the gruesomeness of it was that he had only wanted to show his father that he could get a commission!

On the following day, he was transferred from the guardhouse to the military prison, and shifted into a baggy gray suit of convicts' fustian, with a ringed number stenciled in red paint on his back, directly beneath his left shoulder.

By this time, A. Chisholm St. Clair had become very gaunt and peaked. Also he had become very silent. But there were lines about his mouth that had no right to show on the face of a boy, and a blurry, hunted look in his eyes.

The Girl reached the rock two days after her husband had been thrust into the military convict's garb. She had read of his trouble in the newspapers, which, as usual in such cases, commented with a sort of owlish imbecility upon the uselessness of the scapegrace gentleman soldier in the ranks, and took it for granted that A. Chisholm St. Clair had, of course, been guilty of the military offense of which he had been convicted.

The Girl carried the Baby in the hollow of her arm. As she stepped confusedly from the *General McDowell*, the army tug, and glanced puzzledly about, uncertain which way to go, the fierce-looking old commanding officer of Alcatraz, who had been on the boat, approached her, holding his forage cap as

if it had been a crush hat, and bowed profoundly.

"May I inquire, madam," he asked her, in his deep rumble—in which, however, the fatigue men on the dock detected an unwonted timbre of gentleness —"whom you wish to see?"

The Girl's eyes filled.

"My husband—Mr. St. Clair——" she faltered. That was as far as she could go. It was as far as she needed to go.

"Let me assist you, madam," said the ferocious old "beak," taking her gently by the arm and leading her to the waiting ambulance. The ambulance, of course, was for the exclusive use of officers and their ladies. But this colonel, a "mustang," had been under fire at Chancellorsville and Chickamauga; and such baptisms make for humanness.

He led her to the ambulance, assisted her in, and, taking a seat on the other side from her, spent the time, while the ambulance slowly climbed the hill, in chucking the Baby—a very new Baby, indeed—under the chin, and saying things to it that nobody on the rock would have believed the "old man" could say had he heard them with his own ears. When the ambulance pulled up at the prison entrance, the colonel summoned the prison sergeant, who was lounging in front of the door.

"Sergeant," demanded the commanding officer, in his peremptory, scareful tone, "where is Mr. St. Clair working?"

The prison sergeant blinked. "Mister" for a military convict, and from "the old man"!

"Shoveling gravel on the parade ground, sir," he replied, saluting.

"Send a file of the guard for Mr. St. Clair," directed the colonel, "and have him brought to your office. Vacate your office for the morning, and permit this lady and Mr. St. Clair the use of it. The sentry will stand *outside* the door of the office."

"Lady" for a visitor to a "bobtailed" man doing a year's "bit" on the rock! The sergeant looked as if he wanted to pinch himself.

But he saluted again, and sent a man on guard on the colonel's errand. The "old man" helped the Girl from the ambulance and escorted her into the prison sergeant's bare little office. He placed a chair for her, pinched the Baby's cheek, told the Girl to make herself comfortable, bowed to her as if to the wife of the president of the United States at a White House reception on New Year's Day, and returned to the ambulance.

When the Girl had stepped from the ambulance, several buck members of the guard, lolling in front of the guardhouse door, studied her. They caught snatches of the colonel's directions to the prison sergeant, and heard the name "St. Clair."

"Pipe the fairy with the kid," said one of the men, a Boweryite who had lately joined from the recruiting rendezvous at David's Island, New York. "Class to the shape o' that doll; hey?"

There was a smack that sounded like the report of a railroad torpedo; and the marks of five horny fingers burned on the cheek of the soldier from the Bowery. The man who had done it was the man who had been knocked down by A. Chisholm St. Clair on that young soldier's first day in barracks.

"There's another one o' them where that un come from, y' dirty scut," said the soldier who had thus used his hard palm, bending menacingly over the other man. "What kind of a gutter mutt d'ye think y' are t' talk that-a-way about a decent woman wit' a kid, and th' woman's man in trouble?"

More gaunt and peaked than ever, but with a light of expectancy burning brightly in his sunken eyes, A. Chisholm St. Clair was brought to the prison office by the sympathetic sentry, who had told the prisoner that "a lady wit' a kid" was waiting for him there. The sentry ushered him to the door; and then, at a nod from the prison sergeant, pulled the door to.

When the prisoner saw the Girl, and the little bundle in her arms, he stood stock-still for an instant and trembled all over. Then he reached out his arms. She placed the Baby there.

After a while—quite a while—the Girl was able to speak. He hung upon

her words, his dark eyes glowing; and somehow the hard lines had disappeared from around his mouth. She had gone away because she had thought it for the best. She loved him too dearly to ruin his life. She had thought he would go home to his people. She had not known that he was in the army until she read of his conviction by court-martial. Baby was a month old —and weren't his eyes beautiful, and just like papa's?

Her voice broke here, and he held and rocked her in his arms for a little while. But she was fighting to be brave; and presently she went on. She had been trimming hats in a Sacramento millinery shop. Yes, her father was with her, and still writing verse which, somehow, he could not sell, the poor dear! Oh, yes, she and father lived very simply, because—because—— But they'd get along quite well—oh, very well, indeed—until her boy got out. And then they'd never be parted any more. And she could wait—didn't she have Baby?

He was calm enough when he parted from her at the prison door a few minutes before noon mess call. But, as he stood watching her, with the Baby in the hollow of her arm, bravely walking after the sergeant of the guard, and averting her face so that her tears could not be seen, the hard lines which never should show around the mouth of a boy reappeared.

It is a job for a regular man to escape from the prison on the Rock of Alcatraz and make the mainland; but the thing has been done, though infrequently.

Once a couple of prisoners got out of the prison in the middle of the night, pushed a heavy plank into the cold sea water which laves the base of the prison, and took their chance. The tide was going out at the time. It carried them swiftly out to the gate, miles away. Then the tide turned. It brought them back with equal swiftness; and at dawn, the two cold, shivering figures on the plank were back at the very spot from which they had started, in the shadow of the prison. A sentinel saw them, invited them off the plank, and they went to dungeons.

Once again four prisoners got out of the prison and made the dock, where, after dark, a sentinel humped his post. They overpowered the sentinel, smashed the lock gear of the lifeboat resting in the shed over the water—and took the sentinel with them. His gun and belt were found on the dock by the corporal of the guard who brought his relief.

But it takes a lot of ingenuity and luck to accomplish a get-away from Alcatraz; and the great majority of such attempts have been hashed at their inception.

A man must be pretty keen to get away from the rock to consider the idea of swimming for it. It is a long swim to San Francisco from Alcatraz, the nearest point being the Presidio, the main military post of the harbor, about four miles away. The tide, both incoming and outgoing, is very swift, and the water is always excessively cold.

But when a man desires very greatly to accomplish a purpose, he will seek, at any peril, to establish a precedent. B-047—which was the prison number of A. Chisholm St. Clair—desired very greatly, after the visit of the Girl and the Baby, to leave the prison and the Rock of Alcatraz. In deciding for the swim, he had some justification. Swimming was one of the matters he knew about. He had won slews of the short events in the Olympic Club tank; and at the San Diego flower fiesta he had distanced all of the other men in a two-mile swimming event. So he had a right to suppose that, with any kind of decent conditions, the thing might be done.

The problem was to get out of the prison at night so as to make the water. The luck was with B-047 here. Three days after the Girl's visit was pay day. On that night, when at nine o'clock the prison sergeant came to the prison to count the prisoners before locking them in cells, he was something more than middling drunk. B-047 saw this. The prison sergeant's counting was perfunctory, and B-047 was not put into his cell. He had hidden behind a large, round, heating stove. After the ser-

geant had locked up the main door, B-047 came from behind the stove and walked up a huge, disused chimney by bracing his feet against the sides of it.

Reaching the roof, he peered over the edge, at the far end of the prison, to watch the sentinel pass that point. Then —for he was very strong and wiry—he let himself down the thirty and odd feet by gripping the rusty iron eaves. Then he shot around to the side of the island facing San Francisco, where there is no sentinel at night, removed his prison brogans and the dirty gray, prison blouse with the sinister red number stenciled on it, and entered the water.

It was a rare summer night of stars, and a night unusually warm for the harbor of San Francisco. It was full tide, with not even a ripple on the surface of the water, which purled sibilantly as it lapped the base of the looming rock. But the water was excessively cold.

A long, white steam yacht, possessed of lines exceedingly satisfying to the well-versed eye, steamed slowly through the gate, inwardbound from Coronado. It was close upon midnight of the summer night of stars, and the skipper, having abandoned the idea of trying to berth at that hour, was feeling his way for his anchorage off the Presidio. He was employing the dynamo man to manipulate the searchlight in order to find his exact spot for dropping the mudhook, for he was a very particular skipper. Between dartings of the long, impaling ray ahead, the electrician was throwing the searchlight upon picture points in the harbor.

When the searchlight blazed upon the citadel atop of the Rock of Alcatraz, picking out in gleaming silhouette not only the sentinel walking his post and the wooden sentry box, but almost the plaster between the ancient bricks, the owner scowled. He was seated aft in a deep wicker chair, chatting with a crony.

"Ghastly, idiotic nonsense, cluttering up the harbor of San Francisco with these infernal military posts," he muttered. This was before the Spanish War, when the United States army was a sort of under dog. "I'd like to start a pressure petition to the tomfool government to have every scrap of infernal military gear thrown out of this harbor."

The old gentleman's crony understood. He knew about old Mr. St. Clair's family affairs. He gazed with puckered brows at the searchlight, still picking out the details of the Alcatraz citadel, said nothing for a little while, and then changed the subject.

The owner's daughter, a pretty matron, her husband bending over her, was operating the pianola, pianissimo—it was one of the nocturnes—in the cabin. Through an open port her husband caught sight of the searchlight resting on the citadel. He called her attention to it. She looked up, saw the citadel framed blazingly through the port, and her eyes filled with tears. Then she went on with the music.

The dynamo man brought the searchlight around dead ahead again, and slowly worked it up and down, waiting for the skipper to feel right, to a hair, as to his anchorage. After a few minutes of this, the keen eye of the electrician caught, in the sharp focus of his light, a momentary glimpse of a floating Object. Slowly he depressed the light so as to catch the Object again. He succeeded after some trying, and held the beam steadily upon the Object.

"It's a drowned man, sir," said the dynamo man to the skipper, who stood alongside of him.

"So I see," said the skipper quietly. He summoned the boatswain. "Have the cutter lowered away," he directed.

The engine-room bell clanged, and the engines stopped. The cutter was quickly in the water—it was a smart crew on deck. In something less than five minutes, the Object was brought aboard and stretched out, man-gently by rough hands, on a table between decks.

Having seen to this, the skipper mounted to the main deck, carrying something in his hand, and went aft to where the owner and his crony were talking market. The skipper waited for a pause in their talk. Then he stepped forward.

"Excuse me for breaking in on you, sir," he said, in a quiet tone. "We've just picked up a drowned man."

The owner looked a bit annoyed.

"Too bad, Anderson—too bad," he said petulantly. "But—er—oh, of course you had to do it. But you'll get him off the yacht, of course, as soon as you anchor. Er—what sort of a man is he—young or old?"

"Young, sir," said the skipper. His face was very solemn. He had been skipper of the St. Clair yacht for many years, and was beloved by all the family. "Very young. A mere boy. This was around his neck, sir;" and he placed in the somewhat reluctant hand of the owner a thin locket of Roman gold, attached to a fine-linked chain. "I'll open the locket for you, sir," said the skipper, and, bending over the owner's chair, he touched a little spring, and the locket flew open.

On one side of the inner locket was a little photograph of the gentle, winsome features of a Girl. On the other side was the photographed head of a frank-faced, partly smiling Boy. And between the two pictures, tied at the middle by the tiniest imaginable bow of ribbon, was a little wisp of extraordinarily fine, silky, flaxen hair; the sort of hair that, with tears of love and happiness, is snipped from the head of a Baby.

The owner caught sight of his Boy's pictured face, and his head sank upon his breast.

Repartee

By Berton Braley

SAYS the captain of the tugboat to the skipper of the barge:
"I hain't anything' agin' you, but, to take you by an' large,
Ye're a fuzzy-nosed gorilla that is always crazy drunk,
An' you otta be a-runnin' of a store fer sellin' junk;
Ye're a lubber that is cross-eyed, an' yer brain is buckwheat cakes,
An' I guess the way you got here—some one 'wished you' on the Lakes!
If they sold you fer a nickel it would be an overcharge,"
Says the captain of the tugboat to the skipper of the barge.

Says the skipper of the coal barge to the captain of the tug:
"There's a padded cell awaitin' fer yer special kind of bug;
I ain't got a thing agin' you—'cept the color of yer hair,
An' yer looks, an' ways, an' actions, an' the kind of clothes you wear.
I'm just kinda *sorry* fer you—fer yer temper an' yer shape,
As a human ye're a failure, but you'd make a handsome ape.
I would git a job as wild man if I had *yer* awful mug,"
Says the skipper of the coal barge to the captain of the tug.

Then the captain of the tugboat climbed upon the coal-barge deck,
An' the skipper of the coal barge fell upon his brawny neck,
An' they wrastled, an' they pounded, an' they shouted, an' they swore,
An' it looked—the way they acted—they was out fer blood an' gore.
Says the captain of the tugboat: "Well, it's good to meet you here."
Says the skipper of the coal barge: "Same to you, Bill. Have a beer?"
An' the two old pals an' cronies—arm in arm they goes below—
Fer 'twas just to show affection that they cussed each other so!

Sweeny's Brick-scrape Machine

By Charles R. Barnes

Author of "Sweeny, the Detective," "Miss Sweeny," Etc.

You can't ever tell what the inventors are going to get up next. Mrs. Sweeny's dear dead husband had it in him to become a great inventor. Once he got up a machine for chopping the mortar from old bricks saved from demolished houses. But he never patented the invention. Here's why

"NOW," exclaimed Mrs. Sweeny, "ain't that the cute thing, though!"

She had entered the Boarder's apartment on her morning cleaning tour just as the occupant snapped a flame out of a patent cigar lighter. It was a small, nickel-plated contraption, that fitted into a waistcoat pocket and produced fire at the touch of a spring. Mrs. Sweeny regarded it with much curiosity as the Boarder puffed the end of his cigar to a glow.

"It's a new invention," he explained, handing it to her. "I saw it in a shop window yesterday, and bought it."

The good woman turned it over and over in her palm. Then presently she found speech.

"I s'pose it's the most wonderful thing in the world," she remarked; "but there's alwus somethin' new, and it's hard for a pusson to keep track. Next thing you know, they'll be inventin' wireless seegar lighters, where you just sneeze twice, bite yourself on the arm, give a wheeze or two, and your seegar's lit. You can't never tell w'at them inventors is goin' to get up next. My poor dead husban' had it in him to get by with inventin', but he never done much of it, b'cause he couldn't stand for bein' poor. Onct he got up a machine for choppin' mortar off of old bricks that had been saved out of tore-down houses. And he says to me:

"'Belle,' he says, 'I'd patent this if I wasn't a wise guy, for there's a million in it.'

"'W'y don't you patent it, then?' I says.

"'Because,' he says, 'the million wouldn't go to me. It never goes to the inventor,' he says, 'but to some one else,' he says. 'I leave it to you,' he says, 'if the papers don't alwus talk about poor inventors, Belle, instead of rich ones,' he says. 'And the reason they're so shy of talk about rich ones,' he says, 'is b'cause there ain't but a few, and they're so noticeable that they're alwus spoke of in awe,' he says. 'It's like they'd pried somethin' away from the bondholdin' class and was burglars,' he says. 'And, be-lieve me, Belle,' he says, 'all the inventin' I'll ever do will be for my own amusement, w'en I'm stayin' home nights to keep on the water wagon them times my stummick goes back on me,' he says. 'I could invent my head off,' he says, 'but I ain't goin' to do it. The upper classes has got wealth enough,' he says, 'without me schemin' up patents for 'em to steal and make more ill-got gold out of.'

"And, mister, I knowed that was final, for w'en my poor dead Danny made up his mind to anything, there wasn't no use handin' out any back talk. You know how them kind of men is, mister—them positive men?"

The Boarded nodded.

"Well," Mrs. Sweeny went on, "I knowed, too—knowed it just as well as I knowed there was two runs in my left stockin'. But I seen a million slippin' away from us; and I had to go and let myself in for somethin', I did, just

b'cause I wouldn't take my own advice. And, be-lieve me, mister, it wasn't long b'fore I felt littler than a week-old pin-head. Take it from me—never fool with a man that has got brains enough to invent, for he can hand it to you in a way that will make you want to go to school where they teach the mud-pie business——"

"The kindergarten," supplemented the Boarder.

"That's it," Mrs. Sweeny agreed, "the kindergarden. After a growed lady had had it put all over her by a clever husban' like my Danny was, then she feels like goin' to one of them schools and learnin' how to run round in circles and holler: 'The birdies is flappin' their wings, tra-la.' W'en she's through with it, she feels that she really knows somethin', and realizes just how much. Afterward she kinda respects her man. And if he was to say to her, like my Danny done: "Kid, we flag the inventin' stuff.' Then she says: 'Yes, sir. W'at do you want for dinner?' She ain't goin' to set up in business as a lady that has got naggin' on her mind like I did. No, sir. And if my Danny had lived, I'd never repeat w'at I done in a thousand years.

"You see, he give me such a jolt then that I was scared to death to try anything on him that wasn't just to his likin'. He might of made funny little men march out of the wall paper and lead me off to the mines. It ought to be as easy to do that as to make hard-wood boards talk. Don't you think?"

"Talk?" exclaimed the Boarder.

"Yes, talk," Mrs. Sweeny insisted. "But that there part of it comes later on in the story. First, I got to tell you how I worried over that million me and Danny was lettin' slip away from us. You see, mister, my poor dead husban' sure had a fine machine; and I figgered that if he'd patent it and grab off that million, him and me could go in the best s'ciety there was. He wouldn't have to make book at the track no more, and be up one day and down the next, like all gamblers is. No, sir. We could be reg'lar people, and be panned out by the crowd b'cause we was idle rich.

"That's the way I got to thinkin', and it layed heavy on my chest. There was that machine. It worked as good as a just-sold tourin' car. Danny had made some little bits of bricks out of the flat bottom of a stoneware bakin' dish. He'd cover 'em with mortar and let the stuff dry. Then he'd slide 'em in the jigger, and they'd come out all clean.

"'Belle,' he says to me, 'there's a fortune in this here outfit,' he says. 'W'en folks use old bricks for the inside walls of a house, they hire a bunch of guineas, and give 'em all hatchets, and say to 'em: "Now, chop!" And, Belle, they sure do chop. But it takes 'em a long time to clean off a brick. I stood and watched about a million guys doin' it once, and I timed 'em. Sometimes it took five minutes to fix a brick right,' he says, 'and that means twelve bricks a hour, or ninety-six bricks,' he says, 'in a eight-hour day. Now,' he says, 's'pose you're payin' them one-fifty a day, and your brick-cleanin' is costin' almost two cents a brick—ain't that right?' he says.

"'I guess so,' I says, not bein' good at numbers.

"'Well,' he says, 'this here machine of mine cleans a brick every two seconds, and costs the work of two men and the price of a little gas'line for the engine. I guess it's some labor-savin' device. What?'

"It sure was, mister. And w'en I sat there and watched my husban' put in them little bricks and clean 'em, zit-zit-zit, just like that, I felt a sinkin' feelin' in my chest, and a w'at-do-you-think-of-that yip all ready to come out.

"A million waitin' to be took and spent, mister; and Danny sittin' round idle and not doin' nothin' with his model b'cause he didn't have no confidence in the patent laws! The whole thing had me goin' like a man catchin' a train. It wasn't a possible thing for any lady to keep her mouth shut under them circumstances.

"'Danny,' I says, 'for the love of Mike, do somethin' with that thing!' I says. But he wouldn't. He says:

"'Belle,' he says, 'I know w'at I'm doin',' he says. 'I been lookin' up this

here matter,' he says, 'and I find that a guy out in Nebraska has made patent claims on a brick-scrapin' machine that won't even work, and he's been notified by the Automatic Machine Trust that he'll be sued for infringement if he makes and sells any of them apparatuses,' he says. 'And you can take it from me,' he says, 'that I ain't stuck on lettin' myself in for no lawsuits against no trusts,' he says. 'I'd have the same chance of winnin' that you and me has of gettin' back all them umbrells we've borried to people,' he says. 'So,' he says, 'just let it alone and try to be happy on the eighteen or twenty thousand we pull out of the race-track come-ons durin' the good years,' he says.

"But, mister, it ain't in most wimmin to be satisfied with nothin'. If their man has got a twelve-dollar-a-week job, they wants him to hustle and earn fifteen, so's they can pay five dollars for a hat 'stead of three-fifty. If he makes thirty-five, they want him to clean up sixty, which'll let 'em quit doin' the housework, and hire a lady to cook and sweep and steal the leftovers from dinner and w'atever's loose. That's wimmin, mister; and I guess I wasn't no exception to the run of 'em. First thing I knowed, I was bawlin' out my kind, good husban'.

"'You're a fine hunk of cheese,' I says to him one evenin'.

"'W'y?' he says, lookin' up, supprised.

"'B'cause,' I says, 'you're actin' like you was the feller that first thought up the word "mutt"—and called it to yourself, to find a place where it was sure to stick,' I says, mad as I could be.

"You see, mister, I don't believe I ever in my life talked that bold and rude to my poor husban'. You can see from it w'at money will do buttween fr'ens. And you can see, too, w'at it does to wimmin. I bet you anything you want to bet that the snake Missus Eve talked with had hisself tied up in a dollar sign, and was green enough to remind the lady of a lot of bank rolls tied together, all ready to spend.

"I'm pretty sure of it, mister, b'cause I know that the brick-scrape-machine million that me and Danny wasn't goin' to get had me so excited that I was hurlin' harsh words around in my husban's presence, which is a thing real ladies don't generally do. Danny looked at me kinda sad.

"'Belle,' he says, 'them words is rough like everything,' he says, 'and mebby you don't know it,' he says, 'but you got your battlin' voice on,' he says; 'and them Maxwells downstairs and them Hirschs upstairs is apt to hear all you're sayin',' he says. 'Soft pedal a little, Belle,' he says, 'and mebby they won't back up the wagon.'

"But, mister, I was real mad, and I went to it like a fool dog chasin' a trolley car.

"'Danny,' I says, 'here I been savin' and scrapin' all my life——'

"Well, mister, even if you ain't never been married, you've prob'ly heard tell of that line of talk. Every woman pulls it some time or other w'en she wants to make herself out a abused creature. Danny stood for it, buttin' in only once.

"'Belle,' he says, 'I guess you're just ner-fuss this evenin',' he says, with the loud pedal on the 'fuss.' 'You're all right, Belle,' he says, 'but somethin' seems to tell me that the charmin' little tinkle, like the ringin' of sweet bells,' he says, 'is missin' from your tone. I'd be just as well suited,' he says, 'if you come over here and sit on my lap and sing some lovin' rag at me, like you usta do b'fore we got well enough acquainted to put on the mitts for these here little five-round goes,' he says.

"I didn't pay any attention to him, though, and rubbed it in hard as how he wasn't treatin' me right, makin' me live in a dinky Central Park West flat, w'en we might be on the avenue if he'd only put the brick-scrape mill acrost.

"Fin'ly it got to be too much for him, and he goes over to the piano and starts practicin' the C scale with one finger, which was a thing that alwus got me pullin' out my hair, bein' as he couldn't never get it right.

"I started at him again somethin' turrible; and I guess my words musta

echoed real loud in the apartment, for he turned round with a awful sad look on his face, and says:

"'Sometimes, Belle,' he says, 'a man fergets to feel sorry for the poor sailors on them stormy nights,' he says.

"And then he slipped over to our phonograph, put on a brass-band record, and—well, mister, as I told you, my husban' was the cleverest thing I ever seen. There wasn't nothin' for me to do but shut up. And I'm here to say that I done it more in admiration for his deeplomacy than b'cause that machine made so much racket I couldn't holler against it. Yes, sir, that husban' of mine was a mighty brainy man, he was; and I was a fool ever to try to get the best of him.

"A couple of days goes by, after that night; but I couldn't seem to forget that me and Danny was losin' a million dollars all the time. So every night I kept harpin' on w'at a two-spot my husban' was; and I compared the way we lived with the way some other folks lived that we knowed of. Be-lieve me, mister, Danny got it worse than a baseball umpire after a close decision; for, w'en I get in action with them few well-chose words of mine, there's somethin' happenin', as you may of noticed durin' times w'en the groc'ry man sends me dang'rous explosives and calls 'em aigs. You've heard me howl my head off down the dumb-waiter?"

The Boarder laughed, and said that he recalled several instances of the kind.

"Well," Mrs. Sweeny went on, "I kept chatterin' and chatterin' at my poor husban' till I could see little nervous lines comin' in his forehead. Now and then he'd get out his brick-scrape machine and look it all over, real thorough. Then he'd put it away and stare at me like he was a dog that had been kicked.

"He didn't have nothin' much to say beyond remindin' me that monologues ain't usually booked more'n forty weeks, and hopin' I wouldn't try to get it across as a summer snap, too. He was losin' spirit, I could see; so I kept right on naggin' and naggin' the life out of him.

"I felt good in my conscience, too, for I figgered that I'd nag that man into a million, after which he'd turn round and thank me, and brag to his fr'en's that I was the little woman who'd spurred him on to endeavor and talked him out of all his discouragements. You read about them wimmin in stories; but I'll bet my hope of bein' able to pay next month's rent that most of them lucky inventors was nagged into puttin' somethin' over—and done it to get back their peace of mind.

"I guess I'd been goin' all of three days, w'en, one afternoon, Danny says he ain't well, and is goin' to stay home and lay down. There was some shoppin' I had to do—and afterward, I remembered that I'd mentioned it the evenin' b'fore.

"Oh, that man of mine was the cagy thing, he was! He usta remember the triflin'est things I'd say and make plans on 'em. The first couple of years we was married, he'd catch me tellin' him the little lies that most all wimmin tells their husban's and fr'en's. He done it by rememberin' slips I'd make. He'd save 'em up for a week, and then spring 'em on me w'en I wasn't lookin'.

"At first I was embarrassed, then I got mad, and lost my head and got in deeper. But, after while, it come over me that here was a man that had a extra sense. Not knowin' how he catched me, I set it down to somethin' supernatural, and figgered: 'Here's a man that you can't stall, Belle Sweeny. He's too good for you, so tell the truth.' And I done it as often as I could.

"Well, that afternoon Danny stays to home and lays down. He looked all wore out w'en I left him, and I felt sorry, knowin' well enough that I'd talked him into bein' a nervous wreck. I could see that if he wasn't one already, he was close to it. W'en I went out, he was layin' on our davenport, all gaspy like, and lookin' as if he was broke and had just found out how mean your best fr'en's is.

"'Danny,' I says, pityin' like, 'I hate to leave you. But it wouldn't be right for me to miss that there tablecloth sale, even if you do look like you're dyin'—now, would it?'

"'Nope, Belle,' he says. 'Everybody for w'at's on their chests,' he says. 'Stick to them tablecloths,' he says, 'and never mind me. If I feel the need of a woman's comfortin' hand on my brow,' he says, 'durin' my last minits,' he says, 'I'll holler for the janitor's wife. She'll stick by me if I stake her to fifty cents and promise my clothes to her husban',' he says.

"And so I left him, mister. I just couldn't resist that tablecloth sale; but I didn't have no good time, b'cause it seemed to me that mebby the classy thing for a lady to do under the circumstances was to of stuck to her husban'.

"I didn't get home till about six, and I felt real relieved w'en I seen that Danny was lookin' a lot better.

"'I had about three hours' sleep,' he told me, 'and I guess I'm all right now. So tell the heiress in the kitchen that I can take solid food,' he says, 'if it's done good and comes quick,' he says. So I gives the order, and in a few minnits dinner is on the table, and me and Danny is sit down at it.

"Him havin' come back so strong durin' my shoppin' tour, as you might say, I figgered that he could stand some more punishment. That brick-scrape machine hadn't got off my mind for a minnit, mister. And while I was out, a lot of things had come up to remind me of w'at I was missin', all b'cause my husban' was foolish about his invention.

"It seemed a shame to me—a awful shame—that a thing worth all that money was goin' to waste. And w'en I looked over our plain-food table and remembered that we might be dinin' year in and year out in the best hotel there was, havin' our own private soot and dining room and our private waiter, I got goin' again.

"'Danny,' I begins, 'ain't you never goin' to have no sense about the brick-scrape machine?' I says.

"'Don't,' he says, lookin' carewore, all of a sudden.

"'There you go again,' I says, gettin' mad. 'Here I been downtown all afternoon, watchin' the automobile trade drive up to the stores, and me kickin' it over the hard, hard stones, scuffin' up my new eight-dollar shoes, and gettin' the bottom of my skirt all messed up with cigarette butts and dust and stuff. Danny,' I says, 'there ain't no use in bein' so poor, since the brick-scrape machine is in the fam'ly,' I says, 'and as far as I'm concerned,' I says, 'I ain't goin' to stand for it any more. You're a heartless man,' I says. 'You're lazy. You just won't do nothin',' I says. 'You won't take the trouble,' I says.

"Danny keeps lookin' at me, and passin' his hand acrost his forehead.

"'Belle,' he says, 'this here is twict I ast you—don't!'

"But, mister, I was all wound up, and the stuff had to dribble out. I was enterin' on the third lap, w'en, all of a sudden, I stops. There was a faint sound of talkin' in the room. Danny puts up his hand for quiet.

"'Listen,' he says.

"Both of us kept real still. And then, comin' up through the floor, we heard these here words:

"'Mrs. Maxwell, you're the limit. Kindly tell me w'at I done now—I ast you, Mrs. Maxwell, w'at have I did?'

"The voice quit. Danny looked at me and grinned.

"'Them Maxwells, down b'low, seems to be havin' a argument,' he says. 'I guess I ain't the only man with troubles,' he says. Then he shut up, for the man started in again. His voice was faint, but real clear.

"'Mrs. Maxwell,' he says, 'you remind me of that horrible Mrs. Sweeny upstairs,' he says. 'She's been bawlin' her husban' out for the past week,' he says. 'I'm glad you got a cold and can't talk loud, Mrs. Maxwell,' he says, 'or the neighbors would hear you, and you'd be as bad thought of as that gabby lady upstairs. Thank Gawd I ain't got her for a wife!'

"He quit talkin'. Danny stares over at me, and I bet I turned as red as a tomato-can label.

"'W'y,' I blurts out, 'darn him, anyway! W'at right has he got to talk about me that way? I'll go down and tell him——'

"I was goin' on like that, mister, w'en

Danny holds his hand up again for quiet. Maxwell was goin' to it again.

"'Mrs. Maxwell,' he says, 'you got a beautiful disposition,' he says, 'in the main; and your face is lovely to look on. But if you're goin' to get quarrelsome, like that shriekin' Mrs. Sweeny,' he says, 'your good looks is goin' to get spoiled. You'll have lines around your mouth and a scowl that will make you look ten years older. I seen that screechin' dame downtown to-day,' he says, 'and I'm sure she's takin' on one of them sour expressions,' he says. 'If I was her husban,' he says, 'I'd leave her. The way she pans him out is somethin' fierce,' he says.

"Be-lieve me, mister, I was struck all in a heap. The feller downstairs wasn't showin' me no mercy. He was tossin' words around as careless as a kid playin' with matches. I wanted to get up and holler. I wanted to run downstairs and beat him up for bein' a old knocker. Gee, I was mad!

"And there was Danny sittin' across from me all the time, lookin' at me in a sorrowin', pityin' way, as if he wanted to pertect me from that brutal assault and couldn't. Oh, but he was the good man! I was grippin' the edges of my chair and gettin' ready to start somethin', w'en that horrid party rips out another line of talk.

"'Mrs. Maxwell,' he says, 'take my advice and quit quibblin'. It only sets a husban' and wife farther apart from each other—and the Lord only knows that you could put a city block in betwixt most of 'em,' he says. 'There's that Mrs. Sweeny,' he says. 'She's been naggin' the life out of her husban', that is the best man on earth, b'cause he won't make a million for her. She's a ungrateful thing, Mrs. Maxwell. Her husban' makes a big income now, and gets her everything she wants. But she thinks he can make more, and she's drivin' him frantic hollerin' about it. She's a terrible woman, Mrs. Maxwell; and, if you was askin' me w'at I think about it, I'd say that a good man like Mr. Sweeny won't put up with it much longer. I shouldn't be surprised if he'd quit her week after next. That female pest has sure forgot that there is plenty of good-natured wimmin in the world that would give anything to be in her place,' he says.

"Mister, that was too much for me. I just layed my head down on the table in my arms and began to bawl. And Danny is round to me that quick, tryin' to comfort me.

"'Don't, Belle,' he says; 'don't cry no more. I'm goin' down and knock that guy's block off!'

"But I kept right on hollerin'.

"'I ain't no good,' I says. 'I ain't no good! Throw me out in the street, Danny,' I says. 'Throw me out in the street. I'm a wicked woman,' I says, 'and I ought to have to sell lead pencils and do my own work,' I says. And I kept on a bawlin' and a bawlin' somethin' turrible.

"There ain't no tellin' w'at would of happened if the telephone hadn't of rung. Danny answered it; and there's one of his real close pals, down in the corner saloon, that has got to see him for a few minnits right off. He leaves me, sayin' he'd be right back; and I keeps on with my bawlin' till I dropped my handkerchief on the floor and stooped down to get it. Then I seen somethin' that got me interested.

"There was two strings runnin' from Danny's chair to a hole in the rug. I crawled under the table, pulled away the rug, and there's a lot of little holes bored in the floor. Some of the boards had been sawed across. I yanked 'em up, for they was loose; and then I slapped 'em back again, set the rug in its place, and hollered:

"'Stung! Stung! And it serves you right, Belle Sweeny.'

"W'at I'd saw, mister, was the inside workin's of our phonograph under them boards in a hole. There was a roller record in place and the two strings run to the switch. They was fixed so one would start it and one would shut it off. I didn't have nothin' to say. All I done was to remember that Danny had been at home alone all afternoon; that we had blank records; that Mr. Maxwell's voice sure sounded a little like Danny's; that the boards and the

rug muffled the whirrin' of the machine —even the voice was so awful faint you had to sit real quiet to hear it. I didn't have nothin' to say; and I didn't say nothin' w'en Danny come back. But he did.

" 'Belle,' he says, 'I'm goin' to confess. That brick-scrape machine ain't no good. It won't work,' he says. 'Lots of fellers has been tryin' to make brick-scrape machines that's practical, but nobody's had no luck up to date.' This happened, mister, as you can understand, some years ago. 'I been foolin' you, Belle,' says Danny. 'This model works b'cause I never let the mortar get quite dry.'

" 'Then w'y,' I says, 'did you get me worked up about it?'

" 'Belle,' he says, 'you stick phony hair on your head—you want to look nice to me—what?'

"I says 'Yes' to that.

" 'Well,' he says, 'w'en a man's clean crazy about a doll,' he says, 'he wants her to think he's about the one best bet. Yes?'

"He looked real foolish as he said it. And I didn't need no more explanation. I run to him; and, w'en we was in a clinch, and I felt his great big bear arms around me, I says:

" 'Danny,' I says, 'you don't need to four-flush with me. You don't need to invent nothin' to keep me lovin' you—unless it's some way of strikin' matches on your pants so they won't leave no marks,' I says."

BRYAN'S ADVICE TO BOOK AGENTS

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN was never a book agent, but he at one time came near enough to it to qualify as a counselor of those who followed the business. On one occasion he undertook to sell to the citizens of the Salem neighborhood, in Illinois, ten maps which his brother had been peddling unsuccessfully for several weeks.

"All you want me to do, as I understand it, is to sell these maps," said Bryan.

"Yes, that's all," agreed the brother.

That night William returned home with the announcement:

"I have sold them all."

This astounded the brother, who insisted that the ten maps could not have been disposed of within so short a time.

"Oh, it was easy enough," said the future presidential candidate. "I did not bother about the money. One map I sold to the barber, who will keep me shaved for weeks. Another I turned over to a groceryman, and I used the remainder to pay off some little bills I owed around town."

"But where do I get off?" asked the brother. "How do I get my percentage?"

"Well," said Bryan, without enthusiasm, "you can come around and have supper with me some time."

A NEW KIND OF BUTTERMILK

FRANCIS WATERS, aged four, was begging his father to buy him a goat to drive up and down the streets of Germantown, Maryland. The father gave Francis a long lecture on why a goat was not a desirable piece of property, and, in the course of his remarks, stated that goats gave milk and that they butted little boys.

A few minutes later Francis told his mother:

"Papa says goats give the finest sort of milk. It's all buttermilk."

The Layout Story

By Frederick R. Bechdolt

Author of "Wolf's Story," "As Man to Man," Etc.

The fire fighters at work. If you have never seen a big blaze in the city, here is your chance. It is one of the most realistic things we have ever printed. A newspaper man is sent to cover the story with instructions to "Phone if there is a chance for a layout." There is a chance all right—and a great one—as you will see when you read what the reporter discovered.

ALLEN leaned back in his chair, and sighed. He had been doing rewrite. For more than an hour, he had been making good English from the maunderings of cubs. He sighed therefor as one would sigh who had just finished sawing a cord of wood. Then he frowned as one who now finds time to concentrate his mind upon a matter of importance. He looked up. With a speculative eye, he glanced across the busy local room.

His expression was serious; his lean young face had lost its usual easy good nature. Thoughtfully he gazed over at the copy desk, from one shirt-sleeved reader to another. He allowed his eyes to travel thence to the sporting editor, who sat in his corner fingering over photographs of new heavyweight possibilities. From the sporting editor, he went on to a trio of assignment men, hammering, staccato, on their typewriters. He shook his head at every one of these, as if he remembered some reason for passing on. At two young women, writing longhand amid a litter of gloves and hats and blue books and directories, he did not pause at all.

The hotel reporter came into the room, pulling off his gloves. Allen arose with the abruptness of a spring-propelled automaton, and hurried to his side.

"Lend me a dollar," he said briskly.

The hotel reporter thrust his hand into his trousers pocket. "Make it fifty cents," said he; "I'm short to-night myself."

"All right!" Allen took the coin; then, smiling broadly: "I'll eat on this, and in the meantime I'll scare up more somewhere else."

He went back, and sat down at his desk. All seriousness had departed from his features. He was carefree again.

A brisk little gong, which had been tapping intermittently all the evening, changed its pace. From its place on the wall, it spoke to the noisy local room. "Tang, tang, tang!" it said. Allen stiffened in his chair, and looked up at it. "Tang, tang, tang!" it reiterated.

"Allen!" shouted the city editor from the farther end of the room.

As Allen hurried toward him, the tapper for the third time hammered three insistent strokes; then started businesslike on the box number.

"Sixth Street, near Main," Allen told the city editor. Although his underwriter's card was in his hand, he had not needed to consult it. A downtown box; he knew its signal well. Stone nodded; then briskly, although his voice was without semblance of emotion:

"Cover it," he ordered. "We're

short of local stuff. Phone me if there's a chance for a layout."

Allen walked back to his desk. Although his pace was swift, it could not be said that he hastened. His unperturbed demeanor precluded any such idea. He picked up his hat, and thrust some copy paper into his pocket. He departed, whistling. Into the glaring room, above the clacking of the typewriters, the little gong pealed on. Three times. As if it fully realized the chances for ruin, danger, death, and other elements of news that lay in its announcement; and, therefore, reluctant to cease, was making the best of this opportunity.

A Sixth Street car came by the corner as Allen left the building. He ran out, and swung himself upon the running board, and settled down in an outside seat. It was a ten-minute ride.

Once during its progress, a long, brazen clamor came on them crescendo from behind, overtook them along with a deafening rattle of steel and wood, and passed. Allen leaned out to watch the lean, gaunt ladder truck reel by.

Again at a cross street, the car stopped so suddenly that the passengers shot forward in their seats. While the brake shoes were still shrieking against the wheels, a burnished steamer clanked across the track directly ahead. Its short stack was vomiting black smoke; red coals dropped from its fire box, leaving a glowing wake. Before it, the horses, three abreast, necks arched, nostrils distended, struck sparks in streams from the cobblestones.

Two blocks farther on, the ride ended in a jam of halted traffic, and Allen leaped out into a street, all packed with humanity, all radiant in a great red light that flickered on a thousand upturned faces.

The street resounded with noises. Some were abrupt, some long-drawn, some deep, some ear-piercing in their shrillness. These enormous sounds came from striving machinery and sweating men. They shook the air. The red light hung over everything. It seemed to dominate. A grim radiance, overpowering, louder than any sound.

Allen raised his face, and neither wonder nor awe nor curiosity was on his features as he looked into this pulsating glow. Only an intentness that was businesslike. He traced the radiance to its source.

This lay a half a block away, a building front, towering ten stories above the pavement. The first four tiers of windows were four rows of incandescent maws. Each one of them was belching a thick, solid, crimson mass that twisted swiftly upward. Each mass, twining like some outthrown tentacle, was opaque.

The redness lurked within it, brightening, then subsiding, as if it were a vital fluid driven out in pulse beats from the monster's hidden heart. No flame showed; only this luridness in the smoke columns. Permeating them, it climbed within them, until they spread out far above the earth, making a flat pall that hid the sky. Subdued here as if it were growing cold, this glowing crept along the under side of that pall like a red shadow.

The fire at rare intervals exhaled a single low, deep noise, a weird bass utterance, caused by flames gorging themselves on wood, and sounding like a monstrous chuckle.

Allen gazed at this spectacle for a moment. Then he nodded his head as if satisfied that it was worth his while.

He pushed his way through the crowd. He came to a rope stretched across the street. He stooped to duck under this barrier. A sergeant of police seized him by the collar; then suddenly released him and called him by name.

"What is it?" Allen jerked his thumb toward the burning building.

"Wholesale dry goods," said the sergeant. "Wilson, Buck & Sternberg. It started in the basement. The watchman turned in the first alarm a half hour ago."

Allen pulled out his copy paper, and wrote briefly. When he had done, he smiled at the officer. "Now, Sam," said he, "give me a cigar."

Chewing this tribute to old acquaintanceship, he ducked beneath the rope, and went on. Inside the lines there

was more room for him to move. Here clamored the men and apparatus. The noises of their battle arose from this place. A dozen steamers, trembling with the forces within their metal sides, united the booming roar of their overladen pop valves into a droning thunder. Ladders clattered as men dragged them from the trucks. Captains bawled orders through the din. Standing in their jingling harnesses, calm, dignified, the huge fire horses pawed a slow, raucous chorus on the cobblestones.

As one who is at home and undisturbed, Allen passed among these things.

The vehicles of all the downtown companies crowded the place. Long, lean ladder trucks, emptied hose wagons, chemical engines, thick-bellied steamers pouring the spark-flecked smoke upward from their funnels, dripping streams of incandescence from their glaring fire boxes, reflecting the conflagration from their nickeled sides. In and out the fire hose twisted like long, lazy serpents; they were as hard as rock from the driven streams which they inclosed.

In the midst of all, towering above everything into the overhanging murk, the water tower stood, the main artillery. Thin-necked, rearing like some prehistoric dragon, it pointed its huge beaklike nozzle at the building wall, and shot its heavy stream with bullet force into the burning building.

It battered with six engine streams into one. As swiftly as a cannon sends its steel, it hurled its floods against the flames.

It was a low, four-wheeled car, from which arose that long, thin neck of steel, terminating in its venomous beak. Smoke wreaths drifted around this beak. Through these hanging wreaths, the water column hurtled at its height, and vanished in a window. Two men stood on the low car. At times one of them turned a tiller wheel. At such times the beaklike nozzle swerved; then the water column thundered against the building wall, traveled along this, found another aperture, and disappeared again in its search for flames.

Beside the tiller man the captain stood, a burly young fellow, bareheaded, his face upturned in scrutiny of the fire. No passion showed on his features, no excitement. He studied the glowing smoke through half-closed eyes, and all the time chewed gum industriously like a shopgirl. Allen reached upward, and touched him on the leg.

The captain turned his head, scowling in that absent-minded annoyance which other men in quieter walks of life betray when interrupted at their desks. As his eyes fell on Allen, the scowl disappeared before a grin; he stooped and brought his lips close to the reporter's ear.

"Going to be a big blaze," he said.

"How're you making it?" Allen asked.

The frown came back on the captain's face. Anger showed now. He made a motion to the tiller man, and leaped to the ground.

"Listen," said he; "I owe you a story. Here's one. We can't get through. We're blocked. There's a partition wall in every loft. See? I inspected myself two weeks ago, and ordered them out. The time was up five days since. But the walls are there. We get it down in front, and it crawls up behind, where we can't get at it. And only for them walls we'd have it out."

Allen gripped the captain by the shoulder. "Good stuff, Tom," said he. "Does any one else know—any other paper?"

The captain shook his head. "Go and see." He jerked his thumb toward the upper floors. "Only hurry. Pretty quick this thing will be hell." He leaped back upon the truck, and gazed upward again at the place where the column of water was entering the burning building. His face was calm once more. He chewed vigorously on his gum.

Allen hurried to the nearest telephone. He got Stone on the line. "I've got your layout story coming," said he. "The department's crippled because the building owner broke the city ordinances by leaving partitions in his lofts.

In less than a half hour there's likely to be trouble. Send me a man or two, and look out for morgues and hospitals later on."

He ran back to the fire. The indifference had gone from his face; he was tense in both movement and expression; his voice was sharp when he questioned policemen and firemen; his words were almost brusque. When he had gathered certain essential details—street numbers, nature of the building's contents, and so forth—he tucked his copy back into his pocket, and started for the alley.

There lay his feature. There, where the water tower's hurtling floods could not penetrate, the fire was climbing behind strong barriers. In spite of a half dozen hose companies, it was mounting, defying ordinary steamer pressure. In that place it would work its greatest havoc to property and probably to life. He saw these things clearly, as if they had already happened. But most clearly he saw the one fact on which they depended, the thing which other papers—he hoped—would not discover.

Those barriers—those partition walls—were in the building contrary to law. They prevented the water from sweeping from front to rear. They made the point on which his story would hinge, the big essential fact whose printing would bring sensation. He must see them for himself.

When he had seen them, when he had the first-hand evidence, he would be armed. With the facts in his possession, he could await disaster's approach, to chronicle it, and to lay the blame. That was the point—to lay the blame.

The alley was a narrow lane. Tall buildings flanked it on either side. No apparatus was here; the throbbing fire hose lay underfoot. From wall to wall the place ran water, ankle deep. Clouds of smoke filled it. In the murk, rubber-coated men were constantly appearing and vanishing amid crimson flarings. Now and again the red light would belch from windows, spreading, revealing everything. Then it would subside, and from the obscurity there would come the noise of axes and the bellowing of captains.

Allen borrowed a flash-light electric lantern from a patrolman. He waded through the lukewarm water, and reached the foot of one of the department ladders. A thickset battalion chief, shrouded in oilskins, his fireman's helmet jammed down upon his head, paused beside him, and looked up toward the smoke pall that hid the heavens. His face was working with rage; oaths were dripping from his lips. He shook his fist at the building.

"It's climbing on us," he yelled. "The tower can't touch it here. In ten minutes more, we'll be getting hell." He hurried away.

Allen's features tightened. In his eyes was something that burned like a great eagerness. He stooped and soaked his handkerchief in the water that was running by. He tied it over his mouth, and mounted the ladder. One floor and then another he climbed. The smoke gushed from the windows, and wrapped him in stifling clouds. Up and farther up, until he was on the fire escape at the sixth floor. He stepped to the landing, and entered through the open window.

The fire had not come here. Below him the battle raged. Above him somewhere they were beginning an attempt to flood the building; the water ran in rivers through the ceiling. The floor trembled, and the air palpitated with a deep roar, like the booming of a Niagara. It was the water tower's stream battering against the partition wall. Evidently the captain, out there in the street, had made up his mind to try and force his way through here.

The thought flashed through Allen's mind. He pressed the button that controlled his lantern; a narrow cone of light shot into the darkness ahead of him. It revealed tables heaped high with cloth goods and an aisle between. He ran along that passageway. The smoke was hot and stifling from the floors below. He breathed but seldom, and then through the wet handkerchief.

As he ran, the noise ahead became

more deafening; a huge cyclonic thunder. He bowed his head, and peered before him. The little cone of light suddenly collided with something. Allen turned the lantern upward; the barrier stretched from floor to ceiling. Three steps more and he had reached the place; he touched the wall, and he felt it bellying in toward him, shaking to the force of the water column. He had it now, the fact. He turned at once, and ran back.

Although the smoke was thickening and growing hotter, and, though he found it hard to hold his breath, he was undisturbed. Such things were stale from long experience. He climbed down the fire escape, and reached the alley; and as he stood there at the ladder's foot he saw, through a rift in the dense fumes above, two firemen carrying the limp form of a companion out through an upper story window. He waited there to get the name of this first victim; then departed to find those whom Stone had sent to help him with the story.

"Fine business," he told them when he ran across them in the street. "In a few minutes there'll be falling floors. Get back in the alley; there's where the trouble is due. I've got some stuff to look up by phone. Exclusive."

The others brightened at that word; their faces took on eagerness. Allen whispered the feature to them. They ran, as keen as himself now, to the alley.

Allen turned his back on the fire. He left the roped-off space of street; he pushed his way through the crowd until he reached a telephone booth, whose wires were undisturbed. He sat down here; he remained for some time. He talked with several people, and finally with the owner of the burning building.

The last conversation was conducted slowly by Allen. Between his questions, he wrote down what the other said. When he had hung up, he looked over these notes. He smiled. The building owner had denied the existence of those partitions; he had followed his denials by reiterations.

As he left the booth and pushed his way back through the crowd, Allen began framing his first paragraph—experimenting with sentences, to get effective contrast of those lies with the facts.

A rending noise, followed by a tremendous roar, stopped him from further thought. He knew that sound of old; a floor had fallen. He fought for passage through the pack of spectators. When he reached the alley entrance, the clangor of gongs told him that the ambulances were coming behind.

A big story; one of those stories that go, still unfinished, to the presses, and are not ended until, long after the recovery of the last body, there comes at length the verdict of the coroner's jury. It was midnight when Allen left the lurid inferno, where the rear wall had fallen into the alley. It was some minutes after midnight when he sat down in the local room, to write his lead.

"First page, double column." He had heard the make-up man thus characterize the story, talking to the news editor. "First page, double column." It warmed his heart; it made him forget how he was shivering.

Water dripped around him in little pools as he sat there, striving to get the words for his first sentence. He was bothered by one obtruding thought; the knowledge that he wanted a drink and that he had not the money to buy it. For, in that excitement of gathering the news, he had spent all of the fifty cents which he had garnered a few hours ago from the hotel reporter. However, there was no time for regrets; the presses were hungry. He tried to concentrate. An office boy touched him on the shoulder, and held a card before him. On the card, engraved neatly, Allen read the name of the building owner. "He's waiting," said the boy, "in the reception room."

Allen found him there, a blocky man, coarse-grained, red of face, wearing one of those expensive automobile overcoats. Among all the varied types of property owners, Allen knew this one best. He knew it best, because it was a news producer. The type that

builds tenements and lodging houses in violation of fire ordinances; the type that is often grilled by the coroner, but rarely is prosecuted.

He was not surprised when the visitor began to bluster. He was not disturbed when the blustering grew into direct insult. Only the fact that he was in a hurry to get back to his work made Allen at length forget himself and lose his temper.

"There's no use of your lying," he snapped. "I saw the walls myself. I know those ordinances. And I know you were warned to take the partitions out."

The other changed immediately. His demeanor altered. He was like a different man; he was clumsy with overcourtesy now. Allen smiled at him; the smile was cynical. Ignoring this, the visitor strove to argue blandly. He insisted on going off on little side-tracks. At length, Allen remembered the time again.

"I have to go," said he, "and write my story."

"It's not written, then, *Mister* Allen." The red face was suddenly expectant. Allen shook his head.

"Sit down," said the visitor. "See here, *Mister* Allen"—he made the most of the title—"I know the way it is with you newspaper boys. You have a hard time. Even if you do a lot of roasting, I know that. Now, listen to me. I'm willin' to be right, you know. I want to do what is fair by you, when you've worked so hard on this here item." His hand had been in his trousers pocket for some seconds. It came forth now. He laid it on Allen's knee. He withdrew it, leaving two or three bills whose backs were yellow.

Allen arose, and at the same time flicked the bills from his leg.

"Good night," said he. "I've got to go and write my story." He pointed to the money on the floor. "You dropped something."

Then he hurried back, and wrote his lead. It took him a long time. When he was finished, he was weary, and he was hungry. He took the last sheets with him, and laid them on the city editor's desk.

Stone looked up at him. "Good stuff," said he.

The moment was propitious. Allen seized it. "Lend me a dollar, Stone," he coaxed. "I've got to go and eat."

Wearily, as one who has done the same thing many times before, Stone produced the money.

OH, YOU MOTHER EVE

THIS thing of doing in Rome as the Romans do is not always the best plan. If you don't believe it, Miss Jane Addams, the famous sociological worker, of Chicago, will tell you a story to prove it.

Miss Addams knew a wealthy woman who delighted in doing works of charity, such as sending missionaries to foreign fields; and on one occasion she put up the money to send a missionary to the Caroline Islands. Soon after his arrival on the scene of his activities, the religious man sent his benefactress a photograph of himself and his wife.

Whereupon the rich woman wrote the man of God a letter, suggesting that his wife, in order to win the confidence of the natives, should throw away her fine clothes, and wear the costume of the islands. Two months later she received this answer:

Inclosed is the complete costume worn by native women. My wife awaits further word from you before adopting it.

The native dress consisted of a piece of woven straw, two inches wide and eight inches long.

It was enough.

Second part of a great detective story. The first part was published two weeks ago, and can be obtained from any news dealer. Ask for the first January number.

The Saintsbury Affair

By Roman Doubleday

Author of "The Red House on Rowan Street," "The Hemlock Avenue Mystery," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS

Under an alias, Kenneth Clyde, a man of good family, while in Texas, is sentenced to death for the murder of a crook. Knowing him to be innocent, the sheriff permits him to escape. He returns to Saintsbury and takes up life under his own name, hoping by living quietly to avoid attracting attention to himself. His identity is discovered, however, by Alfred Barker, a man of shady reputation, who successfully blackmails the young man for several years. At last wearying of Barker's demands, Clyde goes to a lawyer friend, Robert Hilton, and tells him the story. Hilton decides to meet Barker in place of Clyde and have it out with him. The lawyer goes to Barker's office and finding him away walks down the hall. As he does so Barker steps out of the elevator and goes into his office. He has hardly stepped over the threshold when a shot is fired from an adjoining room and Barker falls dead. There is no clew to the murderer, so it is with great amazement that the city reads in the morning papers that Eugene Benbow, a young student, has confessed to the crime. The boy claims to have been actuated by a desire for revenge for the murder by Barker some years before of his father, Senator Benbow. Hilton, who has been engaged by the boy's guardian, Mr. Ellison, to defend him, does not take much stock in this statement, and further investigation strengthens his belief that Eugene did not commit the murder. But the boy stubbornly insists that he is the murderer, and so Hilton and Eugene's twin sister, Jean, who resembles him in a striking way, start out on a hunt for evidence that will free the young student.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME OF JEAN'S WAYS.

I HAVE noticed that ideas usually come to me at the moment of awaking. The next morning I returned to a consciousness of Gene Benbow's affairs with a perplexity which was momentarily illuminated by the thought, "Why don't I look up Barker's home? He must have been staying somewhere, and the people there may know something about him."

Why hadn't I thought of that before? However, yesterday had been a pretty busy day as it was. I turned at once to the city directory, and then to the telephone directory. There was no indication in either that such a person as Alfred Barker lived in Saintsbury. The Western Land & Improvement Co. appeared in the telephone directory; but that, of course, was no help. I called up the police department, and asked if they could tell me where Barker had lived. Yes, they had investigated—26 Angus Avenue was the address.

"And, by the way," my informant added, "Barker's body has been claimed."

"By whom?" I demanded.

"Collier, the undertaker. He says that a woman came to his place last night and gave him directions and money, but would not give her name. She was veiled, and he knows nothing about her, except that she paid him to see that the body was decently interred."

"That's all you know?"

"That's all anybody knows."

"Collier is in charge, then?"

"Yes."

That was interesting, so far as it went. Was the woman who had provided for Barker's burial merely some benevolent stranger who had been emotionally stirred by the newspaper accounts—that sort of thing happens more frequently than you would believe—or

was there some closer bond? The answer seemed as hidden as everything else connected with this strange affair.

On my way to my office, I hunted up 26 Angus Avenue. It was such a place as I might have expected—a shabby house in a row on a semiobscure street. My ring was answered by a young woman of about twenty—an unkempt, heavy-eyed young woman, who didn't look happy. She listened unresponsively to my request for some information about Mr. Barker, and left me standing in the hall while she returned to some dark back room. I heard her say: "Ma! Here's another wants to know things." And presently "Ma" appeared, hot from the kitchen, and somewhat fretted.

"I can't be answering questions all day," she said *at* me rather than *to* me. "There was a string of people here all day yesterday taking my time. Just because Mr. Barker roomed here is no reason why I should know all about him."

"You probably know more than any of the rest of us," I said deferentially. "Had Mr. Barker been long with you?"

"Long enough; but that don't mean that I know much about him. He was here a while in the summer two years ago, and when he was in town afterward, he would come here to see if I could give him a room. But he never stayed long at a time. I think he was some kind of a traveling man—here to-day and gone to-morrow. He has been here now for the last six weeks; but he never had any visitors or received any letters, and I don't know the names and addresses of any of his relatives—and that's what I told the police and all the rest of them!" She finished breathless but still defiant.

"That seems to cover the ground pretty thoroughly," I laughed. "But I shall have to ask another question on my own account. Was he married?"

"No!" It was the girl who answered, and she spoke positively. I had not noticed that she had returned. She was standing in the doorway behind me.

"Not that we know," said the mother, more guardedly, and with an anxious look at her daughter.

"Did he leave any effects here?"

"You can see the room, like all the rest," she said, with grim impartiality.

"I'd like to."

She led the way up a narrow stairway from the front hall to a rear room on the second floor. She opened the door with a key which she took from her pocket, and stepped inside.

"Land sakes!" she exclaimed.

The reason was clear. The room was all upset. The contents of a trunk, which stood in one corner, were scattered upon the floor, the drawers of the bureau were open, and a writing desk near the window had evidently been thoroughly searched. Every drawer was open, and papers were scattered upon the floor.

"Land sakes!" she repeated. "Gertie, come here."

Gertie came, and swept the room with the unsurprised and comprehending eye of the practical young woman of to-day.

"Some one got in through the window," she said briefly. "You know that clasp doesn't catch. Anybody could get in. Well, I hope they are satisfied now!" From her tone, I understood that she hoped just the opposite.

"We might all have been murdered in our beds!" exclaimed the mother.

"Oh, it wasn't us they were after," said Gertie carelessly. "It was him. I tell you——" She stopped suddenly and bit her lip.

"But who could ever have known that the catch didn't work?" demanded the mother in a baffled manner.

"To whom did you show the room yesterday?" I asked. "Any one who had an opportunity to examine the room inside could have made plans for returning at night."

"Well, first it was the police; and they told me not to let any one touch anything—though I knew that myself. Then there were people all day long—curiosity seekers, I call them. There was one little old gentleman that came up first—I say old, but he was as spry

as any of them. Something like a bird in the way he turned his head."

It suggested Mr. Ellison exactly. "With spectacles?" I asked.

"Yes. Gold-rimmed. Gray hair that curled up at the ends."

"Any one else you remember? Was there a tall young man, fresh-shaven, with rather a blue-black tint where the beard had been taken off?"

"There was!" cried Gertie. "I saw that. He came last night, about seven."

"Well, I didn't let him go up," said the mother. "I was tired bothering with them."

"But you told him which room Mr. Barker had," said Gertie. "Who was he?"

"I don't know," I answered. "I saw such a man with Mr. Barker the other day, and I just asked out of curiosity."

"I will have to report this to the police," said the woman wearily. "No end of trouble. If you please, sir, I'll lock the door now."

"One moment!" I had been standing beside the writing desk, and my eye had caught a few words written on a sheet of letter paper—the beginning of an unfinished letter. "Is this Mr. Barker's writing, do you know?"

The letter read:

MY DEAR WIFE: So I have found my little runaway! Did she think that she could hide away from her hubby? Don't fool yourself, little one!

Gertie had snatched the paper from my hand and read it with startled eyes. "I don't believe it," she said violently. "That—is not his writing." She flung the paper down and left the room.

"What is it?" asked her mother fretfully.

"An unfinished letter to his wife—if it is his."

"We never knew much about him," she said, looking troubled. I could easily guess a part of the story that troubled her.

I had no excuse for further lingering, so I left Mrs. Barrows—she asked my name, and gave me her own at parting—and went down to my office. Fellows was waiting for me; and it struck me at once that his manner was weighted with unusual significance.

"Well?" I asked. He always waited, like a dog, for a sign.

"Barker was married," he said. "He married a Mary Doherty up in Claremont four years ago, when he was forty. She was twenty."

"Is that all you have found out?"

"All so far."

"That's good, so far as it goes, but I can add to it. She ran away from him, is probably now in Saintsbury; and the chances are that it was she who empowered Collier, the undertaker, to arrange for his burial. Advertise in the papers for Mary Doherty, and say that she will learn of something to her advantage by communicating with me. I'll make it to her advantage. Keep the advertisement going until I tell you to stop. That's all."

Fellows went off; and I knew the matter would be attended to faithfully and with intelligence. But several times during the day I noticed that he was unlike himself. He was absent-minded, and he looked unmistakably worried. It frets me to have people about me who are obviously burdened with secret sorrows they will ne'er impart, and I finally spoke.

"What in thunder is the matter with you to-day, Fellows? What's on your mind?"

"Nothing," he said quickly. But, after a minute or so, he looked up with that same disturbed air. "Who would have thought that he had a wife?"

"That's not especially astonishing."

"I never thought that there could be a woman—a woman who could care for him, I mean."

"She probably didn't. She ran away."

"Still, it must have been a terrible shock. And if she cared about burying him——"

"You're too tender-hearted, Fellows," I said. But I confess that I liked his betrayal of sympathy. He was too unemotional, as a rule.

Well, that brings me down to my interview with Garney, which took place that afternoon.

Mr. Garney was one of the regular

faculty at Vandeventer College; and, to meet his convenience, I asked him to fix the time and place for the interview which I desired. He said he would come to my office at four; and he kept his appointment promptly. I had told Jean Benbow that if she would come to my office at half past four, I would take her down to see her brother. She came fifteen minutes ahead of time—and that's how *she* came into the story. Into that part of the story, I mean. But probably I had got all that Garney could tell me before she came in and disconcerted him. I think my first question surprised him.

"Mr. Garney, do you know anything to Eugene Benbow's discredit?"

He looked at me with an intentness that I found was habitual with him, as though he weighed my words before he answered them.

"You don't mean trivial faults?"

"No. I mean anything serious."

He shook his head. "No. He is an exceptionally fine fellow in every way—high-spirited and honorable. I suppose his sensitiveness to his family honor, as he conceives it, may be called a fault, since it has unbalanced him to the extent of leading him into a crime."

"You know of no absorbing entanglement, either with man or woman?"

"No," he said, evidently puzzled by my question.

"Have you ever heard him express vengefulness toward Barker?"

"Oh, yes," he said decidedly. "I know that he has brooded over that. He does not talk of it in general, I believe; but he has been a special pupil of mine, and he has taken me somewhat into his confidence. That Barker should have escaped all punishment for the slaying of his father has worn upon him. He spoke of it only once; but then he expressed himself in such a way that I knew he had been carrying it in his mind a long time."

"Then you believe that he really shot Barker?"

He stared at me, amazed. "Of course."

"You think of nothing that would prompt him to assert his guilt, if, in point of fact, he should not be guilty?"

I never saw a man look more astonished. "If you really mean that, I can only say that I can think of nothing short of insanity which would make him say he shot Barker if he didn't. Why, he has confessed. Do you mean to say that you think the confession false? And if so, why?"

"I am not thinking yet. I am merely gathering facts of all sorts. When I get them all together, I expect to discover the truth, whatever it may be."

"I supposed his confession was conclusive. But I suppose you lawyers get to looking at everything with suspicion. Have you anything to support your extraordinary hypothesis beyond your natural desire to clear your client?"

I had no intention of taking him extensively into my confidence; but I was saved the necessity of answering at all by the opening of my office door. Jean Benbow put her head in, with a shy, childlike dignity.

"Am I too early?" she whispered. "I couldn't wait."

"Come in," I smiled.

She came in, glanced carelessly at my visitor, and walked over to my window. She was dressed in an autumnal brown, with a trim little hat that somehow made her look more mature and less childish than she had seemed before, though still more like a frank, brown-faced boy than a young lady. I saw that Garney's eyes followed her to the window with a look of startled attention.

"I think that is all I wanted to ask you at this time," I said, meaning to imply that the interview was ended.

"Yes," he said irrelevantly, without taking his eyes from Jean.

I rose. "I may come to you again, Mr. Garney——"

At the name, Jean turned swiftly, and came to us.

"Oh, are you Mr. Garney?" she asked eagerly, putting out her hand. "I'm so glad to meet you. Gene has told me about you. I'm Gene's twin sister, Jean."

He looked like a man in a dream; and

I could see that his voice had caught in his throat. He took her hand, and held it, looking down at her.

"I didn't know that Gene had a sister," he said at last.

"If that isn't like a boy," she said, with quick indignation. "At any rate, he has told me about you."

"Nothing bad, I hope?" He smiled faintly; but I felt that he was almost breathlessly waiting for her reassurance.

"Mercy, no! He thinks you know an awful lot." Then she drew back a step, threw up her head to look him steadily in the eye, and said clearly: "Mr. Garney, I think Gene did exactly right. And I am proud of him."

I saw that she meant to permit no misunderstanding as to her position; but I doubted whether Garney cared a rap what she might think. It wasn't her opinions that he cared about. It was herself. I admit that it annoyed me. I wanted to get her out of his sight.

"It is time for us to go, Miss Benbow," I said abruptly.

"You are going down to the jail?" asked Garney quickly. I saw that it was on the tip of his tongue to propose going with us.

"Yes, we are going," I said, looking at him steadily. "You, I believe, are going back to your classroom."

An angry look came over his face as he caught my meaning. I saw that he would not forget it, but I didn't care. Was I to stand by and say nothing while he tumbled his wits at her feet? It was absurd. She wasn't old enough to understand and defend herself. We parted definitely at the street door; and I walked Jean so fast down the block that I was ashamed when I suddenly realized what I was doing.

"I beg your pardon," I said, slowing up.

She had kept up manfully, though breathlessly. "Oh, I like to walk fast," she said stanchly.

"Did you see your brother yesterday?"

"Yes. But only for a minute. And there was a horrid man who kept hanging around in a most ill-bred manner, so that I really couldn't talk to Gene comfortably. I believe he did it on purpose."

"It is quite possible," I admitted.

She looked at me sideways under her long lashes. "Your voice sounds as though you were laughing at me inside."

"Let me laugh with you instead," I said hastily. "The man *was* there on purpose. Prisoners are not allowed to see visitors alone, speaking generally."

She was thoughtful for a few moments. "Then how are we going to arrange to get him out?"

"I thought you were going to leave that to me."

"Not *leave* it to you," she said gently. "Of course I am glad to have you help, because there are lots of times when a man is very useful. But Gene is *my* brother, you know."

"Yes, of course," I said, trying to catch her thought.

"So, of course, I am going to be in it. All the time."

"In what, child?"

"In the plans for his escape." She set her face into lines of determination which I saw was intended to overwhelm any vain opposition that I might raise to her plan.

"A lawyer doesn't usually take that method of getting a man out of prison," I said apologetically. "I hadn't thought of it."

"But isn't it the best way?" she said urgently. "Of course, I don't know as much about the law as you do—of *course* not—but doesn't the law just *have* to do something to a man when he shoots another man—even if he is perfectly right to do it?"

It was an appalling question. I could not answer.

She went on quickly: "So that's why I thought it would be quicker and better, and would settle things once for all, and be done with it. Now, there are lots of ways we can help him to escape. You know we are twins."

"Yes. What of that?"

She hesitated a moment. "Isn't there any way I could get into Gene's

room for a minute without having that horrid man watching?"

"Perhaps. What, then?"

"We could change clothes. I'd wear a raincoat that came down to the ground and a wide hat with a heavy veil, and extra high heels on my shoes. And you'd be there to distract the attention of the horrid man—that would be your part; and it's a very difficult and important part, too. Then Gene would just walk down the corridor—I'd have to remind him to take little steps and not to hurry too much—and then after a while they would come and look into the cell to see if he was all safe, and they'd see me. And I'd just say 'Good day' politely, and walk off." She looked at me eagerly, waiting for my criticism.

I looked as sympathetic as possible. "It's a very pretty plan, Miss Jean; but your brother is quite a bit taller than you are, isn't he? I'm afraid that might be noticed."

She looked crestfallen, but only for a moment. "Then I don't see but what we shall have to get him out through the window," she said.

"I have read of such things," I granted her.

"Oh, yes, I have read quantities of stories where prisoners were helped to escape," she said eagerly. "It always can be done—one way if not another. Last night I was trying to think it out, and I had six plans all thought out. What's the use of being twins if it doesn't count for something?"

"I am sure it counts for a great deal, Miss Jean, even if——"

"But I shall be able to," she cried, cutting across my unspoken words. "I must. Of course, when I am talking to Gene, I am as cheerful as possible, and I don't let him see that I—I'm a *bit* afraid; but truly, you know, I—I—I don't like it." Her lips were quivering.

"Dear child! Now, listen to me. We'll make an agreement. Let me have the first shot in this business. If we can get him out through the front door, with everybody cheering and shaking his hands, that will be better than an escape through the window, and living in hiding and in fear the rest of his life. Won't it? But if that doesn't work—if I see surely that the only way to save him from the vengeance of the law is to steal him away—then I am with you to the bitter end. I'll meet you with disguise, rope ladder; anything you can think of. But let me have my chance first in my own way. Agreed?"

She stopped in the street to put out her hand and shake mine firmly. Her eyes were as bright and steady as pilot lights.

"I think you are perfectly splendid," she said, with conviction. I have forgotten some important things in my life, and I expect to forget a good many more; but I shall never forget the thrill that came to me with that absurd, girlish indorsement! I think it was the way she said it that made it seem so much like a gold medal pinned upon my breast.

"I shall arrange for you to have a quiet talk with your brother, and then I'll leave you for a while. You will probably be watched; but I think you can speak without being overheard. I want you to remember carefully what your brother says."

"And tell you?" she asked doubtfully, leaping ahead of my words, as I found she had a way of doing.

"If he asks you to send a message to any one, or asks about any one in particular, I want to know it. Your brother is keeping something from me, Miss Jean; and I must find out what it is in order to do him justice. I think there is some one else involved in this affair, and that he is keeping silence to his own hurt. Just remember that this is what I must find out about, somehow; and if he says anything—*anything*—that would show who is in his mind, you must tell me."

"I understand," she said, wide-eyed. "But whom could he care for so much as that?"

"You can't help me by a guess?"

"No. I'm afraid not. Gene writes beautiful letters when he wants to; but not like girls' letters, you know. Not about every little thing."

We found Gene, as I had found him before, the polite, nice-mannered boy, evidently trying somewhat anxiously to deport himself as a gentleman should under unrehearsed conditions.

"I have brought your sister for a little visit," I said. "I am coming for her after a little. I have arranged that you shall not be disturbed, so you may talk to her freely and without hesitation."

"Oh, thank you! I hope I am not putting you to any trouble. I'm so sorry, Jean, that you should have to come here to see me. It isn't at all the right place for a girl." He looked as apologetic and disturbed as though he had brought her there inadvertently.

I left them together for half an hour, and then went back for Jean. Eugene detained me for a moment after Jean had said her last cooing good-by.

"I wish you would tell her not to come here," he said anxiously. "It won't look well. I can stand it alone all right. Honest, I can."

I couldn't help liking the boy, though his anxiety to save his sister from unpleasant comment was somewhat inconsistent with his action in bringing this greater anxiety to her.

"I don't believe I could keep her away," I said. "You will have to stand that as a part—of it all."

He flushed in instant comprehension. I should have been ashamed of prodding him if I hadn't felt that it was necessary to make him as uncomfortable as possible in order to get him out of his heroics and make him confess more ingenuously than he had done up to this time.

I joined Jean, and walked to the car with her.

"Well?" I asked.

"He didn't say anything," she answered gravely. "Of course, I told him that I thought he had done exactly right, and that I was proud of him, and that you were going to take care of all the law business and make it all right, and he wasn't to worry, and I would come and see him. Of course, I am not going back to school."

"You will live with your uncle, Mr. Ellison?"

"Yes."

"I'm afraid it will be a lonely and trying time for you. I wish I might do something to make things easier for you. Will you let me know if there ever is anything I can do?"

"You can come and tell me how things are going," she said wistfully. "I don't understand about law, you know, and—it's lonesome waiting. If I could do something——"

"You promised to leave that to me, you know," I said, anxious to keep her from forgetting what an important person I was in this affair.

She did not answer for a moment, and then she looked up with a brave assumption of cheer.

"I'd be ashamed to get blue when Gene is so plucky. He doesn't think about himself at all. He is only worried to death for fear Miss Thurston should be disturbed."

"Is he great friends with Miss Thurston?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. He asked about her first of all, and over and over again. He wanted me to be sure and go and see her at once, and tell her that he is all right."

"Shall I put you on the car here, then? I am going down to St. James' Hospital to see our man."

"Oh, mayn't I go with you?" she cried eagerly. "You know I have a share in him, too."

"Of course you have—a very large share. Yes, come on. We'll see what he has to say for himself."

As it turned out, he had more to say for us than for himself.

CHAPTER IX.

A GLEAM OF LIGHT.

The white-capped attendant at the hospital led us up a flight of broad, easy steps to a large, sunny room, where convalescents were allowed to try their new strength. Here "our man" was sitting in a large armchair, wrapped in a blanket.

"He simply wouldn't stay in bed," the nurse explained, in an undertone.

"He says he must go home; but he really isn't strong enough to walk across the room without help."

"Is there anything the matter with him? Beyond exhaustion, I mean," I asked.

Jean had run across the room, and was bending over the old man with a coaxing concern in her face that was charming. She was like an elfin sprite trying to express sympathy for some poor, huddled-up toad.

"That's enough," said the nurse crisply. "No, there doesn't seem to be anything else wrong. But it will take a week, at least, before he is able to take care of himself. His mind will grow stronger as he does."

"Isn't his mind right?"

"You can talk to him," she said noncommittally. "Don't tire him." And with that she left us.

Jean came running back to meet me, and put me properly into touch with things.

"He isn't happy," she explained hastily. "You must be cheerful and not bother him. Here is Mr. Milton, who has come to see you, Mr. Jordan. Now you can have a nice little talk with *him.*" Her tone indicated that this was, indeed, a privilege which might make up for many slings from unkind fortune.

Mr. Jordan made an impatient gesture, as though he would throw off the blanket which was binding his arms.

"What am I doing here?" he asked querulously. "I want to get away. How did I get here?"

"You fainted away on the street, Mr. Jordan," I answered. "We brought you here to have you taken care of. Of course, you may go as soon as you are able to. Do you want to go home? Wouldn't it be best for some member of your family or some friend to come for you?"

He let his chin sink upon his breast, and closed his eyes. Jean telegraphed me a look of comment, interpretation, and exhortation. I half guessed what she meant; but I was too keen on my own trail to consider making things easy for the old man.

"I believe you came to Saintsbury to look up Alfred Barker," I said quietly.

He did not answer or open his eyes; but I felt that his silence was now alert instead of dormant; and presently a slow shiver ran over his face.

"It was a shock to you to find that he was dead, was it not?"

He roused himself to look at me. "I can't get at Diavolo except through him. He was Diavolo's partner," he said vehemently.

"I am quite ready to believe that," I said heartily. But Jean had the good sense not to be frivolous. She was smoothing the old man's hand softly.

"Who is Diavolo?" she asked simply.

"If I knew! He was careful enough not to give his name." He was trembling with excitement, and his voice broke in his throat.

I began to see that this was a story which I must get, and also that I should have to get it piecemeal from his distracted mind.

"Where did you meet Diavolo?" I asked.

"Why, at Eden Valley."

The name struck an echo in my brain. Of what was Eden Valley reminiscent?

"What was he doing there?" I asked, questioning at hazard.

The old man clutched the arms of his chair with his hands, and leaned forward to look into my face. "You never heard of him?"

"Not a word."

He nodded heavily and sank back in his chair. "He gave a show," he said dully. "In the opery house. To show off how he could hypnotize people." A slow tear gathered in his eye.

I began to get a coherent idea. "Oh, Diavolo was the name assumed for show purposes by a man who went around giving exhibitions of hypnotism. Is that it?"

"Yes."

"What did Alfred Barker have to do with it?"

"He was with him. He was the man that engaged the opery house and done the rest of the business. Diavolo kep' in the background. Nobody knows who Diavolo was; but Alfred Barker left a

trail I could follow." Excitement had made his voice almost strong and brought back a momentary energy.

"What did you want to follow him for?"

His face worked with passion. "To get back my thousand!" he cried, clenching his trembling hands.

"How did he get your thousand?"

"He got it from the bank on a check he made me sign while I was hypnotized."

Suddenly I remembered—Eden Valley, 32.00 plus 1,000. That was a part of the memoranda in Barker's notebook. A memorandum of the profits of their trip. But I must understand it better.

"Did you let Diavolo hypnotize you?" I asked.

"I didn't think he could," the old farmer admitted, hanging his head. "I thought my will was too strong for him to get control of *me*. He called for people to come up from the audience; and I laughed with the rest to see him make fools of the boys—making them eat tallow candles for bananas, and screamed when he threw a cord at them and said it was a snake, and things like that. But I was mighty proud of my strong will; and the boys dared me to go up and let him have a try at me. So I went."

"And did he make you sign a check?" I asked incredulously.

"Not then. That was too public. He knew his business too well for that. But he got control of me." There was something pitiable in the man's trembling admission. "He hypnotized me before I knew it; and, when I came to, I was standing on a chair in the middle of the stage, trying to pull my pants up to my knees, because he had told me that I was an old maid, and there was a mouse on the floor; and the boys out in front were rolling over with laughter."

"That was very unkind," said Jean indignantly.

"I was ashamed, and I was mad," the old man continued. "And I knew the boys would make everlasting fun of me; so next day I went up to see him at the hotel. I thought if I could talk to him, man to man, and without the fancy fixings of the stage, I could maybe find out how it was did. He was pleasant and smiling, and talked easy; and then I don't remember one thing after that. Just a smoke in my mind. I suppose he hypnotized me without my knowing it."

"That is possible, I suppose, since he had had control of your will before. What next?"

"The next thing I knew, I was walking up the road home, feeling queer and dizzy in my head. I couldn't remember how I got out of the hotel, nor nothing. And I didn't know what had really happened until I went to the bank to draw some money a month afterward, and they told me I had checked it all away."

"Is that possible?" I asked doubtfully.

"Easy enough," he said bitterly. "I could see it clear enough afterward. If he could make me believe I was an old maid afraid of a mouse, couldn't he just as easy make me think I owed him a thousand dollars and was making a check to pay it? I had my check book in my pocket when I went there, and it showed my balance, of course. So it was easy enough for them to find out how much they could ask for and not get turned down by the bank. The last check was torn out but the stub not filled in. And the bank showed me the canceled check all right."

"Payable to whom?"

"To Alfred Barker. But he was only the hired man. I could see that. Diavolo was the real one. Barker came and went when *he* lifted his finger. But Alfred Barker's name was on the check so his name wouldn't show. I had time to think it all out afterward."

It was an amazing story; but I could not pronounce it incredible, especially when I recalled that significant "plus" of $1,000 at Eden Valley, in Barker's memorandum book.

"What did you do about it? Anything?"

"I tried to follow them. Diavolo showed in other places, and I thought I could find them. I see there wasn't no use going to law about it, because I couldn't deny that I had signed the

check; and I understand it ain't against the law to hypnotize a man. But if I could find them, I bet I could get some satisfaction out of Barker's hide if I could catch him alone. I wasn't going to take any more chances with Diavolo." He shuddered.

"You never caught up with them?"

"No. They had always just gone on. Then they stopped the show business, and I lost track of them till I heard that Barker was in Saintsbury. I came as fast as I could, but—I was too late." His head fell forward on his breast, and he looked ready to collapse. His loss, the long pursuit, the disheartening ending had broken him.

Jean looked at me anxiously, and I understood; but it seemed to me too important to get all the information possible from the old man at once to give more than the barest consideration to his feelings. I poured a little whisky into the cup of my pocket flask, and, after he had choked it down, he looked more equal to further cross-examination.

"Did you ever hear Barker address Diavolo by name?" I asked.

"No. I tell you he was the hired man."

"What did Diavolo look like?"

"He was about your height and build. Thin, dark face. Long black hair and a soft, black beard. Queer eyes that gave you the shivers."

It was not an identifying description. Probably nineteen men out of twenty are of my height and build, which is in all respects medium. The long hair and black beard were probably stage properties; and the queer eyes might be merely Mr. Jordan's afterthought of what the hypnotizer's eyes ought to be.

"Would you know him again if you saw him without his hair and beard?"

He looked surprised, and then doubtful. "I don't know."

But at this point the attendant nurse came up, and intimated plainly that I was a trespasser and transgressor, and that the interview was ended.

"I'll come to-morrow and take you out for a drive if the doctor thinks you are strong enough to go," I said, by way of keeping the door open for further details.

"I must go home," he said querulously.

"The faster you get strong, the sooner you can go. Till to-morrow, then."

Jean walked beside me quietly and sedately till we were outside. Then she turned to me with a flash of intense feeling.

"What are you going to do for him?"

"Find Diavolo," I answered promptly.

"And make him give back the thousand dollars?"

"If possible," I answered absently.

My mind was more actively engaged with other features of the story than with the defrauding of the old farmer; and I was not sorry when I could put Jean on her car, so that I could wander off by myself to think the matter over. How far, if at all, this affair of Diavolo might have a bearing upon the murder mystery was uppermost in my mind.

Suppose Diavolo and his "hired man" had quarreled? Suppose they had quarreled to the death? It was, of course, quite probable that a man of Barker's type would have many enemies; but here I was dealing not with probabilities, but with a fact, however small it might be. There had been, in the recent past, an intimate relation between Barker and a man who was capable of touring the country as a hypnotist; a man who concealed his identity—— Ha, a motive! They had quarreled over the division of the thousand dollars, and Barker had threatened to expose him. His own death had followed.

This chain had developed so rapidly and vividly in my imagination that it was a cold shock when my common sense recalled that I must establish some connection between Diavolo and Gene Benbow to make the thread complete. Whatever part Gene had played or had not played in the tragedy itself, he had confessed to the shot. The confession itself was a fact, and must be accounted for, whether the thing confessed was a fact or not.

Up to this time, the only theory in my mind that was compatible with Gene's innocence was the theory of ro-

mantic self-sacrifice on his part. I had felt that if he was not guilty, he was trying to save some one who was. Whom would Gene Benbow wish to save at any cost? Who had killed Barker? Who was Diavolo? Would one name answer all three questions?

That was what I must find out.

CHAPTER X.

WAYS THAT ARE DARK.

My preliminary investigations along the Diavolo trail extended over considerable time, and were intertwined with various other matters of more or less interest; but I shall condense the account here, so as to get on to the more intricate affairs that followed.

To begin with, I wrote to the theatrical manager of each and every town that appeared listed in Barker's notebook, asking if Diavolo had appeared there, under what management he had come, what his real name was, how he could be reached, and whether they had any letter, contract, or other writing of his. Then I wrote to the metropolitan agencies, and to various bureaus of information in the larger cities, and to all the public and private societies and persons whom I knew to have an interest in the occult; asking, in a word, if they knew who Diavolo was, and how and where one might come into communication with him. I threw out these baited lines in every direction that I could think of.

Very soon the first answers came in. After I had received three or four, I began to make bets with myself on the contents of the next one, though it soon became obviously unsportsmanlike to wager on what was so near a certainty. They were all alike. The man who had been placarded as Diavolo had never been seen anywhere until he had come to the theater in the evening for the performance. All business matters had been handled by his agent, Alfred Barker. Barker had made the arrangements beforehand, sometimes by letter, sometimes in person, and he had always accompanied Diavolo at the time of the performance and looked after everything.

One imaginative manager wrote:

> Barker looked out for Diavolo as carefully as though he were a prima donna with a ten-thousand-dollar throat. Shouldn't wonder but what he was a woman, come to think of it. He had a squeaky kind of voice on the stage, and he kept to himself in a very noticeable way. He wore a beard, but it may have grown in a store. I know his hair came out of a shop all right.

Most of the answers were less imaginative, but equally unsatisfactory. Barker had stood in front of Diavolo and shielded him from observation so effectively that no one but Barker really knew what he looked like. And Barker could not now be consulted.

Before long I began to receive answers to the inquiries I had flung farther afield as to the reputation of Diavolo among those who might be supposed to know all professional hypnotists. These replies were also of a surprising and disappointing uniformity. No one working under that name was known. Most of my correspondents contented themselves with this bald assertion; but some of them made suggestions which led me on to further inquiry.

One man suggested that Diavolo might possibly be one Jacob Hahnen, who had disappeared from the professional field some two years before, following his arrest on account of the death on the stage of one of his hypnotized victims, while in a state of trance. That looked like a plausible suggestion, and I at once engaged a detective to trace Jacob Hahnen. I may say here—not to mislead you as far as I was misled—that Hahnen established a perfect alibi, so that pursuit went for nothing.

I did not waste time or money on another suggestion, which was to the effect that a famous hypnotist, who was supposed to have died in California some years ago, might have gone into retirement for reasons of his own, and have come out of it temporarily under an alias. It might, of course, be possible, but there was nothing tangible to work upon.

One thing became clear to me in the

course of this investigation. There were more professional hypnotists in the country than I had had any idea of, and their ways were dark and devious. They were accustomed to work under assumed names, and more or less to cover their tracks and hide in burrows. I came across some quite amazing literature on the subject—circulars issued by Schools of Hypnotism, offering to teach, in a course of so many lessons, for so much money, the art of controlling people by occult power.

"A knowledge of this wonderful faculty," one announcement claimed, "will enable you to control the will of the person to whom you are talking, without his consent or even his knowledge. Think of the advantage this will give you in your business! All taught in twenty lessons, mailed in plain cover."

"Lies and nonsense," I said to myself. But something within me bristled uneasily, as at the approach of an evil spirit. It had not been nonsense to poor old William Jordan.

I took to reading scientific books on hypnotism, to discover what powers or disabilities were actually admitted or claimed for this abnormal state. It was not quite so bad as the commercial exploitation of the subject; but it was disquieting enough. In general, it seemed to be assumed that a normal person could not be hypnotized without his consent the first time; but that if he once yielded to the will of the hypnotizer, his own will would be so weakened thereby that afterward he might find it quite impossible to resist. It was a moot question whether a person could be compelled to commit a crime while in a hypnotized state. Some writers insisted that a person's moral principles would guide him, even though his mind and will were paralyzed. I confess it looked to me to be open to question. Morality is generally more of a surface matter than mind, and would therefore be more easily bent.

It was a tremendous relief to get away from this commerce with the powers of darkness to talk with Jean Benbow—though my part in the conversation was not conspicuous. I was rather like the wooden trellis upon which she could train her flowers of fancy.

William Jordan grew stronger under the care of the hospital; but he was not a young man, and he had had a heartbreaking experience. It was some time before he was equal to the return to Eden Valley; and in the meantime I saw as much of him as I could, encouraging him to talk about Diavolo whenever he was in the mood, in the hope that something might develop which would serve me as a clew. Several times I took him out driving; and, whenever possible, I got Jean to go with us. This was partly because the old man had taken a fancy to her, and she put him at his talkative ease; and partly because she was a delightful little companion on her own account.

One day, when we were out toward the suburbs, she said suddenly: "Oh, let's go down that street."

We went accordingly, and came presently to a quaint old church covered with ivy.

"That is where I am to be married," said Jean, with quiet seriousness. She leaned forward as we drew nearer to watch it intently.

"Really!" I exclaimed. "May I ask if the day is set?"

"Oh, no," she said simply. "I only mean that when I am married, I shall be married in that church."

"Why, pray?"

"My mother was married there," she said gently; and a look of moonbeams came into her eyes.

"Oh! That makes it seem more reasonable. But aren't you taking a good deal for granted in assuming that you are going to be married? Maybe you will grow up to be a nice little old maid, with a tabby cat and a teapot. What then?"

She did not answer my foolish gibe for a minute, and I feared I had offended her. But after a moment she said, with that quaint seriousness of hers:

"Do you know that is a very hard question to decide. I have thought about it so often. It would be very splendid, of course, to fall in love with some great

hero, and go through all sorts of awful tragedies, and then have it come out happily in the end; and, of course, one would have to be married *if* it came out happily, though it is kind of hard to think of what would happen next that would be interesting enough to make a proper climax, don't you think so? *Just* to live happy ever after seems sort of tame. So I have wondered whether, on the whole, it would not be more romantic to cherish a secret passion and grow old like withered rose leaves, and have faded letters tied with a worn ribbon to be found in your desk when you were dead."

I considered the situation with proper seriousness. "Who would write the letters?" I asked.

"Oh——"

"Some young man who was desperately in love with you, of course?"

"Why, yes," she admitted.

"Well, what would you do with him? I don't believe any young man with proper feelings on the subject would be willing to efface himself in order to let you cherish his memory. He'd rather you would cherish him. I'm sure I should if it were I."

"Oh!" she murmured, with a startled dismay that was delicious.

"Did you happen to have any young man in particular in mind?" I asked. "Or is the position vacant?"

She looked up at me from under thick eyelashes in a rather bewildering way. "Quite vacant," she said.

"I'm supposed to be rather a good letter writer," I suggested.

"I should have to be particular if they are going to last a long time and be read over and over again," she said demurely. "Have you had any experience in writing that special kind of a letter?" The sly puss!

"No experience at all. But you would find me willing to learn and industrious."

"I'll consider your application," she said, with dignity. "But I haven't yet decided that, on the whole, I should not prefer a wedding to a package of yellow letters. I don't know. I can just see myself sitting by a window in the fading twilight, with those letters in my lap, and it looks awfully interesting. But it would be disconcerting—isn't that the right word?—if no one else saw how romantic and beautiful it was. Of course, I should know myself, and that counts for a good deal; but it does seem more *lonesome* than a wedding when you come to think of it. Doesn't it?"

"It certainly does. Whatever you may have to say against weddings, they are not lonesome."

"Oh, well, I don't have to decide just yet," she said, with an air of relief. "It is a long way off. Only, if I ever *do* get married, it will be in that little church, no matter if I am off at the north pole when I am engaged and intend to go back there to set up housekeeping the next day. I made a vow about it, so as to be quite sure that I should have the strength of mind to insist on it. When you have made a vow, you just have to carry it out, you know, in spite of torrents or floods or anything."

I agreed heartily. And the time came when the memory of that foolish chatter just about saved my reason.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SIMMERING SAMOVAR.

One day it occurred to me to ask Fellows if he was keeping up my advertisement for Mary Doherty, from which I had heard nothing so far. His start and confusion were an obvious confession.

"N-no, not now. I did run it several times."

"I told you to keep it in until further orders. Don't you remember?"

He did not answer. I could not understand his manner.

"I am sorry if you didn't understand. We have probably lost an opportunity—certainly have lost time. I count on getting important information from Mrs. Barker, if we can find her."

"What sort of information?" asked Fellows doggedly. I thought he was trying to minimize the results of his neglect.

"Well, almost any information that

would enable us to fix Barker's associates would probably be valuable. More particularly I want to find out whether there is any one who wants to marry her, and who couldn't while Barker was alive."

I succeeded in attracting Fellows' attention, at least. He stared at me in silence, as though he were turning the thought over.

"I'll advertise again," he said, but without enthusiasm.

I think it was that day that I had a disconcerting interview with Burleigh, the editor of the Saintsbury *Samovar*. I have mentioned, I believe, that some independent, public-spirited citizens were trying to make Clyde run for mayor. It was one of those anti-ring waves of reform which strike a city once in so often, and are temporarily successful because good business men work at them for a season. The success is seldom if ever more than temporary, because the good business men go back to their jobs as soon as things are running smoothly, while the ring politicians never really drop their jobs for a minute.

Well, Clyde had cold-shouldered the proposition, but rather half heartedly. Probably there is no man living who does not have some political ambition. Certainly Clyde had it. With his wide interest in public matters, his natural power over men, and his ancestry and associations, I knew that nothing but the shadow of fear at his elbow had kept him out of the political game; and I was therefore not surprised when, a few days after the Barker tragedy had ceased to occupy the upper right-hand corner of the first page of the newspapers, that space was given up to announcing that Kenneth Clyde had consented to accept the reform party's nomination. I sympathized with the relief which I knew lay back of the acceptance.

This was the political situation when I met Burleigh. He was the editor of the evening paper which supported the ring and damned reform; and, of course, I knew where he stood as regards Clyde's candidacy. But when he stopped me on the street that noon, he didn't speak of Clyde.

"Hello, how's the lawyerman?" he said, taking my hand where it hung by my side, and shaking it without regard to my wishes in the matter.

I resented his familiarity with my hand and with my profession; but the convention of politeness, which makes it impossible for us to tell people our real feelings about them, constrained me to civility.

"Very well, thank you," I said carelessly, and made a move to go on my way.

He turned, and fell into step with me.

"I'd like to ask what you lawyers call a hypothetical question," he said. "Just a joke, you understand—a case some of the boys were talking about in our office. Read of it in some novel, I guess. Some said it would be that way, and some said it wouldn't. In law, you know."

"Well, what is the question?" I asked, as politely as my feelings would permit. Funny idea people have, that a lawyer learns law for the purpose of supplying gratuitous opinions to chance acquaintances! I shouldn't think of asking Burleigh to send me the *Samovar* for a year just to satisfy my curiosity.

"Why, it's this: If a man has been convicted of murder—the man in the story was—and then makes his escape and lives somewhere else for twenty years or so, and is finally discovered and identified, how does he stand in regard to the law?"

You may guess how I felt! The hypothetical case was so exactly Clyde's case that for a moment my brain was paralyzed. I was so afraid of betraying my surprise that I did not speak. I merely nodded and smoked, and kept my eyes on the ground.

"There's no statute of limitations to run on a sentence of the court, is there?" he asked eagerly.

"No," I said, with professional deliberation. "No, if you are sure that you have your facts all straight. But you don't often get law entirely disentangled from facts; and they often have unex-

pected facts on a question. What novel did you get that from?"

"Oh, I don't know. I just heard the boys talking about it, and I wondered."

But he looked so eager that I could not help feeling the question was more significant to him than mere literary curiosity would explain.

"You think, then, that there might be some element in the situation that would, perhaps, complicate it?" he asked.

"It is never safe to form an opinion without knowing all the facts," I said oracularly.

"But if the facts are as I stated them —an escape from justice after conviction, and nothing else—then the man is still liable to the law, isn't he?"

"Probably," I said, with a shrug intended to intimate that the matter was of no special interest to me. "How did it turn out in your story?"

Burleigh looked at me sideways for a moment. Then he said imperturbably: "Why, I believe he made the mistake of going into politics, and so the thing came out. He was hung—in the story. Politics is no place for a man who has a past that he doesn't want to have come out."

"No doubt you are right about that," I said lightly.

"Of course I am. I'm in the business," he said emphatically. "If a man has a past—that sort of a past, I mean —he ought to know enough to stick to —philanthropy or architecture or collecting, or something else nice and private. This your street? Well, good day, Mr. Hilton. Glad I met you." He tipped his hat and left me.

You can imagine the state of my mind. I puzzled over the situation for an hour, and then telephoned Clyde, and asked him to drop into my office.

Clyde came that same afternoon. I told him of the Burleigh interview as directly as possible.

"Now you can judge for yourself whether it means anything sinister," I concluded.

"The *Samovar* is for the ring, of course," he said thoughtfully.

"Of course. And Burleigh's recommendation that a man in that predicament should confine himself to architecture, or some kindred avocation, instead of trying to break into politics, didn't sound altogether accidental."

He nodded comprehendingly, and smoked in silence for a few moments. Then he looked up with a smile.

"I think I'll go on the theory that it was accidental."

I hadn't expected that, and I couldn't approve.

"As your lawyer, I must warn you that you are taking a serious risk," I said earnestly. "If Barker shared his secret with some one, who has gone with it to Burleigh, you are exactly in your old situation. It would be better to let the sleeping *Samovar* lie and give up the mayoralty."

He continued to smoke for a minute; but I saw the obstinate look in his eye that a mettled horse takes on when he doesn't mean to heed your hints.

"You don't understand, Hilton," he said, after a moment; "but since Barker's death I have felt free for the first time in fifteen years. I like the sensation. Very likely I have gone drunk on it and lost my senses; but I like the feeling so much that I am going to snap my fingers at Burleigh and pretend that he has no more power to influence my actions than he would have had if—well, if Tom Johnson had never got into trouble."

"You think the mayoralty is worth the risk?" I asked.

"The mayoralty? No! Not for a minute. But—this sense of freedom is."

"But it is your freedom that you are risking."

He stood up; and, though I could not commend his judgment, I had to admire his courage. There was something finely determined in his attitude as he tossed away his cigar and put his hands in his pockets.

"I am going to have it out with my evil destiny this time," he said, with a quick laugh. "Better be hung than to skulk longer. I shall go on the theory that Burleigh has merely been reading some giddy detective stories."

"Don't forget that there are some crimes which don't achieve the immortality of a detective story, because they are never explained," I said warningly.

He merely smiled; but I knew my warning would go for nothing—and secretly I was glad. There are things more to be desired than safety.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE TRAIL OF DIAVOLO.

Jordan gained rapidly in strength, and was soon in condition to return, a sadder, wiser, and poorer man, to Eden Valley. I determined, however, to accompany him, and see if I could gather any further details about the serpent, my inquiries by mail bringing, as I have told you, but unsatisfactory answers. But before leaving Saintsbury, I called again upon my client in the jail. I found him, as always, the gentle, nice-mannered, puzzling youth.

"I am going away for a while in your interests," I said by way of greeting.

"That's awfully good of you," he said gratefully. Then, with polite concern, he added: "I hope you aren't giving yourself any trouble——"

"Oh, I shan't mind a little inconvenience when it is in the way of business," I said dryly. "It may be a matter of entire indifference to you, but I want to win my case."

"Oh, yes, of course," he said, with anxious courtesy. I could see that he had no idea of what I meant. There was no use trying to arouse him in that way, and I might as well accept his attitude.

"Did you know that Barker had a partner?" I asked abruptly.

He shook his head with an air of distaste. "No. I know nothing about him. I shouldn't, you know."

"You never heard of Diavolo?"

"Not the opera?" he asked doubtfully.

"No. A professional hypnotist with whom Barker was connected in a business way."

"No. I never heard of him."

"Did you ever hear of William Jordan? Or of Eden Valley?"

"No." He looked puzzled.

"I have an idea that it may have been Diavolo who shot Barker," I said carelessly.

He looked surprised; and then, deferentially and hesitatingly, he expressed his dissent.

"I suppose you feel that you have to fight for me, as my lawyer, but—what's the use in this case? I don't understand these things, of course; but I'd rather have it settled with as little fuss as possible. I shot him, and I am not sorry, and—I'd like to have it all over with as soon as possible." His voice was steady enough; and the gallant lift of his head made me think of his sister; but I thought I saw a look of dread somewhere back in his eye. Perhaps he was beginning to weaken. I determined to press the point a little.

"And yet it is a pity to have your life run into the sand in that way," I said earnestly. "There might be much for you in the future—success, love, honor——" I watched him closely. His face quivered under the probe; but he did not speak.

"Miss Thurston is heartbroken," I added relentlessly.

He looked at me as a dumb animal under the knife might look; and then he dropped his face into his hands. I pressed the matter while he was at my mercy.

"If you did *not* shoot Barker—if you are, in fact, innocent—don't, for Heaven's sake, let any foolish idea of saving some one else lead you to lie about it. There could be no one worthy of saving at that cost. And, besides, if you are lying, I am going to find out the truth in spite of you."

He lifted his head, but he did not look at me.

"I am not lying. Why should I? I supposed any one would believe a man who said he had done—a thing like that."

"I wish you would tell me about it again—just what you did," I said. I wanted to see if his story would vary.

He dropped his eyes to the floor

thoughtfully. "I went to his office," he said slowly. "I went through the outer office and into the inner office. They were both empty. I locked the door, and waited. I watched through a hole in the curtain over the glass in the door. A man came in, waited a little, and went out. Then Barker came. I waited till he came close to the door. Then I fired. I saw him fall. Then I went down the fire escape and got out into the street."

As he finished, he raised his eyes from the floor and looked at me. His glance was not entirely frank, and yet I could not call it evasive.

"There was no one else in the room with you?"

"No one."

"You saw no one else at any time except the man who came into the outer office?"

"No one else."

"And him you do not know?"

"No."

"If I should tell you it was I?"

He looked at me, puzzled and doubtful. "Was it you?"

"Wouldn't you know? Didn't you see the man's face?"

He hesitated. "No—no."

"Then how did you know it wasn't Barker?"

"Why—it wasn't."

"Since you meant to give yourself up to the police, why did you go down the fire escape instead of out through the hall?"

He looked distressed. "I—don't know." Then he seemed to gather his ideas together. "My mind is confused about much that happened that night, Mr. Hilton. The only thing that stands out very clearly is the fact that I shot him. And that is the only thing that is really important, isn't it?"

And that was the most that I got out of the interview.

I had to admit, in face of this, that it was partly obstinacy which made me hold to the idea that he was not telling the whole truth. The fact that he had not recognized me, though he must have had me under close observation for a long time, and the fact that some one in the inner room had been eating apples, and that some one not he—this was really all I had to support my point of view. But these were facts, both of them; and a fact is a very obstinate thing. A very small fact is enough to overthrow a whole battalion of fair-seeming fabrications. I felt that I was not throwing in my fortune with the weaker side when I determined to follow the lead of those two small facts to the bitter end.

The pursuit led me, in the first place, to Eden Valley. I took poor William Jordan to his home, a farm lying just outside of the village, and not more than two hundred miles from Saintsbury, and then I returned to the village. It was a country town of about two thousand, with one main hotel. I judged that Diavolo and Barker would have to lodge there if anywhere; and on inquiry I found my guess correct. They were not forgotten.

"Oh, that hypnotist chap!" said the landlord. "Yes, he was here in the summer. Had a show at the Masonic Hall. Say, that's a great stunt, isn't it? Ever see him?"

"No. What was he like?"

"Oh, he was made up, you know—Mephistopheles style. Black, pointed beard and long black hair, and a queer glittering eye."

"But when he was not made up? You saw him here in the hotel in his natural guise, didn't you?"

"Nope. Funny thing that. He kept in his room, and the man that was with him—Barker I think his name was—he did the talking and managed everything. Diavolo acted as though he didn't want to be seen off the stage. Wore a long cape and a slouch hat when he went out, and had his meals all sent up."

"Was he tall or short?"

"Medium. Rather slim. Long, thin hands. Say, when he waved those hands before the face of that old farmer sitting on a chair on the stage, it was enough to make the shivers run down your back. I don't know whether it was all a fake or not. Most people here think it was; but, I swan, it was creepy."

"Did you know the farmer?"

"Oh, yes—old Jordan. Lives near here. Terrible set up about having a strong will, and said nobody could hypnotize him. Say, it was funny to see him think he was a cat chasing a rat; and then suddenly believe that he was an old maid and scared to death of a mouse, and jumping up on a chair and screaming in a squeaky little voice."

"Diavolo woke him up, didn't he?"

"Oh, yes. And then the old man tore things around. He came here the next day to see the man in the daylight, and dare him to try it again."

"Did he do it?" I asked, wondering how much of Jordan's story was known to his neighbors.

"Oh, I guess not. He went up to Diavolo's room, I remember; and when he came out he wouldn't talk, but just went off home."

"And you never heard Diavolo's real name?"

"Nope. Trade secret, I suppose. Probably born Bill Jones, or something else that wouldn't look as well on the billboards as Diavolo."

I went to the Masonic Hall, where the "show" was given; but there I met the same difficulties. Barker had made all the arrangements and been the mouthpiece. The mysterious Diavolo had appeared only at the last moment, cloaked and made up for stage effect, and had held no conversation with any one. They all thought his assumption of mystery a part of his profession. I saw in it a persistent care to hide his identity. I could only hope that some momentary carelessness or some accident would give me a clew. His very anxiety to hide his real name made more plausible my theory that Barker's knowledge of it might have been the occasion of his death. In the olden times, the masons who constructed the secret passages under castle and moat were usually slain when the work was done, as the most effective way of insuring their silence.

From Eden Valley I went to Illington, the next place mentioned in Barker's memorandum book. Here it was much the same. The two men had stopped at the hotel overnight; but Diavolo had kept out of sight, while Barker had transacted all the business and made all the arrangements. I realized that I was dealing with people who used concealment as a part of their business.

The same story met me at Sweet Valley, at Lyndale, at Hawthorn, at Dickinson. It was not until I reached Junius that I found what I had hoped for and had begun to despair of finding —a personal recollection of Diavolo.

"Oh, yes," the landlady at the hotel said. "He was here. Raised the —— I should say, raised his namesake with a toothache." She was a jolly landlady; and she laughed at her own near profanity till she shook. She had probably worked the same joke off before.

I smiled—it wasn't hard, in face of her own jollity. "What did he do?" I asked.

"Oh, ramped up and down his room just like an ordinary man. Couldn't eat his supper. Kept a hot-water bottle to his face; though I told Mr. Barker it was the worst thing he could do. Mr. Barker was distracted. It was getting to be near the hour for the performance, and Diavolo wouldn't go on. Not that I blame him. A jumping tooth is enough to upset even a wizard."

"How did it turn out?"

"Oh, he went to a dentist and had it out, and——"

Things danced before my eyes. I felt like shouting, "Now hast thou delivered mine enemy into my hands." It seemed almost incredible that what I could hardly have dreamed of as a possibility could be the plain, actual fact.

"Do you know what dentist he visited?" I asked, trying to speak casually.

"Oh, yes. Mr. Barker inquired at the office, and went with him. Diavolo was very careful about not being seen; and even then he wore a wig. I knew it was a wig, because he had got it crooked tossing about, and some light hairs showed about his ears."

"What dentist did you send him to?" I asked anxiously.

"Doctor Shaw."

"And he isn't dead or moved away, or anything like that?"

"Oh, no! He has his office right around the corner. He boards in the house, and I always like to throw business in the way of my boarders when I can."

"I think I shall have to see him on my own account," I said. I almost expected an earthquake to swallow up Doctor Shaw before I could get around the corner; but I found the office still in place, all right, and the doctor himself looking rather pathetically glad to see some one enter. He was a dapper little man, with a silky mustache and an eternal smile.

"What can I do for you?" he asked gently and caressingly.

"I am not in need of your professional services, Doctor Shaw; but I should like to obtain some information from you, if you will allow me to take some of your time at your regular rates. I am a lawyer, and I am anxious to establish the identity of a man who was here in the summer under the name of Diavolo—a professional hypnotist. Mrs. Goodell, of the Winslow House, tells me that she sent him to you to be relieved of a toothache."

"Yes, I remember. I extracted a tooth for him," Doctor Shaw said at once. "I could perhaps have saved it, but it would have required treatment, and he insisted upon having it extracted, as he was to appear on the stage that evening."

"Was there anything peculiar about the formation of his jaw, do you remember? Any irregularity, for instance?"

The dentist smiled. "Yes. Decided irregularity. His jaw was peculiarly long and narrow, and the teeth, which were large, were crowded. On both sides, the upper teeth formed a V."

"Like this?" I asked, taking from my pocket the model which Kenton had made for me.

"Exactly like that," he said, after examining it critically. "Wasn't this made from his mouth?"

"That is what I want to ascertain."

"It would be extraordinary to find two persons with the same marked peculiarity," he said thoughtfully.

"Would that peculiarity be enough to establish the man's identity?" I asked.

"Perhaps not. But I could identify Diavolo positively and beyond question, if that is what you mean. There were other distinguishing marks. The first lower left molar was gone, and replaced by a bridge, for instance. And the second molars in the upper jaw had both been extracted—probably to relieve the crowding. The conformation was unmistakable, and very unusual."

"Then if I ever get my hands on Diavolo, you can identify him, regardless of grease paint and wig?"

"Unquestionably."

"I hope most heartily that I may be able to give you the opportunity. You have done me a great service as it is. For the present, I can only tell you that your information will serve the cause of justice."

Can you guess my elation? I should certainly have astonished the staid people of the prim little town if I had allowed myself to express the state of my feelings. My wild-goose chase had not been so wild, after all. I had not yet bagged the game, to be sure; but I felt that I had winged it. Certainly I ought to be able to convince any jury that if Barker's former partner was in the room from which the fatal shot had been fired, the chances were strong that he had had something to do with it. And that he was there I could prove. The apple in which he had left the imprint of his curiously irregular teeth was freshly bitten; and the toothache which had driven the cautious Diavolo from his cover of silence and forced him, by stress of physical agony, to the intimate personal relation of a patient with his dentist had identified him as the man. It only remained to find—him.

What Eugene Benbow's connection with the affair could have been was so much of a mystery that I could form no conjecture. One thing at a time. When I had unearthed Diavolo, the other things might clear themselves up.

Sometimes one missing piece will make a puzzle fall into shape and everything appear coherent.

I had been away from Saintsbury on this search for over a week, and I was anxious to get back. I wanted to find out whether my advertisement for Mary Doherty had brought any answer. I wondered whether Benbow had grown more communicative. I wanted to see Jean, who must be having a time of it, living with her queer, unaffectionate guardian. I wondered whether Fellows had attended to things at the office. But I didn't think of the one thing that had actually happened. I found out what it was when the newsboys came on the train with the Saintsbury papers. The evening *Samovar* had exploded. It had come out with Clyde's story.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE "SAMOVAR" EXPLODES.

The Saintsbury papers were thrown on our train several stations beyond the town. I got one, of course, and unfolded it with a cheerful feeling of being near home again—and there stared at me from the first page the glaring headlines:

CLYDE A CRIMINAL

THE REFORM CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR A FUGITIVE FROM JUSTICE

Amazing Record of Crime and Concealment Discovered by the *Samovar*

I tore my way through the leaded paragraphs. The only thing that was news to me was the clew on which the *Samovar* had worked.

According to the high-flown account, Barker had left at the *Samovar* office, on the night on which he was killed, a large, sealed envelope addressed to himself, with the added direction:

> If this is not called for within five days, it is to be opened by the managing editor of the *Samovar*.

It would appear that this was the errand that had occupied Barker while I waited for him in his office. I could not refrain from pausing to admire the rascal's cleverness. He was anticipating—not the death which came so swiftly, but—a visit from Clyde, or possibly Clyde's representative; and he had adroitly made it impossible for Clyde to control the situation by force or coercion. The story was written out and in the hands of the paper which would most gladly profit by the disclosure, though it was still, for five days, subject to Barker's own recall if he were properly treated. It certainly was a reserve of the most unquestionable value in diplomatic negotiations.

The *Samovar* went on to say that, after the sensation of Barker's death, the envelope had been held inviolate for the specified time, and had then been opened by Burleigh in the presence of witnesses.

The story as written by Barker was then set forth in full. It recited briefly that Barker had been present at a court trial in Houston, Texas, some fifteen years before, at which one Tom Johnson had been convicted of the murder of a man named Henley, and sentenced to death. The prisoner had escaped from the sheriff immediately after conviction, and had never been captured. Then Mr. Barker proceeded:

> Two or three years ago I saw Mr. Kenneth Clyde in Saintsbury, and, greatly to my surprise, I recognized in him the missing Tom Johnson. I charged him with the identity, and he did not deny it. He then and afterward freely admitted to me that he was the man who, under another name, had been convicted of murder and had made his escape. I have refrained from making this information public out of consideration for Mr. Clyde, but I feel it a public duty to leave this record where, if certain contingencies should arise, it may be found.

The contingency which the writer had in mind was probably a refusal on the part of Clyde to continue paying blackmail. That would undoubtedly have made Mr. Barker's public duty weigh upon his tender conscience.

The *Samovar* then went on to say that the story at first seemed incredible, and therefore the witnesses were all sworn to secrecy until the matter could

be investigated. A special representative had been sent to Texas to look it up. The writer then modestly emphasized the difficulties of the undertaking, and his own astonishing cleverness in mastering them. He had actually found the court records to establish the tale of the late lamented Mr. Barker, whose untimely taking off with this public service still unperformed would, under the present political circumstances, have been nothing less than a civic calamity. Tom Johnson had been convicted of the treacherous and bloody murder of his friend.

The details were then given in substantial agreement with the story which Clyde had told me, and the happy historian went on to say:

> But who would have guessed, who would have dared suggest, who would have ventured to believe, that this obscure criminal, snatching the stolen cloak of freedom from the heedless hands of careless officials, and skulking off with it by the underground passages known to the criminal classes—who would have believed that this false friend, this wretch, this felon, was none other than the reform candidate for mayor of Saintsbury?
>
> The charge is so incredible that we may well be asked: Where lies the proof of identity, beyond the word of Alfred Barker, now cold in death? The man who so long had successfully covered up his past may well have felt, when Barker met his tragic fate, that at last he could walk in security, since the one witness who, in a period of fifteen years, had identified him, was now disposed of.
>
> But murder will out. The truth, though crushed to earth, will live again. The sun in the heavens has been summoned as a witness. While Tom Johnson was in jail, awaiting trial, an enterprising paper of the place secured several photographs of the prisoner. These our representative found in an old file of the paper. We reproduce below, side by side, the photographs of Tom Johnson, lying under an unexecuted sentence for murder, and of Kenneth Clyde, reform candidate for mayor. They speak for themselves.

They did, indeed. It was like a blow in the face to see the pictures side by side, even in the coarse newspaper print. The handsome, defiant face of the younger man had been softened and refined, and had grown thoughtful—but it was the same face. If Clyde had wanted to deny the accusation—though I knew that he would not think for a moment of that course—it would have been fruitless. The photographs made it impossible.

As I studied them, I thought that any woman who loved him—his mother or another—should certainly be ready to give thanks on her knees for the changes that the fifteen years had wrought. As a young fellow, he had clearly been rather *too* handsome. That any man with so much of the "beauty of the devil" had been marked by the stars for a tumultuous career was most obvious. There was spiritual tragedy in every lineament. On the other hand, there was no deviltry in the seriously handsome face of the man of to-day. You did not even think first of his good looks, the deeper significance of character had so come to the surface. Certainly, the shadow under which Clyde had lived had fostered the best in him.

The newspaper scribe ended his paragraph with a cruel innuendo:

> The sudden death of Alfred Barker at a time when Clyde had most to fear from the secret in his knowledge would have had a sinister appearance, if that apparent mystery had not been promptly solved by the confession of Eugene Benbow. Clyde should acknowledge his indebtedness to the convenient Benbow.

The fact that I had had a bad quarter of an hour convincing myself that Clyde had had nothing to do with the matter did not make me less indignant with the astute newspaper scribbler. And I saw further complications in the subject. If I cleared Gene—as I fully meant to do—it would be necessary to do it by bringing the real murderer to light. To clear Gene by simply proving that he was not on the spot—assuming that to be possible—would be merely to transfer the shadow of doubt to Clyde. It was a bad tangle.

The moment I reached the Saintsbury station, I tried to get into communication with Clyde. He might not care to have me act as his legal adviser in this more serious development of his case; but at least I must give him the opportunity to decline.

It was eight o'clock when the train

pulled in, and I went at once to the private telephone booth and tried to get Clyde. His office was closed and did not answer—I had expected that. His residence telephone likewise "didn't answer." Then I called up the chief of police, and asked whether Clyde had been arrested, basing my inquiry on the *Samovar* story. He had not—though it took me some time to get that statement out of the close-mouthed officials of the law. Then I called up Mr. Whyte's residence, hoping to get some hint of the situation as it affected my friends. It was Jean Benbow's voice that answered my call.

"Oh, it's you!" she cried; and the intonation of her voice was the most flattering thing I have ever heard in my life—almost. "Oh, I always did know that there must be special providences for special occasions; and if anybody ever thinks there aren't, I'll tell them about your calling up at just this moment, and they'll *know*. The most dreadful thing has happened——"

"I have seen the evening *Samovar*. Is that what you mean?"

"Oh, yes! Mrs. Whyte is at my elbow, and she says I must tell you to come right up here in a jiffy—only she didn't say jiffy; but that is what she meant. She says now that I must not stand here and keep you talking, though really I know it is I that is talking—or should I say am talking? But you understand. And Mrs. Whyte says you must jump into a cab and come up at once. Mr. Whyte wants to consult with you." The communication stopped with an abruptness that suggested external assistance.

It was Jean herself who admitted me. She must have been watching out for me, for she had the door open, and was halfway down the steps to meet me before I was fairly on Mr. Whyte's cement walk.

"Oh, but I am thankful to see you," she said earnestly. "Ever since that paper came this afternoon, I have been in a dream. I mean an awful dream, you know—almost a nightmare. It seemed so unreal. Though I suppose that is what real life is like, maybe?"

"I never saw anything like it before, and I have lived a real life for many more years than you have," I answered, meaning to reassure her.

She looked at me under her lashes. "Oh, not so very many more. Not enough to—to make any real difference. But you don't know how queer it seems to me to have things happening like this all around you. First Gene, and now Mr. Clyde. Do you believe it is true, Mr. Hilton?"

"I can't form an opinion from newspaper tales alone," I said evasively.

By this time we were at the door, where Mrs. Whyte was waiting, with Mr. Whyte at her shoulder. They both looked worried.

"You have seen the paper?" Whyte asked while we were shaking hands.

"Yes. On the train. Do you know where Clyde is?"

"No. I tried to get him by phone, but I couldn't find him; and he knows where to find me if he wants to. What do you think of it?"

I could only repeat that I could not express an opinion without more reliable information—blessed subterfuge of the lawyer!

Mrs. Whyte broke in emphatically: "Well, I for one do not believe it. You needn't look so wise, Carroll, as though you meant to imply that we can't be sure of any one until he is dead. I knew Kenneth Clyde when he wore knickerbockers, and I knew his father and his uncle, and I simply don't believe it. The *Samovar* is nothing but a political scandalmonger, anyway."

"It was a long time ago, Clara," Whyte said deprecatingly. "Clyde was young; and you know he was a wild youngster. And there may have been provocations of which we know nothing."

"You are trying to excuse him, as though you thought the story true," cried Mrs. Whyte indignantly. "I simply say that I don't believe it. Not for a moment."

"I believe it," said a voice that startled us all. Katherine Thurston was standing on the landing of the stairs, looking down upon us as we were

grouped in the hall. There was a tall lamp on the newel which threw a white light on her face; but it was not the lamplight which gave it the look of subdued radiance that held our gaze. I confess I stared quite greedily, careless of what she was saying. But Mrs. Whyte recovered herself first—naturally.

"Katherine! What are you saying? Come down!"

She came down slowly. There was a curious stillness upon her, as though she had come strangely upon peace in the midst of a storm.

"I should think you would at least wait for a little better evidence before believing such a thing of—of *any* friend!" Mrs. Whyte chided indignantly.

Something like a ripple passed over Miss Thurston's face. She was actually smiling.

"I don't mean that I am eager to believe evil reports of Mr. Clyde," she said gently. "But—it explains so much. I think it probably is true because it would—explain. And, of course," she added, lifting her head with a proud gesture that would have sent Clyde to his knees; "of course it makes not an atom of difference in our feeling toward *him*. We know what he is."

Man is a curious animal. I was not in love with Katherine Thurston. I had never come within hailing distance of her heart, and would have been somewhat afraid of it if I had. I had even suspected that the artificial calm which lay between her and Clyde covered emotional possibilities, past, present, or to come; and yet, now that I saw the whole tale written on her unabashed face, I felt suddenly as though a rich and coveted galleon were sailing away, forever out of my reach.

It was probably only a bare moment that we were all held there silent; but the moment was so tense that its revelations were not to be counted by time. Then Jean, who stood beside me, suddenly clasped my arm with both her hands, in a gesture that I felt to be a warning. I looked down at her inquiringly. She nodded slightly toward the French window, which opened from the library upon a side porch; and, following her gesture, I saw the shadow of a stooping man outside.

Before I could reach the window, it was pushed open from without, and Kenneth Clyde stepped into the room. I don't think we were surprised—we had reached a state of mind where the unexpected seemed natural—but when Clyde stepped instantly aside from the window and stood in the shadow of the bookcase, we awoke to a realization of what his coming meant.

"I beg your pardon for entering in this unceremonious way," he said—and there was a thrill of excitement in his voice that went through us all like a laughing challenge—"but I have been dodging the police for an hour, and I know I am followed now. If you would draw the curtain, Hilton——"

I drew the curtains over the windows, and Whyte closed the door into the hall. I think he locked it. The three women had followed us into the library; and, though they stood silent and breathless, I do not think that Clyde could have had much doubt in his mind as to whether he held their sympathy.

"I had to come for just a moment before I got out of town," he said, in a hurried undertone. He spoke to the room, but his eyes were on Katherine Thurston, who stood silent at a little distance.

"Tut, tut, man, you mustn't leave town!" cried Whyte. "The worst thing you could possibly do. Ask Hilton here. He's a lawyer."

Clyde smiled at me, but went on rapidly: "I am not asking advice of counsel on this—I am acting on my own responsibility. I cannot take the risk of giving myself up to the authorities. I know what that means. I am going away—there is nothing else to do. But I could not go without coming here for a moment. You—my friends—have a right to ask an account of me." He paused for a second in his rapid speech, and then went on, with a deeper ring in his voice: "The newspaper story is true so far as my conviction by a Texas court fifteen years ago goes. But I was

convicted through a mistake. I am innocent of murder. But I could not prove it. That"—he laughed somewhat unsteadily, and his eyes held Miss Thurston's—"that is the story of my life."

We had none of us moved while he spoke, partly because he was so still himself, partly from a feeling of overshadowing danger, which might descend if we stirred. But now Katherine Thurston moved toward him, and he took a step to meet her. I think they had both forgotten all the rest of the world.

"Couldn't you have trusted me?" she asked, in tenderest reproach.

"I couldn't trust myself," he answered, in a low voice.

"Ah, there you were wrong!" she said quickly. "So many years! And now——"

"Now I must go and see if there is any way to gather up the broken fragments."

"Could I not help in some way? May I not go with you?" she asked simply.

"You *would* do that?" he demanded.

"Anywhere," she answered.

He lifted her fingers to his lips. "No, you cannot go," he said, with a break in his voice.

"Then I will wait for you here," she said.

We came to our senses then; and Mrs. Whyte swept us out into the hall with one wave of her matronly arm. They must have that moment of complete understanding to themselves. We hovered at the foot of the stairs, waiting to speak again with Clyde, yet too upset in our minds to have any clear idea of what we could suggest. Mrs. Whyte, in a surge of emotion, caught Jean to her buxom bosom—against which the child looked like a star flower on a brocaded silk hillock. Jean's eyes were shining—and not her eyes alone; her whole face was alight with a tender radiance.

Whyte gripped my shoulder to turn my attention. "See here, Hilton, he mustn't run away. It would look like guilt. You must tell him, as a lawyer, that it would be the worst thing he could do. If he is innocent, the law will protect him——"

"The law has already condemned him," I reminded him. "The situation is difficult. He is not a man merely accused, his defense unpresented. He has been tried, convicted, and sentenced."

"Good heavens!" he gasped. "Then if he puts himself in the hands of the law, there will be nothing left but to see the execution of the sentence? Is that what you mean?"

"Yes. That is the situation. There have been cases where men who had escaped from prison have lived for years exemplary lives and reached civic honors, yet, when recognized and apprehended, they had to go back to prison and serve out the unexpired sentence of the man condemned years before."

"But if the sentence was unwarranted?"

"Of course we would try to make a fight on it," I said, but without much confidence. "But the sentence was pronounced by a duly qualified court, and it will not be easy to upset it at this late day. It would be a thousand times harder now to find any evidence there may be in his favor than it could have been then, when the events were fresh in the memory of everybody. And, unless we can discover some new evidence having a bearing on the matter, we would have no ground on which to ask for a reopening of the case."

"That's terrible," he said. Then, dropping his voice: "Is the death penalty in force there?"

I nodded.

"The man was a fool to hang around home," Whyte protested energetically, as he took the situation in. "Why didn't he have sense enough to go to South America or Africa or the South Sea Islands when he first escaped?"

As if in answer to his question, the library door opened, and Katherine Thurston stood framed in the doorway. She had the same curiously still air that I had noticed when she stood on the stairs—as though her spirit had found the way into a region of mysterious peace.

"He has gone," she said quietly.

There was a sudden tap at the front door, and then, without further warning or delay, it was opened, and a police officer stood there.

"Is Mr. Clyde in the house?" he asked directly.

"No," Whyte answered.

The officer glanced about the room with a swift survey of us all.

"He's gone, then?" he said.

No one answered.

"Sorry to have troubled you," he said, touching his helmet, and immediately went out. We heard low voices and hurried steps passing around the house.

"Oh, they'll find him!" cried Mrs. Whyte, in dismay. "He can't have got a safe distance yet."

"Hush!" warned Whyte. He stepped to the library and looked out. Then, after a moment, he came back to us. "They are watching the house. The longer they watch, the better. Do you know his plans, Hilton?"

I shook my head. Miss Thurston had faded away like a wraith; but Mrs. Whyte and Jean were hanging on our words. "No, I have no idea where he is going, or what he means to do. The police are very close on his heels. I confess it looks dubious that he will get very far."

Jean laughed out suddenly and clapped her hands together.

"Why, of course he will escape! After they have come to know about each other," she exclaimed. "Nothing else would be possible *now!*"

Whyte and I exchanged glances. As a matter of fact, we would all like to live in a rose-colored world, where things would happen of necessity, as they do in properly constructed fairy tales; but it takes the confidence of a Jean to announce such faith in the face of unsympathetic experience.

CHAPTER XIV.

TANGLED HEARTSTRINGS.

There was racing and chasing on Saintsbury lea the next morning. The office of the *Samovar* was besieged by people who wanted to know whether the charge against Clyde was a campaign lie, a poor joke, or a startling truth. Reporters and inquiring friends camped on Clyde's doorstep, blockaded his office—and insisted on extracting some information from his lawyer. Information is a valuable commodity which a lawyer is trained not to impart for nothing, so my visitors went away not much wiser than they came.

"Has Clyde been arrested?" was asked everywhere.

Apparently not.

"But why didn't Burleigh, in the interests of justice, give his information to the police before publishing it broadcast and giving Clyde a chance to get away?"

Probably Burleigh cared more for a *Samovar* scoop than for the interests of justice, and more for helping the campaign against Clyde than for either. Possibly also he did not care to take upon himself the responsibility of lodging a formal accusation against Clyde. He might, in that case, be held responsible for it.

"But how had Clyde got the warning?"

Nobody knew. He had simply disappeared.

Of course, his disappearance was considered equivalent to a confession of guilt. The wires were hot with his description, and the noon editions had columns of conjecture and reassuring reports that the police were in possession of valuable clews which could not be made public.

I could barely get time to run through my accumulated mail. A good part of this related to Alfred Barker. I had started inquiries backward along the shadowy track of that slippery gentleman's career, hoping that I might come across some trail of Diavolo's in that direction.

So far as results went, Mr. Barker might have been the most commonplace and harmless of mortals. He had lived here, he had done business there, he had been through bankruptcy, and he had been promoter of several business schemes that were little better than bankruptcy; but chiefly he had managed

to be unknown for long intervals. How some of those intervals were filled, I could in a manner guess. Probably his venture as business manager for Diavolo was an instance. And that one had not been particularly successful financially, except in the deal with Jordan, if I might regard Barker's notebook as an accounting of the profits.

I was busy in an inner office, trying to assimilate my mail, when Fellows, my clerk, brought me word that Miss Thurston was waiting to see me. As I knew we would be liable to interruptions in the outer office, I had him bring her in.

I saw at a glance that this was a different woman from the self-possessed woman of the world I had known. She was human, womanly. Her eyes met mine with a shy appeal for sympathy.

"We all come to you for advice," she said, with a deprecating smile.

"That is the chief compensation of my profession."

"There are three things that I want to speak to you about," she continued. "First, Mr. Clyde's safety. I have been thinking about things all night, turning them in my mind one way and another, and that is the point that must be considered first. If he is taken, or gives himself up, what prospect is there that he will ever be cleared?"

"Very little, Miss Thurston. You wish me to be frank."

"I want to know the exact truth. In the eyes of the law, he is merely an escaped convict?"

"Yes."

She was perfectly quiet and self-controlled. I could see that she merely expected me to confirm the impression which her intelligence had already discerned. She did not hesitate in her quiet speech.

"Then the second thing is to get word to him. I have written him a letter." She laid it on my table—a nice, thick letter it was, too. "I have told him in this letter that I am ready to go with him to any island of the sea or desert jungle where he will be safe. I want you to know, because it may happen that you will get word to him only by telegraphing. But tell him what I have told you, if you cannot give him my letter. If you should see him, the letter will be enough to make him understand. And if he should hesitate on my account, and talk about not letting me sacrifice myself—he may, you know—will you make him—understand?" There was a mist in her eyes as she finished. If she looked at Clyde with that look, he would have to be a man of iron not to yield.

"Trust me to do the very best I can to deliver your commission. But Clyde has disappeared, as you know. I may not hear from him before you do."

"Yes, I know. I am only providing for the chance—in case you do. I have been thinking of everything, trying to put myself into his mind; and I think he will come or send to you."

"I shall be only too glad to serve you—or him."

"Then there is another matter." A slightly embarrassed air replaced the fine lack of self-consciousness which I had been admiring. "I wish that you would tell Eugene Benbow."

I felt myself stiffen. Unconsciously I was politely obtuse.

"Tell him what? I beg pardon."

"Tell him about Mr. Clyde's escape, and—everything that has gone before."

"Oh, yes, certainly. He will be interested."

"And tell him—about my message."

"You wish him to know?" I asked, in a matter-of-fact manner.

"Yes. I wish him to know—but I don't want to be the one to tell him."

"You think it will hurt him?" I asked, determined to draw her out, since she had given me the opening. I realized that to women emotions are facts, and that impressions, attitudes, and relations are quite as substantial as any of the more material things of which the law takes notice. It might be that the key to Gene's mysteriousness lay in emotions rather than in facts.

She lifted her eyes with something of an effort; but I saw that she had determined to treat me with frankness.

"It probably *will* hurt him," she said; "but it will be salutary."

"In the long run, yes. But—poor fellow!"

"I know. But it wasn't my fault. You know a boy of his poetic and romantic sort simply has to adore some one; and I even thought it was better for him to waste his emotional efflorescence on me than on some woman who might not have understood."

"I am quite sure you are right," I said. But at the same time I could not help a feeling of dumb sympathy with poor Gene, and a certain impatience with her philosophic view of the situation. As Kipling says, it is easy for the butterfly upon the load to preach contentment to the toad.

"Besides, he knew always—or, at least, for a long time—that Mr. Clyde was more to me than any one else. He always was," she continued bravely; "even in the old times, before—anything happened. And I knew, as a girl does, that I was more to him than any one else. Then, when he drew away and would not say what I had expected, of course, I was hurt and angry, and very, very unhappy. But when years and years had gone by, and I saw that what I wanted was not coming, I determined to keep him as a friend. I knew that something had happened, something against his will. So I realized that it was wrong to blame him, and that I must keep what I could have on the best terms possible. It was really Eugene that made me come to this understanding of myself."

"I see."

"Of course, Gene knew from the beginning that it was a case of the moth and the star—don't smile. I mean simply on account of our respective ages, of course. But to make sure that he should not misunderstand, I—told him something about Mr. Clyde."

"That was fine and generous of you," I cried warmly.

She flushed with sensitive appreciation of my change of attitude. "I even told him that if he could ever render a service to Mr. Clyde, it would be the same as if he did it for me. I thought it would be a good thing to awaken his chivalry in that way."

"But you had no reason at that time to suppose that Mr. Clyde was in danger?"

"No specific reason," she said, with some hesitation. "But I felt that something overshadowed him. A woman knows things without reason sometimes."

"And you told Eugene?"

"Yes. Partly I wanted to let him feel there was something he could do for me—you understand? And partly, too, I wanted to enlist his interest for Mr. Clyde if an opportunity should ever come up where he needed help that Eugene could give. You never can tell."

"You can't ordinarily," I admitted. "But at present poor Gene has put himself out of the way of doing a service for any one. His hands will be tied for a long time."

"But—you do think there is a possibility of getting him off, don't you? He is so young!" Miss Thurston rose as she spoke; and, in spite of her kindly tone in regard to Gene, I could see that the important part of the interview was over when Clyde passed out of our conversation.

"Of course, I should not admit anything else," I answered; and she departed, leaving me impressed anew with the important part which women play in the affairs of men. Truly, sentiments may be stronger than ropes, and emotions more devastating than floods. And the woman who is all tenderness and quivering watchfulness for one man, will be as indifferent as nature to the sufferings of another. I was sorry for Gene.

It was not a particularly pleasant mission on which Miss Thurston had set me. I went to the jail for an interview with Gene with very uncomfortable anticipations. It isn't pleasant to hit a man whose hands are tied—and that my communication would be in the nature of a blow to him I could not doubt.

He looked nervous and harassed; and the innate courtesy which characterized him was, I felt, the only thing that kept him from resenting my visit.

"I hope you haven't come to talk about that wretched Barker," he said at

once, trying to smile, but betraying the effort in the attempt.

"Not unless you wish to."

He shook his head. "No. I told you all about it once. I don't want to think about it any more. It makes me—ill."

"Very well. We'll gossip about our friends instead. Have you heard about Clyde?"

He half turned aside, but answered with apparent indifference: "Yes, they let me see the papers."

"He has disappeared, it seems. There has been no trace of him yet."

There was a hint of youthful scorn in his voice as he answered: "Well, if he likes to live that way. I think, on the whole, I should prefer to give myself up and have it over with."

"Clyde insists that he is innocent. That would, of course, make a difference in the feeling about giving oneself up. His conscience is not involved in the question. Besides," I added, seeing my chance to discharge Miss Thurston's commission, "he has to think not alone of himself. Miss Thurston's happiness is bound up in his safety."

The boy did not speak. I could feel, however, that he was holding every nerve tense. I knew what he wanted to know, and I went on, with as casual an air as I could muster:

"It seems that they have been in love with each other for years; but, of course, with the knowledge that this possibility of exposure was hanging over him, he could not speak. Now that it is out and the worst is known, they have come to an understanding. It was inevitable under the circumstances."

"Do you mean she will marry him?" he asked, in a low voice.

"Probably, in time. For the present, of course, his whereabouts are unknown. But I should think that probably, in the end, she will go to him. At her age," I added deliberately, "a woman has a right to choose her fate. She will not go to it in ignorance."

He laughed, but without mirth. "As you say, she is old enough to know her own mind," he said, somewhat brutally. Then he added bitterly: "It seems I did not shoot Barker quite soon enough."

"Why *did* you shoot him?" I asked.

His eyes fell. "Because he killed my father." Then he turned his shoulder to me with an impatient gesture. "I told you I would not talk about that any more." And he wouldn't. For all his good manners, my client had a vein of obstinacy that was almost as useful, in case of need, as plain rudeness would have been.

When I left Gene, I fell in with some friends, who insisted upon having me give an account of myself over a dinner at the club, so it was something after nine when I reached my rooms. I lived at that time, as I think I may have mentioned, in an apartment hotel. My own suite was on the third floor. As I stepped out of the elevator, I saw three men lounging in the neighborhood of my door. They saw me, and set up a shout of "Here he is," which brought in two more, who had apparently been taking the air on the fire escape.

"To what am I indebted——" I began. They grinned cheerfully and simultaneously.

"Oh, we just wanted to find out if you couldn't give us a story about Clyde," the foremost explained—and I recognized the clan. They were reporters on the trail of breakfast food for the great American public.

"Come in, and tell me what you want to find out," I said resignedly. "If you can extract any information from my subconscious self, I hope you will share it with me."

"You'll read it in the papers to-morrow," said the cheerful tall one. "Have you any idea where Clyde is?"

"Why, yes," I answered thoughtfully; and they all leaned forward like dogs on a leash. "Of course, it is only a guess——"

"Yes, yes, we understand," they chorused eagerly.

"Well, gentlemen, I figure it out this way: Mr. Clyde did not possess an aëroplane; and it is extremely doubtful that he was able to borrow one before he left. The most rapid means of transportation available to him would, there-

fore, be the automobile or the choo-choo cars. He has been gone about twenty-four hours. Multiply twenty-four hours by forty miles, and you get the radius of a circle of which Saintsbury is the center——"

They interrupted my demonstration with shouts and jeers.

"You trifle with the power of the press," said the tall one. "Wait till to-morrow morning, and you will see what happens to your remarks. The public will have reason to understand that we have reason to understand that Mr. Hilton has reason to understand that Mr. Clyde is not a thousand miles distant from Saintsbury at this time."

While I had been speaking, my eye had fallen upon the stub of a cigar on the mantel. Now, I had not been in my room since morning—and I do not smoke before luncheon. While I talked nonsense to the men, my mind was engaged with that cigar stub. I had no reason to suppose that the chambermaids on that floor smoked, and nobody else was supposed to have access to my rooms. I sauntered across the room, and picked up the stub and tossed it in the grate. It was fresh and moist. My eye went about the room. Half a dozen books from my shelves were lying about—and it was absurd to suppose that the chambermaids had been indulging in my favorite brands of literature.

"Let me offer you a cigar, gentlemen," I said, and went to the adjoining bedroom, closing the door behind me. My cigars were not in the bedroom, but the excuse served.

There, with his feet on my best embroidered cushions, with my choicest edition de luxe on his knees and a grin on his face, sat Clyde.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The conclusion of this story will be published two weeks hence, in the first February POPULAR, on sale January 10th.

CAUGHT WITHOUT HIS ARMOR

ARTHUR G. NEWMYER, the advertising man, of Chicago, is a great friend of Julius Cæsar Burrows, the man who, at one time, was United States Senator from Michigan, occupying the place with much dignity and considerable asperity. One evening, at a late hour, Newmyer went to call on Mr. Burrows, in Washington, and the senator himself opened the front door, appearing with his coat off and in his stockinged feet.

"I'm glad to see you," said the senator.

"And," replied Newmyer, "I'm particularly glad to see you. This is one night when I can argue with you to my heart's content."

"Why's that?" asked Julius Cæsar.

"Because," explained Newmyer, "you're without your strongest argument. You've taken off those heavy shoes you wear."

THE MEETING OF THE ENEMIES

WHEN James K. Vardaman, of Mississippi, enters the United States Senate and walks down the aisle to take the oath of office, he will be escorted to the desk of the vice president by Senator John Sharp Williams; but the two men will indulge in no conversation with each other. They are not on speaking terms. This is not the first time that such a thing has happened in the Senate. When Robert M. La Follette was sworn in, he went down the center aisle with Isaac Stephenson, and neither one of them would speak to the other.

The Eldorado Lode

By H. B. Marriott Watson

Author of "The Big Fish," "The Devil's Pulpit," Etc.

There's mighty little sentiment in gold mining. But here's a story of a mascot, a strike, and a big-hearted mineralogist that combined for the ultimate success of the man who was a better father than miner

IT was Magnus Chadd who gave me my first chance. I had geological knowledge enough, I thought, to run a museum, and I fancied I knew more of mineralogy than any man I had chanced on. Looking back on it all, I see I had a fair opinion of myself, but I did make good. To give Chadd his due, he picked me out of a bunch, and I don't think he regretted it. Well, it may be he did about the Little Jack Mine. I'm coming on to that. Chadd, anyway, gave me my chance in West Africa, when I was fresh from college, and he got his reward. So did I, in a way.

I became his trusty hand, and if he had a mining proposition in any part of the globe, it was I who was sent to report. It suited me very well, being, as I was, of a roving temperament, and it paid well, also. Having no ties, I could do as I liked, and when I liked I stopped off. I was independent of Magnus Chadd all the time, and I can't say quite the same for him in respect of myself. I stood him in good stead over a big South African deal, of which some day I will tell the story, and in any difficulty he cabled, wired, or phoned to me. That was what brought me into this case, where I lost my reputation.

Chadd got on the end of a phone, and fetched me out of a nice little party I was entertaining at lunch in the Palladium.

"Can you come round?" said he. "I've got a proposition, and I want you."

I gave him the hour after a moment's calculation, for I had been killing time in New York for some weeks, and was not unwilling to adventure again, and as soon as I got rid of my guests I flashed down to him.

"Good!" said he, when I entered his private room, where he sat with a pile of papers about him. "Winsloe, I want you to go to Wyoming."

"Pretty cold, unhandsome weather for traveling to that outlandish part," said I, for the snow had been falling.

"I never knew you to flinch at weather or anything else yet, Winsloe," said Chadd, with a grin.

"Well, what is it?" I asked.

Sallow, heavy-jowled, middle-sized, and spare of frame, Magnus Chadd was well known in two continents. He was by way of being a genius in finance. Under his capable hands mines seemed to assemble instinctively. Even if he struck a wild-cat, he managed to turn it into something else with success. A gold proposition petered out only to allow the management to strike copper rich, and if one property failed he brought up reserves, and threw a couple more into the pot for luck. He was a gambler by instinct, and a plucky one, as I had cause to know. Also he was a tough nut, and he could be all sorts to all men.

"Did you ever hit the Fairhurst gang?" he asked abruptly, pulling a letter from a pigeonhole in his desk, and setting it before him. He was orderly in all things, was this adventurer.

"No, but I've known some of their ways," said I.

"Don't like 'em any more than I do?" he said, and handed me the letter.

It was a rough scrawl, evidently written by a man more accustomed to a pick than a pen, and it was headed and dated from an unknown place in Wyoming. The purport of it was, in an uneducated way, to offer Magnus the Little Jack Mine for the sum of five thousand dollars. There was some mining particulars in the letter which had no doubt arrested Chadd's attention.

"Well?" he asked, looking up, as I finished, from the perusal of other documents.

"Don't seem enough in it to worry a man—White Hat's played out," I replied.

"I don't give a cuss for that," he said, with an impatient wave of his hand. "Probably the fool don't know, anyway. This is the point, Winsloe: This mine is situated in the same valley as the Eldorado group, which Fairhurst had got hold of. Jake Fairhurst's jumped in ahead of me more than once, and I shan't forget his dirty tricks. If I'd had wind of this Eldorado combine, I'd have stopped it somehow. I'd have stood a racket to have spoked his wheel."

"Well, he won't be wanting this show much," I suggested, shaking the letter.

"That brings me to what I want to say," said Chadd. "One of my men—Anderson—you know him—tells me that there is some idea that the Eldorado lode runs through this—what the mischief is it—Little Jack. If it does it's a good proposition. Anyway, I want to get ahead of Fairhurst."

I mused. "I wouldn't pin too much on Anderson," I said dryly. "Strikes twenty ounces once a week."

"But it's you, *you*, I'm talking of and pressing on," snapped Chadd.

I grinned. "All right," said I, and picked up the letter again. "You want me to take an option on it. What price? Five dollars?"

Chadd grinned also. "I leave it to you. You can handle the case. Anyway, forestall Fairhurst."

I put the letter in my pocket. "Right," I said. "I'll fix it."

He nodded, yawned, and reached for his gloves. He was something of a dandy, was Magnus Chadd; at least, he could assume the rôle. The whole business didn't seem to me to amount to much save as a speculative dig at Fairhurst. However, if Magnus liked to pay for his fun, it was of no consequence to me.

I said it was cold, but it was more than that when I got off at West Crow and started in my buckboard for White Hat three days later. I was climbing all the way from the first stairs out of these plains, and the wind blew slick off the ice reefs of the mountains like a hundred sword blades. I mounted the foothills, and, after passing some desolate settlements, hove to at an accommodation shanty of the usual kind, where I took in food, and exchanged conversation with a moody fellow, all legs and beard.

Did he know White Hat? He vented some adjectives, and guessed he did. It was the back of beyond where only fool fellows went. He had heard, and, indeed, had some reason to know, that the Eldorado was all right, but no man had troubled the snowy silence of White Hat these five years, save one specially darned fool. He gave him a name—the name on my paper, Dunstan. He believed Dunstan, in his egregiously foolish way, was still there. Inquiring further, I learned that the track was fairly good as far as Pigeon's, but he wouldn't answer for it beyond. He himself, it appeared, depended for a subsistence on the Eldorado people coming and going to West Crow. The fork divided the Eldorado from White Hat, and no sensible man ever dreamed of turning up the pass toward the bleak, barren, God-forsaken, and generally derelict remains of a mining camp.

This was cheerful news to see me on my way, and though I have been in bad places more than once, I was disposed to curse Chadd and his fancies as my buckboard tumbled about the rough track into the mountains. I had left the shanty late in the afternoon, and when night fell—the long January night—I was still battling with the road.

The cold reached to my vitals, a keen wind singing out of the northern sierras, and charged with keen spears; and I was mightily glad when I sighted the gleam of Pigeon's. He was a wonderfully cheerful man of no intelligence, but of excessive amiability, and was so agreeable to every proposition that it was impossible to learn anything from him. I was glad of the shelter, however, and I listened to the wind roaring down the gulch between the spaces of our talk.

Once the peat that burned in the fire spluttered and fluttered, and Pigeon said amiably:

"I allow there's snow a-coming."

I went to bed on that, and I slept as, thank Heaven, I have always learned to sleep. But the next morning I got some notion of what the old man had forecast. Heaven was gray-black over the north, and there were some flakes whirling.

"I reckon you got to leave the old wheelbarrow here," says Pigeon, smiling foolishly. He had told me of the "track which was no track" along the spur of the mountain. "They always leave their furniture here," he added, grinning wider. And, sure enough, he was right, for the place was strewn with the wreckage of decaying and festering vehicles of all sorts, drifted there as into some Sargasso Sea. It was like walking through a graveyard. He explained that after the rush at White Hat, many of the prospectors did not live to redeem their property. Anyway, the remains of a considerable number were in his hands. He squinted at the sky.

"I'm thinking you'll have a tidy bad trail," said he.

I knew that, but I didn't care. I wasn't going to be snowed up with an old parsnip like him, and so I pulled out as I had intended. Yet I was not two hours upon the road ere I conceived there was some warning in his words I might have taken. It entered my mind as I went down into the valley beyond, with the snow beating in my face, and the wind plucking at my garments. I rode lightly, as an old traveler, but the horse felt the coming storm, and shrank from it. The way was of remarkable roughness, the track degenerating into a mere path of bowlders and gaping crevices.

About midday the storm struck us. The few swirling flakes which had been spindrift in the chilly sky thickened and quickened; in a trice there was a cloud of them, and the horse and I were shut off from all the rest of that savage landscape.

The rude cañon down which we were moving was blotted out; the world became one white sheet about me. And I moved on as one cut off from everything else save the folds of the terrible snow which lay on hill and valley. As the short day darkened, the situation grew worse, for it was no longer possible to learn if I was upon the track.

White Hat! I thought I knew now why this God-forgotten region was so styled. Darkness descended, shutting out even the snow, and darkness found me rocking on a horse that stumbled and floundered down a way that led apparently to nothingness.

I don't know how long this went on. I was only aware of the blizzard through one sense now, and that was the sense of touch. I *felt* it. Sight, sound—there was nothing else but touch. But my limbs grew numb and number, and the poor creature under me began to miss his steps and stagger. He staggered and recovered, lurched forward, and fetched up with a curious pathetic indrawn whinny, started again—and then I knew that I was falling.

When I returned to consciousness, I was aware of a sharp pain in my head, and of a growing warmth somewhere near my midriff. I was apparently in a lying position, and I struggled up on one elbow.

"Wait a bit," I heard a voice, and it seemed to descend out of heaven. "The brandy will fetch you round," it added. "Good Bob! Good Bob!"

Something seemed to be licking my hand with warm, rough tongue. I stared. A lantern flickered on the snow.

"I think you're better now," said the voice. "You'd have been gone hadn't Bob found you."

Now I could make out things a little more clearly. There was a man with a lantern by me, and a huge dog that licked my hand. Dimly beyond I could make out a huge lump as of a fallen animal.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Why, you come over the cliff," said the man. "The hoss missed its way. He's dead, poor critter. It finished him off right away, but I don't know but you've come off pretty well. He must have broke your fall."

I struggled up, and the man supported me.

"Where is this?" I asked.

"Reckon this is White Hat," he replied. "If you can't get along on those legs of yours, I'll fix up something for you."

I thanked him, but was glad to find I could still make use of my feet. Painfully stiff and sore from the fall, I plowed through the heavy snow under the guidance of my rescuer's strong arms.

"'Twas Bob nosed you out," he explained. "Bob took to barking, and become uneasy. He's a great dog, is Bob."

"I return thanks to Bob," I said, "for as sure as I'm a live man now, I should have been a dead one by the morrow."

"That's so," he agreed.

After twenty minutes of difficult progress, he halted at a bigger lump of whiteness, out of which shone a faint light. It was a cabin, constructed in the usual fashion of mining cabins in such regions, of timber and stone, and with a turf thatch. When we entered a fire was burning cheerfully at one end of a rather large room, and—here was my surprise—a young woman rose from a rude chair on our entrance. The man introduced her as his wife. She had certain good looks, but her comeliness was despoiled by a careworn expression. She bustled about, and made me welcome.

"You are Dunstan?" I said suddenly.

He nodded. He was a big, broad-shouldered, slow-moving fellow, with a simple face and a somewhat obdurate jowl.

"I've come from Magnus Chadd," I went on. "I dare say you got my letter—Winsloe?"

He shook his head. "I'd have gone up back to meet you if I had," he said. "It's a bad trail this time of the year. We don't bother much with mails here. I dare say your letter's along at Eldorado."

I lay back in my seat, for a faintness took hold of me, and I must have gone off right at that. When I woke, I was lying in a made-up bed alongside the fire, and Mrs. Dunstan was moving to and fro with a certain natural grace. I guessed it was still night, because of the lantern burning. A big St. Bernard dog, with grizzled muzzle showing his years, stood by me as if he watched. I opened my eyes and took the scene in, and suddenly a child's cry, fretful and thin, arose in the shack. Mrs. Dunstan turned swiftly, and pushed open a door which led into another room, letting in the sound more fully.

"Hush, dearie, hush, my lamb," I heard her call, and there were sounds as if she were soothing the awakened child.

Somehow the scene got hold of me in my weakened state. It seemed of a homely harmony that was attractive. The big dog looked at me. I put out my hand and stroked him ere I fell asleep again.

It was two days before I was fit for much, and I was forced to keep the house all that time. The weather cleared, and Dunstan came and went about his work. As I couldn't move to do mine, the next best course was to ask questions, which I did.

In a little I had the whole silly story. He was from Iowa, and had held a little farm there. When the rush came at White Hat, he had sold his farm and gone off with his new bride to make a fortune. Lots of fools do that, but they don't take their wives unless they're a special brand of fool. Dunstan was a simple, obstinate dolt, and he had struggled on through the rush and after the rush. His means dried up, and he was left there derelict, like the buggies in old Pigeon's.

His child was born in the camp at a time when there was plenty of population, and a doctor was available. And there the child and the mother and the father, not to speak of the dog, had lived ever since. He puddled the color of gold up the creek, and so he maintained himself and his family on this side of starvation.

Well, that was not all, as I discovered when I could get about. I heard the child's cry occasionally, and a lot of babble behind the closed door, but it wasn't till I could move for myself that I made the discovery. That child was a nice little thing, with soft brown hair and large inquiring eyes, but it lay on its back, and couldn't move. There was something the matter with its spine.

The woman told me about it. An operation was necessary, but they could not afford it. Little Jack would be all right if he could get that operation—so a doctor from Eldorado had informed them, and he had named fees and expenses—big items both. It would cost a thousand dollars to get little Jack right. And they were chained to White Hat by poverty. That was why Dunstan was anxious to sell out. He had still an obstinate and ignorant faith in his claim, but he was tired out. He wanted money for little Jack, and to buy back the farm in Iowa. He reckoned he was tiring of mining, the mining that should have made his fortune.

All this and more I got from them in those few days. They were a devoted house; they clung together, and belonged to each other. They were, so to speak, conglomerates, dog and all. Such company as they ever saw was drawn from Eldorado over the pass, where Fairhurst's camps lay, and I knew pretty well what sort of company that was likely to be.

Little Jack! Lord, that was the name that, in their loving pride and hopes, they had bestowed upon the mine! Little Jack! Why, as soon as I got to work with my eyes, I saw the man did not know the elements of mining. He had done nothing that he ought to have done, and what he had tried to do he had done all wrong. I very soon saw what Anderson had meant when he had mentioned the Eldorado lode.

I paid a visit to the Fairhurst combine on the other side of the hill, and found them on a higher level. The lode, which was richer as it dipped, took an angle that might have made Fairhurst think. If it lived at depth, it might be found on the other side of the hill. But it was a pretty tall order. Anyway, I was there to look for it, and I began operations on the lower part of the valley, where the Little Jack abutted on the range.

Dunstan had put in an adit here for some reason, and for some other equally mysterious reason had abandoned it. I left him puddling placer gold by the creek, and got to work. A little afterward I got interested. The mine was there to take or leave, but I felt I wanted to know a little more. I had a free hand, and I was interested in a mineralogical problem.

Morgan came over the pass into White Hat the very day Dunstan left. I had encountered him at the Eldorado camp, and though I said nothing of Chadd, I fancy he knew my name. Anyway, he could not have taken me for any of the truck about him. He was a smart enough man, and, no doubt, had earned his place at the head of the Eldorado Queen, which was Fairhurst's trump. I believe, too, he was responsible for the purchase of the properties on the lode northward. Anyway, he was smart enough to realize that if there was anything in White Hat, he had better be looking after it. Anderson had got out of him an expression of opinion, I gathered later, over more than one bottle of champagne. Anderson had never seen White Hat; and I believe Morgan's interest in it was mainly theoretical.

However, he came over the very day Dunstan left. The kid had had several bad days, and Mrs. Dunstan's haggard face showed her anxiety. He wailed and was fretful, and the little beggar clung to my hand, and went off to sleep one evening, after I'd told him stories of a kind I thought would suit. The mother, I think, put pressure on her slow and lumbering husband; he must

go to Blackville, and see a doctor—bring him out, if necessary. I guessed at some of this, and the next morning I thought I saw my way to make it easier for them.

"I've never squared with you for board and lodging yet," said I. "I think you'd better take these to go on with."

He counted the notes, and separated them. "I reckon you don't owe more'n that," he said decisively. "We don't set out to cut the wool off our guests." He hesitated for a moment, and then, in his slow way, said: "I'd be willing to take twenty-five hundred if Mr. Chadd was agreeable."

That made me feel rather small, and it was only after he had gone, throwing back the bulk of the notes on me, that I saw what a fool I'd been. I ought to have paid for an option. I cursed myself for a champion fool more than once, but it was too late. Dunstan was gone with his meager pocket, on the way to Blackville to get advice for little Jack.

The other Little Jack kept me busy. Morgan, as I say, arrived in a casual manner the same day, and, after inquiring for Dunstan, sought me out. He was put up at the shack, and he talked a lot that night as we smoked indoors, with the frost holding hard without, and little Jack wailing in the adjoining room. Mrs. Dunstan had come to me in perplexity with a bit of paper which Morgan had given her—a letter from her husband inviting him to inspect the claim. So there was nothing to be done but be civil. He had guessed who I was, if he didn't guess more, and I knew who he was. And so we sat, like two hawks in the dove's nest, and talked amicably on all sorts of topics.

The next day Morgan set out to make an inspection.

"I don't imagine there's anything here," he told me, "but of course it's as well to try," and he set about trying on the formation at which Dunstan had been puddling.

Now, if he were a good enough man to be in charge of Fairhurst's concern, he was too good to blunder like that, and so I grew suspicious. He wasn't likely to waste time, either, and I began to conjecture. I soon got upon a trail, too—Morgan wanted to get the benefit of *my* work. As soon as this dawned on me, I was wary as a fox. I had closed the adit before, and I was careful not to work in it when he was about. The day after he arrived, there joined him a lean, tall fellow named Batters, and they made a camp across the creek, just for all the world as if they were genuine prospectors. But I knew better. They were thieves, predatory bandits, vultures that looked on and waited till their prey died.

Well, what was I?

It was three days after Dunstan had gone that I reached what I had anticipated, but I confess I had had no notion of its importance. The reef lived, and I had got it. Dunstan's pick had gone within a few yards of it, and he hadn't known! I had known the lode was coming, but I didn't know it would prove so rich. Morgan's presence had made me shy of publicity, and I had worked in the adit at night. On the third night, as I say, I found it.

It was a fine starred night of January, and I had a lantern for my only company. When I struck the lode I eased up, and made my calculations. Then I went back to the shack, and pondered. Presently it came upon me that I wanted a few more particulars on which to frame the report I was drafting, and I got up stealthily, so as not to disturb Mrs. Dunstan and little Jack, and I made my way to the adit. I had blocked the door with bowlders, and, when I reached it, I was amazed to see that these had been removed. Moreover, there was a gleam of light within. Then I knew I had my man. He started when he saw me, and I saw an ugly look cross his face; it hardened.

"Pleasant night for a ramble, Mr. Morgan," said I amiably. "Nice moon, too."

"Ah!" said he, looking at me in a fixed way.

I lounged against the rock. "Tidy little place, this of yours," I nodded at the workings. "Interesting, too—a regular jeweler's shop, I should say."

"You think so," he said slowly. "Well, I am glad to have your opinion indorsing mine. That makes it very satisfactory."

We had been fencing daintily enough, but now I was going to get home. In point of fact, my blood boiled at his insolence and his shamelessness.

"Before I start on you, I should like to hear any explanations you may like to make," I said, calmly enough.

He hesitated a moment, and then said: "Certainly. Let us get outside, and you shall have all you want."

I backed out carefully, for I did not care about turning my back on a mean man like that, and when we were in the open, he blew out the lantern deliberately. We stood in the moonlight, but I could not see his face.

"The explanation is that I was inspecting the claim in the interests of Mr. Fairhurst," he said coolly.

"I see," said I, fuming with anger that I could not restrain, "and you have the shabbiness to make use of my workings —to follow me, to spy upon me, to steal like a thief in the night, to act like a low-down greaser. I've a pretty poor opinion of you, Mr. Morgan, and I'm going to handle you."

I moved toward him as I spoke, and he leaped away. I followed, and there must have been a dozen paces between us at that moment. Suddenly I saw something on the bare earth, a shadow cast by the moon from behind me. It was the shadow of a man's arm, and a shadow of something, live and thin, moving in undulating, whirling curves, as it were a snake.

Instinct made me act rather than reason. I flung myself upon the ground, and the lariat fell aimlessly upon my prostrate body. The next moment some one had jumped upon me, and lean, muscular arms were about me. I guessed this was Batters, and even at that moment an appreciation of the smartness of Morgan's trick flashed on me.

But there his smartness ended; there he made his first mistake. He ought to have seen me secured. Instead of that, he was in a mighty hurry, and while I struggled with Batters, he ran off. I would have been no match for the two, but I wasn't feeling very desperate with Batters alone. I confess he gave me a lot of trouble, but I proved too much for him in the end. I think my wind lasted better, and I was also a heavier weight. Anyway, round he went, slithering about on the little slope, which helped me a lot, and, ere he had finished kicking, I had him strapped in his own lariat. Then I left him, and ran for it, also.

I knew Morgan's plan pretty well now. I was to be held in a vise while he raced for Blackville, and caught Dunstan on the hop. Dunstan wanted money badly, and he would sell outright for Fairhurst's gold, as he would have sold for Chadd's. If Morgan got ahead of me I was done, and the mine, in all its riches, went to Fairhurst. Well, my business was to see that Morgan didn't get ahead of me. I found his horse gone, as I had anticipated, but there was Batters' animal, a gaunt, tough creature, and I made free with it. As I passed the cabin, I could see a gleam in the windows where little Jack lay, and guessed Mrs. Dunstan was watching over him.

It could not have been more than twenty minutes after Morgan had gone loping up the trail that I followed on my specter. It was slow going at first, for the track was rocky, and a mere apology for a roadway; also it sloped athwart a spur of the range. But Morgan had gone that way before me, and that was good enough for me. The horse was as safe as a mule on those rough slants, and though he made no great pace, he never missed his footing, and carried me like a gentleman.

When I got to the summit of the spur, the wind cut finely, and the whole valley beyond was bathed in moonlight. There was a heavy frost in the air. Down floundered Rosinante on sure foot, but clumsily, cumbrously, slowly, until in the bottom below, the trail bettered. Then he fell into an easy slide, out of which no effort of mine would shake him. He was contemptuous of instigation, and made his own pace.

I fretted and I cursed, but it was all to no purpose. That horse was going like a comfortable circus horse on a job at so much an hour. He couldn't be stirred out of his stride, and I jogged along, as it were, to Banbury Cross, as the old rhyme has it.

When I reached the top of a hill, the moon was so strong that the valley below me was in a full tide of white light. I almost thought that I could perceive a dot moving below, and my pulse quickened at the thought that it was Morgan.

As I rode, there was a certain exhilaration in the night that strung me up and enlivened me. A current of thoughts flowed in my mind, and I drifted away among them. I somehow had no fear lest I should miss my man. Since then I have sometimes wondered why, and only got the answer that it was the crisp, hard night bracing me to confidence. The mere fact, anyhow, is that I forgot my immediate errand in a crowd of other feelings, and that I was suddenly brought up by a light.

For the moment—so astray were my wits—I fancied it was the Dunstan cabin, with little Jack ill, and his mother keeping watch and ward. Immediately I knew better. It was a roofless shack, long deserted, without doors or windows, and a light flickered in it.

I fancy Morgan had made sure of his triumph; he had not looked for me. He was there, as I saw at once, when, having dismounted, I peeped in, and he was busily engaged in preparing a bandage by the light of a candle stuck in a bottle. I had an instant guess at what had happened. He had let his horse down badly, and was endeavoring to repair the mischief. He started as my shadow fell into the room from the moon behind.

"I guess I've got you, Morgan," I said.

He laid his bandage aside carefully. He was a man of good grit.

"I see. I suppose we'd better talk business," said he calmly.

"You've hit it," I answered, entering. "But the business is all on my side."

He looked at me. "Do you take much stock in Chadd?" he asked, after a pause.

"I don't know that I do," I said. "I fancy he can look after himself."

"Let him," he said, turning over the bandage. "You're some authority on a horse, Mr. Winsloe. Will that do?"

I grinned at him. "You want to buy me off?" I said. "You're a cool card."

"I don't think it would be against your interests to come in with us," he said, as calmly as ever. "But I'm not depending on it."

"Well, what are you depending on?" I drawled.

"This!" I looked down the barrel of a Colt as he spoke. But I flatter myself I did not wince. I had no weapon, for I had come away in a precipitate haste, and there were only my two bare hands.

"So!" I said. "But, man, you daren't shoot."

"I don't want to," said he. "But I will if I've got to. This thing must be settled my way. You'd better recognize that, Winsloe."

"Oh, I'll recognize that a man of your kidney is equal to murder, if that's what you mean," I sneered.

"Be reasonable," he said. "I offer terms. I'm bound to see this thing through, and if you don't subscribe, you've got to go out of action."

He was between me and the door, and his pistol was leveled dead on me. It was then that I played the old wheeze, which never fails, because human nature is human nature:

"That you, Jackson? Man, man, I thought you were never coming."

I was looking across his shoulder, and past him into the empty air, and he whipped round without thought, I do believe, but on an unfortunate instinct. The next moment I had him under my hands, and I slipped his coat down from his shoulders over his arms to the elbows, leaving him helpless. Having extracted his revolver from his useless hands, I made shift to secure him, winding him up in a roll of canvas I found in the shack, and tying him up with rope for all the world like a soft goods package.

"Mr. Morgan, you're in a new com-

bine," I said, "and I fancy you've got to stay there for some hours. You shall be released duly at break of day."

On that I went out, mounted cheerily enough, and rode on to Pigeon's, where I roused the old man out of his bed.

"There's a dandy hobo in the shack 'way down," I told him. "He wants a sleep badly, and I'm anxious he should get it. If you'll take him breakfast and shaving water at daybreak, I'll fix it up with you," and with that I passed him some paper, nodded, and rode on.

I had to wait at West Crow for the midnight mail, and I was mighty glad when it came, and I was aboard without more trouble from Morgan. It was with some difficulty that I found Dunstan's boarding place at Blackville, where I arrived in time for breakfast. He did not express any surprise at seeing me, but was heavy and dull and patiently slow, like a bullock.

"They want five hundred dollars to come out and report on little Jack," he told me when I asked his news.

"Well, I dare say it's worth it," said I. "It's a God-forgotten place to get at."

He made no answer, seeming to ruminate miserably.

"Well, anyway, I've come to know if you'll sell," I said next.

He looked up, brightening a little. "Yes," he said.

"For twenty-five hundred?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, with a sigh.

"That's right," said I. "I like a man to be sensible. But, by thunder, Dunstan, you're a better husband and a father than you are a miner. Why, there are ounces, man, where you've been puddling pennyweights."

He took this in, and then he said, with a quick breath: "Then Mr. Chadd will buy."

I sat down, for the man fairly winded me. "Mr. Chadd will buy," said I, "if you like to offer him a five-ounce proportion in a ten-foot lode. He'll buy at five thousand; he'll buy at ten thousand. Hanged if I don't think he'll buy at a bit more."

"You mean?" he said, gaping.

"Oh, man, get your headpiece at work," I said impatiently. "There's a comfortable little fortune for you in Little Jack. Work it. Tell your friends to sell their shirts to put into it; and don't you let Fairhurst look in at it. Then you can sell out, get little Jack, the mascot—you were right—squared by the doctors, and buy your farm, and squat on it for the rest of your natural life."

"Yes." He sat down, dazed, and then got up. "I am much obliged to you, Mr. Winsloe," he began, and there was a gulp in his throat. He stopped.

"All right, old man," said I. "Glad I happened about." I got up. "But if you sell to Fairhurst—well, my ghost will haunt you. So long; best regards to Mrs. Dunstan and the kid," I said, as I swung out, for I didn't like the look of his face, which was working, and I thought I was better out of the place.

I have always hoped that Pigeon released Morgan in due course, but I never heard, and I haven't been back in that region. Anyway, I had no complaints —at least, not from the Fairhurst crowd. Nor did I just then from Chadd. That came later. I reported that the mine wouldn't be of any use to him, and he seemed satisfied. But one day, three months later, when I was called in consultation by him on a Peruvian proposition, I found him contemplative in his cabinet.

"Winsloe," said he, "I hear there's a big strike in White Hat, that Wyoming place. How did you come to miss it?"

I saw the game was up then, and so I told him the story. He listened quietly, if rather grimly, and when I finished, he said:

"I suppose you lost me half a million." I met his eye, and he continued: "So that's why you never drew your expenses?"

I shrugged my shoulders, and after he had stared at the desk a bit, he went on:

"Well, you've got your ideals, I suppose, and I've mine. We've got to pull together somehow. You'll have to go to Peru, my lad." He shifted his papers. "Anyway, I'm glad Fairhurst didn't get in," he said, with a broad grin.

Love Lyrics of a Ranch Girl

By Robert V. Carr

Introduced

'TWAS at a dance a week ago
That first we met; he bowed quite low
When he was introduced. "May I
Have the next waltz?" he asked. Oh, why
Did I refuse and toss my head,
Yet half regret the words I said?
"It's taken, and the next is, too."
And then he turned around and flew.
Why did he back away so free?
Why didn't he try coaxing me?

"Strays"

HE rode up to our ranch to-day,
And claimed he's looking for a stray.
He talked for quite a while to dad—
Looks funny that the fellow had
To take up nearly half a day
With talking of a single stray.
But finally away he went;
I peeked and watched him as he sent
His horse along just like he's glad;
And then like him *I talked* with dad.

Indifference

LAST night he stopped in and he stayed
To supper and he set and played
Some cards with dad and joked so free,
Yet somehow *me* he did not see.
I wonder if he thinks I care—
One way or other—when or where
He is or what he *ever* thought!
But still I think he hadn't ought—
I'm sure I do not care a cent—
Yet I stayed up until—he went.

Dumbness

ON Sunday last he called, and I
My bestest best did try and try
To entertain him with the news,
The stereopticon and views,
And played the organ; yet right there
He set and twisted in his chair,
And looked at me—I had to laugh—
As helpless as a real young calf.
His words seemed in his throat to stick—
I wonder if the poor boy's sick!

Sweets

TO-DAY he came a-riding down,
And brought me candy from the town;
And then I asked, "Is this for me?"
And then he said, "You bet it be!"
I felt so queer I let him stand
And for a moment hold my hand.
"That candy's sweet," he said, "is true,
But there's none made as sweet as you."
And then I laughed and looked away,
For there was nothing I could say.

Dreams

I DREAMED of him last night and thought
He came to me and quickly caught
Me in his arms and told me all
Those love names that a man may call
The girl he thinks his heart's desire;
And then I dreamed a prairie fire
Came sweeping up on every side,
And *he saved me,* and then I cried
Upon his shoulder strong and nice,
And then he leaned and *kissed me twice!*

The second series of "Love Lyrics of a Ranch Girl" will be published in the first February POPULAR, on sale two weeks hence, January 10th.

Athelbert Hustles

By Ellis Parker Butler
Author of "Pigs is Pigs," "The Incubator Baby," Etc.

At the exit of the Pennsylvania Station in New York is this notice: "BLOW YOUR HORN." On the gates of Euston, London, the warning is: "GO SLOW." Both are somewhat typical of the cities. Athelbert is from the "go slow" town, and he comes to the city of hustle where you have to "blow your horn" to make a living

HIS name was Athelbert Montyon Montmorency James Grey, and he came aboard the ship at Southampton with a monocle in one eye—you can't have a monocle in two eyes, by the way—and a cane in one hand. He wore a tremendously loud plaid mackintosh and a silk hat.

"Here's Lord Dundreary in his youth," I said to myself. I heard him say farewell to a couple of "chappies" who had come down from London to see him off, and my heart rejoiced in the lazy drawl of his voice. "Here's sport ahead," I said.

He seemed the typical Englishman of the type of Englishman he was—blond hair soaked down on his head so that not a hair could go astray, ineffable blond mustache, and gentle blue eyes. He wore his mouth ajar, and I knew just the sort of conversation that would issue from it: "Bah Jove, y'know! Really? Well, rawther, old chap!" I had seen his sort on the stage, and at a distance in London.

I nabbed my steamer chair, and made the usual complaint to the deck steward because it was not in the very best spot on board, and had it changed, got out my steamer rug, dug my trashy novel out of the Gladstone bag, and settled myself. Athelbert-and-the-rest-of-it Grey had, I noticed, the chair next mine. His name was in the slot at the top. "Good!" I said to myself. "Sport ahead!"

I had hardly opened my book when Athelbert came on deck. He paused a moment in the doorway, and walked toward his chair. Never have I seen such a change in a man in so short a time. He had shaved his mustache, for one thing, and, while his fresh pink-and-white complexion could not be changed so quickly, his mouth was closed, and his ultra-English garments had given place to a good imitation of an American business suit. He took the monocle from his eye as he came toward me, carefully wrapped the silk cord around it, and tossed the whole affair over the side of the ship. Then he seated himself in his steamer chair. Or, rather, he sat on it, with his feet over the side.

"I say," he began, without preliminaries, "you're from the States, I take it?"

"New York," I admitted.

"You bet!" he said, and the phrase sounded oddly from lips more accustomed to say "I wager!" His interest in me seemed intensified a hundredfold by my admission. "Hustlin' place, New York. That's where I get off."

"That's where we all get off, unless we mash into an iceberg," I said.

"Right, oh!" he said cheerfully. "American joke, that, what? I get you."

He seemed immensely proud that he had caught the faint glimmer of humor in my words. I suppose he had heard many times that Englishmen are unable to see American humor in less than a week after it is inflicted on them—which is not true, by the way. There's

Jerome K. Jerome, for example, almost entitled to rank as the leading American humorist. I liked Athelbert. A more innocent, sweet-natured youth I never met.

"See here," I said, "I saw you chuck that monocle overboard. What did you do that for? Did it hurt your eye?"

"My word, no!" he said, with a little laugh and a grin. "Cawn't wear the thing in America, can I? Chap cawn't hustle with a pane of glass in his jolly eye, what?"

"And that's why you tossed it over?" I asked.

He nodded his head, and grinned.

"Chap has got to hustle in America, they tell me, what?"

I laughed.

"There are plenty of 'chaps' that don't hustle in America," I said.

"Really?" he asked, with surprise, and then he said: "All the more chance for the chaps that do hustle, then, eh, what?"

"Looks that way," I said.

This pleased him.

"Right, oh!" he said cheerfully. "I say, you look like the right sort. I don't mind tellin' you I'm goin' to New York to hustle. What say? Has a chap a chawnce?"

"The hustler has a chance anywhere," I said.

"Oh, say, now!" exclaimed Athelbert. "Not in Lunnon, you know. Chap cawn't hustle in Lunnon. I tried it, and it's rotten, I give my word. They look at you, you know. It isn't done. Tell me," he said, with his pleasant smile, "do you rawther think I'll make a hustler?"

I looked at him, and laughed. I believe I went into a sort of mute fit of laughter in my steamer chair, and Athelbert sat and watched me with the good-natured smile on his face. Suddenly his face fell.

"I say," he said anxiously, "did I miss a joke?"

"No, no!" I assured him. "Excuse me, will you? I didn't mean to be rude, but you *don't* look like a hustler. You are all right, but if I was to make a guess, I would say you were in the habit of lounging around a club all day."

"You hit it off!" he said. "And I got so bally tired of it! My word, yes. I was sittin' there one mornin', and uncle came in. Good old sport uncle is, but I was sittin' there, and uncle came in. 'My word!' I thought, 'look at uncle! In forty years I'll be sittin' here just as I am now, and I'll be like uncle.' Good old sport, uncle is, but, my word! A chap don't want to be like that in forty years."

"Like what?" I asked.

"Nothin'. Just a good old sport," said Athelbert. "Ah—ah—Cecil Rhodes wasn't that way, nor Wellington, nor —nor those chaps, you know. It's very well to be a good old sport, but——"

He waved his hands. I understood; it was no life for a man.

During the voyage, Athelbert clung rather closely to me, and I was not sorry, for he was a charming fellow. He asked me at least ten thousand questions about America and New York, and I answered as well as I could.

"See here, Grey," I said at last, "we are good friends now. What is the real reason you are coming to America?"

Athelbert blushed all over his pink face. We were leaning on the rail, looking at the water slipping by, and it was characteristic of his frank spirit that he turned and looked into my face.

"Girl," he said. "Uncle didn't approve of the girl, and the girl was all right, you know. Cheesemonger's daughter and all that, but a fine girl. A chap cawn't chuck over a girl he likes just for a bag of money, what?"

"You are all right, Grey," I told him.

His face glowed, as it always did when he was pleased.

"I say, do you think so?" he said. "Think I did the proper thing, what? Think I'll make good?" He asked it rather hesitatingly, perhaps because the phrase was new to his vocabulary, and perhaps because he did not like to put such a bald question.

"That depends," I said. "I rather think you will. What do you mean to take up?"

"I wanted to awsk you that," he said.

"I want to hustle. What—what's the hustlingest game in New York, do you fawncy?"

"I should say advertising," I said thoughtfully. "Advertising, or reporting for a live newspaper."

"I couldn't be a press man, you know," said Athelbert. "I cawn't write that well. I rawther fawncy advertising, you know."

"It is a big field," I said. "The man with ideas, with hustle enough to carry them into being, can do well in advertising."

"I'm for it," said Athelbert promptly.

"You have to be what we call a live wire," I warned him.

"Never fear," said Athelbert.

I saw him through the customhouse and to a hotel, and there we parted. I had meant to keep an eye on him, but you know how it is in New York. Time flew, and I was busy, and, actually, I forgot all about him. I had given him my address, and he could have looked me up at any time if he had desired, but it was eight months before I heard from him.

"Why, hello, Grey!" I said when I heard his voice through the telephone. "Knew you the minute I heard you speak. Why haven't I seen you before?"

"Jove! You don't see me now, what?" he laughed back. "Oh, I've been hustlin'. I'm in business, what, ho! Goin' some, that?"

"My goodness, yes!" I laughed. "Only eight months to get into business."

"Oh, I got in sooner than that, you know," said Grey. "Hired an office the day I landed. Had my sign out the next day. Sign chap thought I was jolly well insane. I taught *him* to hustle. I say, can you come over?"

I could, and I did. I found Grey on the tenth floor of the Metropolitan Building, with a sign on his door: "A. Gray, Advertising Specialist." He greeted me with a smile that was as warm a welcome as a man ever had.

"Jove!" he said. "I've hit it, you know. Bally well believe I've hit it!"

"You have, have you, you fraud?" I said. "Why didn't you let me know where you were? Nice way to treat an old friend."

"I've been hustlin' too hard," said Athelbert. "Look at the top of that desk."

I looked. It was a new roll-top desk, but the top was worn void of varnish.

"Heels," said Athelbert proudly. "Jove! I've had my heels there twelve hours a day, takin' out lunch time. Hustlin'? Nothin' but hustlin' all day."

"With your heels cocked up on that desk?" I asked.

"Thinkin'," said Athelbert, beaming on me. "Jove, you know! I had to. Chap has to hustle in the States. I can see that."

"And you hustled eight months, sitting in a chair with your heels on top of your desk?"

"Rawther!" said Athelbert. "Jolly hard labor it was, too, old chap. Quite hard to keep awake some days, I assure you. But a man's got to hustle."

"Come on," I coaxed. "Tell me. What's the answer?"

"It's not a conundrum, you know," said Athelbert good-naturedly. "It was thinkin'. By Jove, it's no easy matter for a man that never had one to have an idea, is it? He's got to hustle them up, what?"

"Oh, I see!" I said, as a glimmer of the truth reached me. "You have been digging for an idea. That's it, is it?"

"Uncle is married again," said Athelbert, apropos of nothing, as it seemed to me.

"You don't say!" I exclaimed. "Didn't know the good old sport had been married at all."

"Oh, lots of times," said Athelbert carelessly. "Quite a marryin' man, uncle is. That's my idea, you see."

"What? Marrying a lot of times?" I asked.

"I get you!" he said, with a laugh as a tribute to the joke. "No. The invitation and announcement and all that, you see. Right good place to advertise, what? In a wedding announcement?"

"Look here, Athelbertus," I said, "stop hustling the American language long enough to tell me what is in your mind, will you?"

"Rather!" he said. "Uncle sent me an announcement, you see. 'What, ho!' I said. 'Here's somethin' interestin'!' Chap always feels that way about a weddin' announcement, doesn't he?' So I opened it—two envelopes, announcement, cards, tissue sheet and all. I saw it was only uncle, marryin' again. 'Phaugh!' I said. 'Nothin' but uncle gettin' married. A chap would sooner get an advertisement by mail than one of uncle's marryin' notices.' And right there I had the idea!"

"Go ahead. Tell me. I'm strong," I said.

"Sellin' space in weddin' announcements for advertisin' chaps," said Athelbert, glowing with pride. "Rawther clever idea, what? And all my own. Finest kind of advertisin', I take it. Now, you see——"

He explained the whole scheme. He would buy the advertising rights of all the wedding announcements—he was not sure how he would buy them, he thought he might reach the contracting parties through the stationers that furnished the announcements. He passed that very important detail over lightly. His idea was to furnish the whole announcement or invitation, fashionable envelopes, swell engraving and all, free for the mere right of slipping another small card in the envelopes. And then he would sell the right to engrave an advertisement on that card to some one advertiser.

"They'll be crazy over it," he assured me. "They'll be wild for it. Fancy you were a classy silversmith, now. Fancy you could put your advertisement on a card in all the weddin' invitations goin' out in New York for a year. *'Williams and Jones, Silversmiths. Weddin' Presents a Specialty.'* Everybody would receive that card right in the weddin' invitation, just when they were thinkin' they must pick up somethin' for a gift for the bride. It should bring results, what?"

"It would be good advertising," I laughed.

"Rawther!" said Athelbert enthusiastically. "And the bride should like it, what? Sort of a gentle hint?"

"I should say so!" I said.

"Glad you like the idea, old chap," Athelbert said. "Don't see anything wrong with it, do you?"

"Only two things," I said. "You will not be able to get the names of the contracting parties in advance from any stationers I ever knew anything about, and you will not be able to get permission to put the card in the invitations from any one on this green earth."

Athelbert pondered this.

"That's where the hustlin' comes in," he said, at length.

"I should say so!" I said, and I meant it. Athelbert seemed to hesitate.

"I say!" he said. "Are you married?"

I had to laugh. Athelbert laughed, too. Then he became serious.

"Want to try it on the dog, do you?" I asked. "Well, excuse me."

"Now, I say!" said Athelbert, and he launched into a talk about the advantages of getting my wedding invitations engraved and mailed free of charge such as should have convinced any one. I never imagined Athelbert had the talk in him that poured out upon me. Nine or ten times he really had me convinced, and then I would think of the bride to be, and her parents, and I would come to with a shock. The thing was utterly absurd.

"It will not do, Grey," I said. "People will not have it. No bride will. Her wedding is the one time she isn't thinking of cash—or pretends not to be—and she would not have an advertisement put in her announcements for a million dollars."

"That's too much, you know," he said seriously. "I couldn't pay it. That's two hundred thousand pounds."

"I know what I'm talking about," I assured him. "Take my girl, for example. She's a sweet girl, and she would do anything to oblige a friend, but if you were the best friend she had in the world, she would not consider such a proposition for one second. No, sir!"

"Jove, now!" said Athelbert. "And I thought you Americans were all for money!"

"Then you've got something to

learn," I said. "We're partly for show and style."

Athelbert mussed his hair, and creased his brow.

"Jove!" he said. "You have tangled my idea all up, old chap. I've got to hustle on this a bit yet, I see."

"Or drop it. That's what I'd do," I told him.

I could see how the idea must have grown on him, sitting there with his feet in the air. It must have seemed to have unlimited possibilities. You know how wedding announcements are sent out—in bunches. You order so many—three hundred or a thousand, and send one to each man and woman you can think of—and the number could be multiplied almost indefinitely. Given a wedding and Athelbert could have gone right through the city directory if he wished, sending the announcement to every man in New York. People get announcements from couples they have trouble in remembering. Happy bridegrooms take the printed lists of the members of their clubs, and send the announcements to one and all, dead or alive. Any man will receive an announcement, and, if he does not remember the names of the marrying couple, feel an extra touch of pride. It is the subtlest compliment to be remembered by one you do not remember. That is why confidence men have such easy work.

After that interview, I saw Athelbert almost daily.

"Jove!" he said, when I saw him next. "If some chap set the style, it would go swimmin'ly. If I could get a Vandergould or a Belderbilt to let me send some cards, every one would be crazy to do it."

"You have hit the true New York spirit," I told him.

"But hustlin' wouldn't get me the right from the Vandergould's," he said.

"Honestly," I said, "I don't believe it would!"

"I know it wouldn't," he said. "I tried it. For a shillin' I would have my girl come over and marry her, to set the thing goin'."

"Would she permit it?" I asked.

"There you are!" he said. "She wouldn't. She's only a cheesemonger's daughter, but they're the sort that stick out for form, don't you see?"

"And you want to remember," I said, "we are all cheesemongers or cheesemongers' daughters in America."

The next time I saw him he was beaming.

"I say!" he exclaimed. "I've got it, you know! A matrimonial agency."

"Dropped the wedding-announcement idea, did you?" I asked.

"Well, rawther not!" he said reproachfully that I should have thought such a thing. "That's part of it. I'll start a matrimonial agency, don't you see, and have no fees. Bring the lovin' hearts together without charge, what? No charge at all, only I have the right to slip an advertisin' card into the announcements. Do you get me?"

"I do," I said. "Only, if you are going to run a matrimonial agency, it would pay better to run it as that. Personally, I don't think matrimonial agencies are very reputable."

"Bringin' two happy souls together?" said Athelbert.

"They may be happy souls when you bring them together," I said, "but what are they going to be afterward? I don't like the idea. It is all sordid. Old Man Broken-down with a sock full of gold after Miss Foolish, or Old Miss Undesirable with a stocking full of greenbacks after Young Simpleton. Sort of 'Bless you my children; go, and be miserable.'"

"It is a nawsty mess, isn't it?" said Athelbert, the disgust showing on his frank countenance, and I knew that idea would go no further.

Athelbert had been in New York a year—hustling—and his great idea seemed no nearer fruition than the day he landed, when, looking through my mail one morning, I found one of those suspiciously plump and refined envelopes that invariably betoken a wedding invitation or a wedding announcement.

"Who's married now?" I questioned myself, and opened the envelope. In-

side was the second envelope, and inside that the announcement:

Mr. and Mrs. L. C. P. Cæsonius
have the honor of
announcing the marriage of their daughter
Calpurnia
to
Mr. Caius Julius Cæsar
on Monday, the ninth of January
Fifty-nine, B. C.
at Rome, Italy.

"This is Athelbert!" I said, with a laugh. "He has been hustling," and I looked at one of the cards inclosed.

Mr. and Mrs. C. Julius Cæsar
Will be at home after the first of February.
Hillcrest, Rome, Italy.

"Very clever, Athelbert!" I laughed, and looked at the other inclosure. It was a card as neatly engraved as the announcement itself.

Don't miss seeing
Mr. James K. McCullough
and Miss Rosalind Grimm
in
Mr. William Shakespeare's play,
"Julius Cæsar,"
at the
International Theater,
Forty-second Street at Broadway, New York.
Now playing.

Of course I dropped across to see Athelbert immediately, but there was a slip of paper on his door: "Back in Five Minutes." I went down to the corridor, and waited ten. The slip was still on the door when I went up again, but Athelbert had not returned, and I was moving toward the elevator when Athelbert dashed out of it, and came across the intervening space like a shot out of a gun. His straw hat was on the back of his head, his hands were full of papers, and he was perspiring like a porpoise.

"Oh, I say, old chap!" he cried, when he saw me, and he was unlocking the door of his office at the same time with one hand and trying to pull off his coat with the other. "You're just the man I want to see. Who did Pharaoh marry?"

"Pharaoh?" I asked. "Who's Pharaoh?"

"That Egyptian chap that had the plague, you know," said Athelbert, as he slammed up the top of his desk and began opening papers like a madman. "Old Pharaoh. Got to have his wife's name. Oh, I say, did you get the Cæsar thing?"

"I did," I told him. "And it is clever."

"But look at this," said Athelbert, and he dug a paper out of the mess on his desk. I opened it.

"Dear Caroline," I began, reading it aloud, but Athelbert reached out his hand, and jerked it away from me, and a blush mingled with the moisture on his face.

"Jove, no!" he said. "That's the letter I'm writin' to the cheesemonger's daughter, tellin' her to come over. Hawvn't had time to finish it yet. Here, this is it."

It was another beautifully engraved wedding announcement. It said Mr. and Mrs. Tascher De La Pagerie had the honor of announcing the marriage of their daughter, Marie Josephine Rose, to Mr. Napoleon Bonaparte, March 9, 1796, at Paris, France. One of the inclosed cards called polite attention to the Little Corporal Suspenders, for sale at all haberdashers. I laughed.

"But I say, you know!" said Athelbert. "Hustlin' pays. Look at these!"

He handed me a bunch of contracts as thick as my hand. I saw at once that if Athelbert did not run out of historical characters, he was going to make a good thing out of "hustlin'" in America. He had sold the wedding announcements rights in good old Sir James Mackintosh to a raincoat manufacturer, and Cleopatra to an Egyptian cigarette maker, and Madame Pompadour to a false-hair dealer. Christopher Columbus was sold to the maker of the Discoverer Cigar, and Oliver Cromwell to the maker of the Protector Dress Shield. Athelbert was evidently doing a rushing business.

"Good work, Grey," I said, as I handed him back the contracts.

"Oh, hustlin' pays!" he said. "Who *did* Pharaoh marry?"

"I give it up," I said. "What does it matter? What have you sold him for?"

"Fly-poison chap bought him," said Athelbert. "Plague of flies in old Pharaoh's time, what?"

He had a dictionary of "Famous Characters" on his desk, and he took it down hastily, and turned over the pages. Suddenly he stopped, shut the book with a bang, and jumped up. With almost the same motion of his hand, he put on his hat.

"I say, excuse me, old chap, will you?" he said, as he made a bound for the door. "Business is business, you know. A chap has got to hustle while his idea is hot, what? Just thought of a crackin' good one for Rosalie, the gown maker. Adam and Eve, what?"

He was already in the hall, and the door slammed behind him.

"Hustle?" I laughed. "Talk about American hustle! Talk about Englishmen being slow! Talk about——"

The door flew open, and Athelbert shot in. His face showed disappointment, but Athelbert was not droopy.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Change your mind?"

"Jove, yes!" he said violently. "Eve won't do at all, you know. Rotten pity, too. A chap can't announce Eve's wedding."

"Why not?" I asked. "She was married enough to satisfy any one. Of course, there was no church ceremony and all that. No bridesmaids. But it was a good enough wedding for those days. I don't see——"

"I say, though!" said Athelbert. "You can't announce Eve's wedding, you know. She didn't have any mother. What? There was no Mr. and Mrs. to have the honor of announcing. What?"

Another man would have been glum over the miscarriage of such a good one as the marriage of Adam and Eve, but not Athelbert. He was a hustler. He was not glum for over an instant. Then his face lighted up.

"I say!" he exclaimed. "How's Noah? Crackin' good marriage for a toy shop, what? Or, I say! For these steamship chaps! 'Large, comfortable, roomy vessel,' and all that sort of thing. You don't mind my leavin' you, old chap?"

It did not seem to matter whether I minded or not. Athelbert was in the elevator before I could open my mouth.

Athelbert Montyon Montmorency James Grey was a hustler. There was no doubt of that!

THE BAD EFFECTS OF EDUCATION

WHEN Allen Chandler was making a fight for the governorship of Georgia, the race question was one of the big issues, and all the candidates were delivering speeches on the advantages or disadvantages of the higher education for the colored people.

One day he ended his argument against the proposition by getting off this outburst:

"I don't believe in the higher education for colored men, because, as soon as you teach them how to say 'hic-haec-hoc,' they forget how to yell 'gee-haw-buck.'"

HE WORKS ALL OVER THE WORLD

"Marse" Henry Watterson, the brilliant editorial writer of the Louisville *Courier-Journal,* is a perambulant worker. When he goes abroad, or makes a tour of the world, he keeps on writing for his paper, and he has been known to sit down in Berlin and contribute to the *Courier-Journal* a hot-shot editorial on the local problems of Louisville. Occasionally he drops out of sight, retires to one of the country districts of Kentucky, and puts in a lot of time reading and studying.

Bargeman and Bully

By Frederick Arthur Dominy

We have had lots of thrilling stories of the sea, but we cannot recall one that dealt with the bargeman. It may not look a very promising subject, but if you can conjure up a vision of a barge at sea on a nasty night, with the glass falling and a southeaster kicking up a rip-roaring sea, and depending upon a snorting, puffing tug and a hawser that is liable to snap at any moment, you can see that the men on the barges deserve a thought or two.

BAT HULL was the bully of the ward, which is saying much for his ability as a scrapper. The ward in question was distinctly and unmistakably tough. Longshoremen, burly and strong, with the fighting instinct uppermost, who punched and kicked and bit, viciously endeavoring to inflict all possible damage upon an opponent; sailors who had been manhandled by deep-sea mates until they hardly knew what it was to be free from bruises, and who looked upon fighting as they did eating, something to never shirk; patrolmen who, unassisted, had tried to drag Bat before their sergeant—all had gone down before his superior strength and skill.

If Bat had possessed the brains, he might have been developed into a successful ring fighter; but he was short on gray matter, and he remained nothing more than a barge hand, with a reputation as a bruiser who liked whisky, quarrels, and just enough work to keep him in food and clothes.

There was one thing, however, which the inhabitants of the ward in which Bat dwelt had never questioned, and that was his courage. They all knew of his ability, and many had had the doubtful pleasure of seeing him in action; and upon one point they all agreed, that he did not know the meaning of the word fear.

Even old Captain McCarthy, manager and principal owner of the McCarthy Barge Company, whose blood was not yet too thin to find delight in a good fight, would have risked a tidy sum upon Bat's gameness. Perhaps that was one of the reasons why the company employed him as frequently as it did, and particularly the reason why the captain had sent word to him that morning saying that he was wanted to take charge of a barge in a tow that was leaving within a few hours.

The McCarthy Barge Company had the reputation of paying higher wages than any of its competitors, even if it did ask its men to assume greater risks occasionally. Consequently when the call came to Bat, he responded with more than usual alacrity, for, not long before, he had discovered that a lone nickel constituted his total capital.

Hence but a few minutes elapsed before he lumbered into Captain McCarthy's office, and found him sitting behind his desk sternly eying a little, undersized man, whose hangdog look, rusty clothes, pinched-up face, and general air of dilapidation plainly told its own tale of ill fortune, and who now stood, hat in hand, nervously shifting about from one foot to the other, before him.

"And you tell me you're a good man," the captain was saying, distrust strong

in his voice. "'Tis a divil of a nerve you have, anyhow, to try an' make me believe that you or any of the rest of the Ballard family—— Sure, didn't I know your father over in the ol' Fourt' Ward? We was boys together; and he growed up into a fine, whisky-soaked bum; an', by the same token, I'm thinking you're bound on his course."

"S'help me, capt'n, I ain't touched a drop in a year," protested the man, in just such a weak, colorless voice as one would expect him to possess. "I've been up against it hard; an' I know I look pretty tough, but work's been scarce, an' I thinks that mebbe you could give me a job steady, so's I could make enough to keep goin' an' live halfway decent."

"Steady jobs is for steady men," Captain McCarthy replied shortly. Then, pointing to Bat, who had remained near the door listening to the conversation, he continued: "Here's Bat now. If he wanted a regular job, he could get it, an' get it quick, provided he'd settle down an' give up his drinking an' fighting. But he's a better man than you, anyway you look at it. If you had the size an' muscle he's got, I might think of taking you on; but, why, you darn little runt, it's safe betting you ain't got the strength of a cat, let alone any spunk, an' the likes of you are no good. No. Don't bother me. I'm wanting *men*, an' you ain't in that class."

"Aw, cap'n," the despised one pleaded despairingly, "gimme a chance, will yer? Mebbe I ain't big, but I'll do my share of any work you sets me to. An' I tells you I ain't no baby——"

"Shut up!" the captain interrupted abruptly, as a sudden thought occurred to him. "Tell you what I'll do. I'll leave it to Bat. If he's willing to put up with you for one run—— What d'you say, Bat? Think you can stand Joe Ballard here for a shipmate? The tow's to New Haven an' back, an' you start this afternoon."

"If he's willin' to take the chances of my gettin' riled up an' throwin' him over the side o' the barge he c'n go, fur's I care," said Bat; and he grinned wickedly.

"Well, that's settled, then," Captain McCarthy declared. "At two o'clock, you be at the dock, Joe, an' we'll give you a chance to show just how good you are. An', Bat, you see that the *Mary Ellen's* got grub enough aboard for the trip. There'll be but the two barges, yours an' the *Sister;* so, 'less you run into a spell of rough weather, you won't be out more'n a day an' a half each way. The *Vulcan's* got the tow, an' Abe Ryder's got his orders to shove her. Remember, now, hustle's the word from start to finish. It means money to me if them two barges get to New Haven 'side of forty-eight hours; an' that's the reason I sent for you to take charge of the *Mary Ellen.*"

The powerful, ocean-going *Vulcan,* tugboat of the best type, cleared the Hook that afternoon some two hours before sunset. Up in the pilot house, Captain Abe Ryder was holding the steering wheel with great, horny hands, and casting alternate glances astern at his tow, and ahead, out over the broad Atlantic.

"Goin' to be a nasty night," he said to his engineer, who had left the engines temporarily in charge of his assistant, now that the passage down the bay had been accomplished. "The glass is fallin', an' this sou'easter'll kick up a riproarin' sea if it keeps on blowin'."

"Dunno but what you're right," the engineer assented. "'Pears to me the ol' man's losin' his grip. Gen'ally speakin', he's mighty particular, an' don't want us to leave when the weather's unfavorable."

"Rush job, I guess," Captain Abe replied. "Big money in sight, an' he's not the one to let a good chance go by. Wow! Look at that, will yer?" he exclaimed suddenly, as the tug buried her nose deep into a monstrous sea and the spray flew high above the deck, completely encompassing the pilot house for a moment. "An' I'll bet a month's wages we ship 'em bigger'n that afore mornin'. Looks to me like the makin' of a reg'ler ol' gray-backed sou'easter."

"If that's the case, we'll have all we can do to hold the tow, even if it's light," added the engineer. "I, for one,

never did like the idea of coastin' Long Island in a southerly storm. 'Bout how far offshore you goin' to keep her, Abe?"

Discipline, so far as the officers addressing each other by their titles went, was lax upon the *Vulcan*. When one man has been in command of a boat ever since she first floated free of her launching cradle, some five years past, and the other had seen the first starting signal answered promptly, and had been listening to the bells ever since, formalities seem trivial, and titles are reserved for special occasions.

"Oh, some fifteen or twenty mile, I guess, 'll do," the man at the wheel answered. "That'll give me plenty of sea room; an', if them engines of yours don't fool us, it'll take some storm to keep us from clearin' Montauk."

"Don't you be gettin' worried 'bout them engines. They'll shove her long's either of us wants to go. What I was thinkin' 'bout mainly was the barges. If it does come on to blow harder, I'm wonderin' if Bat'll hold on if he sees us goin' to leeward."

"What! You don't mean to say you think Bat Hull'll get cold feet an' slip the *Sister's* hawser, do you, Sandy?" Captain Ryder asked, astonished. "If you want to know, that's just the reason the ol' man put him in charge of the *Mary Ellen,* an' told me to make fast to her. He's sure of Bat, an' don't figger to take any chances. Says that cargo's too valuable to cut adrift. No, sir. Bat's got his orders to hang onto the *Sister,* an' I've got mine to hang onto the *Mary Ellen.* I guess we'll both do it, provided you can keep steam enough in them ol' junk heaps of yourn what you call engines to give us steerage way."

"Junk heaps—huh!" the engineer retorted, incensed at this slander of his favorites. "Them junk heaps'll be goin' when the bitts is pulled out of the *Vulcan,* let alone them in the rotten ol' tubs we've got in tow. But, seein's you're 'fraid of 'em, why don't you run back, in behind the Hook, till the weather clears?"

To this taunt, Captain Ryder made no reply, knowing that it was but a fair return of the attack he had made upon Sandy's beloved engines; but when Sandy swung himself down the narrow iron ladder leading from the pilot house to the deck, a few minutes later, and disappeared, grumbling and shaking his head disgustedly, into the regions of "down below," the captain allowed himself a smile and a quiet chuckle.

An hour or so after sundown, the *Vulcan* and her tow passed the Fire Island lightship. The wind had gradually increased in velocity from the time when they had first breasted the swells of the Atlantic, and now was blowing a gale, which drove the seas before it in great, foaming masses that made the tug stagger from the force of their impact upon her sides. Hatches had been battened tightly down, the tow rope parceled carefully, to eliminate all possible friction; and long ago the signal for full speed had been jingled to the engine room—speed now needed if they would make headway against the storm.

On the barges, the severity of the storm was felt even more keenly than upon the tug. Heavily loaded and deep in the water they could not ride the seas, but wallowed through them, decks constantly awash, and each wave as it struck sweeping clear from bow to stern with nothing but the little deck house to stay its progress. Once they had sailed the seas, brave with white sails and tapering spars; ships whose speed and stanchness were known in every port along the coast; but that was before the trade between these ports had been monopolized by tramp steamers, rusty-sided and unlovely, which, however, could stow ten cargos larger than either's total tonnage inside their iron hulls, and carry them from port to port for a freightage charge so low that competition was useless.

So the *Mary Ellen,* stripped of her useless spars and canvas, and her mate, the *Sister,* had deteriorated to mere hulks, helpless and dependent upon a snorting, puffing tug for their motive power, where once the same wind that

was now threatening them had seen them heel over, in scornful acknowledgment of its weight, until, with lee scuppers awash and sails and rigging taut and strained to the uttermost, they had defiantly worked, point by point, up into the very teeth of the gale.

With the coming of darkness, the red and green lights were set in the stays that supported the *Mary Ellen's* lone stump of a mast, and Bat took the wheel. From out of the deck house issued the sound of rattling pans and the sizzle of frying meat, and with the thin wisps of smoke trailing to leeward went the odor of cooking. As an accompaniment to these sounds and scents of culinary activity, the words of a popular music-hall ballad, sung in a nasal wheeze, and with total indifference to the air, reached Bat's ears.

"Singin'!" Bat growled, as he spat disgustedly over the rail. "'Stead of singin', he'll be wantin' to say his prayers 'fore the night's over, I'm bettin'." Then, with the importance of suddenly acquired authority, he shouted: "Hey, you! Cut out that yowlin' an' git me somethin' to eat. Whatcher think this is—a singin' school?"

"Jest a minit, cap'n, jest a minit, an' the grub'll be ready," a voice answered meekly, and the title so tickled Bat's vanity that he was almost pleasant when Joe Ballard came on deck a short time after to announce that the meal was prepared and to relieve him at the wheel.

Now, it was an understood thing among those who usually manned the barges of the McCarthy Company that no man should stand over a three hours' trick at the wheel; but Bat, safe in the knowledge that his shipmate was ignorant of that rule, determined to enjoy a comfortable smoke and a few hours of sleep before relieving him. So, his supper finished, he settled himself in one of the cabin bunks, and puffed leisurely upon his pipe. The soporific influence of the tobacco caused him presently to nod his head and relax his muscles until the pipe fell out of his mouth, and he lay back to add his snores to the sound of the gale.

How long that sleep would have lasted is problematical, for Bat was entirely comfortable, and also sadly in need of rest after a carouse that had lasted well into the morning of that day. Instead, however, of enjoying a comfortable night's repose, he was suddenly and violently awakened by being thrown heavily from his bunk to the floor of the cabin, across which he slid, to stop with a bone-crushing jar against the opposite wall.

For a moment he could not realize what had happened. Then his sense of locality returned, and he heartily cursed the man at the wheel for allowing the barge to take a sea upon her broadside, as he supposed.

"Whatcher think you're doin', you lubber?" he yelled up the little companionway as another lurch sent him staggering across the cabin. Clearly the barge was rolling in a manner altogether out of reason; and he followed his shout out onto the deck to take charge of the wheel himself.

"Head her up. Head her——" The words were snatched out of his mouth by the hurricane that swept across the *Mary Ellen;* and for an instant it needed all his strength to keep from being blown back into the cabin.

Then came a lull that gave him time to dash to the wheel; and, as he grasped the spokes, a wave came sweeping over the bow, burying him waist deep in a green flood that threatened to carry him back into the ocean with it.

He swore viciously. Wet and shivering, he peered through the night, searching for the lights of the *Vulcan.* "Where's the tug?" he yelled. "Joe, Joe, you lubber! What's the matter? Hawser parted?"

Out from the shadow of the leeward rail crawled a bedraggled figure, and, with step rendered uncertain by the rolling of the barge, staggered to Bat's side.

"Nigh got me that time," he bawled. "The tug? She's ahead an' fast to us; but I'm thinkin' we're driftin' to leeward."

"An' the beach not over three mile off! Ain't she holdin' us? Joe! Joe!

Ain't she? Man, if we're makin' leeway, we'll be in the surf in an hour, an' then—— Why don't you answer, you fool? Whatcher goin' to do?" And Bat cursed the wind and the sea and the barge company, and finally his companion, his voice rising wildly above the roar of the storm as he watched him crawl aft and examine the heavy hawser that led over the *Mary Ellen's* stern.

"Come back here," he shouted. "Help me hold this wheel. Can't you see——"

"I was wonderin' if the *Sister's* hawser was holdin'," explained the little man.

"The *Sister!*" Bat yelled. "The devil take the *Sister*. It's the *Mary Ellen* we're on; and, if we're losin' ground, we'll be deader'n drownded rats 'fore mornin'. Watch, I tell yer, an' see if we're makin' headway."

The minutes passed slowly as both stood straining their eyes to determine that important fact. On the distant beach a tiny light twinkled, now shining plainly as the heavy barge rose on the crest of a wave, and then disappearing altogether when she slid down the long, watery hill, down into a hollow so deep that it seemed impossible for her to ever arise again.

Sometimes it looked as if they were slowly passing it. Then again it showed in exactly the same position. Once Bat lurched to the rail and endeavored to discover whether they were making progress; but in the black waters buffeting the sides of the barge he could read no answer.

Suddenly the whistle of the *Vulcan* sounded. Three short, sharp blasts, that were carried by the wind to the ears of the anxious men on the barges, and which told them, plainly as words, that the captain of the tug was doing all in his power to save them, but that the boat was not equal to the task, that she was unable to make headway against the storm, and that they should be prepared for the worst.

The deck of the *Mary Ellen* was now almost constantly knee deep with water. Wave after wave was sweeping clear from stem to stern, and, though they struggled with the wheel, vainly trying to keep her bow to the seas, she would scarcely answer the helm, and they finally relaxed their useless efforts.

Gradually the light on the beach grew plainer, and then they heard, above the creaking of the timbers of the laboring barge and the crash of the waves as they struck her sides, the ominous, sullen sound of a heavy surf beating on a lee shore.

"Hear it? Of course I hear it." Bat glared angrily at the man beside him. "An', when we're in it in this ol' scow, she won't last ten minutes."

"Mebbe the *Vulcan*'ll manage to keep us clear, Bat," the little man suggested hopefully.

"Ain't she tried for the last two hours, an' losin' ground every minute! If I was Abe Ryder, I'd cut loose an' save myself."

"But he won't, will he?" asked Joe anxiously. "He's a man, I'm thinkin', or they wouldn't put him in charge of a tow."

"Naw. He won't; but, by thunder, why didn't I think of it sooner? That's our chance. Blast the *Sister!* What's her an' her crew to me?" And, as the thought occurred, Bat rushed into the deck house, to emerge an instant later with a hatchet in his hand.

"Bat! Say, Bat! Whatcher goin' to do?" Joe yelled the question into his ear as he passed the wheel. Then a wave swept the barge, and, unprepared, Bat was carried into the scuppers. With a desperate effort, he regained his feet, and half ran, half slid across the deck to the two upright timbers in the stern, around which the hawser holding the *Sister* was made fast.

Frantically he began to cut at the coils of heavy rope that encircled the bitts, wielding the light hatchet savagely, and with each stroke cursing the futility of his blows upon the wet hemp. "The *Sister*. Here she goes," he shouted almost crazily. "Let 'er drift, an' the *Vulcan* can pull us clear of this hell hole. Let 'er go, I say——"

"Bat! Bat Hull!" Above the storm came Joe Ballard's hail, clear and distinct. Something in the cool tones

compelled obedience, and for the moment Bat stopped his attack upon the hawser.

"Quit it!" yelled Ballard. "You hear! Let's see you act halfway like a man. Whatcher tryin' to do? Cut that hawser; an' you'll kill them on the *Sister* jest as sure as if you shot 'em. Here! Gimme that hatchet an' git hold of the wheel again."

Joe held out his hand persuasively; but, with a snarl of anger, Bat struck viciously at it, and then turned to the bitts again.

"Curse the *Sister,* an' the men on her," he shouted; "an' you, too. Lemme be, you little fool. I know what I'm doin'. I'm lookin' out for Bat; an', if cuttin' the *Sister* loose'll help me, the *Sister* goes."

Completely in the grasp of a cowardly, self-preservative panic, Bat was totally indifferent to the fate of the men on the other barge. Gone was his boasted courage, gone his indifference; and, with the one thought of saving himself, whatever the expense to others, he resumed his hacking upon the thick rope.

But again the incisive voice stayed his uplifted hand; and now it carried with it a menace unmistakably deadly. "Drop that hatchet. Drop it. *Quick!*" A revolver, its blued-steel frame and barrel glistening wickedly in the dim light, appeared in the hands of the speaker; and Bat, angered at this second interruption, and about to launch himself upon him, drew back instead of advancing, and let the hatchet fall upon the deck.

Then the little man stepped closer, keeping the weapon always steadily trained upon the big bulk of the "captain" of the *Mary Ellen,* and berating him in sneering tones.

"You quitter. *You* a fightin' man, eh? You're a purty one to send out in charge of a barge! Grab that wheel, an' hang on till I orders diffrunt. I'm boss here now, an' you're goin' to take your chance with the rest of us. 'Member that, an' don't try to start nothin', for, sure's you do, I'll pot you."

And Bat Hull—big, blustering Bat Hull, bully of his ward, and the one man who Captain McCarthy swore would never show the white feather—shambled across the wet and slippery deck of the barge and grasped the spokes of the steering wheel with trembling hands; while the despised Joe Ballard, son of a rum-soaked father, and himself a failure and a laughing-stock among men who bow to nothing but strength and proven courage, followed in his wake, demanding obedience, and securing it, fully as much by the power of an indomitable spirit, revealed most unexpectedly, as by possession of the pistol that he carried.

Each moment they expected to feel the *Mary Ellen's* keel grate upon the sand bars of the beach. Bat started nervously at every unusual sound or motion of the barge; and only the threatening visage of his self-appointed commander kept him at his post at the wheel, while the erstwhile cook and roustabout sat grimly silent on the coil of rope near the after bitts, awaiting the outcome of the fight with the storm with the resignation and indifference of a fatalist.

Nearer, constantly nearer, they drifted to that white line of foam that marked the break of the surf upon the outer bar; and again the distress signal of the tug sounded. Then a flash of red light on the beach told them that a patrolman from a life-saving station had heard the hoarse whistle, and was on the alert to summon his mates to their assistance should the barges strike.

"An' a swell lot of good them dubs'll do if we hit that bar in this sea!" Bat commented surlily, in reply to a nod from Joe, calling his attention to the Coston signal burned by the life-saver. "Say, Joe. Lemme cut that line. Whatcher care for them fellers astern? It'll give us a chance, and——" He concluded with a volley of curses, pleas, and revilings of the man who had prevented him from acting, to which there was no reply, unless the raising of that menacing revolver, when he moved as if to leave the wheel, could be so construed.

Through the long hours that followed, the fight continued. Sometimes the tug would make headway against the gale. Then it would seem almost certain that tug and barges were about to be caught in the chaos on the outer bar. Bat clung to the wheel in sullen silence, watching the little man sitting on the coil of rope, and waiting for his vigilance to relax. That threat of his, made in Captain McCarthy's office, that maybe he'd "git riled an' drop him over the side," had been meant in jest at the time; but now let the opportunity offer, and he would gladly put it into effect.

And then the time came when the lights on the beach were steadily slipping by, and becoming more and more indistinct. Either the gale had lost some of its weight, or they had encountered a current setting away from the land which was carrying them with it. When this fact, that they were gradually creeping out of danger, became plain to the two men on the *Mary Ellen*, Bat immediately recovered some of his old jauntiness of manner. Joe still remained sitting on the handy coil of rope; but now that the danger was past, that cold, hard look had left his face, and it was with an almost apologetic air that he slipped the pistol out of sight.

"Pullin' clear, ain't we?" said Bat; and then, with a jerky laugh, and the manner of one unused to asking favors, he hesitatingly inquired: "Say, Joe, you ain't goin' to say nothin' to the ol' man 'bout my wantin' to cut the *Sister* loose, be you?"

For a moment Ballard was silent, and a look of anxiety overspread Bat's countenance. Of course, it would be a case of one man's word against another's; but somehow Bat knew that if Joe accused him of cowardice in the presence of Captain McCarthy, he could not successfully deny it. Now that the little man had been tested and qualities most unexpected had been disclosed, Bat realized that denials would not avail him should Joe see fit to report his cowardice.

But finally Joe replied with another question· "Whatcher goin' to tell the cap'n 'bout me? Do I get your recommend for a steady job?"

"You sure do—an' good an' strong, too," Bat replied, with emphasis, now that he saw his opportunity for an exchange of courtesies. "That is, providin' you say nothin' 'bout my foolishness."

"Well, then, we'll let it go at that. I keeps still, an' you asks the ol' man to give me a reg'ler berth."

So the bargain was made; and although Captain McCarthy, when he stood on the dock at New Haven that morning and greeted his employees after the tug and barges had been securely moored, thought it strange that Bat Hull should be so enthusiastic in recommending the little man who had sailed with him, still he accepted his word for the man's ability, and employed him.

"I'd rather give you the job, Bat," he declared; "but, seeing that you won't take it, an' Joe will, an' you say he's all right, he's hired. You're a better man, though, and I know it."

And at this last statement Bat looked queerly at Joe, as though expecting him to contradict it; but Joe Ballard, with the semblance of a smile hovering around the corners of his mouth, said nothing.

Modest

By William Slavens McNutt

Author of "His Brothers," Etc.

Watch "Modest" who believed in self effacement—even in a logg'ng camp. The habit gets him into all sorts of trouble, much to his surprise. A funny story of the woods

WHEN Algernon Van Ameringe, seeking first-hand knowledge of the logging business for future reference at such time as he should sit at his rightful desk in the Seattle office of his brother-in-law's lumber company, came as a swamper to the logging camp on the Skeena River, in northern British Columbia, he was modest.

Also he was six feet two inches in the matter of height, and reminiscent in outline of both Apollo and Hercules. He was blond and curly of hair; pink-cheeked, and his face was of a contour so perfect as to create in every man who met him the envy-engendered desire to alter it. On closer acquaintance, his mild, baby stare, faltering, apologetic smile, and disposition to imitate the general color scheme of a freshly peeled beet, at the slightest laudatory allusion to himself, made one feel like buying striped candy, and asking him what he expected to be when he grew up.

Women all—but that is—— What? Wrong! Sit down. Not another story, but a vital part of this one; only it doesn't belong this near the beginning.

Algernon stepped off the up-river boat one June day, with excess baggage to the extent of a trunk full of picturesque sartorial scenery, concomitant with pioneer life as pictorially expounded in the catalogues of certain firms; some few guns—that inasmuch as we were shorthanded, and worked seven days of the week he would never have a chance to use on anything more gamy than the tin hides of a herd of Borden's cows that banked in the cook shack—and a freshly acquired diploma from an Eastern university.

Also, he had a letter from his brother-in-law, addressed jointly to the head sawyer and woods boss, to the effect that Algernon was to be not only started in at the bottom, but kept there and properly trod upon until further notice from headquarters.

The head sawyer occupies much the same position in a logging camp as the captain of a ship on the high seas. There is, however, this difference—the captain of a ship has the law to back up his authority, the head sawyer has naught but personality and fists.

A comprehensive description of Ed Gamble is contained in the statement that he didn't need anything else to successfully boss any camp on the North American continent.

If his daughter, Nita, successfully and continually bullied him, as she did, none of the men in the camp ever took that as a sign that they could hope to emulate her.

Nita was one hundred and twenty-five pounds of nineteen-year-old, black-haired feminine dynamite, compounded of more or less equal parts of bewildering beauty, ready sympathy, such of the qualities of a mule as go to make that animal a synonym for stubbornness, and a mighty, subconscious longing for the man who was sufficiently granitic of will to mentally knock her down, drag her to the altar, and pummel her into the grand, good wife she was destined

to be under those circumstances, to come along and make her behave herself. Meanwhile she didn't.

Gamble, standing beside the carriage in the roaring mill, critically shaving the shaggy beard of centuries from a patriarchal behemoth of the forest, gave over control of the ten-foot circular razor long enough to glance hastily through the note Van Ameringe handed him. Then he beckoned him outside, where conversation was possible, and spoke:

"This here letter says you're to start in here like any other green hand, an' git the same kind o' treatment. You'll git it. Hunt up the woods boss, give him this letter, an' tell him I said to put you on swampin'. There's empty bunks, I reckon—take yer pick. We're short-handed, so git goin'. Come up to my shack any night after work, an' call on me. Meet my daughter. But don't git the idea that 'cause I'm glad to smoke with you at home, I won't bust your head if you try to git fresh with me on the job. Got me?"

Van looked down at him. "Yes, sir," he said earnestly. "I quite understand. I'm sure I hope I'll prove satisfactory. I'm altogether unfamiliar with the work, but I assure you I'll do my best to——" He didn't finish the sentence, for his only auditor was a chattering chipmunk on a near-by log, not at all impressed by his assurance of good faith. Gamble was back "on the job."

The crew that night, at the supper table, and afterward in the bunk house, ignored him with that self-conscious, painfully abstract manner, assumed by a pair of strange dogs that spy each other afar, and consume an hour in absorbed contemplation of all things that a dog may pretend to be interested in, before they deign to make hesitant, sidling confession of recognition.

A lull punched a conspicuous gap in the general conversation when he stripped for bed, and a chorus of whispered ejaculations and subdued whistles broke out when he disappeared into his bunk.

They had beheld a huge, milk-white body, now smooth as a plump child's, now corded with a web of rippling thew, as he moved about.

The boys were particularly interested in the physique of any newcomer just at that time, on account of a six-round boxing match that was scheduled for Dominion Day, between some representative of the camp and a man from the tie mill twelve miles below. Big "Cockney John" had been tentatively selected to do the honors, but he knew as well as the rest that he was badly outclassed.

"I s'y, ye know, this new bloke's the cove to turn the trick," he whispered to the questioning crowd that gathered about him. "Did ye get sight o' the lad? Blimey! The bloody beggar's a bleedin' tiger, so he is!"

He mentioned the matter to Van the following evening. Van blushed and stammered. "I—oh, I couldn't think of it, really. I know very little about boxing—very little. You say you've had some small experience, and I'm quite certain you'd be much more successful than I."

"Well," said John, "come on ahtside, an' give us a bit of a whirl with the mitts, an' we'll tyke a look at yer style."

Van got slightly redder, made as though to get up, and thought better of it. "No, no. I—I couldn't, really. I'm sure it—it wouldn't be worth while. You see, you are hardened by this splendid outdoor exercise up here, while I—oh, really, I'm quite sure you're the proper man for the place."

The earnestness and finality of his remarks were apparent. A contemptuous silence, adorned with disgusted shrugs and satirical grins, was the camp's comment, and the matter was dropped.

Nita heard of it in some way, and was not pleased.

I here waste paper to insert the axiomatic statement, that, within a week after his arrival, Van was consciously in love with her.

She made no direct mention of it to him, but when, on Dominion Day, Cockney John was ingloriously whipped, and the fistic honor of the camp made marks in the sawdust, she

builded a fine young quarrel all by herself; which same was all his fault, and proved him to be no gentleman, so there! And she refused to allow herself to be humbly apologized to for at least a week.

But no one could remain angry with him for a longer period, even if they wished to, which Nita did not. He was so big, and so good-natured, and so unfailingly modest and desirous of pleasing.

Nita wasn't in love with him. Not at all. But she did wish, at odd moments, that the man she did fall in love with, or, rather, the right one who was little enough of a gentleman to grab her rudely and pull her in, would have the same kind of eyes he had; and the high, straight nose—oh, yes, and the clean-cut mouth; not too thin, and yet not——

This line of meditation always led her into a snappily vexatious mood, and she would contrive some way to see him very soon, that he might get the full benefit of it.

Also she would take pains to be very, very nice to "Doc" Woods, who was at Gamble's cabin about as often as Van. Doc had a quartz mine about two miles from camp, that bade fair to be something more than the inspiration for a name that would look well on stock certificates. He had been offered twenty-five thousand dollars for it in real, smelly cash.

Doc was a large, middle-aged man, typically Western; wore a broad Stetson, high boots, and heavy nugget watch chain, all with a hugely nonchalant manner. He spoke often, and very casually, of gun play.

Some five years had elapsed since his departure from his birthplace and home in Belden, Pennsylvania, where he had wound up his career by gallantly riding a small notion store into bankruptcy.

He was wont to recount to Nita, at much length, and in Van's hearing, certain valorous deeds, performed of him on the great Western plains, in the dim, dead days when the redskins were pesky as well as soiled.

Van listened to these tales with awestruck wonder, and made much admiring comment thereon. For this Nita properly despised him, and expressed her contempt by being effusively attentive to Woods.

The twenty-five-thousand-dollar offer for the mine inclined the canny Gamble to hope that at such time as he should be deprived of the compensated blessing of Nita's presence, Woods would be the means thereof.

He scarcely thought his daughter stood in much danger of any attachment to the meek and ludicrously credulous Van Ameringe, but the sheer, handsome size of the boy caused him certain qualms, and he spoke with him.

"See here, son," he said, kindly serious, "you're hangin' around this shack right considerable. I ain't goin' to ask you what brings you here, 'cause I know. Now, I'm goin' to talk right plain. I take it you ain't got a whole lot o' money, huh?"

"No, sir," said Van. He laughed disconsolately. "Not much of a fortune as they count fortunes these days, that's a fact."

"Well, that's just it. Of course, you've got some little pull with your brother-in-law, but I'll be frank with you, son; I don't think you're ever goin' to amount to nothin'. You ain't got the snap an' the go, somehow. I don't know just what is the matter with you, but that's the way I feel about it. Now, I've worked hard all my life; I been a pretty good hustler, an' I got near five thousan' laid away now. But it's been a mighty tough pull. I know how hard it is to get, an' when Nita settles down, I want her to hook up with some good, solid party, that's got a nice wad salted. I like you, son, in a way, but that's how I feel about this thing. I ain't goin' to tell you to quit comin' here, but when you begin to hear weddin' bells jinglin', you just kind o' stop up your ears. You ain't ready to listen to 'em."

"No, sir!" Van agreed humbly. "I feel my unworthiness keenly, but I hope some day to—— Well, I'll give you my word not to impose on your generosity, Mr. Gamble."

Alas for the promises of lovers! For instability properly comparable to the shifting sands of the sea, or the pre-election statements of Republicans—and Democrats, and Socialists, and Prohibitionists, et cetera.

But one small week later, Van was sent to Gamble's cabin just before the noon hour, to get a small, circular saw the boss had taken home to file, and forgotten.

Neither Van nor Nita could ever remember just how it happened, so I can't be expected to divine it; but, somehow, all of a sudden, it did.

The horse scream of the noon whistle from the mill broke the spell of delirious unconsciousness of all things, save the old, old new thing, and the two young people, very trembly as to limb and lip, stepped apart and stared at each other in glad wonder.

Suddenly Nita wept tempestuously. "Oh!" she cried. "Go away! I hate you! I hate you!"

"Why—why, my darling, I——"

"I'm not your darling. I'm not! Don't you dare call me that! Don't you dare! Go away! I hate you!"

"But why—what—why——" Van stammered, performing the impossible feat of standing still on a motionless floor, and going around and around in a dizzy circle.

"You're no good—that's why! I hate you! You let my father bully you, just like he does all the rest! You're no good. You——"

"But, my dear, your father's my nominal superior just now, and, besides, he's your father, dear, I——"

"I'm not your dear, and don't you dare call me that again! And you let that man Woods string you along with those awful lies of his, like you were an idiotic five-year-old boy; and you take the——"

"But, honey, listen! Listen, please. I don't, really I don't. He's such a pathetic old bluffer, I——"

"I'm not your honey; and if you're afraid you can't make money enough to take care of me, I'm going to marry him, anyhow, if he is an old bluffer; and I wouldn't marry you if you could, and I'd marry him now if he didn't have any money at all, and if dad didn't want me to, and I'm——"

"Marry him? You marry that old—your father wants you to—why, he told me he—why, he hasn't got—why, I've got more money than he ever—why, sweetheart! Listen! I——"

"I won't listen! I won't! I wouldn't marry you, anyhow, 'cause you're a coward. You're a great, big coward. Yes, you are! They wanted you to box that man, and you wouldn't do it. You were scared. And everybody knows it, too. You're a great, big coward, and I——"

"Wh-a-a-a-t?" The unmistakable genuineness of the surprise expressed in the long-drawn question made her look up. He was staring at her in open-mouthed, ludicrous amaze.

"Oh, you're so big," she quavered, "and I love you so hard, and you're so—so nice! Why don't you amount to something? Why don't you get mad—hit somebody—anything! *Do something!*"

"You thought I was afraid?" he asked slowly. "Afraid? Me? Oh, good Lord! I didn't want to butt in and show off. Why, I can whip fifteen muscle-bound clodhoppers like that before breakfast, and not have an appetite! Why, I was——"

A quizzical grin gradually erased the disgust and wonder from his face; the grin gave birth to a chuckle that grew into a booming, exultant laugh. He glanced out of the door. The men were just coming out of the mill, and straggling in from the woods. Starting up the trail toward the cabin was Gamble, and Woods coming to dinner with him. Van looked at them, and wagged his head.

"Oh, me! Oh, my!" he said. He stooped to pass out the cabin door, and went down the trail to meet them.

Gamble scowled as he came near. "'Smatter with you?" he snapped. "Why'n't you git back with that saw?"

"Saw?" Van inquired blandly. "Saw? Why, you poor old grouchy, rain-rotted bump on a windfall, what saw?"

It was fairly interesting while it lasted, but it didn't last long.

"Fortunately for you you're going to be my father-in-law," Van remarked casually, as he ducked the first swing Gamble made at him, "so I won't beat you up much."

In the phraseology of the advertising man—"jujutsu did it." Gamble hit the ground a trifle harder each succeeding time up to the fourteenth, and then raised on one elbow, and said reminiscently:

"I seen a bull buck a locomotive once. He wasn't no relation o' mine. What d'ye want?"

"Don't bother your head about it," said Van. "If you've got anything I want, I'll take it. That style of wrestling I just showed you was invented by a Japanese, but I'm the man that really perfected it. Just a little side line with me. Boxing's my real game."

He turned to Woods. "Say, you rotten imitation of what my kid brother thinks a bad man looks like, just change that impersonation for the sake of variety; let me see you look like a shy young antelope with Theodore Roosevelt in the middle distance. I'll be the colonel to help out. Start, you! Row-r-r-r! Wuf! wuf!"

There is some doubt as to which impersonation was the most natural. Both were good. Van emerged from the assumed character, and spoke genially with the crowd gathered about.

"Any dozen or so of you wart-headed paralytics think you'd like to be sausage for my grinder? No? Then quit staring like a crowd of yawps in the rubber-neck wagon, and get on down to your dinner where you belong, or I'll root up the poor little wild flowers with the lot of you!"

Then he swaggered back to the cabin.

Nita stood on the porch. "Oh, Van!" she sobbed. "Did—did daddy hurt you?"

"What? That papier-mâché Sandow?" he snorted. "I should say not!"

"Oh, Van!" she said tremulously, "you're—you're just simply splendid!"

"You bet I am!" he agreed vulgarly.

That night Nita and Van sat in the moonlight on the little dock at the landing.

"Why, I thought he was talking about real money," Van said largely, during one of the conversational intervals, "telling me he wanted you to marry some one that had it. I thought my little old fifty thousand and I were away back numbers. Wanting you to marry that old whiskered goat of a Woods! Gee! He's an awful piker, if he *is* your dad. Telling me he didn't think I'd ever make good! He's got a nerve! Why, say, little girl, I'm going to own this company in another five years. Sure I am! Why, say, I've got ideas that——"

At the beginning of the next verbal period in the evening, Nita said softly: "Why, dear, I always thought you were so—so modest."

Algernon Van Ameringe sounded the death knell of a virtue with a past tense.

"I was!" he said.

LONGING FOR OLD ACQUAINTANCES

THERE are few men in this country fatter than President Taft, and there are equally few who get more amusement out of their own avoirdupois.

Senator Nathan B. Scott, who always tries to get off something funny when he goes to the White House, told Mr. Taft one day:

"You know, Mr. President, it is a very usual thing for fat men to get thin as they grow older."

"Well," replied the president laughingly, "if that happens to me it will give me an opportunity to see something of some old acquaintances of mine."

"Who are they?" asked Scott.

"My ribs," replied Mr. Taft.

Song of the Wire Fence

By Chas. C. Jones

WHERE the drifting steers have driven with the "norther" through the night,
Where a dust-bound trail herd journey through a lazy autumn day,
Where a "puncher's" reckless efforts turned a mad stampede aright,
Where a "night nurse" chanted ballads on his lonely, circling way,
Where the reaches lay unfettered by the builded things of men,
I have come to make the conquest that is more than all the rest;
I have passed a wild, free old time that shall never come again,
For my barbs have pricked the bubble that was Romance in the West!

I have stretched my way resistless out across the prairie lands,
And the rifle backed my progress as the rifle said me nay;
To the sharp, staccato barking of a gun in practiced hands
I have marched forever westward with a vigor none could stay;
I have seen my builders stricken, and the earth with crimson wet—
There is never mound nor marker where the dead in silence sleep!—
I alone of all remember, and I never shall forget
That the lives of men have made me what the will of men shall keep.

But beside me runs the furrow as the plowshare rips the sod
That the countless cattle trampled in the days of long ago,
And the foot that stepped the stirrup is the foot that treads the clod
With a slower use and calmer—but the world is better so;
For the night winds croon and murmur in the swaying, waving wheat,
And the harvest dims remembrance of the round-up that is gone—
I have changed a country's customs—but the old-world millions eat,
And they bless the faith and courage that has kept me going on.

Oh, I won a vast dominion, and I broke the grip of kings
Who were sturdy, fighting monarchs from the land I sought as mine!
I had Progress in behind me—they had only lesser things,
And they are not—while I tauten on the far horizon line.
I can hear the tumult rising that shall sing my victory,
In the whirring song of reapers, going yonder, five abreast;
I have worked the better purpose, and the glory rests with me,
But my barbs have pricked the bubble that was Romance in the West!

The Renaud Marine

By Wells Hastings

We have been hearing some wonderful yarns about the lost "Mona Lisa" for several months. This story is about another great painting that wasn't half so famous, but its possession brought a pile of trouble to the purchaser. A pleasantly told tale with a bit of philosophy mixed up in the series of adventures.

MY father's face when he came in and found me here yesterday was as droll a sight as you can imagine. You know how ruddy and frank and young he generally looks with those autumn sky-gray eyes of his, that are set so far apart, and his patrician nose, and his close-clipped, vigorous brown hair, that is curly in spite of him. Money-getting has never seemed to make him look old or worried, as it has so many men; and, indeed, I have heard that part of his success is attributed to this same calm frankness of his that nothing seems to be able to surprise, trouble, or shock. But yesterday he looked staggered, I can tell you; and a little shocked, too, as far as that goes; and all because he found me sitting here hard at work in Eli Homan's office; and, for that matter, I suppose it is going to stagger everybody.

You see, the trouble was that I quarreled with him four months ago. It was the usual quarrel between the rich father and the idle son; and it seems as silly to me now as it must have seemed to him in the first place. I am sure I am definitely over such childishness. Any one that could quarrel with father twice is just plain idiot.

He had made one mistake, and I had made a lot of them. Through college, and before it, he had given me too much money. I know of nothing that gets a person in debt faster. I had never taken the trouble to understand money, and I was startled and, I am ashamed to say, hurt when I found out he thought I ought to understand it. It was our first, and I think our last, disagreement. I left the house in a huff, and never saw him again until yesterday, which, I'll admit, was a pretty silly performance for a man of my age and inches.

He must have expected me back in a day or so; but it was like him not to send for me or try to find me, and actually keep from worrying about me. He respected his own blood enough to know that I would be able to take care of myself, and, like the wise man he is, he has just waited. Well, it's all right now, and always will be all right. He knew he would find me; but it was a surprise to him to find me where he did. It's a surprise to me, too; but so many things have happened to me in the last four months since that row of ours that I am always having to pinch myself.

I had thirty-five dollars and some loose change when I left the house. I hadn't the slightest idea what I was going to do. I was only determined that I would not go back until I had "showed him"—what a kid I must have been four months ago! I stalked down to the Racquet Club, and tried to think it out in the smoking room; but it was no use. You can't show a man like my father much of anything on a capital of thirty-five dollars. It wasn't enough to set up a respectable fruit stand.

Oh, of course, I knew that most of

the Napoleons of finance had started out with less; but it took them years before people even said, "There he goes" when they went by. I didn't have years to wait. I was in too much of a hurry. Even then I had sense enough to know that I couldn't make a not-on-speaking-terms situation last as long as that. Why, before a couple of hours were over, I was commencing to miss him. He is like that. If you know him at all, he is a habit.

While I was still wondering what I was going to do with myself, Perry Finch came in. Perry is a good sort; but just then I didn't have any time for him. I was too busy to take any notice of him, which was a fool way to treat Perry. It always makes him mad and obstinate. He wanted me to go with him in his car to take some people down to the White Star pier—the two Jackson girls that Perry has never been able to choose between, and their mother.

I told him I was busy.

"Yes, you are," Perry said.

So I told him the Jacksons were nothing to me, and asked him why they didn't go down in their own car.

I don't know what he said to that; but pretty soon I'd agreed to go just because I saw he was going to make it a point of honor never to give up.

Well, we got the Jacksons on their boat, and got their deck chairs for them, and all that sort of thing. The little one is sort of pretty. And then while Perry was hanging around, trying to take a last look to help him make up his mind, and the steward was beating the gong and shouting "All ashore" in his silly English voice, I had a brilliant idea. I just stole away and lost myself.

Shipping has a fascination for me. It's in the blood, I suspect. So I started to put in the rest of the morning playing around the piers. It came to me after a while that my thirty-five would go a good deal farther abroad than it would here. You know how it is in France, for instance. You can't break yourself of the habit of thinking in dollars, and you spend in francs. It always has given me a rich feeling.

"Thirty-five dollars," I thought—"a hundred and seventy-five francs! I'll go to France."

If I'd gone to England, I would have only had seven pounds, which sounds poor. If I'd gone to Germany, I'd have only had a hundred and thirty marks. But a hundred and seventy-five francs. There was riches for you. So I decided on France; and then wondered how I could get there. Of course, I could have gone steerage, but that would have cost money, and I had to go for nothing.

I went over to one of the French lines to see about it. It was perfectly simple. I found I could go that day; and, what's more, make five dollars into the bargain. They were short of hands on one of the cattle ships, and all I had to do was to be a sort of bovine marine, a cross between a cowboy and a sailor. I could even come back with the boat if I wanted to.

I had an hour before the ship sailed for my shopping, and it was plenty of time. I got a nice, clean blue canvas suit for two dollars, a pair of brogans for a dollar and a half, and three dozen bananas for seventy-five cents, and four enormous cakes of chocolate for a dollar more. I was a little apprehensive about the food they might serve, so I got the bananas and chocolate to piece out. It was one of the cleverest things I ever did in my life.

The stupidest thing I ever did—excepting my quarrel with father—I accomplished the third day out. I quarreled with the first mate. I didn't like him, anyhow. He had a wart on his nose, and both his eyes together wouldn't have made one good one; and they almost were together. Likewise, he had a nasty disposition. Naturally I was perfectly familiar with the Jack London kind of story with "bucko" mates in it, who were half cave men and half Bowery thugs; but I thought they were as fictitious as the dogs that had a wolf for a grandfather. But this mate was a real, genuine, money-back-if-not-as-represented bucko. I ought to have had sense enough to steer clear of him; but I suppose it really was good luck, after all.

He knocked down a poor, seasick, shivering little cockney, who was one of our gang, and who ought never to have left London, where I believe he made a very nice living as a pickpocket. Knocked him down for nothing at all, as far as I could see; and I spoke to him about it. Then he knocked me down. Then I got up and knocked *him* down.

We must have looked just like a vaudeville sketch. He had the last knock, though, the brute, even if he had to get a boatswain and a couple of sailors to help him. He was amusing himself by jumping up and down on my stomach when Eli Homan came along. I was as glad to see him as if I had been a European art dealer. He had the captain with him, and they were making a tour of the ship. Eli Homan always does that. He just likes to know.

The mate stepped right off me. I think he was rather embarrassed. The captain was, too; for he called Mr. Homan's attention to a blooded Jersey bull they had just passed, and that he would have had to turn around to see; but Eli Homan didn't get where he is by turning around whenever somebody pointed over his shoulder. He came right up and looked at me.

"Mutiny?" he asked.

The mate only growled.

That was the captain's cue. "Mr. Hopper," he asked stiffly, "will you kindly explain what this means?" He must have known that such things went on, of course; but he had to make his bluff.

"It's mutiny right enough, sir," the mate said, although I could see from where I lay that he didn't like it. "The swab struck me."

The boatswain and the two sailors had let go, so now I managed to stagger up onto my feet, and stood there vainly gasping for wind to answer with. Many's the time before I have had the same sensation when I was playing football in college; but then I didn't have to talk. Now I wanted to talk so much I thought I'd die if I couldn't. At last:

"He hit me first," I managed to gasp.

"What for?" asked Eli Homan.

I got some breath back then, and told him about it. Both the captain and the mate kept trying to butt in, but he wouldn't let them. He had gotten used to having the floor when he wanted it; and everybody knows that he owns the line; so he said just what he wanted to. Some people think he's queer for the very reason that he doesn't care what they think. He just makes up his mind what he wants to do, and does it.

What he wanted to do this time was to have me up in the first cabin. You may be sure I didn't mention my name. I tried at first to pretend I wasn't anybody, and was quite used to being a cattle tender and all that sort of thing; but it didn't fool him. I was getting along beautifully in what I thought was a perfect Yorkshire dialect, when he suddenly said: "How's your father?"

"Father?" I repeated, staring at him.

"My dear boy," said he, "you look enough like him to be his younger brother; and, as he and I have been friends and rivals for the last twenty years, I have some idea of his appearance. Quarreled with him, I suppose—going to show him his lack of judgment and the sterling value of youth?"

I was mad and embarrassed for a minute, then I laughed. I couldn't help it, he was so shrewd about it all. "Yes," I said, "just that, and all of that."

"Do you like the husks?"

"Not a bit," I said; "but I can stand them."

He smiled that dry smile of his. "Have you got any shoes?"

"Yes, sir; shoes and a suit of clothes all done up nicely in newspaper."

"Well, come up and take a bath," he said. "I want to talk to you. Perhaps I can help you to 'show father.'"

I not only had one bath. I had three. First, hot, fresh water brought up from the galley in pails at infinite trouble and expense. Second, hot salt water; and the third, cold salt water. They were fine. I could have licked the mate and the boatswain and the two sailors after I got through.

I had my own shoes and my own suit,

even if it was a little wrinkled; and Mr. Homan sent his valet with the rest of the things I needed. His collar made me feel a little apoplectic at first until I got used to it; but I was so happy to feel natural again, I could have stood anything.

I went down with Mr. Homan and ate the biggest luncheon dinner of my life. I took pretty much everything on the bill of fare but milk and roast beef. After we had finished smoking a couple of his cigars, he asked me if I could play bridge, and I told him I had had a college education.

We found a couple of traveling men from Chicago, and took away about everything they had except their letters of credit, at half a cent a point. If they had't known who he was, I think they would have suspected him of having found a confederate among the cows; for almost every time we cut for partners we drew each other; and every time we drew each other we won. I won, anyhow. He began to warm up to me right there.

Next morning, when I was busy up forward letting down some things I had taken from the breakfast table to sweeten the life of the cow gang, one of the stewards came up and touched me on the elbow. I dropped the string I was using and jumped about a foot; and before he could say a word I gave him a dollar. But it was just a dollar wasted; for he had only come to say that Mr. Homan wanted to see me in his private sitting room. I followed him and knocked at the door, thinking that the time for a serious interview had come. And, in a way, it had; but not in the way I expected.

Mr. Homan was sitting in a wicker chair behind a desk, and a tall, thin, dapper young man, three or four years older than I am, was backed up against the wall before him. He looked pale and frightened and angry; and he kept raising his hand to his little black mustache in a nervous, half foreign way.

"Now, Mr. Carter," Homan said coolly, "won't you sit down? I won't introduce you to my former secretary; but there he is over there." He pointed at him rudely. "I called you in because I want you to change staterooms with him. When I came in a few moments ago, he was going through some private papers of mine, which he quite understands are outside his usual line of work."

"But, Mr. Homan," the young man protested, "if you'd only let me explain. It was a mistake, and I can prove it." He tugged at the little waxed end of his mustache.

Homan turned to me with a smile. "Let us call it a mistake, then," he said. "I cannot afford to have mistakes made. Is that satisfactory to you, Mr. Laurent?"

The secretary's pale face flushed, but he said nothing.

"Because," Mr. Homan went on, after a pause, "I have nothing more to say. The steward will move your things. I think you had your salary yesterday."

He sat waiting quietly until Laurent had gone out of the room; then he turned and stared at me. He stared and stared until his cigar went cold in his fingers. I looked back at him; but it got me nervous after a time, and I suppose I must have grinned. At any rate, he smiled back at me, and straightened his shoulders against the wicker chair so that it creaked.

"I was just wondering," he said, "how you would like a temporary job. What was it you quarreled with your father about?"

"Debts," I said.

"Fool debts?"

"Yes, sir."

"And that was all?"

"All and plenty," I answered. "I am cured. Bovine did it."

"Just so. What do you know? You've been to college, haven't you? I remember seeing you play football. Do they include anything beside that and bridge?"

"Yes," I stammered. "I took the regular academic course."

"And managed to graduate?"

"Yes," I said. "I stood fourth in my class. I had honors in French, German,

Italian, and mathematics. I wasn't very strong in Greek, though."

"Neither am I," said Homan. "I don't think we'll need it. It's lucky about the foreign languages; for, if it suits you, I should like to have you substitute for my secretary. I am not offering you the position permanently, because I don't know how you'll work out; but I'm going to be abroad for a couple of months, and I shall need some one. You understand, it'll be hard work; but more in your line than tending cows, I should say. Do you think you're up to it?"

"I shall be very glad to try," I answered.

II.

That was the way I started in. It was a delightful trip. The boat was a slow, nine-day one; but I didn't have time for much more bridge. Eli Homan got a regular little code newspaper by wireless every morning; and it took all my time until luncheon to get it into English, with the aid of his private code book; for it was two or three weeks before I had the thing by memory. Then, in the afternoon, we sent off a code extra on our own account. I used to wonder what would happen if the wireless broke down; how many widows and orphans would be bankrupted if Eli Homan got out of touch for two or three days.

On the whole, I got on very well with my duties; and I do not think that Laurent was much missed. We neither of us saw much of him for the rest of the voyage. His pride had evidently been injured; and he took care to keep out of the way of his former employer and his successor. Indeed, his sudden dismissal must have been a bitter pill for him; for he had been with Eli Homan for two years, and had every prospect of advancement and fortune. He was half French, too, with much of the Latin temperament; and you know how hard that temperament takes things.

I looked up one morning from my work to see him peering in at the door and scowling at me; and realized how much he must have hated me to have so intruded. He was gone before I could say good morning to him.

I naturally thought we were going to Paris; but instead, we struck directly across France to Italy, where we spent a week in Rome, and divided ten days more between Florence and Venice. We touched Budapest for a week, and were in Germany, which meant mostly Berlin, for the better part of a month. From Berlin we went straight to Paris. Our march was a sort of triumphal progress. Talk about strewing roses at the feet of a conqueror. As far as I could see, all Europe stopped business to strew everything it had at ours. They must have some kind of an international information bureau over there; for, although we seldom traveled by special car, yet there was always a delegation to meet us.

Of course, everything strewed had a string attached to it. We were not offered gifts—or, at least, Eli Homan wasn't—but chances to buy things at prices which the venders claimed amounted to much the same thing. Generally we found people waiting for us at the station; and there was an unfailing delegation at our hotel. Everything was for sale—pictures, armor, railroads, crockery, Persian rugs, and tapestries. And sometimes Eli Homan bought something; for, like the rest of his class, he is a keen collector.

I was never so popular in my life. I almost got writer's cramp mailing back presents. And melodramatic Italians and Germans and Frenchmen were forever waylaying me in corridors and darkly hinting at commissions if I would help them palm off their particular investment or work of art on my employer. A secretary's duties are certainly varied. I got to be a sort of automatic "No"; a sieve of negation through which only a favored and genuine few were allowed to sift into the presence of the Real Money. I must have saved him about a million; and, as it was, we landed in Paris with a bale of tapestries, a Mediterranean steamship line, and two or three really wonderful old masters.

We divided our time into four nearly equal parts—business with the home office in New York, business with various foreign magnates and corporations, art collecting and sight-seeing. And we got along together wonderfully.

Few people, I suppose, know what a grasp Eli Homan has. Everybody knows he's the ninth wonder of the world in business; but he knows about the other things, too. I am pretty well cracked over paintings myself, and have always though I knew something about them; but he showed me I was only in my A B C's.

To be sure, he had some queers ideas. I don't think he would have taken a Leonardo da Vinci for a gift; and, when we paused before the sad, empty space that the lost Mona Lisa has left, he said something about "small loss" so loud that I trembled lest he be overheard, and we both be dragged away to the guillotine on the spot.

He was wild about Van Dyck, though; and, strangely enough for a man of his tremendously educated tastes, wilder still about Madame Lebrun. We were always trotting back to Salle XV. to take another look at "Madame Lebrun et sa Fille." We fairly ogled her. I'll admit I like the picture myself, her loveliness is so intelligent, and she smiles out at you so winningly; and the color is exquisite. I'll admit, too, that I'd rather have her around than the greenish and supposedly cryptic Mona Lisa; but it takes some nerve to announce to the world that you prefer her as a painting. Homan was so crazy about her that he even insulted the museum authorities with an offer to buy her, although he knew better.

"By George," he would say, "you watch! I'll have that thing yet. If I can't buy her, I'll collect two or three of their old Da Vincis somewhere else and swop. I guess they'd fall for that."

In the meantime, he set about buying some modern fellows. He got two beautiful Monets, a nice little Corot, and a Thierry.

It was the morning that we bought the big marine by Marcel Renaud that things commenced to happen. I had been doing some errands of my own, and was to meet him at the Café de la Paix. I got there a little before the time appointed—for I had found that promptness pleased him—and I sat down at one of the little brass-bound marble tables on the sidewalk and ordered an innocuous sirup.

The time for his coming came and passed, and I began to be afraid that somehow I might have missed him. Perhaps, I thought, he might have understood that I was to meet him inside. By simply turning around, I could look through the window into the big café restaurant. It was almost empty; but, as my eyes grew accustomed to the less brilliant light, I saw two men sitting over in a corner with their heads very close together.

One of them was Laurent, my predecessor. The other man was a short, little fellow of a type common enough in Paris; compact of body and ridiculously square-shouldered. He had a short, wavy pompadour, vividly described as being cut "en brosse," and a square-trimmed, crinkly beard that rippled halfway down his chest, and which, like his hair, was a sort of pinkish red. They had evidently seen me when I came, for Laurent gestured in my direction, and only met my eyes after the gesture was made. Some impulse prompted me not to recognize him; and when I looked up again he was gone. A little later, the red-bearded man strolled out and paused beside my chair.

"Monsieur Cartairr?" he asked.

I was full of experience, and I scented what was coming. "Yes," I said, "my name is Carter, and I'll admit that Mr. Homan is very rich, and that his collection would suffer unless it contains your 'John, the Baptist,' he having only five already."

"'John, the Baptist?'" the man in the red beard repeated, puzzled.

"Well, 'Susanna and the Elders,' or 'Spring,' or whatever it is you have."

"Oh, I see. Monsieur jests; and I suppose it is true that you have many offers of paintings; but this, ah, this is something different! Monsieur has

doubtless heard of Marcel Renaud. There is a marine of his. Ah, what a wonder! Words cannot describe——"

"Then why waste them?" I interrupted, for I was wondering if Mr. Homan was looking for me, and I was getting pretty tired of the dealers.

"But, yes, I see that monsieur is a business man. I, too, am a business man in my little way. We will come down to boxes—is that your word?—no, cases. My offer is this: Should it occur to Monsieur Homan to purchase this marine, Monsieur His Intelligent Secretary will receive twenty-five thousand francs—five thousand dollairz. Is that clear—plain—lucide?"

"Beautifully. Here comes Mr. Homan now."

The red-bearded man glanced nervously over his shoulder. "I vanish," he said. "The marine is at the Dounau galleries. I but represent the owner; but I have authority, and the twenty-five thousand francs is yours on the day that picture is sold to your patron."

"I am inexcusably late," Eli Homan said. "Who was the red-bearded Johnny?"

"An agent for the owner of the Marcel Renaud marine," I laughed. "They seem very anxious to sell it, and offered five thousand dollars if I could land you."

"Well, let's go round and have a look at the thing. I have seen it once before, and I'm frank to say that I am stuck on it. I tell you what; if I buy it, you get your five thousand and I'll split with you."

III.

It really was a wonder painting. A good many of those modern Frenchmen have gone crazy, and I know it, and a lot of hideous and imbecile work gets into the salons; but what this man Renaud didn't know about painting the sea wasn't worth knowing. He couldn't have been one of those poor fellows that you hear about that work up or down, whichever it is, from the garret to the Hall of Fame; for, with his style, he never could have afforded the paint.

This picture—it was quite a large one called "Dawn"—must have been about a quarter of an inch thick from the way the paint was put on. I do not like palette-knife painting, as a rule; but I liked this. The big waves were whooping along to Kingdom Come, heaving and swirling and fairly shouting at you; and over the great rough eternity of waters the tender light of new day fell like a dim radiance from fairyland.

I tell you the thing had zing. I was a goner as soon as I laid eyes on it; and I could see by Eli Homan's face—for I was getting used to that mask of his by that time—that he had come prepared to get it at any money. I didn't blame him. If my father had divided unto me his living the way that other prodigal's father did, I'd have started in riotous living right there, and bought it for myself.

They were easy people, those picture dealers. We would have paid forty thousand for it; but they only asked thirty, and we beat them down to twenty-five; and at that we didn't conclude the bargain; for I happened to look out of the window, and saw the red-bearded fellow hanging around; and we decided that while we were about it we might as well make sure of that commission.

I could see that Mr. Homan was terribly afraid of taking the chance of losing the picture; but he had a gambler's nerve, and wasn't above saving twenty-five hundred. We persuaded them at last to give him an option on it; and we went back to the hotel. Sure enough, right after luncheon, the red-bearded man showed up. He was as fidgety as a cat on a railroad train.

"Well, monsieur, have you bought it, that splendid painting?"

"No," I told him, "not yet; but I think he's almost persuaded." I tried to look like a conspirator. "If you should deposit that five thousand in the bank to my order, I think I can bring about the sale. If I don't, there's no harm done, for I won't draw the money."

They had already made so many concessions that I had no idea he would

make this one; but he did. He jumped at it. It wasn't half an hour before I had my first experience of bribe-taking. The next day, the picture was sent up to us. Most of our things had been simply packed and crated and sent home; but Eli Homan was so pleased with this picture that he had it packed in a great case with a solid front that was only attached by four thumbscrews, and easy enough to take off, so that we could look at it in our room. Before we had time to take the front off, though, somebody else did it for us.

I came up that evening to get some opera tickets I had left in the desk, and noticed, with surprise, that a light was shining out under the door. It was not an hour for any one to be fixing the room; and no one should have been there, anyhow; for Eli Homan always arranged that none of the hotel servants should ever touch his sitting room. What work there was to be done was done by his valet. He always made it a kind of office, you see, and too many people wanted to know about his private affairs to have casual hotel servants running in and out.

As I was sure I had turned the light out when I left, I immediately thought of spies and burglars and people like that, and put my key into the lock very softly.

Not softly enough, though, for I heard a sudden, sharp whisper and a sort of great, flopping thud; and, as I flung the door open, the lights were snapped off. I dashed into the room, tripped on something in the darkness, and fell sprawling at full length.

The door leading into Mr. Homan's bedroom slammed; and, when I got up and reached for it, I found it had been locked on the inside. I shook it for a moment futilely, and then turned and groped my way back across the room to the hall; but I was too late. Before I was halfway there, another door slammed, and I heard the muffled drum of running feet.

I just got to the hall in time to see a man whisk around a corner into another corridor. Of course, I chased him; but it was no use. There were two or three turnings which he might have taken; and I knew he could get down before me; and once there, could easily lose himself in the crowd, for he must have been the usual well-dressed man to have gotten into the hotel at all. The best I could do was to go back to the room to try to find out if anything was missing.

When I snapped the lights on again, I found out what I had tripped over, and the reason for that big, soft thud. I must have come just as they had loosened the last of the thumbscrews; for the front of the packing case we had had made for the marine lay where it had fallen across the floor; and, in the brilliant light of the electrics, the uncovered picture fronted me with its wonderful, great, staggering waves!

Picture thieves! I rang the bell, and sent a boy in haste for Mr. Homan. He was red-hot, I can tell you, even when he found that nothing else in the room had been touched. But two things surprised me. In the first place, he would not send for the police, because he wished to avoid notoriety; and, in the second place, he was flattered. Yes, just plain flattered. He was tickled to death that some criminal had thought enough of his taste to indorse it in this way.

But, though we did not put the front back on the packing case, we took precautions after that. While we were in Paris that picture was never left alone again but once, and that was just an hour or so before we started for home. That once was enough, though, for those Johnnies-on-the-spot.

Henry, Mr. Homan's valet, was supposed to be in charge; and so I was surprised when he came to me in the hotel courtyard and asked me if I'd seen Mr. Homan. I thought he knew as well as I did that Mr. Homan wasn't expected back for at least three-quarters of an hour; and I told him so. But he was very positive. The boy had come up to the room for him, and told him that Mr. Homan wanted him below directly. He had supposed that he would find him at the office or in the court.

I had had such a taste of melodrama

that I was suspicious in a minute. I left Henry to pick up my things for me, and went dashing up the stairs three at a time. No one in a hurry waits for a French elevator.

Before the door of the sitting room, I found the red-bearded agent who had so successfully bribed me. He was jumping up and down noiselessly on the soft carpet, and clutching his red pompadour and weeping.

"Oh, monsieur," he whispered, "you come not a minute too soon. There are robbers within. Hasten, oh, hasten!"

I gave him a glance of suspicion.

"I saw them," he wept. "There were two of them."

"Well, why didn't you give the alarm?" I asked. "Watch the other door. We've got them this time."

I opened the door a little way, squeezed in, and shut it behind me. Two men were on their knees before the canvas. One of them had a small penknife. They were little, swarthy fellows pretty much alike, except that one had a beard, and the other only a ferocious mustache.

I was on them before they heard me; and I banged their heads together joyfully. It was really the best fight of my life; for, after the first moment of surprise, they turned to like good little men; and for their size they were good scrappers. One of them landed a kick in my stomach that reminded me of the mate on the cattle ship. I uppercut him for that. I don't like kicking. After that the other man was pretty easy. I piled them on top of each other and sat on them.

"Hey, Redbeard," I yelled, "you needn't watch any more! Come right in. I've got them."

No one came; and the two little men under me started squirming so I had to knuckle them in the neck. I wondered if he were afraid of them. I was commencing to get angry.

"Hi," I shouted, "come on in, you with the red beard. What are you afraid of? Come on, bribe-giver. Here's a chance for you. Be a nice little corruptionist and lend a hand."

Still no one came. The man with the fierce mustachios, who was on the bottom layer, screwed his head around and started to jabber French at me.

"Shut up!" I said, "I'm going to get up and lock the door, and, if either of you so much as wriggles, I'll chop him all up with that little penknife you're trying to stick into my leg."

I said it all over again in French to make sure, and then I got up. Neither of them stirred. I took a quick peek out of the door; and 'way down at the other end of the hall I saw a red pompadour sticking around the corner.

"Send over a few police," I yelled to him, and turned back to my little thieves. I locked the door and put the key in my pocket. "Now," I said, "it is permitted that you arise and straighten your neckties. It shall not be said that two such men as you went to jail in disorder."

They got up, scowling at me wrathfully, and started to speak; but I wouldn't let them. Instead, I marched them through Mr. Homan's bedroom, and locked them up in the bathroom off of it. It was a little bathroom, with a window too small even for them to crawl out of. They started again to protest.

"I know," I said, "that the room is small, but you will find it cozy. If you wish to rest, you may recline in the bathtub;" and, with that, I locked them in.

The next fifteen minutes were busy ones. First my red-whiskered friend came back, and said vaguely that he had sent for the police, congratulated me on my capture, and told me to be sure and keep them locked up, as he knew them dangerous. He was laughing and crying by turns, and slightly incoherent; and finally he fidgeted himself away.

Then Henry came, and shortly afterward Mr. Homan. He wanted to have the thieves out and look at them; but I persuaded him against it, so we sat down to wait for the police, while Henry screwed up the front of the packing case again and attended to dispatching the rest of our luggage. Mr. Homan said we would take the marine with us on a taxi; for he wasn't going to let it get out of his sight again.

It grew to be almost leaving time, and still no police came. I commenced to have a dawning suspicion of the disinterest of the red-bearded man. Was it possible that he was engineering stealing his own picture back—that he was the brains of the whole attempt? Two or three times people knocked at the door to inquire if anything was the matter; funny, scared people who had waited for the commotion to die down, and who had heard me yelling. At last a porter came up to tell us that it was almost train time. Eli Homan chuckled.

"We'll leave them where they are," he said. "The police can work out the mystery to suit themselves when they come."

The more I thought it over, the sorrier I was that I had let the red-bearded man slip through my fingers; for it came to me more and more plainly that all his anxiety to sell us the picture, and even the rather low price at which we had been allowed to purchase it, pointed to just one thing. The owners had hoped to have their cake, and eat it, too. They had hoped to sell us the picture; and, thinking us easy Americans, they had hoped to get it back again before we left Paris.

What business, for instance, had the fellow had before our door at all? It was inconceivable that he had constituted himself as a sort of private guardian of our purchase until we should be safely out of the country. No, I thought, the man was simply a lookout; and, when I caught him, he had simply saved his skin by treacherously diverting my attention to his comrades.

I soon grew to share Eli Homan's exaggerated notion of the value of the picture. Of course, we both knew that it was worth what had been paid for it; but this second attempt made at so much risk impressed me. I began to think that we must have gotten the thing for less than half its value; and this opinion was strengthened by an occurrence, innocent enough on the face of it, but which my new sense of general suspicion translated into a third attempt, and convinced me that we were the intended victims of a well-organized gang of criminals.

IV.

The boat was not a large one, and the passage was unusually smooth, so that I got to know pretty much every one on board by sight. There was only one passenger who never appeared on deck or came to meals. The passenger list gave his name as George Morris; but he was generally referred to as the "sick man"; although no one, not even the ship's doctor, seemed to know what was the matter with him. His stateroom was a large, upper-deck one adjoining our suite; but I only saw him twice on the whole voyage; and the first time was only a glimpse.

I passed his door early one morning, and saw him looking out at me. He seemed, in the glance I caught of him, to be rather a small man, rather pale, but stout enough and clean-shaven, except for an ebony-black mustache that matched in shade his disordered black hair. He shut his door hurriedly at sight of me.

The next time I saw him, I had a better look at him. I was working one evening in the private sitting room, and was getting ready to go up on deck. Some of my papers had fallen under the desk I had been working at, and I was down on my hands and knees collecting them.

A little sound made me turn my head, and what I saw caused me to huddle up in my involuntary hiding place as if I had been a dime-novel detective or a society reporter; for the door had been pushed softly open, and through it intruded the edge of a pink-and-blue bath robe.

I crouched closer, and held my breath until I could hear the beating of my heart and my watch ticking like an eight-day clock.

Presently the door was opened a little farther. A slippered foot followed a slippered foot; and the "sick man," garbed outrageously, stood before me.

Nobody named George Morris ever

wore a bath robe like that. I knew right off what he was going to do, and he did it. He went right over to the picture, and started thumping on it gently with his knuckles.

I have thought since that he caught sight of me about that time; for, although he didn't start, as far as I could see, he turned and walked out of the room, with his eyes staring straight in front of him in a queer, blank sort of way. I was certain he hadn't had that expression when he came into the room; and I admired him for it. He was the most convincing somnambulist I ever saw.

Nothing further happened, however, until we got home, except that we were singled out for persecution in customs. Eli Homan ramped and tore like an outraged monarch, and swore he would break everybody, from the collector of the port down; but it didn't do any good. They had it in for us for some reason; and they turned out every last stick and stitch either one of us had. They even insisted on taking the marine out of its case, although we had declared it properly; and I could have sworn they were disappointed not to have found a smuggled tapestry or something behind it.

The crash came after we had been home a week. I had been working like blue blazes, and had been having an evening of temperate relaxation at the club; so that it was after one o'clock when I came in sight of Eli Homan's big house. The private watchman, a good old fellow who had had the job for years, was patrolling up and down in front of it. I bid him good evening.

"Well, Mr. Carter," he said, "these must be busy days."

"Busy enough," I said, wondering what the deuce he knew of it.

He half stifled a yawn. "It's the first time I remember," he said inquisitively, "that Mr. Homan has had three of you on the job at once."

"Three?" I repeated. "What three?"

"Why, you and Mr. Laurent and his assistant."

"What are you talking about?" I asked. "Mr. Laurent isn't with us any more."

"Indeed he is, then. He went into the house not half an hour ago, and his assistant with him."

I was somewhat taken aback, and stupidly bid him good night. Laurent back again? Could it be possible that he was forgiven, and I was to be superseded; and what on earth did the old fool mean about an assistant?

Then at last I began to have a glimmer of intelligence, a glimmer which made me take the stairs as fast as I silently could; for I remembered that I had seen the discarded secretary with that red-bearded man in Paris; and, as far as I knew, Mr. Homan had forgotten to ask him to give up his key to the house. I paused on the landing to shed my dinner coat; and then I tiptoed down the hall toward the picture gallery. There was a light there, and I heard the subdued murmur of voices. Fortunately the door was not locked.

Just as I had expected, the marine had been taken from its new place of honor on the wall, and even lifted out of its frame. It lay face down on the floor, and two men were stooping over it.

Everything happened then in a flash, like a comic moving-picture film gone crazy. I came running across the room; and Laurent jumped up and lost his head, and shot at me. I felt the bullet singe along the flesh of my shoulder, and then I hit him, not once, but two or three times, following blow with blow even as he toppled over.

The other man was on me like a cat, his breath hot in my ear and his arms about me. I wrenched him away, somehow, but he tripped me, and we fell to the floor together with a bang that shook the house.

Fortunately he struck the back of his head, and it took the fight out of him. I banged his head once more just for luck. He was George Morris, the sick passenger.

Through it all, I had heard the shrieking of the watchman's whistle; now I heard it suddenly stop in full blast. The servants commenced to run into the

room; and then in dashed Eli Homan in his pajamas. Have you ever seen a Napoleon of finance in his pajamas? It's worth the money.

"What's all this?" he said. "What's all this? Not hurt, are you, Carter? By Jove, the marine, eh? I knew we got a bargain in that thing. Think of them following us all the way over!"

I stepped over to the sick passenger, who looked sick in good earnest, and plucked out a little tuft of his hair. Then I signed to the men to take them away. When the police had come and gone and the rooms had cleared, Mr. Homan turned to me.

"You're a strange fellow," he said. "What on earth did you want to pull that fellow's hair for? Was it revenge or souvenir hunting?"

"Neither, Mr. Homan," I said. "But unless I am much mistaken, you are in a pretty serious predicament."

I showed him the little tuft of black hair in my hand. The roots were a brilliant pinkish red.

"Good boy," said Mr. Homan. "My friend, the agent, eh? Still, I don't see how that puts me in a predicament."

"Will you let me try a little experiment?" I said. "I've got an idea, and I won't really hurt anything."

"Go as far as you like," said Mr. Homan.

I think it shocked him when I began to work with my penknife at the tacks which held the marine to its frame. Twice he started to speak; but, as I told you before, he is game, and he let me play my hand by myself. Besides, he knew I really wouldn't hurt anything. When I got the last tack out, I stood the marine on end against the wall, with the canvas still upon it. My heart was thumping with excitement, I can tell you; for, after all, I was making the wildest guess in the world.

"Now, watch," I said; and I lifted the big, stiff canvas gently away.

I had expected something, but not exactly *the* something. There, smiling sweetly out at us, with that high-bred intelligence of hers, was "Madame Lebrun et sa Fille."

"Good Lord!" said Eli Homan.

It was then that I made my position as secretary permanent; for I handled a difficult situation in a diplomatic way. I don't suppose I ought to tell you, but he wanted to keep it. All his collecting days he had longed for that picture; and now there it was, through no fault of his, in his own gallery.

"Of course, it's a copy," he said feebly, avoiding my eye, although he knew perfectly well it wasn't. It was the copy we had seen a week or so ago in the Louvre. This, even to an amateur like me, was patently an original. Heaven knows how it had been taken; but we had innocently brought it over, sandwiched in between the marine and a backing of canvas that matched the marine. Eli Homan's position had only been made use of to get it out of the country. I wonder what bosom friend of his had agreed to buy it.

"You don't think it is a copy?" Eli Homan asked.

"No, sir," I said, "I don't. There has been too much risk and trouble taken for it, and you may depend upon it that those two men I locked in the bathroom in Paris were not part of this gang at all; but secret-service agents who had a pretty good idea where the picture was, and were only trying to definitely find out before they made trouble for us. It will only be a day or so," I added gravely, "before they do definitely find out."

Eli Homan sighed, and then laughed. "Then, I suppose," he said, "that——"

"Yes, sir, you had better cable the directors of the Louvre immediately. There is nothing like seeing them first."

Well, of course, he cabled, and yesterday we got a young letter of gratitude back by cable. They are going to decorate him with the Legion of Honor. He says he'll see himself shot before he'll go around with a cigar ribbon tied in his buttonhole. I think it pleased him, all the same.

Anyway, it definitely cinched the job for me; and father is giving a prodigal dinner for me to-night, with the fatted calf left out at my request, so everything is lovely. You'd better come.

A Chat With You

A GOOD story is like a stimulant with no reaction, like champagne which no headache can follow, a bracer with no let-down. It makes us live a little more intensely, feel a keener enjoyment in all our faculties. A famous character once explained his popularity by saying that he was not only witty in himself but was the cause of wit in other men. So is the case with a good story. Not only does it interest us in itself, but in other things, ourselves included. Those who, taking the ingredients out of life itself, can compound these mental stimulants are rare indeed. The one we are thinking of just at present is E. Phillips Oppenheim.

DO you remember "The Malefactor," which appeared in THE POPULAR five or six years ago? It has been famous as a book since then, but its first appearance, like that of a great many other famous books, was in the pages of THE POPULAR. Oppenheim has written another story just as good as "The Malefactor," just as absorbing in its interest, just as new and original, just as startling. We have been announcing several big serials recently, "The Buhl Cabinet," "Good Indian," "The Saintsbury Affair," and there are more to follow. You know by this time that when we say we have a great serial to give you we are likely to make good to a larger degree than we expected. The new Oppenheim serial is of the best, it could have been written by no other than Oppenheim, it has all the qualities which have made him one of the most widely read authors in the world. It is called "The Tempting of Tavernake." The first installment will appear in the next issue of THE POPULAR, out on the stands two weeks from to-day. It will be completed in four or five installments, so you will have it all in two months. Start it on the tenth of January—Wednesday two weeks. It's a big story, one of the biggest in a long time.

WE have never met in the flesh any one who resembled Tavernake. Yet as we meet him in the story, he is as real, as living, as vital, and human a personality as any of those we meet from day to day. He is a strange young man, with something of the Napoleonic in his intensity of character and almost terrible efficiency. Tavernake is bound on success—business success; he is ruthless, dominant, silent, and dynamic. For a long time we have met no one in the pages of a tale who seemed so notably real. Tavernake has a way of hypnotizing the reader. His manners are not good, he has little understanding of the amenities of life, but we like him for his clean-cut, silent strength. When he tells us he'll accomplish some surprising thing we feel sure of its accomplishment. He

is a personality with a great many rough angles, but like the little Corsican, he dominates any assembly in which he finds himself. We don't propose to spoil a good story by telling you anything of the plot. We've indicated to you how well worth while it is, and it's up to you to do the rest.

THE complete novel in the next issue is by Henry C. Rowland, and is called "Chain-Driven." A man with a master's certificate on a passenger ship, a first officer or a captain is a person of some consequence, and when he leaves his task of piloting a shaft-driven steamship to preside over the fortunes of a chain-driven motor car there must be some strong and compelling reason. The reason in this case is a girl, and yet we could not, even by a wild stretch of fancy, call "Chain-Driven" a love story. It's a tale of incident and adventure both afloat and ashore—splendid companion for a winter's evening. In any other magazine than this you would have to read "Chain-Driven" as a serial. You'll be glad you don't have to wait from month to month in this case.

GETTING out a magazine like THE POPULAR is like manufacturing some well-known brand of goods. It isn't like book-publishing business. In that case the author's name is to a larger extent the guarantee of quality. In our case, that label, "the Twice-a-month POPULAR," is the brand, and everything between the paper covers must be the kind of thing we have led you to expect from us. You can fake goods or paint or almost anything of a physical nature. You can color catsup with dye so it looks like the real thing, and you can make splendid-appearing candy out of terra alba and anilines. But you can't adulterate fiction. The reader applies the acid test when he opens the magazine and starts to read.

WE, however, aim to do a good deal more than keep up a general standard of excellence. We want to give you in every number something out of the common, something surprising, something more than you are looking for. We did that when we introduced to you Burton Stevenson and his story, "The Buhl Cabinet." We are going to do that in the next issue with "The Tempting of Tavernake." And there are other striking and surprising things to follow.

THERE'S a very striking and unusual story by Clarence L. Cullen, "A Brand from the Burning," in the next issue. It's a tale with the "return-to-nature" motive running through it. The principal character in the story is a bear, who has fallen among bad companions and evil days. The bad companions are men, not bears. It's a "human-interest" as well as a "bear-interest" story. Then there are other stories by William Slavens McNutt, Charles Neville Buck, Robert Welles Ritchie, Frank Condon, Charles R. Barnes, Charles E. Van Loan, and others.

JUST a year ago to-day in these columns we forgot the magazine for the moment and talked about Christmas. We won't repeat what we said then. Perhaps you remember it, and perhaps you don't. But we think you'll catch some of the Christmas spirit in this issue of the magazine.

STARTLING

Watch Offer

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The most amazing offer ever made in the whole history of the watch industry — an offer which has absolutely PARALYZED competition — **the offer of the genuine Burlington Special direct to the public at the rock-bottom ANTI-TRUST PRICE,** without middlemen's profits.

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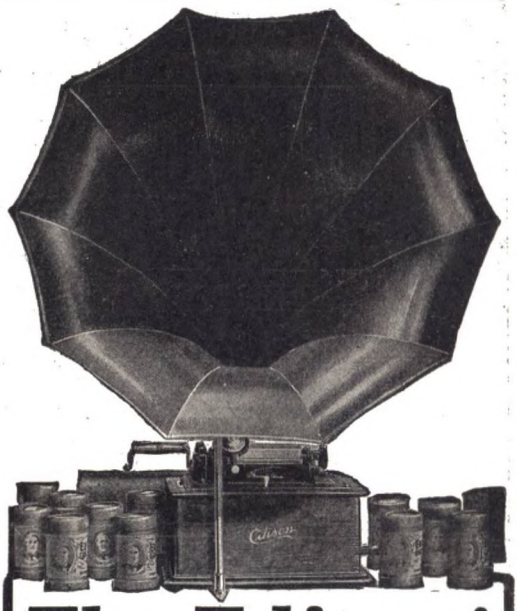

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My Reason

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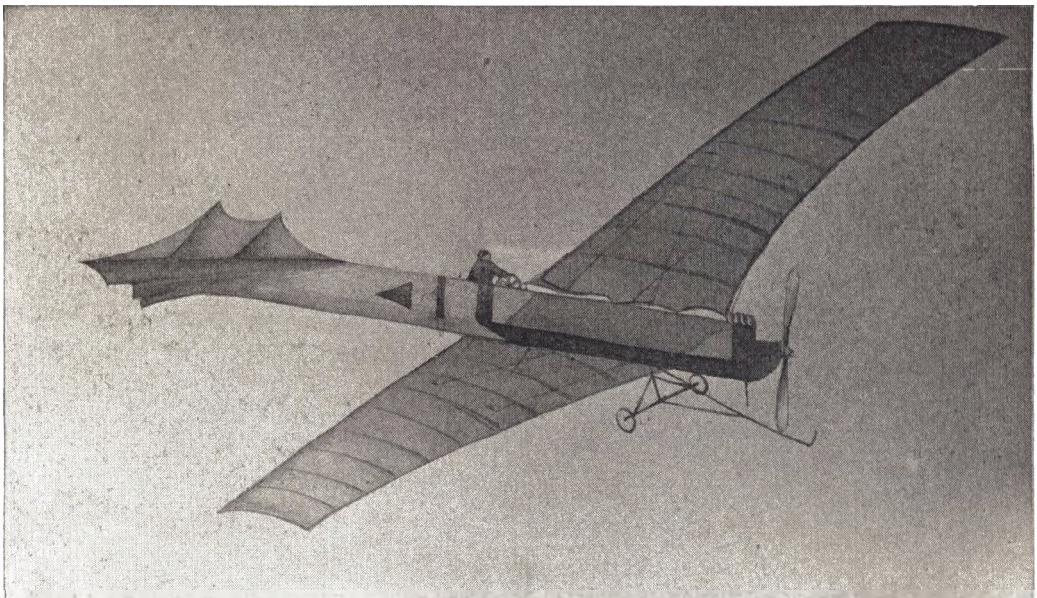

Nothing is Impossible

Nothing is impossible to the man with ambition! It does not make any difference what you want to do, there is a way to do it.

You may think it impossible to have your earning power doubled, tripled or quadrupled, but the realization of such an ambition is no more impossible than flying from New York to Los Angeles—telephoning from New York to Denver—or telegraphing without wires from San Francisco to Japan, all of which has been done within the last year.

Ambition knows no obstacles.

Ambition will find a way.

First say, "I *can* do it," then say, "I *will* do it."

When your *will* begins to work, nothing can stop you.

But your *will* must be directed by your mind. Train your mind along the lines of your chosen work. *Learn* more—and you will pass by all those who are satisfied with what they have.

To see how easy it is to do this, read the next page

THIS IS OPPENHEIM

The man who wrote "Havoc" and "The Malefactor." Be sure to get the opening chapters of his newest novel, "The Tempting of Tavernake," which begins in the next issue, **THE FIRST FEBRUARY NUMBER OF**

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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Then there's a long complete novel by Henry C. Rowland that's brimful of thrill and action. It's a story of adventure on land and sea, told with a dash and snap that'll keep your interest white hot to the end.

In addition there are stories and serials by

Clarence L. Cullen
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B. M. Bower
Roman Doubleday
Charles Neville Buck
Frank Condon
And Others

Be sure and read the opening chapters of the Oppenheim novel!—The First February POPULAR, on sale at all news stands January 10th. Fifteen cents per copy.

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For the first time in years, this good lady, who has been deaf, hears the church bells. She is in ecstasy. Only this morning has she been able to hear the prattle of her grandchildren and the voice of her daughter. Twenty-three years ago she first found herself becoming deaf and, despite numerous remedies, medical advice, hearing devices and specialists' treatments, she found it more and more difficult to hear. Of late years she was harassed by peculiar noises in the head, which added to her misery. At last she was told of a book which explains how to regain perfect hearing without costly apparatus or drugs. She got this book and learned how to quickly become freed from deafness and head-noises. Observe her delight in this hypothetical illustration! Any reader of this publication who desires to obtain one of these books can do so free of cost by merely writing to the author, Dr. George E. Coutant, 196 C, Station E, New York, N. Y. He will be pleased to mail it promptly, postpaid, to anyone whose hearing is not good. This offer will bring joy to many homes.

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