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The Popular Magazine

NOV. 7 1921

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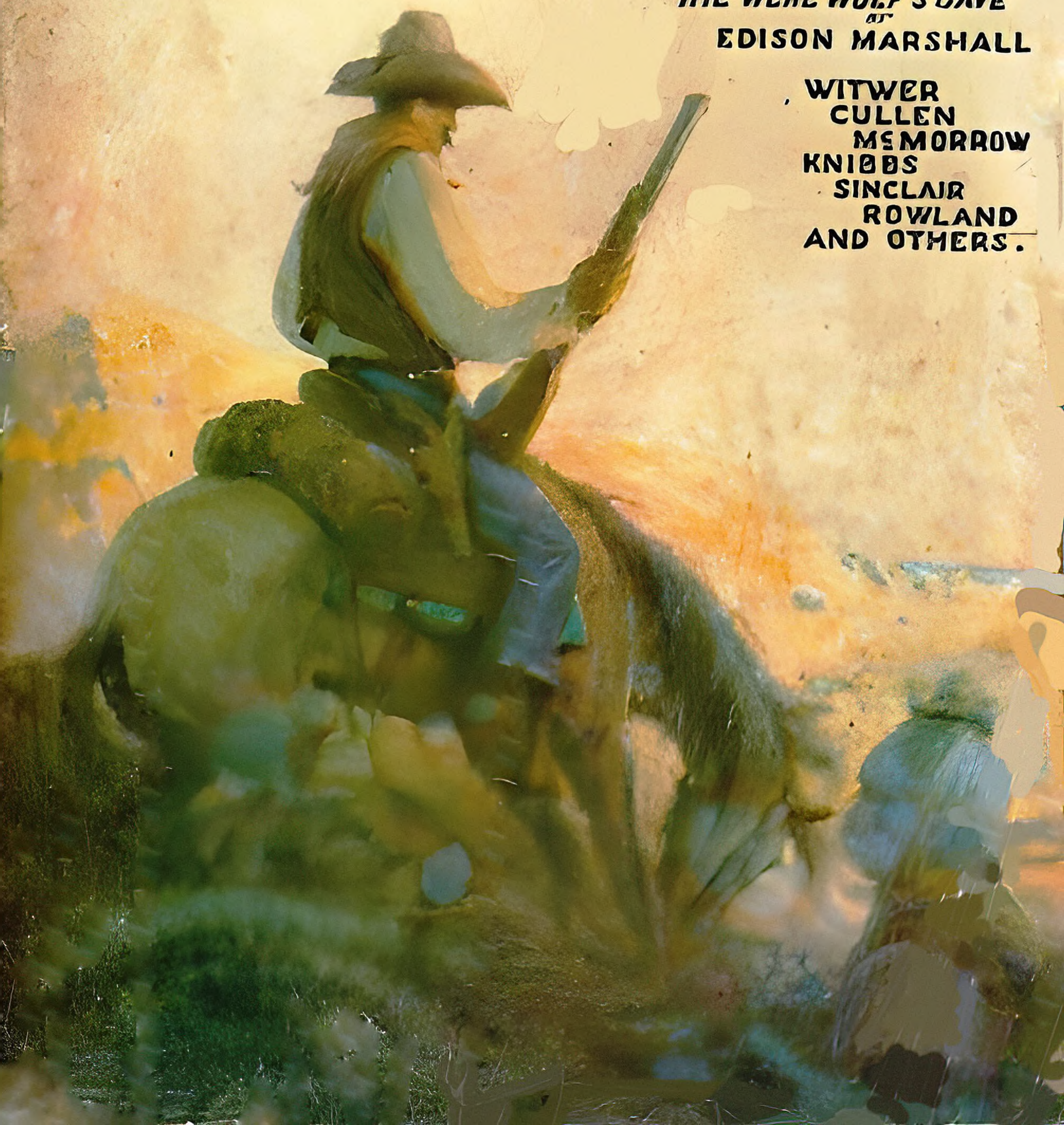

An Amazingly Easy Way to Earn $10,000 a Year

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TO the average man the $10,000-a-year job is only a dream. Yet today there are a surprising number of men earning five figure salaries who were merely dreaming of them a short while ago. The secret of their success should prove a startling revelation to every ambitious man who has ever aspired to get into the $10,000-a-year class.

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Earns $1,562 in Thirty Days
My earnings for the past thirty days are $1,562.00 and I won Second Prize in March although I only worked two weeks during that month.—C. W. Campbell, Greensburg, Pa.

Earned $1,800 in Six Weeks
My earnings for March were over $1,000 and over $1,800 for the last six weeks, while last week my earnings were $356.00. I travel eleven months out of the year, working 6 days each week. The N.S.T.A. dug me out of a rut where I was earning less than $1,000 a year and showed me how to make a success.—J. P. Overstreet, Denison, Texas.

Mr. Overstreet, Mr. Campbell and the others whose letters you see on this page are all successful salesmen. They have stepped into the $10,000-a-year class—and they never sold goods before! It is hard to believe that such big success could come so quickly and easily. Yet it was all amazingly simple! Ask them the secret of their sudden success. They will tell you they owe it to the National Salesmen's Training Association. This is an organization of top-notch salesmen and sales managers formed expressly for the purpose of training men to sell and helping them to good selling positions. It has taken hundreds of men from all walks of life and made them Master Salesmen—it has lifted them out of the rut and shown them the way to magnificent earnings, to fascinating careers and big selling positions.

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City .... State ....

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...Building Contractor $5,000 to $10,000
...Automobile Engineer $4,000 to $10,000
...Automobile Repairman $2,500 to $4,000
...Civil Engineer $5,000 to $15,000
...Structural Engineer $4,000 to $10,000
...Business Manager $5,000 to $15,000
...Certified Public Accountant $7,000 to $15,000
...Accountant and Auditor $2,500 to $7,000
...Draftsman and Designer $2,500 to $4,000
...Electrical Engineer $4,000 to $10,000
...General Education In one year.
...Lawyer $5,000 to $15,000
...Mechanical Engineer $4,000 to $10,000
...Shop Superintendent $3,000 to $7,000
...Employment Manager $4,000 to $10,000
...Steam Engineer $2,000 to $4,000
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...Telephone Engineer $2,500 to $5,000
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1 Celery Dish, 8⅝ inches
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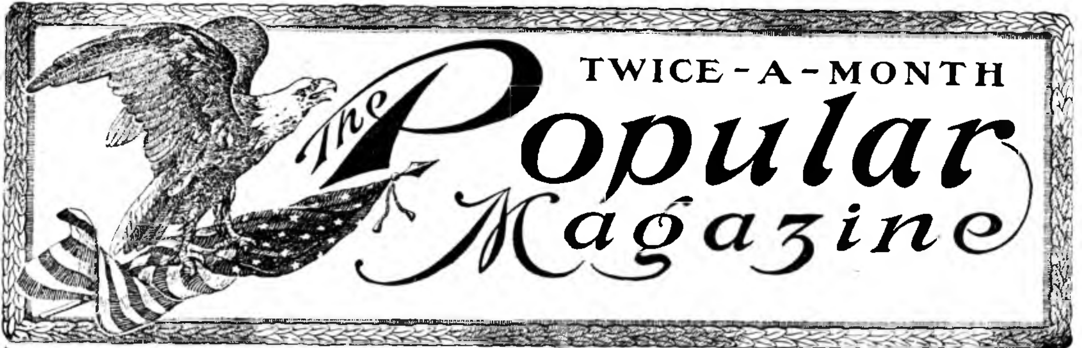
Town .... State ....
Occupation .... Color ....
Give Initial Wanted (Any One Letter) ....

H. C. WITWER starts a new series, "Classics in Slang," in the next issue. "Bright Roads of Adventure," a new series by Ralph D. Paine, also starts. Marshall, Sinclair, McMorrow, Cullen and Brown are among the other contributors.



Vol. LXII. No. 2

CONTENTS

November 7, 1921

The Fight for the Copper Ledge. A Complete Novel, **Frederick R. Bechdolt** . 1
A skipper's reputation for seamanship usually hasn't much effect on a battle for a mining claim, but this is an unusual story about unusual people.

Phil Grimm's Progress. A Short Story, ... **H. C. Witwer** . . . 41
He was on his way, but some one had to tell him where he was going.

The Werewolf's Cave. A Five-Part Story—Part I. **Edison Marshall** . . . 52
"Wolf" Darby decides that the city is no place for him, fights a battle and makes a friend, and in the Northland begins to come into his own.

Fate and a Florida Fish. A Short Story, . . **Clarence L. Cullen** . . 76
Tancred Weedon made no mistake when he let Mr. Smith land that big tarpon.

Scandalous Asphyxiation. A Short Story, . . **William Hamilton Osborne** 90
A gas attack has an important bearing on a political campaign.

An Exhibit in the Dessauer Case. A Short Story, **Thomas McMorrow** . . 108
In trying to stop a quarrel old Dederich Dessauer almost started a riot.

Caught in the Net. Editorials, ... **The Editor** 118
In Washington. Chicago As a Seaport. The Red Cross and War's Aftermath. Popular Topics. The Lions and Lambs of Modern Chemicals.

Magic. A Short Story, ... **Henry C. Rowland** . . 124
De Lancray knew there was a will and Cynthia Guilford showed him a way.

The Double Life of Hippo McNutt. A Short Story, **Raymond J. Brown** . . 146
A husky cyclist from Australia springs a new one on the boxing game.

God's Fools. Verse . . . . **J. H. Morse** 158

Ransome's Sheila. A Short Story, ... **Henry Herbert Knibbs** . 159
The story of a man and a horse.

The Hidden Places. A Four-Part Story—Part III. **Bertrand W. Sinclair** . . 164
A great happiness comes to Doris and Hollister, Myra has something surprising to say, and Hollister has to face a tragic situation.

Off Sudden Island. A Short Story, ... **J. H. Greene** 181
Cap'n Jeremiah Hackbutt tells a story of the far tropic seas.

A Chat With You 191

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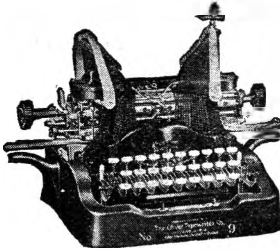

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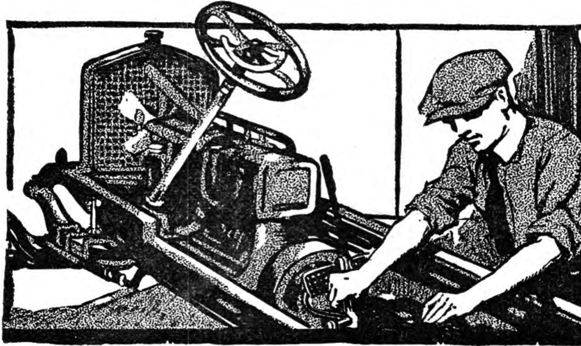

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE
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The Fight for the Copper Ledge

By Frederick R. Bechdolt

Author of "Back to the Right Trail," "Black Gold," Etc.

There is law in Alaska these days, of course—and yet sometimes men must fight in the old way to hold what is their own. It is of such a struggle that Mr. Bechdolt tells in this fine story of the battle that was waged for the possession of Captain Dan Haley's "mountain of copper" on the shore of Lituya Bay. You are going to like the upstanding men of the Over There Copper Mining Company, and Captain Moulton, of the schooner "Alden Bessie."

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

THEY say that coincidences are rare, but it was a coincidence that the Mexican authorities raised the passport fee to ten dollars a head, thereby putting the Tia Juana race track and several big gambling houses out of commission, on the same day the wind veered in the Gulf of Alaska. These two whims, the one of nature and the other of men, brought two shipwrecks, thereby turning the paths of Captain Dan Haley and "Come Along Charley" toward a point of intersection.

Captain Dan, who figures largely in this tale—which is more than Come Along does, although he causes certain wild events—was well accustomed to the wind's vagaries in these northern waters, but this one caught him unprepared right off Cape Spencer. Within five minutes the schooner *Alice*, late of Kadiak, was drifting on one of the nastiest nests of rocks on the southeastern Alaskan coast, a dismasted wreck, while her skipper —who was at the time also her crew—was making a hard fight of it against the running seas to reach his dory. The whooping of the surf was loud in Captain Dan's ears when he finally set to work with the oars, and it was a good two hours before he had time to wring the salt water from his beard or breath to spare in thanking the forethought which had made him secure those oars to the thwarts with lanyards.

Dusk found him with wind and tide behind him and the Indian Islands dead ahead. When darkness settled down upon Cross Sound his roaring camp fire made a wavering, red patch in the night under the lee of a lofty point of rocks where the little archipelago fronts the lonely sea. Then, while he dried his soaked garments and solaced his hunger with briny plug tobacco, Captain Dan began readjusting his life to meet the new conditions.

It was not the first time he had been forced, by nature or luck or man's doings, to shift the helm of his destinies, and he went about it with the calmness of one who is thoroughly accustomed to looking Fate between the eyes. One of the things that struck him was the idea of taking a vacation.

"San Francisco," he said aloud, and smiled into the night. Being originally a product of the city by the Golden Gate, he did not abbreviate her name with the shameless familiarity of many strangers. Being one to whom only scanty news of recent large events had come during his visits to little obscure cannery ports and Siwash villages, the eighteenth amendment to our national

Constitution had failed to impress him very deeply. Hence the choice of the city of his nativity rather than some British Columbian port; and hence that smile of anticipation.

"And then," he promised himself, "when I've got that out of my system, I'll come back and take another whirl somewheres out to the west'ard."

By dory to Hoona, where he made a dicker with the Siwashes for chewing tobacco, food, and passage in a war canoe to Sitka; by steamship from Sitka to Seattle; and thence another vessel took him down to the Golden Gate. Having decided to postpone the real event of the vacation until he reached his native city he was still giving small heed to many things which were taking place in this fair land of ours. And he remained thus until the afternoon when his path and the path of Come Along Charley converged at an acute angle in the dingy, little lobby of a very unpretentious hotel down on lower California Street. That afternoon marks the real beginning of this tale.

We may as well leave out all events up to the meeting of these two, excepting the one which directly prefaced it. Captain Dan was parting with Ben Story. Their trails had crossed five years before up in Prince William Sound, where men talk copper in their sleep; and Dan had remembered Ben the moment he laid eyes on the young mining engineer. For three long hours they had talked upon the subject which engrosses the thoughts of people in Valdez and Cordova; and the Alaskan, who judged his fellow beings at first sight, according to whatever impression they made on him, had taken enough of a fancy to his companion to unfold one of those secrets which he had gathered in his years of wandering through all the inlets from Juneau out to the Islands of the Four Mountains.

"If what you say is right," Ben Story told him when the description was completed, "this is a bigger thing than Butte Hill."

"I tell you, son," Captain Dan reiterated, "there's a mountain of the same stuff I showed you." He patted the pocket into which he had stowed the specimen. "And you could heave the ore down into tidewater from the ledge."

Then they talked business, and the upshot of it was an appointment for the morning of the morrow.

"Make it eleven o'clock, son," Captain Dan called after the other, as he left. "I'm liable to be out late to-night." For business was over now; he had shaped out the details of his future, at least so far as the next one of his multitude of adventures was concerned; and he had it in mind, now, to do that for which he had come to San Francisco.

"Eleven o'clock, then," Ben called over his shoulder and went forth with his head high, his hopes all soaring. In the doorway he brushed elbows with Come Along, who was entering with his eyes on Captain Dan.

He was a fattish man, this Come Along Charley, moon-faced, with cold, wise, little eyes, as neat and unobtrusively up to date as a man can be who has been obliged to rely on a set of trained dice to eke out an existence for some weeks past—which means that his clothing was still perfect, his collar and tie sartorially correct, his shine gleaming; but a certain luster, begotten in more prosperous days by two large diamonds, was lacking. He knew tourists as well as a hill rancher at the edge of the upper San Joaquin Valley knows sheep.

Tia Juana had been a crowded corral, with an ever-changing herd of humans in its environs—until that passport order—and he had been unprepared for a rainy day. But tourists are tourists and farmers are farmers, and how was one who had put in his time fleecing such to know that whiskers do not always make a victim?

If Come Along Charley had only remembered history he would have realized that the only Alaskan who is worth while going after is the Alaskan in the process of the making—and you want to get him before he leaves Seattle. There is something in the Northern air which hardens a man's susceptibilities. Also Captain Dan had traveled all the way from Chilkoot down to Dawson and all the way from Dawson to Nome's sand spit before he turned his footsteps toward southern Alaska; and he who trod those trails in the old days learned bunko men before he learned to fry his flapjacks.

Come Along looked at Captain Dan, whom he had seen before and studied in this same lobby, and made up his mind to have a try at this grizzled stranger in spite of the fact that the local pickpocket and bunko detail from the Central Station was active nowadays. And Captain Dan looked at Come Along and took thought concerning the vacation festivities, thus far postponed. It had begun to come to him, as the news of changes

will come even when one's mind is engrossed in other things, that getting a drink of the genuine stuff was not as easy as a man would expect in the old town. And during the few seconds since he had called after Ben Story, he had suddenly realized that there was a possibility of a dry evening ahead of him. His eyes took in Come Along from top to toe and his mind acted swiftly; he made his plan just as the other fixed on his own determination.

"Howdy," said Captain Dan as Come Along dropped into the chair beside him and begged a match; "nice weather."

Inside of the half hour he shied off from two tentative propositions, the one to visit a pool hall and the other to stroll down to the ferry building, but accepted an invitation to dinner.

"I'm looking for a chance to see the town," Captain Dan confided in his host, and Come Along pointed his plans toward the neighborhood of Powell and Ellis Streets. They dined amid the clamor of jazz music and the eyes of the Alaskan grew weary watching the bedizened entertainers who were following one another in swift succession under the spotlight's glare. He had gotten tired of that sort of thing in Cape Nome back in 1900, and the girls up there were better looking, too.

"Seems to me," he murmured to Come Along, "there's some of the same ones in this bunch that used to cash in their checks on the sand spit in those days."

Similarly the drinks brought only old memories. Wine of pepsin reminded him of the lemon extract that they used to sell to the Siwashes when the century was young up in Tyonek and synthetic gin, warm from the hip pocket of a bootlegging peddler, took his thoughts back to the whisky that came reeking over the unpainted pine bars of Sheep Camp. Come Along was discouraged to the point of letting his guest pay the bill, but rallied at a mention of faro. Jerry Shannon's place would deliver a ten-per-cent cut, if this sheep yielded anything worth while.

"I know," he remarked with enforced calm, "where there's a roulette game."

"Fine," said Captain Dan; and the lookout admitted them through the barred doors of a third-floor back room a few minutes later. If Captain Dan noticed when the dealer leaned against the table's edge and when he failed to do so—and he should have noticed that after what he had seen in the days of the big Northern rush—he let it make no apparent difference with his playing. Yet there was something tantalizing about the manner of his losing. He dropped just enough to show that he was—as the saying has it—"fat," and not enough to satisfy the avidity of those who must pay a substantial share of the house's proceeds to the powers that be before they line their own pocketbooks.

A wise-eyed, sleek-shaven floorman touched Come Along's elbow after things had been going this way for a little while.

"You and your friend have a nip?" he asked quietly.

Captain Dan allowed himself to be escorted to a back room and tasted good Scotch whisky for the first time in many moons. Thereafter his play loosened up—a little. Other invitations followed and were accepted. It was an interesting game to the old-timer, and, as he figured it, not as expensive as some other good times had been. In all he parted with a little more than five hundred dollars, and when he left the place, it was with some difficulty that his guide and mentor restrained him from embracing the doorman.

"There's a livelier place up the street," said Come Along Charley, looking about him for a taxicab, but Captain Dan cut him short.

"No, thanks. Got enough. And I'm going to walk home." He remained steadfast in this determination and Come Along had to content himself with the hope of fifty dollars for his night's work—if Jerry Shannon did not shut down on him altogether, which wasn't so unlikely considering the amount of Scotch that had been consumed. Yet he stuck to Captain Dan's side clear to the hotel door. No telling what this wise old bird might let drop, if a fellow kept his ears open.

And he was rewarded by one crumb of information. For the sour dough saw no particular necessity of keeping his lips closed on the subject which was uppermost in his mind, now that the celebration had been accomplished; moreover he felt no fear of this obese man whom he had employed for his own purposes. So he confided in Come Along the fact that he intended going north again very soon in order to post his location notices on a mountain of copper which, he assured his companion, was a bigger thing than Butte Hill.

And the luck that takes care of such things willed it that Come Along run afoul of Perry Laskey before he had gone many blocks from the hotel, that night.

CHAPTER II.

Copper was booming that year, and Ben Story believed in the metal as sincerely as an old-fashioned Calvinist believes in original sin. He owned a serene faith in himself and his projects which went a long ways to carry conviction to others. To see him walking down the street when he left Captain Dan's dingy hotel, with his broad-brimmed black hat slouched a little on one side—debonair from head to foot but careless in that debonairness—one would say that there went one who knew nothing of failure.

It was in good part that bearing which got him past the line of polished quartered oak desks forming the outposts to a certain inner office, itself part of a long suite on a downtown building's upper floor. But the thing that gave him an extended hearing from the gray-mustached man within the room was a reputation founded on hard work whose results showed in several printed reports to corporation directors. The San Francisco representative of the great Stroheim corporation, however, had his own reasons, born of specific instructions from back East, for shaking his head when he had heard Ben Story through.

"Show us the ore body when you've prospected it," he said, "and if it's anything like what you say it is, we'll take it over gladly. That's the best that I can do, as things are now. Sorry we can't go any farther, but a grubstake is out of the question."

When, a few minutes later, Ben Story sauntered down the long corridor which leads from the Market Street entrance of the Palace Hotel, more than one of the throng who are ever moving back and forth in that meeting place for men from all the world turned to look after him, drawn by the fine serenity of his demeanor. Somehow he made those who noticed him feel more hopeful, as men always feel when they have witnessed the passing of a winner in the world's battle. At the clerk's desk he turned, feeling a hand upon his shoulder. The hand gripped him tighter as he faced its owner.

"You look," the latter cried, "as if you'd just made a big killing."

Ben ignored the imputation. "Where have you been, Russ?" he demanded. "Get across?" He smiled into the large-featured face that was smiling into his, and he swept the lank figure with a glance which was not without fondness.

"Jerry Nolan and Hempel are upstairs right now," the other announced. "They both got in to-day. Come on." He turned abruptly and led the way to the elevators. "To think of all four of us running into each other like this!" he shouted over his shoulder.

So it happened that within a half hour after the dashing of his hopes Ben Story sat down on the edge of a hotel bed, lifting his voice against the voices of the three others who had left the northland on the same steamer as himself to join the great adventure in France.

"Seems like being back at the old job again," he managed to make himself heard this time through the rain of queries and counterqueries which were filling the room. "Well, who got to see the big show, anyhow?" There was just a trace of defiance in his voice as he put the question.

Russ Hall was sprawling beside him on the bed with a half-smoked cigarette in the corner of his big mouth; Hempel, a blond-haired giant, was sitting with one huge leg thrown over the arm of a morris chair and little Jerry Nolan was perched on the very tipmost edge of a steamer trunk, the only one in uniform among them. A pair of wings adorned his neatly fitting tunic. They all looked up at the words and Jerry caught Ben's eyes fixed on the aviation badge.

"They kept me at Mather Field building hangars, after they'd put in a year teaching me to fly," he said ruefully.

"Not so bad," Hempel called from the depths of the leather upholstery. "I put in my last year piling up shoe boxes back in New Jersey. You see, I quit the officers' training camp to enlist in a regiment that was going to start across next week—so the tip went. I did see salt water when I went to New York on leave."

Hall laughed. "I knew I'd make it from the first." He sat up in the middle of the bed and waved his cigarette. "And I was bound to start from the old town. I went back home as soon as I could, and was the first to sign up in the place. They gave me a banquet and everybody that ever knew me had some junk to hand me for a present. There must have been two hundred down to

the train to see me off. And when I got to Angel Island the doctors said I had an astigmatism. I never did dare to go back home, but got a job in the shipyards as a draftsman and laid low whenever anybody from my town came to the city. How about you, Ben?"

"Because I didn't know anything excepting mining I wound up with the psychiatric and put in most of my time herding shell-shocked soldiers back in Iowa," Ben announced quietly. "Looks as if we all did our bit, doesn't it?"

"Well," Hall said slowly, "maybe we did our bit, but I tell you fellows what it is; this whole thing has got me disorganized. I reckon it's sitting down and wishing for action that's done it. I'm afraid somebody's going to give me a job—that's the way I feel."

"Me, too." Hempel rumpled his mop of blond hair and the heavy chair complained to his sudden movement. "I suppose I have to go to work. But when I think of the old mine and the old day-in-and-day-out—well it's like taking a licking to go back there."

"Pretty good times we had, at that," Jerry Nolan reminded them from the trunk's edge, "and I did like Alaska."

"Alaska's all right," Ben answered quickly. "I'd give a whole lot to be back there now. But the job—I'm just like you fellows; been trying to dodge it ever since I hit San Francisco. And I thought I'd make it, too—this afternoon. Not an hour ago, I——"

He paused abruptly and remained silent for a moment, while the others eyed him, waiting to see what was on his mind. Then:

"Say, any of you got any money?" he cried. Big Hempel's hand went into his pocket.

"How much you need, Ben?" Story laughed and shook his head.

"No, thanks. It's not a touch. But something bigger. Real money, I mean. Could we raise ten thousand among us?"

"Tell us the proposition," Hall bade him. "I've got some—in Liberty Bonds."

"A mountain of copper," Ben began slowly, and his head went back. "It's bigger than Butte Hill, and richer. And right at tidewater. You fellows remember old Dan Haley; used to run into Prince William Sound with a little schooner and went trading out to the westward?"

"He took me over to Cook Inlet and up the Susitna hunting Kadiak bears one time," replied Hempel. "Fine old boy."

"Well, he's in town. Lost his schooner in a squall off Cape Spencer and came down to take a vacation. He's got that ledge; or, at least, he knows where it is and nobody else has seen it; or, if they have, they've not done anything with it."

"Whereabouts?" asked Jerry.

"There's a bay below Cape Fairweather," Ben told them. "I've heard of it before. One time there was a beach placer diggings near there. This ore body lies right at the head of the bay, and I've seen specimens. It's rich stuff—and you could take it out in an open cut. All it needs is ten thousand to outfit and charter a schooner. Old Captain Dan can take us there." He was on his feet now and talking fast. "I've the word of the Stroheim people to take it over, if it shows up as well as it promises. And—you fellows know Alaska copper."

"I've a little over two thousand," Jerry said quietly. Hempel was figuring on the back of a blank check with his bank book in his hand.

"Thirty-two hundred, with what I can hock my bonds for," he announced.

When they had summed up their resources they found more than five hundred above the ten-thousand mark, with Captain Dan not yet accounted for.

"And he'll go in," Ben said, "with all he's got. We've a big thing, boys."

"Better than going back to work for somebody else." Jerry sprang to his feet. "Let's organize her now. Stock company and——"

"Wait till we get Dan," Ben broke in. "He'll want his say, and he's entitled to it. I'm going to pick him up at eleven to-morrow morning. You fellows go down there with me."

"Well, anyhow," Jerry persisted, "there's no objection to our having dinner together and smoking the thing up. And we may as well name her. Eh? What about it, Ben?"

And so, while Captain Dan was dining with Come Along Charley the four of them talked copper at their table and named the ledge, which none of them had seen. They called it "Over There," in commemoration of certain other high hopes which had in their own time been dashed to earth.

"Action," Jerry Nolan announced when they were parting late that night, "and room to move about where I blamed well please, without some one else to tell me what to do

or how to do it—that's what I'm chucking in my share for."

"Maybe we'll not get rich," big Hempel chimed in, "but, anyhow, we'll get some fun out of this thing before we're through."

And that was just about the time when Come Along Charley met Perry Laskey and let drop the information which caused all of them more danger and trouble—which constitute youth's idea of fun—than they had ever dared expect.

CHAPTER III.

This Perry Laskey was just about the last man in San Francisco whom Come Along Charley wanted to meet. The enthusiast who invented the phrase "Honor among thieves" never had bunko men in mind when he let his sentimentalism run away with him. Captain Dan's recent guide would as soon have walked into the arms of a Central Station detective as to come face to face with this fellow member of his profession. The reason dated back five years to a Southern race track where Come Along had accepted the position of betting commissioner for the other, but had placed the money in his own pocket instead of with the bookmaker, believing the horse could never win. And at the present moment Laskey was a power in the city.

His hired car—he was one of those men who never encumber themselves with large bank accounts or property which is not easily portable, but put their profits into such things as will go into safe-deposit boxes—was standing at the curb; he was in the back seat, with the fur collar of his overcoat turned up to shield his soggy cheeks from the fog-laden night breeze, a man who should have been fat but was merely flabby, with a perceptible tinge of gray in his hair and eyes as cold as two round blue stones. And the reason he saw Come Along Charley first was because the latter was looking at the Federal minor official who was hurrying from the machine into the doorway of the nearest apartment house.

The Federal official had good cause to hurry, more cause than any one save himself and Perry Laskey as yet suspected. It was, in fact, getting very near to time to look for alibis. If Come Along had guessed the things which these two knew, and could have looked just a little way into the future, he would not have tried to slink into the shadow when he glanced up and found those cold blue eyes regarding him.

That afternoon the Marine Exchange lookout at Point Lobos had picked up a fast power craft heading for the north channel and had phoned the news to the customs officials who in their turn had used the wireless to notify two coast-guard cutters. The trap had been so well arranged that the slower government boats were able to close in on the smuggler just off Point Bonita, and the officials themselves were surprised when they counted the cases of Scotch whisky in that illicit cargo.

Such things took place every once in a while but, since he had wormed his way to underground power, Perry Laskey had used the profits of his great bootlegging ring so carefully that successive arrests and seizures merely meant so many entries of expenses on his books. Bonds were arranged, fines paid, and some men served sentences in jail for good high wages. This time, however, accident had interfered in the shape of a skipper who had a wife and family, and a newly appointed Federal judge who had a known penchant for long sentences. By the time the skipper had started making his confession to the officers Perry Laskey got enough inside information on what was taking place to make him very sure that within a week or two the head writers for the daily papers would drop the word "Alleged" with which they had always heretofore prefaced his title, "King of the Bootleggers."

Unlike many another man who has built a house of cards he had a faculty for seeing when the time had come to get out from under. And he knew that when one started doing this he needed to be very quick about it, too. The crash of two Nevada mining corporations had failed to overwhelm him because of this same swiftness. He did not see the necessity of going to MacNeil's Island now. But when his eyes fell on Come Along he was doing some hard thinking, the idea being to map out a line of retreat. Some men would have chosen some town in Honduras, but he did not fancy Central America.

Being one of those who are always willing to take a chance, so long as the risk does not fall on himself, he was seized with an inspiration at the sight of the obese swindler who had made away with his money at that Southern track. For here came one who was in deadly fear of him, one who was skillful

enough to be employed on dubious missions if the occasion demanded, and unscrupulous enough to do anything. Moreover, the fellow might come in handy if he needed one of those victims who are known in the parlance as "fall guys." So he hailed Come Along, and the latter, seeing there was no retreat, came to the car, with a very fair semblance of surprise.

"Evenin', Perry." Come Along's voice was cordial. "I——"

"Hop in," the King of the Bootleggers bade him, "I want to talk with you."

Come Along swallowed a sigh and obeyed; and because he knew his guest was sweating, Laskey said nothing at all for the next few blocks, but looked straight ahead of him as if he were alone in the car. It sped down the Bush Street hill, leaving the apartment-house district behind it, and turned north in Kearny Street, for three blocks. Come Along looked past the driver toward the gray bulk of the Hall of Justice shrouded in wisps of fog.

"Where we going, Perry?"

His seatmate pointed toward the drab stone pile and allowed a smile to flicker over his mute lips. Come Along's gasp was clearly audible through the purring of the motor.

"Now, look here, Perry," he quavered, "you know 'swell as I do that that was five years ago and in another State. Even if you are strong here, they's law and——"

"I'm not going to swear to any complaint against you, Charley," Laskey answered quietly. "That six hundred is just between me and you, that's all. But I've got a friend in the upper office who's done me a good turn or two, and he's looking for the party that turned that lock trick down in Basset's pool room last week."

His full lips closed to a straight line and cold perspiration bathed the brow of his companion.

"Perry," the latter said thickly, and gripped him by the elbow, "forget it! That farmer can't ever rap to me. Besides"—his mind was working rapidly and the words came to his lips almost before he realized what they were—"I got the chance to pull something worth while. This is on the level, I tell you. I left the sucker not half an hour before I run into you. Gimme till noon and I'll hand you those six hundred berries."

Laskey laughed.

"It's good as the wheat," Come Along pleaded. "A mining deal. Listen, Perry, I'll turn him over to you. This is big, I tell you." He remembered Captain Dan's words, "A mountain of copper, bigger'n Butte Hill, and right at tidewater."

Perry Laskey leaned forward and touched the driver's shoulder, naming his hotel. The car slackened speed and at the next corner right under the shadow of the great gray building whose walls had never before seemed to Come Along to be so uncomfortably close, it turned. There was no more speech between the two occupants of the rear seat until they were within the suite of rooms on the upper floor of the Palace Hotel. Down in the corridor Come Along Charley—without knowing it—had brushed elbows with Ben Story. Thus Story came for the second time so close to the man whose acts were to influence his life, yet whom he never was to see again.

"Tell me about that copper," said Laskey. And Come Along elaborated to the best of his ability on what Captain Dan had told him.

"Where?" Laskey demanded, when he had finished. The fat man gulped for breath.

"I'll connect you with him in the morning," he promised. "I'd take you to him now, but he's too drunk. Besides, he's cagy and he'd smell something if we come this time o' night."

"I don't think much of your proposition," the other told him coldly. "Mines don't mean a thing to me, nowadays."

"But this bird's got money——" Come Along began. Laskey allowed his scorn to show in his voice, as he replied:

"Do you think I'm playing bunko?" But he continued, thinking swiftly as he sat there regarding the fat man, and more and more the idea of that ledge lured him. He knew as well as any man that copper was booming now; he realized the value of a tangible asset when it came to a get-rich-quick scheme. And Alaska looked as good to him as any other of those places whither a man could flee by water leaving no trace behind. He had at the best two weeks, possibly not more than a week or ten days.

"I'll tell you what," he said at length, "you're going to stay here to-night in the next room, and in the morning we'll look up this bird. If there's anything in it, I may let you work out that six hundred for

me instead of turning you up for that lock trick. So get to bed now."

Come Along did. But as he turned in, it occurred to him to wonder why Laskey was so anxious to "trim a sucker out of a mine" when things were breaking so easy for him, and decided that there was something doing that he wasn't wise to.

CHAPTER IV.

It was a little after ten o'clock when the phone bell rang in Perry Laskey's room.

"All right," he said, recognizing the voice of the minor Federal official who had scuttled from his hired car into the apartment house the night before when Come Along happened upon them, "I know who it is. Shoot!"

"U. S. grand jury meets this afternoon. There's a subpœna out for you—or will be within an hour. Good-by!"

"Good-by!" said Perry Laskey, and hung up. He strode into the next room and pulled the covers from Come Along Charley's bed with one vigorous jerk. "Get up!" he bade the fat man, and turned on his heel without waste of further words. By the time his guest was dressed he had stowed such portable property as vitally concerned his needs and liberty into a single, large Gladstone bag and had phoned the driver of that hired car.

"Going to Sacramento, if any one calls for me," he told the clerk as he turned in his key. "I'll be back this evening."

The car was waiting at the curb. Come Along Charley, who liked his coffee as soon as possible after rising, was still hopeful, although his host had said no word of breakfast. His hopes were dashed when the automobile took them to the financial district, and he spent an uneasy half hour waiting in front of the bank within whose safe-deposit vaults Laskey was finishing his packing.

"Now," the latter said, when he had reappeared with the Gladstone bag stuffed to corpulency, "where's that hotel?" Come Along took one swift look at the soggy face and decided it was not yet time for his breakfast. He gave the address.

"Hit her up," Laskey bade the driver, "but don't get into any jam with the traffic cops." They arrived in front of the little hotel just in time to see five men solemnly shaking hands within the dingy lobby. Thus the stockholders of the Over There Copper Mining Company were cementing their agreement, made within a half hour after Ben Story and his companions had found Captain Dan.

"A mountain of copper, lads," said Captain Dan when Ben had made the situation clear to him. "Wait now—I'll show you." He went to his room and returned with a large-sized chart of the southern Alaskan coast; this he unfolded and, where a bit of an indentation showed between Cape Spencer and Cape St. Elias, he marked the point with his pencil. "Lituya Bay; they's a bad bar, but light-draft schooners can make it at slack water if you know the channel. Up here"—he pointed to the head of the bay—"she lays. Good stuff." He hauled forth the specimen from his pocket and, when they had handed it around the talk went straight to money.

Just as the hired car had drawn up at the curb Captain Dan was explaining his financial status.

"I don't think they's more'n three or four hundred left in my bank roll," he told them. "I took a whirl at the old town last night, dropped five hundred at a brace game, and I didn't have——"

"Remember," Ben Story interrupted, "you're furnishing the discovery. I guess that evens things up, doesn't it, boys?"

Whereat they all shook hands while Come Along nudged Perry Laskey, as they walked in.

"That's the bird," said he, "the one with the spinach, and the rolled-up paper in his hand."

"And some one else has got him hooked now," Laskey answered in an undertone. They sat there in the rear seat while Captain Dan returned to the desk and gave his map to the clerk, who thrust it into the pigeonhole of the owner's room. The Alaskan rejoined his fellow adventurers, and the party started toward the street.

"Shall I try and take him away from 'em?" Come Along asked breathlessly.

"Sit tight," the big man ordered in a whisper, "and turn your back to 'em." The five stockholders of the Over There passed on up California Street. "Now," Laskey told the fat man, two minutes later, "get into that lobby and bring me the paper he left."

The clerk looked up from some bookkeeping at Come Along's question.

"Captain Haley's paper? Oh, yes, the one he left." His eyes took in the questioner. "He sent you back after it?" Somehow or other he did not remember having seen this man in the group who had just departed with the Alaskan, but he gave the matter no further thought. And Come Along Charley departed with the chart whereon Lituya Bay was designated by a broad pencil mark. Some men would have kept that chart, but Perry Laskey did not intend to give any one a chance to remember his comings and goings that morning. When the car had taken them down into the wholesale district he unrolled the stiff paper, noted the name of the bay, and bade the chauffeur drive back with it to the hotel again. So it happened that Captain Dan never knew that the map had been touched since he had turned it over to the clerk. He gathered it up along with his other belongings during the noon hour and moved to a quiet family hotel on the Hyde Street hill whither his fellow adventurers had also changed their lodgings.

So it was that Come Along was never able to find Captain Dan again, and to tell the truth he had not much time to devote to the hunting, either. Perry Laskey kept him too busy at other things. They had their breakfast that day some time after noon down the peninsula at a road house where the former King of the Bootleggers did some more telephoning. After that they drove by unfrequented side roads to a lonely ranch in the midst of many acres of hill vineyards, and the smell of new wine was one of the memories which Come Along carried with him through the ensuing days of enforced peonage.

For peonage was what it amounted to. He was doing his master's bidding for bed and board. And, though there were times when he went alone into the city, times when he read the daily papers and learned how the man whom he feared was already listed as a fugitive hiding from subpœna servers, still he did not dare to betray the whereabouts of his companion. For as yet the big news had not come out and the world had only suspicions that real trouble might be brewing for the man who had engineered the affairs of the big bootlegging ring. And Come Along Charley knew from long experience that it is a far cry from a subpœna to an indictment. Until a crash came he was very sure that Perry Laskey only needed to extend a flabby forefinger in his direction to set the officers after him. The lock trick is one thing and a huge liquor selling conspiracy is another when it comes to starting the wheels of justice to moving.

"I want you to go to town this morning," Laskey told him on the second day, "and look up a party at the foot of Drumm Street by the name of Moulton, Captain Moulton. He's got a schooner for charter. You're to charter this boat in your own name, with her master, to make the voyage to Lituya Bay, Alaska. Find what it will cost and when the money must be turned over. Tell this fellow Moulton that you'll arrange for provisions and outfit and that you'll ship a crew. And the schooner has to be ready to sail in a week. The car's not coming for you; you'll have to walk down to Redwood City and take a bus in."

Come Along, who was accumulating that ailment which is known as kidney feet, had quite made up his mind to risk all consequences of betraying his master to the Federal authorities, before he reached Redwood City by the very poor ranch road; but he changed his decision when he bought a noon edition of an evening paper in San Francisco. For the first thing that greeted his eyes was his own name emblazoned in top headlines. The statement ran—in bold blackface type—that the U. S. authorities were looking for him in connection with the disappearance of Perry Laskey, and it went on to say that he was further wanted on the charge of having swindled a Grass Valley farmer by the ancient device known as the lock trick. Although he was a shrewd man in his own way, he did not connect the former King of the Bootleggers with the publication of that bit of news; but he might have done so, if he had known the nature of a telephone conversation which Laskey had held with a very well known criminal lawyer during his own absence from the ranch house the day before. As it was, he gulped for breath and kept off of Market Street, clinging to the Embarcadero during the remainder of his city visit.

"And I gotta give a bum name when I charter this schooner," he mused as he hurried toward the foot of Drumm Street. "I suppose that puts me in bad with Perry." He cursed Laskey under his breath. The address which his master had given him turned out to be an ironworks, and Come Along's kidney feet suffered still further punishment when he sought out the proprietor in a grass-

grown lot down by the railroad tracks; for the place which was used as an anchor yard was all strewn with rusting chain cables and gigantic mudhooks.

"Moulton?" The proprietor of the iron-works repeated the name after Come Along. "Oh, you mean Cap'n Moulton." He extended his long arm toward the coal bunkers whose dingy framework towered at the water's edge. "Down in the slip there, schooner *Alden Bessie*."

Come Along found his way to the slip. The captain of the *Alden Bessie*, with back turned shoreward, was standing on the quarter-deck addressing two men who were busy mending the main rigging.

"And is that all you've done since I've been away?"

It was not the words, it was the voice which made Come Along stiffen with surprise, and that astonishment grew when the skipper turned to face him.

The beauty of it, he told himself, as he was returning to Redwood City that afternoon, lay in the fact that his instructions had been explicit and he had carried them out to the letter. After all, maybe Perry Laskey stood a chance of wishing he had never laid eyes on him before this affair was over; and one thing was certain, he wasn't going to ship on that voyage; he couldn't be dragged aboard that vessel; developments promised to be interesting, but he would await the opportunity of hearing what took place from the lips of others. He did tell Laskey about the headlines in the evening paper.

"And so I give the name of Burton," he explained, "Walter Burton." Laskey smiled as he noted down the name; one of the things which gave him solace during these anxious days was watching Come Along's various squirmings.

"To-morrow," he said, "you go to town again and maybe if you keep on looking out for my interests as well as you did to-day, I'll let you make the trip with us."

Come Along gave him no answer but smiled mentally. On the next day he hunted up the criminal lawyer to whom Laskey had telephoned and the matter of payment for the charter was arranged; also the recruiting of seven picked men who were to constitute the schooner's crew. Inside of the week the *Alden Bessie* slipped away from her moorings and was taken in tow, with her skipper, a mate and these seven aboard. That was late in the afternoon. As she was passing the heads, a launch, which had put off from the Marina, ranged alongside and a man in a heavy overcoat and cloth cap, whose visor was well pulled down, boarded the ship. He was clumsy enough in seizing the schooner's manropes to show the most inexperienced beholder that he was a landlubber.

He did not linger aboveboard but went straight to the cabin and shut himself within the after stateroom. So he did not see the *Alden Bessie's* skipper until he had felt the heaving of the long gray swells outside Point Bonita under his feet, and came on deck again. Then Captain Moulton turned and faced him and for once Perry Laskey allowed his emotions to get the better of him.

"A woman!" he said aloud, and ended with an oath.

Down near Redwood City, where he was waiting for a southbound coast-line train, Come Along Charley, who enters no more into this story, having done his full share at mixing the various ingredients in the way of men and events and a girl, allowed a grin to mantle his features.

"Anyhow," he told himself, "I'll take a bet against long odds that I'm the only one of us two that's doing any laughing now."

CHAPTER V.

The first of those strange, inward stirrings which precede the earliest qualms of seasickness, like faint whisperings foretelling coming trouble, was making its presence felt within the depths of Perry Laskey's being as he stood on the schooner's quarter-deck staring at her skipper. This did not add to his good temper. He saw a slim, long-limbed girl, brown-eyed, her hair tucked up under an ordinary cap save for such wisps as the freshening breeze had tugged away from their moorings to do with them its playful will; her young form was garbed in an olive drab flannel shirt, open at the throat, military breeches of the same color and sea boots turned down about the knee. On the leaning deck, moving her body against the pitching of the vessel, she made such a picture as should rouse a man's admiration; but Laskey, who had something of a reputation for admiring womankind, was thinking of carefully laid plans placed in jeopardy by her presence. His first oath was born of

disgust; he followed with another directed at the absent Come Along.

Marjorie Moulton's lips tightened and the bewilderment which had widened her eyes when they lit on this man, whom she had never seen before, promptly vanished; the lids came closer together and she took a step toward Laskey. Behind her, in the cockpit, a square-faced, grizzled Scandinavian hung to the wheel's spokes, holding one eye on the sails. Of the ship's company he was the only member save herself who had not been hired by the charter party. There was that in his semiabstracted gaze which told that it managed to include the movements of both the girl and the ex-bootlegger. And as the former spoke, a light, which was not altogether pleasant, came into those blue eyes of his.

"You, there!" Marjorie Moulton's voice came loud enough to make one or two seamen who were standing by the foresheet look aft. "I'll have you understand there's to be no more of that sort of language on my quarter-deck."

Now, many a man can mask himself and keep up the masking for any length of time when he is in his own proper environment, and on land there were those who had cause to know that Perry Laskey was a cool hand; but he was treading the deck of a small vessel for the first time; San Francisco Bay was a bit rough that afternoon, and the *Alden Bessie* was what sailors call a lively craft. All of which was making itself felt, and the growing suspicions of imminent internal dissolution did their part to help along the wave of rage and disappointment which was overwhelming him. For an instant he allowed the mask to drop and his true self to show in his face, and he made an unpleasant figure as he took a single unsteady pace toward the girl, with lips drawn back and eyes ablaze.

"What," he demanded with a third oath, "are *you* doing here?"

There was something like a full second of silence while these two stood facing each other. The grizzled mate of the *Alden Bessie* twirled the wheel and bellowed an order to the hands up forward. They bent to the pull, and there followed a moment when the fluttering of loose sails drowned all other sounds; then the jib filled and the schooner came about on the other tack.

Perry Laskey saw the girl bend swiftly; the movement was in his direction, and he heard her call out sharply. Being what he was, he believed for the instant that the voice and posture were belligerent. After which he had neither thought nor belief of any kind for a short time. The main boom swung on over and the blocks rattled as the tackle came taut. And the man who had chartered the *Alden Bessie* lay prone on her quarter-deck where the great timber had struck him down.

"Douse him with the whole bucketful," were the first sounds that met his returning faculties, and then the water descended on him. "All right, now; get forward there." It was the girl's voice. "Why didn't you duck when I told you?" she demanded.

He groaned and strove to get to his feet, and the qualms, which come before the real seasickness arrives, added to his general feeling of dizzy helplessness. When he had his legs under him once more he saw the grizzled Norwegian mate standing there in the cockpit with a face that looked as if it had been chiseled out of granite. Captain Marjorie Moulton was the only soul who appeared to be taking any heed of him. Her lips were still tight; her eyes were filled with anger; but there was something away back in them which told him, even in that moment when everything in the world was beginning to seem of no consequence at all, that she was struggling with bewilderment.

"Now," she demanded sharply, "who are you? And where's this man Burton, who chartered the schooner?" He pressed his lips tight and summoned all his resolution, for from long experience he knew a showdown when he saw it.

"I'm the man who chartered this schooner," he answered coolly. "Burton was merely my representative."

The girl's eyes betrayed the rising of her bewilderment. But they narrowed at once.

"Very good," she told him. "And I want you to understand I'm captain. What I say goes." He remained silent, watching her narrowly. "I don't like this crew you've shipped," she went on quickly, almost breathlessly—and he could see her slim bosom heaving under the thick flannel shirt. "What does it mean, their coming aboard with weapons? And what are those rifles doing in the cabin?" His head had cleared by this time, but the throbbing of that lump where the boom had struck him was growing harder to bear.

"Those things," he answered with some-

thing very much like a snarl, "are none of your business."

The girl smiled—a hard, tight smile.

"Mr. Larson," she called clearly, "get ready to come about. We're going to put back to port at once."

"Aye, aye," the grizzled mate never took his eye from his steering as he gave the answer.

"What d'ye mean?" Laskey shouted.

"Just what I say," she said, and came a step nearer. "We're going back to San Francisco."

For a fleeting moment he thought of the seven men whom his lawyer had hired, of these two against them, and of the possibilities—and then he remembered that he knew nothing of the sea; nor was there one among them, the chances were, who could navigate a vessel. She seemed to have read his thoughts.

"Perhaps," she told him, "you don't know the penalties for mutiny. I'm master of this schooner. And either all hands on board do my bidding—or we return to port and I'll give you over to the authorities for refusing to obey orders." She raised her voice, "Ready, Mr. Larson?"

Laskey raised his hand.

"Don't!" he said sharply.

He bowed his head to the crisis not so much because he recognized the inevitable in her words as because he senced it in something else.

"Do what you please," he managed to articulate, "but don't go back to San Francisco." He dived for the cabin companion, for time was getting precious, but he halted at the head of the stairs when she called him.

"What's your name?" she asked. And, when he had answered, she said, "Very well, Mr. Laskey; you'll take that starboard bunk in the main cabin. Keep out of the after stateroom; that's mine." And as he was descending the flight he heard her clear voice bidding Larson muster all hands. Half an hour later he was not too sick to see the Norwegian mate coming down the stairs with a dozen revolvers in his arms. And he noticed that, after the fellow had put these weapons and the rifles from the cabin into the stateroom, he locked the door. Then nothing that happened was of any consequence so far as he was concerned. The only grievance that he held against this determined girl skipper was that she did not sink the schooner at once and have it all over with.

In the meantime Marjorie Moulton was talking things over with her mate.

"I don't like it, Larson," she was saying. "They're a bad lot, the whole of them."

"I'll make good sailors out of 'em," he said quietly. She smiled and shook her head.

"I'm not afraid when it comes to that. But what are they up to? I wish we'd turned back. Those guns——"

"We got 'em locked up in your cabin," he reminded her, and shifted the helm a bit to ease the vessel off. The girl drew a deep breath and pressed her lips tighter.

"I'm going down to turn in for a bit. Call me if anything comes up." His big blunt-fingered hand swept to his grizzled forelock in a seamanlike salute as she left him. In her stateroom she sat with her elbows on the table and her chin between her hot palms, thinking hard.

It was not her first voyage, not by many voyages; but this was different from any of the others; it would have been a matter for worry on her part even if things had been shipshape from the start. For the schooner *Alden Bessie* was all she had in this world; in other days the craft had been her father's, and she had learned seamanship from old Larson, who was occupying the same position then as he did now, when she was a slip of a girl. Two voyages to Bering and two to Honolulu, and then she had studied navigation until she was as proficient as her black-haired, fresh-cheeked brother who took the *Alden Bessie* over at the father's death. Then came the war and the brother departed for the front. In those months, when it was the fashion for women to try and take the places of their absent men, she had gotten her master's papers; and the *Alden Bessie* had done well in making money, carrying cargoes between San Francisco and different bay ports.

Then one day she had gotten one of those formal telegrams, which came to many a wife and sister during the recent struggle. When the tears had cleared away she settled down to keeping on in the part which she had taken. She was the only one left to carry on with the schooner.

The length of this voyage to the Gulf of Alaska meant nothing to her; she had seen the fog-hung headlands by Bering straits, and had stood her turn at the wheel, many a

night, under the Southern Cross. And Larson was fit to handle any ship that ever sailed. The idea of deadly weapons did not appall her; nor the sight of the faces on the forward deck, bad faces every one of them. She and the mate had managed to handle more than one bunch of riffraff during the war when good men were scarce along every water front. What really made her heart sink was the memory of Perry Laskey's eyes when he had taken that first step toward her. She was just a girl in her early twenties, but, if she had never seen a man before in all of her life, her woman's instinct would have warned her against this shipmate of hers.

Larson called her when it was her turn to stand watch. "Getting 'em into shape already," he told her as she came on deck.

By the time they were a week out the old Norwegian had licked that crowd in the forecastle into a fair semblance of being a crew. And Perry Laskey began to recover from his seasickness. It looked as if the voyage might pass off without any untoward incident after all.

They were well up in the Gulf of Alaska when the weather changed abruptly. The mate had sensed the coming of that storm, however, before the barometer had noted it; and had all in readiness. The *Alden Bessie* was making good weather of it, climbing the backs of the great gray seas like a wild duck, swooping down into the hollows between those walls of water as easily as any man could ask—until one of those accidents happened which no man can foretell, and brought disaster.

CHAPTER VI.

Twenty-four hours of this blow and the *Alden Bessie's* skipper came down into the cabin. Larson was "mugging up" as the old sea phrase has it; he set the steaming cup of coffee on the table and wiped his brindle mustache with the back of his hand.

"Wind still risin'?"

Marjorie nodded and removed her sou'-wester, dashing the water from its drooping rim; briny drops glistened in her hair and her oilskins dripped moisture from every stiff fold; her cheeks were crimson, her eyes flashing with a fine excitement.

"Looks like a stiff gale before it's done blowing." She cast a swift glance at the starboard bunk and, finding it empty, she tightened her lips.

"Up for'ard with the hands again?" She jerked her thumb toward the vacant bunk. The mate followed the gesture and frowned.

"Come the mornin' watch, I found him down here lookin' at the chart. This is three times he does that and tries to hide what he is up to when I see him. I guess mebbe he is anxious to get ashore once more, cap'n."

"I guess," Marjorie said decisively, "he is so. You never were a hand to read the papers, Larson." The Norwegian shook his head and the girl went on in a lower tone, "Well, I hadn't much time for that myself when I was in port. But I remember his name, all right; mixed up in some bootlegging business, and the grand jury was looking for him before we left—him or a man of the same name. It came back to me when we were two days out." She turned toward the companion stairs, took a step in that direction, then whirled on her heel and returned to the table. "Think the wind's standing any chance of easing?"

"Stands more show of risin'," answered Larson steadily. The girl remained silent for a moment.

"I'll leave it to the weather," she said. "If you're right, the most sensible thing we can do is to make a run for Sitka and lay by there till she blows over. Better than riding it out with this rotten crew of ours. And, to tell you the honest truth, Larson, I'd like to know some more about this man Laskey. If he's a fugitive from justice, why the news has reached Sitka by this time; and if he isn't, there's no harm done by asking. I don't want the *Alden Bessie* to get a bad name by carrying criminals." She donned the sou'wester and tied the strings under her chin. "Coming on deck?"

When the two had vanished Perry Laskey slipped out from the after stateroom, wiping the perspiration from his brow. He stood leaning heavily against the cabin table, and his breath came in deep gasps. It was not the situation which confronted him; it was the one from which he had just escaped. If that girl had entered her stateroom and found him there—— He was enough of a physical coward to feel, in his imagination, the heavy hands of the *Alden Bessie's* mate upon his throat, and the cold embrace of irons on his wrists. He had just found, among other things, a half dozen pairs of handcuffs in one of the stateroom's lockers. The confiscated revolvers were in another. He had unlocked them with a skeleton key

which he had borrowed from one of the foremast hands.

Ever since he had been able to drag himself about, those seven had been listening to such orders as he had deemed it wise to give them during his surreptitious visits to their quarters.

The *Alden Bessie's* cabin and her forecastle were connected between decks by a narrow alley on the starboard side. Laskey looked up from the chart, on which the schooner's position had been pricked off this morning with a pencil mark, and started for the alley. She was, as has been said, a lively craft, and his progress was as erratic as if he had been stowing away a cargo of the stuff which his underlings used to peddle in San Francisco's so-called "soft drink" establishments.

Up to five minutes ago everything had appeared serene and there had been times when he had regretted his conduct on that first afternoon on board. Not that notions of chivalry or anything of that sort were distressing him; but as things stood he could see no advantage gained by his behavior, and he was shrewd enough to know that it must have roused the girl's suspicions. Now he cursed himself for having lost his self-possession and told her his name. Sitka would be bad enough in any event; but with this busybody, who should have been in skirts and ashore where all women belonged, looking up his record—well, there was only one answer. Jail!

Not knowing the sea and its ways, he believed that he still had what he would term a gambler's chance, which meant a pretty sure thing of it. And when he entered the narrow forecastle he looked about him, holding to a stanchion.

"Where's 'Banjo Eye?' " he demanded loudly. The criminal lawyer who had picked those men for him had done his work well according to the nature of his instructions, and though the two officers did not fancy their hands when it came to seamanship, their real employer could find no fault with them; for they belonged to the urban breed to be found in any of those private vendettas that have come into fashion ever since the first East Side gunmen showed New York how white men could, with profit, follow the methods of Chinese tong warfare. The man whom they called Banjo Eye was the only sailor among them. He tumbled out of his bunk when his name was called, a frowzy, big-boned Greek, swarthy, with a mop of curly black hair and eyes very much like those of a calico Indian pony. Laskey and he went aft together. In the cabin they studied the chart with its penciled markings.

"Think you could navigate her from here to the bay?" his employer asked and the gunman grinned.

"Sure!" he answered.

"Go get the others and tell 'em to come quietly," Laskey bade him. "We may as well lay hold of those guns now."

"Boss"—the Greek plucked him by the sleeve and shook his head—"tha's runnin' chances!" Laskey whirled on him, scowling. "No, no!" Banjo Eye shook his head faster. "Dissa de bes' way, what I mean. Geev me those key, an' I breeng the gons for'ard. Mebbe eef they all come, the skipper catch us here—an' that gets trobble." He extended a swarthy hand, and as the other gave him the skeleton key, "Youse stan' by an' keep the lookout for me. Wheech locker now?"

"That side," Laskey told him with a gesture.

"Port side," the Greek whispered and, nodding, glided into the after stateroom.

And now things began to happen swiftly.

Up on deck, Marjorie Moulton was standing in the cockpit beside Larson. The Norwegian's big hands gripped the wheel's spokes; his strong body leaned, now this way now that, as he bent its weight to shift the helm. The wind's droning and the deep undernote of the rushing seas filled the whole gray universe about them. The sails stood out before them in rigid curves against the lowering sky. Up forward the tumbling swells came climbing toward the rail, one after another, and the *Alden Bessie* leaped to meet them, eluding each at the last moment like a wrestler, springing upward on its shoulders, mounting the steep wall of water, then descending to the trough beyond. The masts complained, the steel stays sang like fiddlestrings to the strain put upon them; the shrouds lamented in a never-ending dreary chorus.

A great drab hill of water, sweeping onward as swiftly as a troop of running horses, with a fringe of white along its crest and wisps of spoondrift blowing away from it like wind-tossed locks of hair, appeared suddenly, as if from ambush; it mounted the bows and swept hissing over the main deck.

The *Alden Bessie* hesitated under the blow, trembled, and, as one who has regained her breath, emerged, shaking off the enemy. But as she did so, a fresh gust avalanched upon the tight sails pressing her forward, holding her down, and a second sea boarded her. The deck was a welter of white foam.

Marjorie Moulton pressed her lips to old Larson's ear and shouted to make her words heard.

"I'll take the wheel. Go call the hands. Got to shorten sail now." He nodded and she sprang to the wheel; her slender body bent like a reed; her lips went tighter and she threw herself against the wheel, fighting its efforts to yield to the weight of the waters against the rudder. Out of the grayness new armies of wind came on, yelling as savages that leap from ambush.

"All hands on deck!" the mate roared through the storm. But no man appeared.

The sails bent to the bursting point; the schooner lifted herself out of the water and then dived, again, headforemost into the rising seas. She lay for a sick interval on her beam ends struggling, like one struck between the eyes, to regain her balance. And as she struggled wind and sea came on with tenfold force.

There followed one of those tremendous moments when the storm's forces seemed to have been augmented by many times their former number. What had been a stiff gale became for a short space of time a hurricane. Such crises come to those who sail the northern waters, and the men who have met them know that in many cases they pass as swiftly as they appear; but always they must be dealt with promptly. Marjorie fought with the wheel and struggled to hold the *Alden Bessie* to her course.

"Five minutes more of this," she told herself, "and it'll pull the sticks out of her." Her eyes went to the sails and to the masts bending like whipstalks. Out of the noises which rioted about her she heard the voice of Larson coming again from the main deck, deep-throated, ringing like a bell buoy.

"All hands on deck!" She had one brief glimpse of his form as he staggered forward.

"Oh, for a crew," she called aloud, "a crew of seamen!" The wind yelled into her ears mocking the words which it plucked from her lips and carried away into nothingness.

Larson stood alone on the main deck, a solitary figure bending against the storm's assaults, his thick legs wide apart, his heavy face uplifted as if in defiance to the heavens which were pouring down their forces upon the striving vessel. The water raced about his knees and tugged at his limbs; the deck sloped away under his feet at an angle steep as the roof of a house. The *Alden Bessie* fought as if she were a living thing, to regain an even keel.

"All hands!" his voice rose for the third time in a deeper bellow. "Lively there!"

There was no time to lose now; he sprang to the ropes to release that suspended canvas from its holdings, but while he was tugging the next gust had already struck her; a larger sea than those that had come before crawled over her rail as swiftly as a running snake crawls in the grass. The mainsail split, but before it went to ribbons the schooner had buried herself in the flood of oncoming waters holding the hull against the yelling wind. There came a report like a cannon shot and a snapped backstay curled through the air like a whiplash. The mast shuddered, then swayed sharply.

There followed a louder crash, and it went by the board, like a tree before a hurricane. From the flooded cockpit the girl got one last look at Larson as he stood among the welter of waters in the midst of flying wreckage; and it seemed to her, as she remembered it afterward, that she saw his face, still resolute, calm, but unyielding, as a good sailor's face remains when he is contending against the unleashed elements. Then the sea took him and she was left alone there on the deck of the stricken schooner.

Down in the narrow forecastle, when the first of those gusts came and the girl took the wheel, the Greek was dealing out the revolvers which he had stolen from the locker in the after cabin. The place was resonant with the groaning of timbers straining in their places; it was as if here, in her heart, the *Alden Bessie* was lamenting against the forces which were assailing her aboveboard. The members of the crew stood about the Greek, plucking the guns from his hand. He heard the first of those ominous noises from aboveboard and sensed what was coming.

"Boss," he cried, "we gotta look alive now! Dey'll be calling all hands to shorten sail."

Laskey clung to a stanchion and felt the whole fabric of the little vessel shaking about him as she took the first sea. His face paled; but he thought of Sitka and jail bars.

"Wait a bit!" he raised his hand as the voice of the mate reached them in that first summons. "All of you now, remember! When they give the word to change her course, then's the time!"

Larson's voice came again, and they heard the thunder of the seas on the timbers above their heads. The Greek cried out.

"Now, lads. Or eet's Davy Jones for us! Head for the cabin. She's flooded to the quarter-deck."

They would have made it in time if it had not been for that halt when Laskey had given them those final instructions. While the *Alden Bessie* lay on her beam ends and Larson called for them a third time, they were staggering aft through the alleyway, cursing one another for their slowness, each hindering the movements of his companion; and as they worked their way they heard the crashing of the mast.

The Greek was first to reach the deck. The others came at his heels. He seized the wheel's spokes, adding his weight to the girl's. And as he struggled to hold the schooner's head to the oncoming seas he yelled:

"Get for'ard there and clear away that wreckage!" But he might as well have shouted at the storm itself. The men huddled on the quarter-deck, clinging to what they could find to lay their hands on while wind and seas did their will with the helpless, broken thing that had been a proud schooner but a few minutes before.

He groaned, for he was sailor enough to know the meaning of what had happened, the consequences which were to follow that delay on the part of himself and his fellows to respond to the call to duty. And through the wind the girl's voice came to him; he saw her eyes regarding the butt of the revolver which protruded from his waistband. She knew now why they had been so tardy.

"I've lost my ship." Her eyes were hard with unshed tears.

"Where's the mate?" he shouted.

"Drowned—and I hope you all drown!"

CHAPTER VII.

The sea is not so wide—to use a figure of speech—as many men think. It is, in some respects, like the primeval wilderness. For, sooner or later every one who plunges into the unpeopled forest must come forth again to the fringes where trodden trails lead to the towns. And when such a one comes or goes his movements are carefully noted, or his tracks are scanned to the same purpose, by men who report what they have seen to others. So every ship must come to land and, arriving or departing, she is sighted; her presence is gossiped over and the intentions of those on board of her become a matter of keen interest to every one concerned in maritime affairs. Mankind has learned that it is wise to keep posted on such things. And if Perry Laskey had not been afflicted with that false sophistication which is so common among city dwellers, he would have realized, when he put off from the Marina in that launch to board the *Alden Bessie,* that he left a trail which was bound to be picked up somewhere or other between that point and his destination.

If it had not been the schooner *Dora* it would have been some other craft that sighted the wreck; and if the men on board of her had not been in time to have their suspicions aroused by the looks and demeanor of the survivors, why then those survivors, including Laskey, would have been food for the black cod which run in schools off that mountainous southern Alaska coast. The *Dora* was heading for Lituya Bay, which brought her, of course, into the same unfrequented lane of traffic as her stricken sister, who was more than four times her size.

The *Dora,* out of Sitka, was carrying the members of the Over There Copper Mining Company, together with their food and such equipment in the way of tools and giant powder as men take to do development work on a ledge of copper. The schooner was off Sitka for the second time, too; she had made one run for the mainland and had put back to port because of heavy weather. The bar off Lituya Bay is bad enough when the sea is not running high; the first white men to discover that little landlocked harbor drowned in the hour of their discovery, and since that day two hundred years or so ago, more than one craft has foundered trying to make the entrance. All of which things Captain Dan Haley knew, and so did Pierre la Touche, the bent and weather-beaten little master of the *Dora.*

Captain Dan and his partners were eager to get their stakes driven, their notices posted, and the claims recorded on their prospect. Not that they so much as sus-

pected that any one else had knowledge of the property, but prospecting is at the best a wild gamble, and there is never any telling who may have been through the country since you last saw it. So this morning they lounged about the *Dora's* deck watching the clearing sky with anxious eyes, scanning the running seas with the same anxiety. They told one another that, the way things looked, the chances were the rollers would have smoothed off enough to forbear from breaking over the bar during the brief slack-water interval which comes between the ebb and flood tide.

"Three-fifteen this afternoon," Ben Story was saying to big Hempel, and he pulled out his watch to see how long an interval that left them. "The way the wind lies we ought to make it in plenty of time."

Just then little Pierre's cracked voice brought them to their feet; for all five of them were working the vessel under the warped skipper's orders, although he could have handled her alone—and had, many a time. They sprang to the ropes and did his bidding while the breeze cuffed their cheeks and rumpled big Hempel's blond mop of hair. She swung about on the other tack and they resumed their loafing. All save Captain Dan; he was standing on the quarter-deck with Pierre. His hand was shading his eyes.

"Wonder what he's looking at," Russ Hall drawled. Little Jerry leaned his body athwart Hempel's sprawling form and prodded the speaker in the ribs.

"Give me some tobacco, Russ. I left mine below." Hall growled, for the request necessitated a change of position, and he was very comfortable.

"All right!" Jerry shouted; "then I'll come and get it." And the ensuing scuffle distracted the attention of the four from their fellow stockholder. When next they noticed him Captain Dan had gotten out Pierre's ancient binoculars and had them at his eyes.

"Guess the old boy's sighted something," Ben Story said lazily. "Look there; he's handing the glasses to the Frenchman."

"I hope it's nothing to make us come about again." Hempel's voice was plaintive. "I'm sick of pulling these infernal sheets and halyards and downhauls. A sailor's life's a dog's life, if you ask me. Jerry—if you don't get off my stomach I'll heave you overboard."

The voice of the *Dora's* skipper saved Jerry from maltreatment.

"I was afraid of this," Hempel reminded them as they bent to the ropes. "Yo-ho, boys! Now! All together! A weak head and a strong back; that's what does it." But when the *Dora* was running before the wind and they had gathered on the quarter-deck to hear the tidings, they passed the glasses from hand to hand in silence. A wreck at sea is not a pleasant sight even when it is but little more than a speck on the heaving waters. And the nearer they came the lonelier that dismasted hull looked.

"All I hope," muttered the irrepressible Jerry, "is that this don't make us put back to Sitka again. I'm sick of that place." Ben Story laid his hand on the speaker's shoulder.

"Some one aboard of her," he said quietly. "I just heard Dan telling the Frenchman." And within the half hour they were able to make out the huddled forms on the *Alden Bessie's* quarter-deck.

"Nine of 'em," Captain Dan announced when he had taken the binoculars from one of the others. "What sort of a skipper was that to let her lose her sticks in a blow no worse'n this one was?" His voice was heavy with censure. "Now, lads, get for'ard to that dory."

They ran down within a quarter of a mile or so and hove to as close as the Frenchman dared, which was quite close enough, too. The seas were still running high and the wind had not yet died down; they needed the lee of their own vessel when it came to getting a boat away. Captain Dan beckoned to Ben Story and big Hempel.

"You two take the oars; I'll steer. Careful there; mind how you stow that line. Now, look alive, boys!"

The others stood by the rail and watched the dory pull away; now it mounted the crest of a long roller; now hovered on the brink; now vanished in the trough. The oar blades flashed briefly in the watery sunshine as the little craft came into sight again; then buried themselves in the flanks of the oncoming swell. So, over one rushing sea hill after another the dory went onward, growing smaller until they beheld it rising and falling under the quarter of the wreck. The poor *Alden Bessie* was half submerged; the stumps of her masts arose rigid from the hissing seas which lapped over her hull; and all about her a welter of flotsam, a tangle

of broken spars and trailing ropes, appeared and reappeared upon the heaving surface. In herself, as she wallowed there among the wilderness of surges, she made a picture more impressive, rousing more of grief, than the huddled forms along her uplifted quarter-deck.

The dory bobbed and sank, a mere speck, astern of her. When old Captain Dan arose in the stern sheets, heaving the line, the straightening coils stood forth, outlined against the sky above and the waves beneath, hairlike in thinness, ridiculously fragile.

Now one of those huddled forms moved slowly along the canted quarter-deck; there was a stirring among the others. At length, a little thing, gnatlike in its smallness, appeared, suspended by that line over the heaving swells between the wreck and the dory. It moved with appalling slowness and, when it became of a sudden merged with the outlines of the small boat and those within it, the watchers by the *Dora's* rail took a long breath in unison. Back at the wheel little Pierre stood bending forward, his browned face tight under the growing sun rays.

One after the other those minute forms appeared hanging by the lifeline with the cloud-flecked sky wide above them and the gray-green sea infinitely wide below them, until three of them were in the small boat, which then came winding her way through the swells back to the biding schooner. Three trips of it and on the last one they brought the skipper of the *Alden Bessie.*

Captain Dan came up from the cabin of the *Dora* after he had carried her down the stairs, and took the wheel. Little Pierre was making coffee below.

"What was it she said to you when she landed between the th'arts?" he asked Ben Story.

"Said she wished we'd never come along," Ben answered soberly. "And I believe she meant it."

Captain Dan grunted and looked at his watch, then at the flotillas of cloud which were sailing across the heavens.

"Fair wind," he said. "We can make the bar if we run for it. Jump, now, lads! I'm in a sweat to get this business done with." He lowered his voice. "Did you notice those guns?"

Ben nodded. "Every man of 'em's got one."

"Something wrong there." Captain Dan chewed the ends of his grizzled mustache. "Well. Let's get under way. We'll figger what to do about 'em when we're in harbor."

Pierre la Touche came on deck a few moments later, but shook his head when Captain Dan made to turn over the wheel.

"No; no, yo' kip heem." His face was tight with many little lines; he made a gesture toward the cabin. "Aslip; hevery wan; daid to the worl'." He smiled slyly. "Thees' skeeper he's a girl. By gar! Wot yo' theenk of that, hey? I don' hask her notheengs; han' she's kip the log book now. Got heem tight een her 'ands. Thees is dam fonny outfeet." He nodded several times more and his eyes narrowed. "Hi theenk mebbe wan of thees lads better come below weeth me han' make theengs shipshape." He wagged his head knowingly. "Too many gons, cap'n."

"Right, cap'n!" Dan shifted the helm a bit and beckoned Ben Story. "Pierre wants you to lend a hand below there." He gave the order in an undertone, but he could have shouted it for all the difference it would have made with the castaways. Pierre's pot of coffee was still steaming on the cabin stove —untouched. Nine forms lay, pretty much as they had dropped there—on the floor, on lockers, in the bunks. They lay motionless as dead men; it was as if they were too exhausted for heavy breathing, for no sound came from their lips. Here and there an outflung limb added to the suggestion of death in their postures. They looked as if they had been stricken suddenly; and, in fact, it was thus that sleep had come upon them. Little Pierre placed his lips close to Ben's ear.

"We get thees' gons," he whispered. He might have bellowed the words; none of those sleepers would have heard them. The steam rose from their soaked clothing filling the warm cabin with a thin, close fog. The butts of the weapons protruded from their waistbands.

As he went from man to man plucking the weapons from their places Ben Story looked down on their faces. In the stressful moments of the rescue he had found scant opportunity for appraising the appearance of these men; what he saw here in the cabin was like a revelation. He paused for some time over the Greek and shook his head; and when he came to Laskey he drew back a little; the face was turned to the color of

wet putty, and every line, which the man's guardedness had enabled him to mask during his intercourse with others, stood out unconcealed. It was a face to make an old hand pull away, and Ben was still in his early thirties. He breathed a little easier when he had secured the big, flat, automatic pistol.

The girl was in an upper bunk, as remote from the others as she could get; that was the last thing she had taken thought of before sleep overcame her. Ben glanced at her pallid features, her weather-browned little hands still clutching the *Alden Bessie's* log book, her slim form. Then he took a blanket and very gently laid it over her. He had not missed the lanyard slung about her neck, and he was reasonably certain that a pistol was suspended from it, but he made no movement toward confiscating this.

Pierre piled the weapons on a bit of sailcloth in the middle of the cabin table, gathered the ends of the canvas together and knotted them. He slung the bundle over his shoulder and carried it to the deck. Ben followed and the picture of the girl's face was in his mind.

"Hall right." Pierre dumped the bundle on the deck. "They can wake op w'en they dam pliz now."

"Who in the devil are they and where d'you suppose they're bound?" Ben demanded.

The Frenchman shrugged his warped shoulders. Captain Dan smiled sourly.

"Whoever they be, they fetched up with a round turn," the latter growled. "*Alden Bessie*, of San Francisco. That's all I know. I'd say a chechahco outfit bound north prospectin'—or tradin'—or—who knows? Liable to be up to anything."

"But that girl; she was the skipper?" Ben persisted.

"She's not much, if you go to askin' me," Captain Dan answered quietly. "Anyhow, I'd say so, judgin' by the comp'ny she's keepin'. And one thing's dead sure; she's not much when it comes to seamanship. Lose a schooner in a hatful of wind like that was!" He spat to leeward. "Wait till they wake up, lad, and we'll find out." He turned his eyes to the sails and shifted the helm a bit. "Ease off that fore-sheet, Hempel! A little more. Belay now! Hey! That's enough, I say! What a lubber you are; take five years to make a sailor out of you." He winked at Ben and then to Pierre. "What I say—better land the stores as soon as we can after making the bay; then you take 'em back to Sitka and get shet of 'em."

"Right, by gar!" the Frenchman cried. "Mebbe I don' theenk so, too!"

The *Dora* flew like a homing gull before the wind that day, and while the nine rescued ones slumbered in the cabin oblivious to the occasional tramping of feet, the creaking of sheaves and the rattle of blocks aboveboard, the outlines of the lofty mountains on the mainland grew sharper; the peaks soared upward higher and higher, the glaciers on their scarred and snow-blanched flanks glistened like enormous fields of green-blue jewels under the sun rays. When mid-afternoon came it found the schooner hovering off a little niche which seemed to open between two rocky headlands, as if maybe there might be a rift in the ragged shore line here. Bare granite to the north, and the surf thundered on those stone masses incessantly; to the south, granite with a lining of bright green behind it and spare, wind-blown trees leaning landward at a sharp angle; back of all the towering mountains apexed in four huge peaks, Lituya, Perouse, Crillon and, loftiest, most remote of the silent quartet, Mount Fairweather.

The two grizzled skippers stood on the quarter-deck and little Pierre clung to the wheel spokes; his lips moved constantly, but only occasionally did the words come from them louder than an undertone; then his orders crackled forth like pistol shots. At intervals old Dan spoke quietly to him concerning the channel, the landmarks on the shore, or the shift of tidal currents. Now and again the four adventurers leaped to obedience as the commands came.

It was a bad bar and a crooked channel; for all the world like creeping through a twisted bottle neck into the flask's interior. The rushing swells rose high and higher behind the schooner as she came on. Their crests grew thinner; hoary wisps surmounted them. Now one and now another of them seemed about to topple over on the *Dora's* little after deck; always she eluded the avalanche of water. There came a moment, when the schooner's course was being changed, a moment when she darted straight toward the wooded promontory as if she meant to dash out her brains against the cliffs, and in that moment the tallest of the combers towered above her. But it passed without breaking

and she hung during a brief interval that followed with her bow pointing heavenward.

Then old Pierre cracked out an order; the four sprang to the ropes. The Frenchman's gnarled hands tightened on the spokes until the veins stood out rigid; and the wheel described a revolution. Less than a minute later the hidden width of waters opened before the bows and the *Dora* shot into the placid harbor leaving the warring surges farther and farther behind her. Ben Story and his companions came aft; old Captain Dan grinned through his beard at them, and broke off a muttered conference with the Frenchman long enough to ask:

"How'd ye like it? Touch and go, hey?"

"Thank Heaven!" big Hempel shouted fervently. "I'm done with seafaring. No more sailor's life for me from now on, boys. I'll not touch a rope for the best man that ever lived."

"But you'll pull an oar, though," Ben reminded him; "we got to go ashore and land these stores." Dan looked up from his quiet talk with little Pierre and nodded.

"Land 'em all this afternoon," he said. "Pierre wants to get away with the morning tide. He's got to take this bunch back to Sitka."

"Sooner the better," Jerry sang out. "Come on boys."

They were at the forward hatch before the anchor went out, and by the time the schooner was swinging at her moorings the dories were overside—two of them, one belonging to the *Dora,* the other and the larger the property of the Over There Copper Mining Company, to be used in transporting tools and supplies to the ledge. Load after load went to the sandy beach behind which a bleak, barren building, the house of the Dry Bay Siwashes who came here every summer, stood out against the sky line. No sign of life showed about it. The last cargo of blankets, rifles, and odds and ends was piled up. Pierre took his small boat back to the schooner and the five adventurers settled down to their first night in camp.

"They're all aslip," the Frenchman announced when he rowed ashore to pay them a brief nocturnal visit before turning in, "han' hi theenk they don' wak' up to-night. Come morneen' hi mak' for Seetka han' get shet of them."

"Mind you're back before the month-end," Ben bade him; "for we've got to go to Sitka to record these claims."

A little later and the dory vanished in the shadows, and they heard the thump-thump of the oars as the Frenchman pulled for the schooner.

"I'll bet he's going to be glad to get rid of them," big Hempel said, looking out after the receding sound. "They're surely one queer bunch."

"Something about that outfit that doesn't make a hit with me," Ben agreed. And Captain Dan nodded his grizzled head.

"Too many revolvers," he growled. "A rifle's honest, but when men go to packing short guns—why keep an eye on 'em. They're either chechahcos—or crooks—or both."

They rolled up in their blankets; the firelight died down until only a red patch of coals remained, throwing a reflection into the rising tide which made that portion of the waters look like blood.

CHAPTER VIII.

Marjorie Moulton awoke the next morning, nearly twenty hours after sleep had overtaken her. She looked down at the log book clutched in her fingers, and it came to her like a blow that she was not aboard the *Alden Bessie,* that her schooner was a drifting derelict.

She had the pride of the born seaman, the pride which makes some skippers stick to their vessels and go down with them. And that pride was accentuated by her sex; being a girl, she was, in a manner of speaking, on the defensive when it came to this calling which she had adopted and was more sensitive than a man would have been. Had it not been that she was weak and worn out with what she had gone through with when the dory came to the wreck the day before, she would never have yielded to the calls of the men in the small boat; as it was, she had come sorely against her will. There was also her good name, not only as a woman but as a skipper; she knew that if she did not tell her story, the true recital of the disaster's cause would never reach human ears; that even then the chances were she would be giving the facts against the flat contradictions of her ship's company—and perhaps giving them to a skeptical audience. She could see in her mind's eye the face of Captain Dan as it had regarded her when she had dropped into that dory yesterday and announced her identity—the stern disap-

proval in the Alaskan's eyes, the semicontempt. She realized that was for her sex. And now she had to convince them.

She was stiff in every joint, her muscles throbbed with pain as if some one had beaten her from head to foot. She clinched her teeth to keep from crying out, took the log book and slipped from the bunk. The forms of the eight sleepers remained motionless all about her; the fragrance of steaming coffee was in the air; she saw a frying pan simmering on the back of the stove. She stepped over two of her former shipmates, made her way to the cabin table, poured out a mug of Pierre's strong brew, heaped up a plate—and ate and drank her fill. Then she relt better.

With the log book under her arm she came out on deck. Pierre was crouching in the lee of the cabin scuttle with a bit of dirty tarpaulin wrapped about his body, fast asleep; but at her step he sprang to his feet and faced her. She saw the lines about his deep-set eyes; they were eloquent with unvoiced suspicion, and she hardened at the sight.

"Well," she said quietly, "I suppose you're captain of this schooner?" He nodded and she looked about her at the waters of the landlocked bay, with the black-green forests rising away from them to the lower flanks of the great mountains, at the scarred cliffs and rock ridges climbing up and up into the fields of everlasting snow still throbbing pink under the caress of the newly risen sun, at the glaciers coming down seaward from the lonely summits, blazing where the dawn's rays touched them like enormous outpourings of jewels. She noted the four lofty peaks, Lituya, Crillon, Perouse, and Fairweather.

"This is Lituya Bay?" she asked him sharply.

"Lituya Bay," he answered, regarding her with narrowed eyes.

"We were bound here," she told him. "Schooner *Alden Bessie*, San Francisco for Lituya Bay. Day before yesterday it came up a blow——"

He shrugged his shoulders, "Sometams he blows a beet in the Golf of Halaska," he said dryly. "Wot you want 'ere?"

The flame of growing suspicion in his eyes had not escaped her and now the shame—the deepest humiliation which a seafarer can feel—all came back on her with tenfold weight. She shut her lips tight. A sudden impulse swept over her, an impulse to get away from this warped, hard-faced little man who would never believe her, and to tell her story to more charitable ears. Her eyes roved to the northern shore, and she saw the smoke of the camp fire where the five members of the Over There Copper Mining Company had finished their breakfast; the forms of men showed on the beach.

"If you've a boat, cap'n, I'd like to go ashore."

Pierre glanced at the dory swinging at its painter beside the schooner and his gnarled fingers went to his chin; he stroked the brindled stubble reflectively.

"Hi don' lak to be weethout my boat," he said quietly, and now she noticed that bundle at his feet; a pistol butt showed through a parting of the stiff folds of the canvas. His eyes followed hers and, as he saw the hurt expression in them, he relented a bit. "Hi ta' you ashore, han' before we liv' hi come back hafter you," he said.

"You're going to leave?" she asked.

"Tak' yo' to Sitka w'en the tide turns," he announced.

"Well, that's the first good news I've heard for some time," she told him as they were climbing into the dory. Pierre made no comment on this, but pulled shoreward in silence, and she sat in the stern sheets with her chin cupped in her hands, thinking over the queer events which had brought her thus far, wondering what might follow.

The five adventurers on shore had made their landing the afternoon before in a bit of a cove backed by high sand dunes; but this morning the set of the current changed conditions and Pierre was heading for a spot a hundred yards or so to the seaward of that bight. So it happened that when the dory was halfway to the beach the brief, sheltering point of land with its sand hills shut out both camp and men from Marjorie's view. Pierre set her ashore and left for the schooner with a warning to be ready for embarkation within the hour. She did not wait to answer, but started off up the beach and, as she was nearing the little cape, she saw a laden dory shoot out from behind it. The five members of the Over There Copper Mining Company were in the boat; it was heading straight up the bay. She hastened her pace, called after them, and waved her hand, but if they saw her they made no sign of it. The dory, if anything, increased its speed.

"It looks," she reflected bitterly, "as if no one was anxious to have a word with me."

When she had rounded the point she found their camp deserted. By this time their dory looked like a toy boat and Little Pierre was halfway back to the schooner. She glanced at the disordered camp and turned her back on it, heading for the Siwash house at the edge of the forest. And before she had occasion to look in the *Dora's* direction again things were taking place aboard that little vessel which materially changed the aspect of this whole affair, things which prevented her from telling her story for some time to come.

CHAPTER IX.

Perhaps it was because he had more on his mind than his followers that Perry Laskey awoke before they did. The first recurring memory as he opened his eyes was the faces of the five members of the Over There Copper Mining Company. To recall faces was a part of his stock in trade, a knack which he had carefully cultivated ever since he was a common bunko man. And now, as he saw in his mind's eye those five adventurers looking at him and his companions when they came aboard the *Dora* the day before, it occurred to him that he was in one of those tight situations where a single word might turn the balance one way or the other. Which made him think of Marjorie Moulton at once.

He was a long, long ways from being a man of violence; from the days when he had started making easy money as capper in a gambling house he had belonged to a school which affects to despise strong-arm methods, but he had strayed far from his proper environment, and it is a fact that just at present he was regretting the complete engrossment in hanging to the *Alden Bessie's* wave-lashed quarter-deck which had kept him from saying one little word to Banjo Eye. Just a word—with maybe a gesture—and the Greek could have given the girl a shove at the proper moment. It would have been a sure thing—and sure things were made for such as he to take advantage of.

He eased his aching body out of the bunk and then, seeing that Marjorie had vanished from the cabin, began making his way very slowly to the deck. Slowly because he could not move otherwise, but had he been able to do it ever so quickly he would still have climbed those stairs with infinite precautions, for he wanted to learn what harm the girl had managed to accomplish by this time. In his hand he bore the Gladstone bag, which he had clung to as faithfully as Marjorie had clung to the *Alden Bessie's* log book.

The landscape lay before him when he thrust his head aboveboard, such a landscape as few men get the opportunity of viewing. He wasted no time, however, on its enormous beauties, but fixed his eyes on the dory in which little Pierre was just then rowing the girl to the beach. And so, presently, he also saw the five adventurers put off from their camp. Watching the girl as she ran up the beach after them, then as she turned her course inland toward the Siwash house, and finally watching Pierre's approach, he was thinking quickly and thinking hard.

His eyes fell on the canvas bundle by the *Dora's* wheel, and when he saw the butt of the automatic pistol through the parted folds he opened his lips to call his shipmates. Straightway he closed them again; the situation was one to be handled by diplomacy and one hasty move might undo all the good that his best lying could accomplish.

The dory came on closer and the warped little oarsman cast a look over his shoulder toward the schooner; his eyes met Laskey's, widened with surprise, narrowed as quickly—and turned away. Pierre kept on rowing and then Laskey knew that the chances were the girl had not betrayed the secret of his identity as yet. It were as well to make certain on this vital point, he told himself. So he mustered up that affability which had done its share to make other men in many places regret his acquaintance.

"Morning!" he called, as Pierre scrambled over the rail. "You captain of this craft?" The Frenchman nodded and glanced toward that canvas bundle by the wheel; his face lightened a trifle, then became like a face that had been whittled out of wood.

"Burton's my name. Glad to meet you, captain. You surely came along just in time to save our lives."

Pierre shrugged his bent shoulders, finished taking a turn of the painter in the main rigging, spat overside and, regarding the speaker with about as much expression as a billet of stove wood, came on toward the wheel. He seated himself upon the canvas bundle, keeping his eyes fixed on the other's.

"Wot kin' hof skeeper ees yo' fellers got," he asked, "to lose 'er sheep een a briz lak that? By gar! I haf to laugh!"

Laskey breathed more deeply but managed to conceal his relief; evidently there had been no confidences exchanged between those two during the dory's shoreward trip; his face was guileless as he played the card which would decide who took this important trick.

"Well, captain, to be honest with you, we had to do the best we could, and"—he smiled ingenuously—"she was all we had to pick from. Where's she going now, anyhow?"

Pierre looked shoreward, then after the retreating dory, a speck far up the bay.

"Hi guess she donno mebbe. She's goin' to 'ave a talk weeth the boys, but they shove off before she gets there. Women is mak' trobble all tam. Hi got to send the dory ashore hafter her purty queek, so we ketch the slack water hon the bar."

"Ye-es?" Laskey's drawl held a world of unconcern in it. "Where we going?"

"Seetka." Little Pierre turned to spit overside or he might have seen the change of color in the other's face, but the voice was as easy as ever.

"Sitka; well, that's good. And where are we now?"

"By de livin' man!" Pierre cried. "Don' yo' know thees plas? Han' yo' boun' 'ere! Thees ees Lituya Bay. Say! Wot yo' want 'ere, any'ow?" The suspicion had crept back into his eyes.

Sitka! And here at Lituya Bay! Laskey's features smoothed out as a piece of cloth smooths under a hot flatiron; they became very bland.

"Well"—he sighed as he said it—"we did want something, but I don't see there's anything here for us now. Sitka looks good to me, captain."

"Mebbe 'ees copper?" Pierre let it drop with elaborate indifference. "Heverybody goes crazzee over copper now."

"Gold," the other answered promptly. "We had a proposition——" He swore. "It looked good, too!"

"Ho! Them ol' placer hup the coas'," Pierre cried. "Wot fer yo' got them gons, then? Nobuddy ees try to jomp them claims." He laughed.

"Maybe not. But it's just as well to make sure, you know. We got word there was another outfit leaving San Francisco——"

Pierre chuckled, interrupting him. "Tha's thees boys. They ain't botherin' weeth no ol' worked-hout placer mines." He rose. "Hi guess better we call your fellers; Hi got to weigh anchor, purty queek."

"Sure!" Laskey came out on the deck. "Call 'em." And then suddenly, as if the inspiration had seized him.

"You under charter to these people, captain? No? Well, then, what's the matter with your making a piece of money?" He opened the Gladstone bag and pulled forth a roll of greenbacks. "How much would it be worth to take us to Sitka and bring us back with stores? Or say!" He held the money where Pierre could get the full benefit of the sight. "Why couldn't you put us ashore here with enough grub to last us while you make the trip?"

He was not the only one who was skillful at masking his emotions. Little Pierre regarded the greenbacks with a wooden face and lackluster eyes. What relief he felt at the prospect of making that trip without those eight passengers whose looks had so little appealed to him, he kept well hidden under an expressionless exterior; what avarice the spectacle of this wealth awakened one would never suspect unless he looked well into those hard, beady eyes.

"Hi got to 'ave somebuddy to help me work the schooner," he countered—which was as bald a lie as he had ever told in his long years of knocking about bad bars and treacherous river mouths without a soul to bear him company.

"I'll give you one of the hands," Laskey offered promptly and peeled a hundred-dollar bill from the roll. "You make the trip, and I'll turn over a list of the stuff we want. Fetch it back as soon as you can and I'll double this amount."

"Eet's a go!" Pierre cried.

Some time later when all hands had been awakened and he had the list of stores which he was to purchase, together with the money with which to buy them. " 'Ow about thees girl?" he demanded. "She says she wants to go to Seetka. Eef I hont 'er up now, I lose thees tide."

"Forget her then," Laskey bade him coolly. "She's with our party, anyhow. Get us ashore with a little grub." And so the Frenchman landed them a mile up the beach from the camp of the five adventurers, behind a rocky point which effectually hid each camp from the other. And within the hour the *Dora* was heading for the harbor mouth,

while Marjorie Moulton, who had come down to the beach in time to witness the schooner's departure, gave utterance to her bewilderment and anger in language which she had learned on the *Alden Bessie's* quarter-deck, language which relieved her the more because she had never the chance to use it when men-folk were about.

CHAPTER X.

Old Captain Dan Haley was sitting in the dory's stern when the boat started up the bay with big Hempel and Russ Hall at the oars. It has been said that Captain Dan's susceptibilities were long since hardened on the bleak, wind-blown, northern trails; certainly women-folk had no lure for him. If you had asked him he would have told you that they were all right in their place, and would have gone on to give you a very definite, somewhat old-fashioned idea of where that place was. So when the two oarsmen told him that the girl was coming up the beach, he merely grunted.

"Looks as if she wanted something, maybe," observed Ben Story quietly. "She's waving her hand."

"I dunno what she wants," growled Captain Dan, "but I do know we've got five miles' rowing ahead of us with the tide agin' us most of the way. If you ask me, I say pull on and leave her wave her arm off if she wants to."

"Well—what if she's something to tell us?" Story demanded with a little impatience; there were times when, much as he liked the old fellow, Captain Dan grated a bit. Besides, he remembered that girl's weary face as he had seen it yesterday, and the feeling of sympathy which he had carried away from the *Dora's* cabin recurred. Little Jerry came to his support.

"No harm in hearin' what she's got to say," he argued lazily. There was a moment when the oars hung poised, and decision likewise. Then Captain Dan took the bit in his teeth.

"Look here, you fellows," he ordered, "give way! We got no time to go monkeying around with women now. I don't care what she's got to say." And that settled it, the more easily because Marjorie had already stopped her signaling. The oars resumed their steady thump-thumping.

The black-green forests came down closer to the water's edge as they went on; the shores grew more abrupt; they rounded a rocky cape surmounted with weather-beaten evergreens shaped into fantastic outlines by the sea wind's long assaults, and the lower harbor vanished from sight. It was as if they were traveling upon an inland lake girded round by steep, tree-clad mountains on two sides, and on the third—the one ahead of them—walled in by lofty, silent peaks whose snow fields glistened in the morning sunshine. At the bay's head, a half dozen bergs floated, whittled by the sun rays into fantastic shapes of green and blue and white.

Ben Story exclaimed aloud at the sight; little Jerry uttered a whoop of undiluted joy.

"Worth coming all the way to look at!" he cried.

"Supposing, then," big Hempel said dryly, and wiped the perspiration from his brow with his shirt sleeve, "you two take the oars and give us a chance to look at it."

"Easy there now! You needn't capsize the boat; plenty of time to drown us after we've staked that ledge!"

Jerry subsided a bit and they made the change without shipping so much as a cupful of water.

"Now, lads," Captain Dan bade them, after they had been sweating for a good half hour, "a little more to starboard. There! Dead ahead she lays." A dozen more strokes and the oar blades flashed out of the water and the dory glided upon a shingle beach under a dense, tree-clad slope that rose against the sky line steep as the roof of a house, hiding the snowclad peaks behind.

"You could toss a pebble from the face of that ledge to where you stand," the Alaskan told them, when they had climbed out and were clustered around him on the shingle; "and yet them trees hides it so nicely that I bet a year's outfit they ain't a white man only myself has ever clapped eyes on it. Come on!" He struck off inland.

A little stream of clear, icy water came out from under the tangle of green foliage that walled in the upper edge of the beach. Captain Dan ducked his head and plunged under an arch of intertwined greenery and the others followed.

"I thought," Jerry called when they had clambered up the brook's course for a good three hundred yards, "you said you could toss a stone from the beach to that ledge.

Some throw, if you ask me!" But the leader did not so much as deign to turn his head. Another fifty yards and he swerved from the stream's narrowing course; there followed something like a half hour of clambering among the rocks off to the right. The undergrowth hid all things about them, and as they fought their way through it, Hempel, who, like many another large man, was none too good when it came to long-windedness, was begging for mercy and all were breathing like laboring truck horses, when an abrupt turn brought them to the edge of a cliff. Through the scattered tree-tops they could see the waters of the bay glistening below their feet.

"And here she is," said Captain Dan. He dropped down in a patch of nodding blue-bells and heaved a mighty sigh. "Some climb!"

"What I want to know," Jerry demanded, "is how you ever came to make it the first time. Somebody chasing you?"

"I was after a bear," said Captain Dan, "but I forgot about him when I got a look at this. See there." He pointed and they leaned over the brink, looking down the face of the cliff. Here it was absolutely sheer; a little off to the left the slope eased, but everywhere it was too abrupt for any but the most hazardous sort of climbing. The living rock stood forth naked to the elements, and as they saw the great discolored patches where the disintegrating metal stood forth against the ore in bizarre hues, they realized that he had spoken the literal truth when he had said, "A mountain of copper."

There is something about the sight of the earth's native riches, when a man sees it for the first time, or when he sees it knowing that by right of discovery the wealth of mineral belongs to him, which stirs the dullest pulses. And among those four young adventurers there was none whose blood was not ready to leap whenever there was a good excuse. For a long time they lay there gloating over that exposed outcropping.

"Bigger than Butte Hill," Ben said at length. "I'll say so! You were right, Dan." The Alaskan chuckled; then lazily picked up a bit of float and tossed it away. There was an interval of silence, followed by a faint splash. He nodded at Jerry.

"I never said a fellow could heave a rock from the beach to the ledge," he drawled, "but I did say you could heave one from the ledge to salt water. Five hundred feet under you, and not two hundred feet away, the bay lies. Couldn't ask anything better'n that, could ye?"

"Why did you bring us around that way?" Ben demanded. "Looks to me as if a fellow could climb to the foot of it through the timber."

"Could," said Captain Dan, "if he was to take the time, but until ye've built a trail, this way we took is the easiest."

The spot where they were standing was a bit of table-land leading out from the base of sky-scraping cliffs. A goodly portion of the ground was open, covered with a thick growth of scented grasses and patched with bluebells. A tiny stream of ice water traversed the natural garden and went leaping down the declivity that led toward the bay.

"Good place to camp," Story pronounced it when he had looked it over. "May as well bring the outfit right here."

"My idee, too," said Captain Dan.

"Let's start in staking her, first," said Ben.

Save for a brief interval at lunch they toiled until the lengthening of the shadows warned them that evening was at hand. Story took the surveyor's compass and alternately the others labored with ax and tape, and they got the location notices posted and the corners marked after a fashion.

"Call it a day," little Jerry cried. "Look, boys!" He pointed seaward. Through the dense tops of the evergreens they could see that the sun was about to bury itself in the distant ocean. "We'll do well if we make camp before dark."

At that he was too optimistic in his estimate. By the time they had rowed half the distance down the bay dusk was deepening to blackness. In that silent hour sounds carry far over the waters.

"Hark!" Captain Dan cried from the stern sheets, "I thought I heard a voice."

The oarsmen held their blades suspended over the surface. From the dusk-shrouded land there came a faint stirring of the air, not enough to be called a breeze, just an exhalation as if the forest had sighed. But other than this they could hear nothing.

"I'll swear 'twas a man," the Alaskan grumbled.

"Maybe a Siwash," Ben suggested, but Dan shook his head.

"Them Siwashes are gone—up the coast, I reckon—for they ain't no sign of canoes

about. But they's somebody ashore there—or I'm a liar. Give way, boys!" The oars dipped into the water and the dory shot on ahead. Somehow the sourdough's words had left the members of the party with a sense of disturbance; there was no more talking; every so often one or another would cock his head as if he were listening. Thus they went to camp, with premonitions upon them, where during the hours of honest daylight there had been naught but the joy of the newly discovered wealth.

They were thoroughly weary when they reached the beach, and there was still the getting of wood and water to be attended to; darkness had long since fallen when they sat down to their supper. After the meal they lighted their pipes and cigarettes and sprawled beside the camp fire.

"You know," big Hempel said at length, apropos of nothing, "I was thinking of that outfit we took off of the wreck."

"You mean that outfit that Ben and Dan took off," Russ Hall corrected him. "Well, what about 'em, anyhow?"

"If you're askin' me," Jerry broke in, "I'll say they're a mighty queer crowd. Now if——"

"Well, we're not asking you, Jerry," Hempel reproved him loudly. "Nobody's looking for your opinion at all. What I was going to say when you fellows cut in was this." He straightened himself and gestured widely and then, with the extreme intolerance of youth, went on: "About that girl. Now what sort of a bunch of fools do you suppose those fellows are to take along a girl as skipper? No wonder they got shipwrecked! What I can't understand is how they ever got as far as they did."

"Well," Ben demanded, "how do you know it was the girl's fault, now?"

"If you ask me——" Little Jerry began again, but Russ Hall overturned him with a swift, back-handed sweep of his arm and he spoke no more.

"I guess," Captain Dan said slowly, after silence had been restored, "that girl ain't much. Trollopin' around with a bunch like that. And it's dead sure she ain't much when it comes to seamanship. Lose a schooner in a hatful of wind——" He changed his tone abruptly. "What's that?" he growled.

"I heard some one walking off there," he told the others after a moment's listening. "Now. Hear 'em?" Unmistakably there was a footstep where he pointed outside the circle of firelight.

But though they called several times no answer came.

But at that very moment, Marjorie Moulton, behind the sand dune which she had picked for a hiding place, lay listening to their voices, beside her a side of bacon and a fifty-pound sack of flour. Five minutes before, she had been on her way to join forces with them in their circle by the fire, determined to warn them of that camp, a mile up the beach—and of another matter. Now she was intent on slipping away without their seeing her, taking with her this loot from their widely scattered stores.

It had been a lonely day for her, not without its alarms, awaiting their coming, dodging back into the forest whenever one of Laskey's men appeared. For she was sure of one thing—she would die before she rejoined her former ship's company. What she had seen that day was enough to give her a pretty definite idea that the man who had chartered the *Alden Bessie,* and the crew whom he had hired, were as anxious to avoid the observation of the *Dora's* party as she was to keep clear of themselves.

So she had come down toward that camp fire after nightfall, to tell her story with all its details, including Laskey's identity and the stealing of those weapons which had led up to the *Alden Bessie's* wreck. She was almost within the circle of radiance cast by the flames when she halted abruptly, hearing Hempel's speech. Then, as anger and humiliation racked her inmost being, she listened to the Alaskan's comment. That settled it.

Life, as she had lived it, had hardened her a good bit. Some girls would have wept. She merely shut her teeth and started to steal away. She was alone. Alone and every man against her. She would have gotten clear without them hearing her, had it not occurred to her—when her foot struck a sack of flour—that one must eat to live. Spoiling the Egyptians she would have called it if she had been asked to put a name to it. It did not hurt her conscience; on the other hand, it brought to her a certain angry joy.

So now, seeing them rising, about to go forth and hunt for her, she picked up her burden and glided off among the shadows toward the black line which the forest made against the sky. She walked a good two

hundred yards before she dropped her pack and sank down in the tall, coarse grass; and it was not weariness which overcame her then; it was a thought which had occurred to her. A thought and the memory of Ben Story as he had stood there in the firelight taking up the cudgels for her. She pondered for a long time, holding her little chin in her cupped hands. A man's part alone is hard enough for a man to play oftentimes; she was finding more difficulty just now in carrying on her rôle than she had ever dreamed of. The impulse which had made her halt, being born of her woman's nature, was for that very reason the more distasteful to her; yet she found she could not now go on.

So she sat there fighting it out with herself, and in the end she reached a compromise.

CHAPTER XI.

Ben Story was a long way from being afflicted with nerves, but when the members of the party made down their beds after a fruitless hunt for the eavesdropper, he found himself unable to go to sleep for a long time. He lay on his blankets on the lower slope of a sand dune staring at the dying fire; occasionally his eyes went to the forms of his four sleeping companions between him and the coaling logs; occasionally they strove to penetrate the darkness which was creeping closer and closer in toward the luminous center. Too many things had happened since they left the copper ledge to suit him; the voice which Captain Dan had overheard, the footfall, and once or twice he thought he had detected the glimmer of another fire reflected against the sky, a mile or more away. He could not dismiss these incidents from his mind, try as he would; and as he thought them over there were times when the stirring land breeze seemed to be laden with mysterious sounds; the lapping of the water on the beach was like the voices of men talking in undertones.

He swore at himself, thrashed about in his blankets to get an easier position and told himself that he had been smoking too much ever since leaving San Francisco. Strong pipe tobacco, too. Yes, that would be it. He dozed off finally in the midst of the diagnosis, but came back to wakefulness with a start, certain that he had heard footsteps. He hearkened, then dozed again. This time the dozing deepened into genuine slumber, and how long the sleep had lasted he did not know; he was only able to judge by the fire, which had become a mere pin point of ruddy coal when his eyes flew open at the touch of fingers on his shoulder.

"What's that?" he muttered.

"Shut up!" The words came in an angry hiss. He looked into the face above his; it was the girl whom they had saved from the wreck, and she was scowling down on him with her forefinger laid warningly on her lips. He lay there blinking at her for a moment and the scowl deepened. She drew away from him and beckoned him to follow.

When he was pulling on his boots he saw her warning him to silence again. Then Captain Dan stirred in his blankets and rolled over. "That you, Ben?" the Alaskan asked and, at Story's reply, turned away with a drowsy "All right," and Story tied the last boot lace.

The girl was no longer visible, but as he started off in the direction where he had last seen her, she arose as from out of the earth before him. In silence she led the way until they had gone perhaps a hundred yards. Here she turned and faced him.

"The schooner didn't take you, then?" He realized the inanity of the question before the last word had left his lips. But she was too intent on her errand to heed that.

"No," she said quietly. "It went away without me."

He was wide awake now, and his thoughts became clearer. It was plain enough to him, now, whom they had heard when they were seated round the fire a few hours back, and he flushed as he remembered what Hempel and Captain Dan had been saying. She seemed to have read his thoughts.

"I was intending to have a word with you men and tell you something, but——"

In the shadows he could see her biting her lip. "I understand," he interrupted her. "And I'm very sorry it happened." He hesitated, trying to find some palliation for those remarks which she had overheard. "You mustn't think anything of that. Old Dan is——"

She broke in on him with a swift gesture.

"Oh, that shellback," she said loftily and laughed, but the laugh was short and there was no mirth in it. "I've seen lots like him. Maybe some day I'll show him I can handle a ship. If I'd had a crew instead of that bunch!" Her memory went back to the mate's death, and she pressed her lips tight

to shut down on a sob. Then, with a blaze of hot scorn, "Don't bother your head about my feelings, please; it wasn't for that I came to you."

"I'm sure," he told her, "I'm ashamed it happened."

"Well," she went on swiftly, "you needn't be. It's just as well it did, as far as that goes, for it helped me to make up my mind to go it alone instead of bothering around with your bunch."

"But what are you going to do?" he demanded, "and how did they come to leave you here?" She ignored the last question, in accordance with the determination she had made when she arrived at that compromise. Whatever Laskey and his crowd were here for and whatever trouble might come out of it—well, that was their affair, and let the two parties fight it out to whatever end they chose. But Story's first query she answered.

"That," she told him coldly, "is my business. I can look out for myself. I've always done it. But I couldn't leave without warning you. You chechahcos are liable to get into trouble if you don't keep your eyes open. Keep away from that Siwash house."

"What's wrong there?" he asked wonderingly.

"Smallpox, I guess. That or something else just as bad. There's seven fresh graves back of the place. And everybody's gone away. It was just luck I noticed 'em this morning, or I'd have gone in myself."

"And you're no chechahco, either," he could not forbear saying.

"Well, anyhow," she flashed, "I saw those graves and how the Indians had all left, and when I came to thinking it over this evening, I couldn't bring myself to get out without telling some of you. Sorry I had to put you to all this trouble, but you see I didn't care to have anything to do with the rest of your crowd."

"As a matter of fact," he answered quietly, "I am mighty grateful. The chances are——"

"Oh, that's all right." She was moving off in the darkness. Abruptly, as if a thought had come to her, she halted. For a moment she was silent. Then:

"I took a side of bacon and a sack of flour," she said coldly. "I'll see you get your pay for 'em before long." And with that she was gone.

CHAPTER XII.

Now, in the fag end of spring, summer's advent was being heralded by long hours of sunshine; the abbreviated nights afforded but scanty intervals of darkness. It seemed to Ben that he had hardly returned to his blankets when Captain Dan's roar awakened him.

"Roll out, ye lazy lubbers! Roll!" The Alaskan was standing beside the newly kindled fire; his voice rose in a thunderous chant. "And hear the little birds sing praises!" The pæan rumbled on; attaining such artistic triumphs of profanity as only the old-timers ever dared to even strive toward and ended with another whooping, "Roll out!" that brought the last man tumbling from his bed.

Then, as they gathered yawning and stretching by the little blaze, half clad, and less than half awake, Ben told them of what had taken place while they were sleeping.

"Well, I call that pretty decent of her, now!" Jerry cried, when he had ended. Russ Hall, who had postponed his toilet to roll and light a matutinal cigarette in defiance of all known hygienic laws, exhaled, amid a cloud of smoke, the question which was puzzling all hands.

"Why in the devil did they sail away and leave her here?"

"And how," Captain Dan demanded coldly, "do ye know they've sailed away? Since I heard that voice, last evenin', I've been a-thinkin', boys, and 'twouldn't su'prise me at all to know some dirty work was doin'. Ain't a one in that hull bunch looks good to me. And, as for that girl, why, I wouldn't trust her no further than I could throw a bull by the tail. No, sir, they's something up."

Hempel had already departed for the beach with towel, soap, and comb, not waiting for the Alaskan's comment.

"I don't just see," Ben was answering the sour dough with considerable heat, "how you figure there's any underhanded business in that girl taking the trouble to wake me up and warn us against smallpox. However, if you——"

He got no farther. Hempel's yell brought them all to the water line on a run. The big fellow was pointing to the sand.

"What," he emphasized his question with an oath, "do you make of that?" The smudged trail of the dory, flanked by foot-

prints on either side, showed broad and deep leading down to the tide; and of the boat this was the only sign.

"Gone!" Jerry shouted. Captain Dan nodded.

"And if ye'll notice," said he, "ye'll see them's men's tracks. Mebbe I'm right." He glanced at Ben, and there was something of triumph in his eyes. "They've stole our boat!"

The sun was climbing up behind the range; the snow fields on the topmost ridges of the lofty peaks were beginning to blush under its warm caress. Far out to sea a line like molten quicksilver was showing, and the placid waters of the bay lay revealed eastward to the rocky cape which shut off the inner harbor. No one spoke; all were searching that dark surface for some sign of the missing craft.

"No use to argue," Ben said at length; "we've got to go and hunt." His heart was heavy; there is nothing which hurts a young fellow so sorely as to have his faith in another shaken, and, although he told himself that the girl had taken the trouble to awaken him and had shown unmistakably her aversion for her former shipmates, still doubts assailed him. If those others had not departed on the *Dora,* she must have known—and she had said no word of their presence. That surely looked damning in itself.

"You're right, Ben," Captain Dan flung his arm over Story's shoulder and his voice was kinder now. "Get out and hunt, boys, that's the word."

Hall had dropped to his knees and was lacing his boots. He looked up from this task, still puffing on his cigarette; his big features were somber.

"That ledge!" he groaned. "Too much good luck to be true, fellows. I'm afraid that——" But Jerry interrupted him with a cheerful oath.

"How do we know, Russ? We don't even know it was these fellows. And if it was—what's to show they're after the copper? Cheer up, old boy!"

"Anyhow," Hempel chimed in, "they're somewhere in the bay. Couldn't go to sea in that dory."

"Line out, lads," the Alaskan bade them; "we're going to find what's doing. Up the beach!" They started off at his words. "I wisht," he said quietly to Ben, "we'd brought them rifles back to camp last night, instead of leaving them up there with the tools. If this should be trouble——"

"There she is!" Hempel shouted, and, looking whither he was pointing, they saw the dory coming down the bay. A mile ahead of them it showed, and even as they caught sight of it, it vanished behind the little point which hid the landing place of the other party from their own camp.

"Run, lads!" Old Dan's face was grim. His grizzled mustache clamped down as if he had no more breath to waste. They followed him up the soft sands. It was hard going, loose footing for a man who was walking; before they had traveled two hundred yards they were gasping for breath. Gradually they slowed to a trot; the trot became a mere jogging; they strung out in a long file and far in the rear Russ Hall cursed the day when he had started smoking before breakfast. Dan and Ben Story were keeping close together in the lead. They reached the point with the nearest of the others a hundred yards in their wake, and as they clambered to its rocky summit the dory shot out into the bay again, not fifty yards away.

Just then the sun emerged from behind the snowclad peaks, and its rays fell upon the waters, making a thousand little dancing swells to glisten, bathing the boat and the four men in it. The faces of the oarsmen showed, agleam with perspiration; one of them said something, and the man in the stern sheets turned his head. Ben Story looked across that interval at Laskey and, even at this distance, he was gazing into a pair of eyes whose coldness made him draw back, just as he had drawn back yesterday when he peered down into the sleeper's unmasked face. There was something there this morning which showed plainly, something of unrelenting greed that roused him to such mingled dread and anger as he would have felt at the sight of a poisonous snake. Then the head was averted.

"No use wastin' your wind yelling after 'em," Captain Dan growled, and Story fell silent after the first long shout. "It's the ledge, all right. They've made one trip already and left the rest up there!"

The others came up and, as they came, beckoned the stragglers to mend their pace.

"They's a trail takes off ahead here, through the timber," the Alaskan told them. "Siwash trail. But I can foller it."

"Hurry, Russ!" Jerry shouted, "we'll get 'em yet!" Old Dan smiled a sour smile.

"We'll get 'em," he muttered to Ben. "I've an idee 'twon't be this mornin', but we'll get 'em—if it takes a year." He cursed himself aloud, "For," he wound up, "I'm the fool that said to leave them rifles up there with our tools. Fine box I got us into!" And Ben's heart went out to him in gratitude because he said nothing more of the incident of the girl.

Yet how, he asked himself, could she have helped the cause of those others by waking him last night? What purpose would that have served? He knew the answer only too well—the answer that Captain Dan would have given, that he suspected must be right; she had been unable to forbear from warning them against the danger which she had discovered in the Siwash house; she had stolen to their camp and had done that which the worst woman could not help doing. But she had not let slip one word of the intentions of her shipmates; probably she was with the other members of the party, even now, up there at the claims.

His eyes went to the dory as he started on up the beach beside the sour dough; he saw a bundle of bedding between the thwarts, a sack of flour. Where had they gotten those supplies? A frayed bit of canvas flapped in the morning breeze; it brought his mind to the *Dora*.

"It was old Pierre!" he cried, aloud.

"Aye," Captain Dan answered quietly. "I've thought of that. He'd not steal the pennies from a dead man's eyes. Oh, no! But he'd dicker with the undertaker to get 'em for half price. Old Pierre's making money outa this deal, somehow, and ye can bet on that."

"If I ever get my hands on him——" Ben began, but the other growled at him.

"Save yer wind, lad. We got a whole lot to find out before this thing's done with—and the trail is more'n six miles long." They passed the enemy's landing place and the Alaskan mutely pointed to tracks leading up into the sand hills. Ben remembered the wavering light which he had thought he saw the night before—that would have been from their camp fire. Not a doubt of it. Why had he not wakened the others then? Or wakened them when he came back from the talk with that girl? He hated to suspect her even now.

A faint blaze, half overgrown with bark, showed the beginning of the Siwash trail. They plunged into thick woods. The dark trunks of hemlocks and spruces surrounded them; overhead the branches were bearded with gray moss; the light was dim and the cool breath from the distant snow fields seemed to seep down through the forest upon them. They needed all that shade. The path was more like the ghost of a trail than like a place where men had walked. Save for that blaze at the beginning, the trees held no mark to show direction; and there were times when even Captain Dan had to slacken his pace in order to choose a course.

They climbed until they found themselves traveling along the steep flank of a mountain with the waters of the bay somewhere off to their right. Now and again they crossed a noisy torrent; at intervals they plunged through jungles of devil's club, already growing rank and hiding everything ahead; its branches slapped their faces, leaving myriad of minute stinging thorns under their skins to torture them.

Once they came upon a gigantic bowlder slide and, as they made their way in and out among the huge rocks, they saw the bay almost under them. Away at the upper end of it the dory was creeping in to the land, and if they had ever cherished the slightest doubt as to the intentions of the enemy, they were disillusioned now; for the boat was heading for the bit of shingle beach directly beneath the copper ledge.

Again the woods inclosed them, and they panted on for the last mile over ground so broken that it took all their energies to make it at a walk. At last they tumbled down a steep bank and found themselves in the little watercourse which they had entered so blithely, with hopes so high within their hearts, the day before.

"Easy now," Captain Dan muttered. "Let the others come up." And when the last of them was gathered round him, "Slip down to the landin' place," he ordered, "and we'll see if we can't lay hands on the dory, anyhow." But when they emerged from the tangle of greenery which hid the beach, they saw no sign of the boat. The claim jumpers had evidently taken the time to conceal it before going on.

"What now?" Jerry whispered.

"I'm going up the hill," Ben answered in the same hushed voice. "I mean to have a word with 'em."

"Well, I'm going along, too." Hall spoke under his breath, but his big face was alight with an expression which said that the cau-

tion prompting that low tone was not born of fear. "No man's going to jump a claim of mine without hearing me cuss him out, anyhow." A murmur of assent arose from the others.

"Slow's the word, then," said Captain Dan. "Remember they've got guns, and we ain't so much as got a hand ax to back us up."

He was for taking the lead, but Story elbowed him aside. "My turn to go ahead," he whispered, and struck out up the water-course.

What moment the greenery before him was about to part he did not know; nor did he know with what sort of a reception the enemy intended greeting them; he only knew that there was something inside of him which forbade his going back until he had faced that cold-eyed leader and his followers.

The place was silent. Save for the occasional rattle of a stone under their feet, the sound of their labored breathing, and the rustle of branches as they brushed them aside, they made no noise. And of the other party their ears caught no sign, until Ben was stepping out into the open of the little table-land and a voice called:

"Halt!"

The very fact that they had been expecting that command from moment to moment made it the more startling when it came, and because they had been dreading what they now beheld the spectacle was the harder for them to face. For in their inmost hearts they had been hoping against hope, and now they looked upon the truth to which they had been trying to close their eyes ever since the discovery of the dory's theft. Calamity confronted them, and the visions of wealth which they had cherished only yesterday, to which they had striven to cling in spite of their better judgment this morning, vanished utterly. The tension which had upheld every one of them during the long, heart-breaking race snapped, and they came to a stand on the very spot to attain which they had spent all their money and used all their energies—defeated men.

CHAPTER XIII.

There passed a brief interval during which no man spoke or made a movement, but both parties stood in tableau.

Where they had emerged from the narrow trail the five members of the Over There Copper Mining Company made a tight group, with Story a pace in advance of the others. Their chests were still heaving with hard breathing; their faces were flushed with the effort of climbing. Their empty hands were tightly clenched as if even yet they meant to make a fight for it.

Less than twenty feet away seven of those whom they had taken off from the wave-washed quarter-deck of the *Alden Bessie* two days before confronted them. Laskey was standing in the rear; it was he who had given that command to halt; his face was as smooth as an egg now; all those telltale lines which had shown while he was sleeping aboard the *Dora* were gone; he had himself in hand; this was his sort of game.

The man called Banjo Eye was on one knee, a rifle at his shoulder; his swarthy cheek pressed the wooden stock, his black eyes glittered looking along the sights. Scattered about the place the other members of the party were watching their enemies narrowly; now and again one of them glanced sidelong toward the Greek as if awaiting the order to fire. Two of them bore captured rifles and the rest held their automatic revolvers leveled. Their fingers caressed the triggers as if eager to give the pressure that would send forth the steel-jacketed slugs from those muzzles.

Laskey allowed his cold, blue eyes to rove from Story to the Alaskan; then one by one they went over the faces of the other three; he read the mixture of anger and bewilderment in those features, the heavy discouragement which was coming with complete realization—and he felt that now, at last, he was standing with solid ground under him. The cards were in his hands, and he was far from like the man who did not know how to deal them to his own advantage. He spoke and his voice was as hard as ice.

"Don't come any further."

The words seemed to awaken Story, for his head went back and a smile, which was not nice to look upon, came to his lips. He took a pace forward, and the hammer of the Greek's rifle clicked, reaching full cock. A second pace.

"Easy, Ben," the Alaskan muttered behind him. But Story laughed.

"That fellow hasn't got the nerve to murder us," he said, and finished a third pace before he halted.

The morning sunshine falling full on the Greek's face made the little beads of moisture glisten where they had sprung forth.

His lips were drawn back, showing his white teeth; his nostrils widened. The other gunmen were watching him, breathing hard.

"Now," Story demanded abruptly, "what do you fellows want?" He held his eyes on Laskey as he put the question, ignoring the muzzles of the weapons and the men who held them.

Laskey let a frown chase away that egg-like smoothness from his face, and there came into his voice a tinge of anger, the anger of a man who feels himself in the right and outraged, but still holds himself in hand.

"This is our property, and I warn you men to leave."

"So that's the idea?" Ben cried. "Claim jumpers!"

"Two months ago," the ex-bootlegger answered swiftly, "we staked these claims. This morning I found where you've torn down our location notices." Russ Hall gasped an oath at the lie's impudence, but old Captain Dan gripped his arm.

"Leave Ben do the talkin', lad," he ordered. "Steady, all!"

"Do you think," Story demanded, "you're going to get away with that in Sitka?"

"What you've done's a crime," went on Laskey in the same cold, even voice. "If I'd the time for prosecution, I'd have the boys arrest the crowd of you and take you back to Sitka. But the way things stand there's been no harm done, and I'm willing to let it go. You'll keep away from this property from now on, understand!"

Ben smiled again and looked him right between the eyes.

"So, old Pierre's sold out to you?"

"I've chartered the schooner." Laskey allowed a gleam of triumph to flicker over his face. "When she returns with supplies I'm going to Sitka to record the claims. If you fellows were in possession of them right now, it wouldn't do you any good that I can see, under those circumstances." His voice dropped its hard note and he smiled, but nothing could hide that coldness which still remained in his eyes. "My advice to you is to clear out and to stay away. You've lost and you're in dead luck that some of you haven't gotten hurt already."

He paused as if to let his words sink in, and it was then that Russ Hall seized the opportunity to keep that promise which he had made to himself down in the water-course.

"Do you know," he began, "what I think of you?" He went on to say in terms so explicit that they left no room for misunderstanding, and he was really becoming quite eloquent, when Ben turned.

"No use, Russ, there's not language enough to do him justice. Well, boys, I guess we may as well go back to camp." He allowed his eyes to rove over the place, and a new note came into his voice. "A cup of coffee would taste mighty good now to me."

"Remember," Laskey called after them, "the next one of you that shows himself inside our lines gets shot." There was a rancor in his tone which had not been there before.

"Now what," Hall demanded, when they had gone beyond earshot of the enemy, "was the big idea about the cup of coffee, Ben? I didn't get that." Story smiled dismally.

"Russ," he said, "it was the only way I saw to save my face. You see, they're short of grub. All that old Pierre's given 'em is a slab of that tainted salt pork he had in the cabin and some flour and baking powder. I looked their outfit over, every bit of it—and they'd been cooking breakfast, the ones who were in camp. They haven't any coffee—and if you'd ever run out yourself you'd understand how it made them feel when I mentioned it."

"All the same," big Hempel growled, "I can't see what good it did for you to plague them about it. It'll only make 'em raid our cache. They're armed and we ain't. All they have to do is come and get what they want."

"Yes," Captain Dan chimed in. "It looks to me like we was flat up against it, lads. They've got the claims. And if they didn't have 'em, they've got the schooner chartered; you can bet on that. This fellow told the truth then. They can go back to Sitka and record 'em, and we can't do a blamed thing but sit down here and eat up our grub—provided they leave us keep it."

And as they trudged back along the steep side-hill trail, over which they had panted in that race an hour before, they all felt that the Alaskan had just about sized up the situation.

CHAPTER XIV.

That was a dismal breakfast in the sand dunes back of the beach. Twelve miles round trip on empty stomachs with the vanishing of all their high hopes on top of it had quenched even little Jerry's ebullient

spirits. But the enthusiasm of youth needs more than mere quenching to kill it, and by the time they had swallowed their second cups of coffee they were beginning to rekindle the fires of hope. It came slowly, this reincarnation of their fighting spirit, but as each man spoke, the words revivified the flame in the breasts of his fellows. At first they started discussing those things of which they were still in ignorance. Speculations on what had taken place without their knowledge at least gave their minds something to feed upon.

"I wonder," little Jerry ventured, while they were sitting around the dying fire. "Do you boys think there could possibly be anything in what that fellow said—about having staked the claims?" Old Dan laughed scornfully. "Well," Jerry persisted, "how did they ever come to know about the place, then?"

"Easy enough," the Alaskan answered. "All they had to do was to watch us yesterday and see where we went. Or mebbe old Pierre told 'em. Mebbe they knew before they left San Francisco. I mind now that I spilled a little talk about the ledge that night when I filled up with hooch. My son, those fellows are a bunch of crooks; all ye have got to do is to take one look at 'em to see that. And this one that done the talkin' to-day is smooth people. He's jumped that ledge because copper's a good bet." The scorn deepened in his voice. "Now ye didn't happen to run onto any location notices when we were stakin', did ye?"

Ben Story was the only one who did not join in the murmur that arose at the last words. He was sitting off to one side and his thoughts, curiously enough, were not on the ledge nor were they on the men who had held them up at the muzzles of leveled weapons. He was wondering about the girl who had awakened him the night before. Where would she be now? And what part could she have had in this? In spite of himself he could not look upon her as he knew his companions did; it was not only because his reason failed to make her actions dovetail with those of their enemies; there was the memory of her face. He could not bring himself to think that dishonesty lurked behind that clear-eyed gaze.

Big Hempel was talking now.

"Old Pierre," he cried. "He didn't strike me as that kind of a coyote, either."

"Well," Captain Dan drawled, "old Pierre's not runnin' that schooner for his health. I've known him nigh to twenty year, and he always would go a little furder for a dollar than any one I ever ran acrost. I reckon this fellow made him an offer, and he figgered 'twas none of his business who got the ledge. Anyhow, we didn't have the schooner chartered."

Ben listened to him idly, and his thoughts turned to the *Dora*. If they had only taken pains to charter the vessel! As matters now stood, they were virtually marooned—at Laskey's mercy. They could not even board the schooner when she came, for they had no boat and yet, as his mind ran on in this channel, the germs of a plan slowly began to bud away back in his subconsciousness. Nothing that he could fix as yet—but it was there.

"I tell you one thing," Russ Hall was saying when next Ben paid heed to the talk. "We better move this grub. Hide it somewhere, or they'll come after it—and what'll we do then? Let 'em help themselves, I guess!"

That was something worth while beginning, anyway. Ben got to his feet.

"Good idea, Russ," he cried; "and the sooner the better! Let's get to work, boys."

So they put in the morning and a good half of the afternoon at moving the cache back into the forest. Sweating, back-bending work, and it left them weary when night fell.

"Come daybreak," Captain Dan said, "we can go back over the ground and mebbe we can cover up the trail. Make it harder for 'em to find, anyhow."

They were sitting around their camp fire in the forest, smoking, after the evening meal. Hempel changed his posture and groaned.

"Lame as if I'd been beaten with a club!" he growled. "Why did we go to all this work, anyhow? Ben, why did you remind 'em that we had coffee? Maybe they'd have been content with their bad pork and flour if you'd only kept still."

"Don't think it!" Story shook his head. "I was in an outfit once that ran out of coffee over Cook Inlet way. I never saw a bunch of men so ornery. No, they'll remember, all right—and come after ours."

"No ledge, no schooner, and pretty soon no grub. Can't even make a fight for it when they ask us for it," grumbled little Jerry. "And as for hiding that trail——"

It was then that Ben's plan began to take more coherent form, and he lay there thinking hard for a long time. At length he called the Alaskan off to one side.

"I've got an idea," he said quietly, and went on to outline it. Old Dan heard him out in silence, but shook his head when Ben was done.

"S'posing it works," he objected, "where are we then? We ain't got the ledge—and we ain't got the schooner, either."

"One thing at a time," Ben argued. "We'll have the dory and some guns to start in with—and we'll have that crowd split up. Think it over, Dan."

The Alaskan did so at considerable length.

"I reckon," he said finally, "you're right. And, anyhow, it's fighting. I never did like the idee of givin' up a proposition without a scrap. Let's see what the boys say about it."

So Story told them the project in detail, as it had grown to fullness during his discussion with Captain Dan and Jerry voiced a unanimous sentiment when he made the comment:

"A whole lot better than sitting down and waiting for that bunch to rob us some more!"

"And," Russ Hall chimed in, "they're cowards, every one of 'em. Once get 'em on the run and—why, boys, we've everything our own way. There isn't one of 'em has got a grain of sand."

"All right," Ben spat on his palms and rubbed them together. "Then we'll start in first thing in the morning and scout out a new place for the cache."

"The trouble with your plans, Ben," big Hempel growled some time near noon the next day, "is that a fellow has to break his blamed back carrying 'em out." He sank down on his knees, easing his pack against a bowlder, slipped his arms from the straps, and let the bundle drop to the earth; then he wiped the perspiration from his brow and drew a deep breath of relief. "Thank Heaven that's the last load!"

Story grinned and looked about him.

"Not to hand myself any bouquets," he said, "but I think this is what one might call a strategic position." He pointed to the new cache on which he had just piled his own burden. It stood in the bed of a narrow gully. Even now, near noonday, the tall hemlocks kept the place in a shadow that was like twilight. A dense growth of devil's club and rank young underbrush covered the banks of the wash, overhanging the brink. Save for the narrow pathway which they had trodden down, the wall of greenery was intact, hiding everything beyond.

"All I hope," Hempel grumbled, as he lifted the sacked flour which composed his pack to its place on the summit of the pile, "is that they come after it now. Blamed shame to go to all this trouble and then not get any fun out of it."

"Don't worry," Ben told him. "They'll be along. Old Dan's gone down to the beach to watch for 'em. Don't you ever think that crowd are going to eat tainted pork and bannocks when they know we've all this grub."

A crackling in the brush interrupted him.

"Hark now to the boys," he exclaimed, "and they're a good hundred yards away. Why, we could hear any one far enough to get ready for 'em even if we didn't have a lookout on the job." It was several minutes before Hall and Jerry appeared, bent almost double under their loads. Slowly, as men must move when they are pack laden, they came on down the narrow pathway where it descended along the side of the bank to the gully's bed. Hempel chuckled.

"Now, if a man was going up that path," he cried.

"Have him foul if he wasn't carrying more'n fifty pounds," Ben agreed.

Hall and Jerry eased their aching shoulders free from their burdens and threw themselves upon their backs. And so the four of them rested their weary bodies while old Captain Dan scanned the surface of the bay from a nook among the sand-dunes for the first sign of the dory. The hours went by, and the sun began its long, slow descent toward the horizon; the afternoon passed on toward evening and the air grew cooler. And still the gleaming waters betrayed no trace of their enemies.

Old Dan's youth lay far behind him, and the enthusiasm which had carried him into remote places had long since departed. After all, he asked himself, was it going to be worth while? Supposing the claim jumpers did come? What then? Why, if everything worked out to the smallest detail in accordance with their hopes, there wasn't a doubt but Laskey would keep a guard up there at the ledge. And, even if they should go so far as to regain the possession of the claims, there was the schooner. Once she returned—under charter, as that cold-eyed

leader had boasted yesterday—the enemy only needed to go aboard and sail to Sitka where they could record the claims and put themselves in a position from which even expensive legal proceedings could hardly be expected to oust them. Knowing the history of much mining litigation, Captain Dan shook his head. But for all of his pessimism he continued to keep a sharp lookout.

CHAPTER XV.

It was after six o'clock and Ben Story was going over the details of that plan of his for the third or fourth time with the other three in the gully's bed.

"And when we get those guns!" little Jerry cried, "Oh, wow!"

"And when we get the dory, Jerry," Ben reminded him, "that's when we've won. For the men who've got that boat are the men who board the schooner first when she comes back—and it's a cinch she's coming back soon, because old Pierre left them with so little grub."

"And the men who board the *Dora* first"—Russ Hall picked up the thread of the argument—"are the men who do business with that French Canuck. Which means——"

"That they're the men," big Hempel cut in, "who go to Sitka and record the claims."

"There you are," Story nodded. "If we aren't first at the recorder's office, why, we've as good as lost out—no matter if we retake the ledge in the meantime. We've not the money to carry on a lawsuit, and the Stroheim people aren't going to take over this property unless the title's clear. So now—once we start—we've got to carry on right through to the end. Or else we've spent our money and put in our time for the sake of taking in the scenery."

"I think," Jerry said quietly, "I hear some one coming."

They all hearkened. Through the enormous silence of the thick forest a sound came to them, faint at first, now more distinct and now it grew louder; the crackling of underbrush.

"He's on the run," Hall announced after a moment of listening. "Boys, he's bringing news!" They leaped to their feet and climbed to the summit of the bank.

Unmistakably the man was traveling fast; the crashing of his body through the brush was eloquent of haste. There is something stirring in the sound of one approaching through the primeval forest, something that awakens strange primitive impulses in the auditor, that rouses instincts which have come down from the days when all human beings lived among the shadows of the great trees, and spent their waking hours with ears alert to warn them against the attacks of their fellow beings. The four companions stood amid the dense thickets in very much the same attitudes that a quartet of their forbears, with hair on their backs instead of shirts, would have taken under similar circumstances; and the resemblance was heightened by the fact that every one of them was clutching very much the same sort of weapon which his remote ancestor would have been holding.

Those clubs were the Alaskan's idea, conceived when the plan was taking final form.

"Never waste your hands on another fellow," he had told them, "unless ye've got to do it. This Markis of Queensberry stuff is all right for spectators, I reckon; but if ye are going to fight, why fight to win. All holds; nothing barred. Ain't anything better'n a bit o' timber—and get in the first lick with it. Remember these fellows are packing guns." So he had gone about it that morning to select good billets and had set them to work at trimming them, until every one was as formidably equipped as the forest allowed of.

Now he came bursting through the thickets, taking mighty strides. They knew at first sight of his face what they had suspected on hearing him—that he brought large news.

"In the dory," he announced, "three of 'em. They must be landing by now. I was late in catchin' sight of 'em because they hugged the shore and the light is rotten under them trees when a man's been looking into sun glare all afternoon. Plenty of time now, Jerry; don't be in such a sweat. They've got to scout around at our first camp; then pick up the trail and foller it to where the camp is now; then pick it up again and come on here and"—he chuckled—"I stopped long enough to make a show of hidin' the path with some brush. That'll look more like we didn't expect 'em to find it, and they won't be so apt to expect an ambush." He looked about him coolly, saw the weapons in their hands and nodded. "Good!" he muttered, "and when ye hit, hit hard.

"Ye've no idee," he went on, "how dark

it is in here after bein' out there in the open. They'll be sunblind, every man of 'em, or I miss my guess. Now, lads, we better stow ourselves away."

They had picked their places long since, after much discussion, and similarly they had gone over the work that was in hand. There is always pretty sure to be some slip in the most carefully laid plans, but they were reasonably sure on one point: the marauding party would reconnoiter a bit, then descend to the cache and proceed to load up. And the looters must ascend the trail along the side of the bank in single file, with those packs on their backs. So now they took their stations in the tangle of creepers and underbrush which overhung that narrow trail. Because he had thrown every one of them in wrestling, including Story who took considerable pride in his prowess at catch as catch can, big Hempel was posted right opposite the spot where the pathway reached the brink. For they reasoned that if the claim jumpers were going to keep any one on guard while they did their pillaging, this would be the legitimate place for such a one to stand. The others were strung out with Captain Dan and Ben nearest to the cache.

"Now," the Alaskan bade them, "not a whisper till the fun begins. And, unless something goes wrong, wait for Hempel to start the fracas. As soon as he does—why, all hands sail in."

Time dragged on with that heartbreaking slowness which time takes in passing when men are waiting for the moment of action to arrive. It was a good half hour and more before the first, faint crackling of a far-off twig heralded the approach of the enemy. For some moments there was no further sound, and the ambuscaders were beginning to wonder whether something might not have happened when the trampling of feet came suddenly from less than one hundred yards away. Then the man called Banjo Eye appeared.

In the dimness of the forest he came on, crouching slightly, walking on the balls of his feet, his knees bent, his body swaying with a lithe, catlike movement. His head was bare save for a bandanna handkerchief which he wore bound round his brow. A stray beam of light, the last token sent in through the thick roof of boughs by the descending sun, lit on the red cloth, making it gleam. His black eyes glittered, roving from side to side, and his nostrils were widened as if he were sniffing the air for some scent of enemies.

In his hand, held lightly at waist level, he carried one of the captured rifles. He came on to the brink of the embankment, halted, looked restlessly about him, and then his eyes fell on the cache. They widened with the discovery, narrowed again with suspicion, and went to searching the coverts about him. He raised one hand.

Two others appeared at the turn of the trail, and it was easy to see where the noise of that approach had come from. Their feet crashed in the brush and one of them stumbled over a root, plunged forward, and fell almost to his hands and knees. The eyes of the watchers in the thickets picked out the butts of the revolvers protruding from their waistbands. The Greek spat an oath at the man who had tripped and pointed to the gully's bed.

"Down dere," he told them. Oath and words came hissing, barely above a whisper from his lips; and when the foremost man uttered an exclamation of joy at the sight of the provisions, he warned the fellow to silence in a growl, the more ferocious because it was scarcely audible.

"Get beesy," he ordered them. "Min' that coffee." He stepped back to let them pass and the movement brought him so close to big Hempel that the giant could have touched him without reaching the full length of his arm. It was evident that none of them fancied the dimness of the forest, from the manner in which they kept looking over their shoulders as they began the pillaging. There was something about their furtiveness which suggested children for the first time in the woods. Once a disagreement rose between the two down there in the bed of the gully, and the swarthy leader hushed them with an oath. Now they bound their packs together and shouldered them. They came slowly up the steep path. As the foremost drew near, the Greek stood back again to give them room for passing.

In the midst of that rearward movement he halted and spun round on his heel; the rifle flew toward his hip. Whirling, he bowed his head abruptly; his knees bent under him; his body sagged, and the wide green leaves of the devil's club beside him took on curious-flecked patterns of scarlet as the blood flew over them where Hempel's blow had gone home.

The two packers looked up at the first

stirring in the brush. Now, when the blow fell, one of them strove to free his arms from the straps and, as he struggled, went catapulting down into the depths of the gully with little Jerry on his shoulders. The other made to draw his weapon, but his hand had barely touched the butt before Story struck him.

"Good work, Ben." Old Captain Dan leaped from his hiding place. "Where did those fellows go?" Out of the thickets in the arroyo came the noise of struggling; then abruptly it stopped and Russ Hall emerged panting.

"Jumped right on top of the two of 'em," he cried, "and knocked the wind out of Jerry. Give me a hand with that fellow. I think I brained him."

"Easy," Dan bade him. "How about you, Hempel?"

"My man's out," the giant answered quietly. Little Jerry crawled, spent and breathless, from the thicket.

"Confound you, Russ," he sputtered; "do you want to murder me? I'd of got that fellow myself if you'd only kept your big feet out of my stomach."

"Hog tie 'em," Captain Dan ordered, "and stop your noise. We want to figger on what to do next." They dragged their victims to the summit of the bank and bound them hand and foot, and while they were doing this Ben's eyes lit on the handkerchief which the Greek wore. He smiled, bent down, removed the headgear, and placed it on his own brow.

"Think I'd pass for him in this light?" he asked.

"This is no time for masquerading, Ben," Jerry growled, still filled with rancor over his mishap. But Captain Dan grinned as he nodded.

"That looks to me," he said, "like a good idee."

"Get it?" Ben chuckled. "I'm willing to take a chance, if the rest of you are."

"If you'll be good enough to explain," Jerry grumbled, "maybe we'll have some notion of what you mean."

"Why, leave these fellows tied up here," Ben told him, "and take their packs down to the dory. Then row over to the ledge. They'll be expecting us. And I'll go at the head of the procession with this bandanna. I'm about his build—and black-haired."

"Which leaves two of us to do the packing," Hempel reminded him; "and you go light. Well, at that it's not such a bad scheme, Ben. I'm with you for one. But what'll we do with our two extra men?"

"They can follow a little ways behind and come on for reënforcements when the trouble starts," Captain Dan suggested. "Let's get to work, lads. Light is going fast, and we don't want to be too late or they might be getting uneasy."

With the Greek's revolver and rifle there was only one of them left without a weapon, and they drew lots to see whom that one should be. It fell to little Jerry.

"Anyhow, you needn't carry a pack up that trail," Ben consoled him. "Now, fellows! Pick up our bedding when we get to camp." They shouldered the bundles and made what speed they could. When they reached the open land they were surprised to see how light it was.

But dusk was deepening to darkness before they had rowed halfway back to the copper ledge and by the time they were climbing the trail out of the little watercourse to the table-land the night had fallen. Through the brush before them they saw the ruddy light of the enemy's camp fire. Voices sounded as they neared the summit.

"That you, Banjo Eye?" In front of his two companions, with Jerry and Hempel following a few paces in the rear of the trio, Ben recognized the hail as Laskey's. He made no answer but came on a little faster. Now he emerged from the thicket into the open table-land.

"Well," Laskey demanded with an oath, "why didn't you answer?" He was on his feet at the farther side of the fire, and his face showed his suspicions in the light of the flames. The three other claim jumpers had evidently been sprawled out on the near side of the blazing logs, and the restlessness of their leader had roused them, for one was in the act of rising as Story came into sight and two were crouching with their hands on their revolvers.

In the shadows Story and the two burden bearers showed only vaguely, but the bandanna handkerchief on the leader's brow was unmistakable. Laskey started to resume his seat; the trio across the fire from him sank back.

Hall and Captain Dan dropped their burdens. Ben's hold on the rifle shifted.

But in that brief moment whose passing would have marked the complete working

out of their plans, the machinery slipped a cog, and the whole situation changed.

It is impossible to arrange such things so that the details will come through with clockwork precision. In their places on the trail big Hempel and little Jerry had no means, save guesswork, of figuring on the movements of their companions. Being perhaps a little overeager, they misjudged. Just as Ben was shifting the rifle—before he had fairly begun the movement—Hempel stumbled on a root and came pitching face foremost out from the thicket into the open. He strove to recover his footing, but before he had gotten his legs under him a revolver's flat, venomous report sounded somewhere close by; a form catapulted from out the firelight across the interval and knocked him down the second time. As he fell he heard Jerry cry out; the crashing of heavy bodies in the brush followed that shout. He raised his head and looked before him.

In the firelight two shapes showed locked together in a tight embrace. Captain Dan and Russ Hall were holding their drawn revolvers on the other pair beside the fire.

"Go see if you can't help him, Hempel," the Alaskan shouted. But even as Hempel was starting toward the combatants, Ben Story struck out with his fist and his opponent dropped limp beside him.

"My fault," Ben said. "I'll never try to hold up a man with a rifle again. I heard that noise behind me and looked around and, before I could get my eyes back, he was under the gun and closing with me."

"Good thing he didn't have a revolver," old Dan growled. "How about that one down the trail?" And like an answer they heard the thump of rowlocks from the bay.

"Gone!" Story cried. "Look after these fellows, boys, and I'll find what's happened to Jerry."

But Jerry met him as he was starting down the path.

"If you'd given me a revolver," he complained, "I'd have gotten him. As it was, he bowled me over, and I went a good hundred feet down there through the brush before I stopped. Which one was it, anyhow?"

They took appraisal of their prisoners and found that Laskey was the missing man.

"And got the dory!" Captain Dan looked around at them and shook his head. "Looks like we're still losers, lads."

CHAPTER XVI.

The next morning they liberated their three prisoners and sent them off down the trail with a warning to their fellows to keep their distance from the ledge.

"The only man worth our while to guard and feed is gone," was the way Ben put it. "Why waste time and grub on these hired hands?"

"Maybe we'll get that fellow yet, Ben," little Jerry said, and the return of his optimism had its immediate effect on the others. That day they set to work trying to recapture the lost dory and Laskey.

From then on old Captain Dan put in all his waking hours scouting along the sidehill trail between the dunes and the ledge. That day and the next and for a full week afterward, he lay under cover watching the bay for some sign of the little craft, or when he got sight of it, crept through the timber and on behind sand hills and rocks trying to steal up on it.

But the claim jumpers realized the strategic importance of that dory and kept a sharp lookout; and, although the Alaskan came very close to getting within good rifle shot on one or two occasions, it was always to see his quarry slipping away in the end.

"They've made a camp acrost the bay," he told his companions on the third day, "and two of 'em are sleeping over there nights, with the boat." Which effectually prevented any surprise under cover of darkness for the five great glaciers at the harbor's head interposed an insurmountable barrier against land travel to the southern shore.

The failure of the schooner to return by this time was puzzling the members of the Over There Copper Mining Company.

"The longer she stays away, the more chance we got to lay hands on the boat," was the way Captain Dan summed up that phase of the situation; and he redoubled his efforts, taking Story along with him.

That was along toward the end of the week, and now they noticed that the small boat was making no more trips back and forth between the original camp in the sand dunes and the new one on the bay's southern shore. Apparently their enemies had divided forces; and when the two companions crept down toward the harbor mouth they could detect no sign of the larger party.

"Something queer here," Ben said after they had been watching the deserted camp

for a long time. The Alaskan shook his head.

"Don't like the looks of it myself," he muttered. But the recovery of the boat was still uppermost in their minds, and they had no desire to go to solving mysteries.

"Only one way," they agreed when they had talked over the matter that night in camp, "and that's to cross the glacier." So the two of them set out the next morning to have a try at that forlorn hope. And they had not been at it an hour before they saw that the project was impossible beyond the wildest dreams. They were making their way back toward camp when they saw that which made their hearts skip a beat—that which they had been both hoping for and dreading.

"Look!" the Alaskan cried and pointed seaward. "The *Dora!*"

There she was, hovering off the bar like a white-winged gull. Even as they turned their eyes toward her she came swooping inward.

Ben Story regarded her in silence.

"Well," he said, and heaved a sigh, "we've lost out. But I'm going down there and see if we can't get aboard yet."

"And I'm with you," Dan growled.

The other members of the party were under strict injunction to stand by on the little table-land, keeping guard of the ledge against any unexpected developments. As these two started along shore toward the trail which led to the harbor mouth, they watched the schooner coming in. The seas were running high outside and breaking badly on the bar; even now at the slack-water interval their crests showed snowy white. Old Dan shook his head.

"Never had an idee Pierre would dast try that," he said. And a few minutes later when an interval between the trees gave them a second view, he voiced his astonishment in a loud oath. "Look! Say," he spouted, "that Frenchman can handle a schooner! I'd never been able to do that myself!"

The *Dora* came twisting in through that crooked passage, dodging the big combers, swooping up the sides of the great seas, with a boldness which, even at this distance, was beautiful to watch. Like a seafowl she rode the rushing breakers, now vanishing in the trough clear to her topmasts, now reappearing, shedding water which gleamed in the sunshine as it flowed from her decks.

"I'd never o' thought it," Dan cried. "Old Pierre's l'arned seamanship!"

Long before they came to the first open place from which they could get a view of the lower bay, the schooner was in. They had heard the rattle and roar of the cable as the anchor went out. When they took their first look at her swinging at her moorings they saw the dory with two men in it on its way from the southern shore.

"There goes our friend." Ben pointed to the boat. "Well, come on; we'll see what there is to see." And they kept on as if there were really some shred of hope to which they were clinging. And thus at last they reached the same spot in the dunes where they had camped that first night ashore.

"Well, anyhow, some one's coming," the Alaskan growled. A boat appeared under the schooner's quarter, and they stood on the beach watching its approach.

"If that's Pierre," Ben said with a sudden recurrence of hope, "maybe we can do business with him yet."

They held their eyes on the oarsman as the craft drew nearer. Clearly it was not the *Dora's* skipper; there was nothing in that back which they could recognize. The dory touched the sand; the oars came inboard; the solitary passenger leaped out and, turning toward them, dragged the craft inshore.

It was Marjorie Moulton.

Both men voiced their astonishment, but Ben's cry drowned the Alaskan's muttered oath. She waded in and stood facing them, looking from the eyes of one into the eyes of the other. Ben stretched forth his hand and she took it.

"I guess I can pay you for that grub now," she said. There was that in her face which puzzled Story, a light as of triumph and, showing through it, a peculiar hard defiance.

"I don't remember asking you to be in any great hurry about that," he answered.

"Where's Cap'n Pierre?" Captain Dan broke in.

"Cap'n Pierre," she placed emphasis on the title, "is laid up in Sitka. Down with rheumatism, and can't move hand or foot. I brought the schooner in."

"You brought the schooner in?" old Dan echoed.

Then, forgetting a multitude of other questions which were tumbling over one another in his mind, forgetting everything but the memory of the sight he had witnessed

and the admiration which that spectacle of rare seamanship had begotten, he made amends for bygones in a fashion truly his own.

"My hat," he said, and suited action to the words, "is off to you, cap'n. I couldn't have handled her as neat as that myself."

Marjorie flushed deep crimson at the compliment which did more than anything else that old Dan could have said to erase the memory of those words he had uttered in hasty judgment when he first saw her. Ben was the first of the three to find his voice.

"How on earth," he demanded, "did you get to Sitka?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Started up the beach the morning after I saw you," she told him quietly, "and walked to Dry Bay. There were some Siwashes there and I got 'em to take me in a canoe. By good luck I found the Frenchman sick, and so I had the chance to bring the *Dora* back." Her eyes narrowed. "That wasn't just my idea when I started. I had something else on my mind. This man, Laskey——"

"Laskey?" Ben echoed. "Who's he?"

"That's so," she smiled. "There's a whole lot you people don't seem to know. Why, Laskey's aboard the *Dora* now—with a pair of deputy U. S. marshals taking care of him. We were afraid maybe we'd have some trouble finding him, but he kindly rowed out to the schooner as soon as we came to anchor."

"You mean——" Ben interrupted.

"Oh, he's in custody." She breathed deeply, as if with relief. "That's why I went to Sitka. You see it was like this."

She told them the story from the beginning of those events which led up to the *Alden Bessie's* wreck.

"Bad enough to have mutiny aboard," she wound up, "and lose my mate on top of it—as good a man as ever followed the sea, and then lose my ship and—— No. I didn't propose to take the blame for that! I made up my mind to get that fellow if it took me twenty years—and now I've got him. It seems the charge against him in San Francisco is bribery, and he's got to go and stand trial. The fellow he gave old Pierre for a hand to help bring the schooner down to Sitka told the officers all he knew before we started up here and we sort of looked for trouble." Her eyes sought Ben's in inquiry.

"Trouble is right," he told her. "But we're through with it now—thanks to you. Which makes me think; where are the rest of that bunch, I wonder?"

"I guess I can show you," she said, and he noticed how her voice had dropped a note. "I wish you'd come along. Somebody's got to look after it." And she led them inland to the Siwash house.

It was Captain Dan who looked into the place and made the discovery, for among his adventures had been a siege of smallpox during Nome's early days. When he came out from the desolate cabin his face showed his news before he uttered a word.

"Five of 'em in there," he announced, "and all dead. I see why that dory quit making trips acrost the bay, now. Those two just abandoned the rest—ran away and left them layin' there to die without a bit of help. One of 'em's that big fellow that was wearin' the bandanna when they came to rob our cache—the one that Hempel knocked out."

The *Dora* left for Sitka the next morning with Ben aboard to record the copper claims, which he did on his arrival. And in good time the Stroheim people fulfilled the promise made by their San Francisco representative.

But when it came to division of the spoils of this adventure there were six ways for the money to go instead of five, as had been intended. It came about in this manner.

Captain Marjorie Moulton, being invited to visit the ledge during that day while the schooner lay at anchor, went, and among other things received Hempel's apologies for those words which he had uttered by the fire on that first night ashore. Being no adept at amenities the big fellow was making an awkward job of it and, in part to relieve the situation, in part because this other business was the main thing in hand—having been agreed upon by the five original stockholders—Story silenced him and went on to tell Marjorie that her name was now inscribed on the young corporation's rolls.

"For," he wound up, "after all it was you that saved the whole situation for us, and if you're not entitled to an equal share, I don't see how any one of the rest of us is."

In this manner it was settled. And that conference on the little table-land, where the other five adventurers welcomed the newcomer to their number, really marks the end of the whole affair, at least so far as this story goes.

Phil Grimm's Progress

AS ASSISTED BY "ALEX THE GREAT"

By H. C. Witwer

Author of "A Flash in the Pan," "Once a Year," Etc.

Queer thing about the—er—hero of this tale. He asked for advice and then took it!

A GUY entitled Ralph Waldo Emerson, which spilled a mean ink some moons ago, once shook the followin' off the end of his pen:

The reward of a thing well done is to have done it.

Well, boys and girls, Ralph said a basketful! The babies which makes the human race the world's most thrillin' contest is the ones which fights under that flag whether they admit that feelin' or even know they have it. The achievement is *always* the thing which counts, not the guy which achieved it, and the bird with a idea which keeps it a secret for fear he won't get credit for it, is at best a pitiful fool. The memory of the mob is like its applause—short and sweet.

How many know who wrote the alphabet which taught 'em to read? Autos is known by the names of the latest classy models—who remembers the bird which put the *first* one together? Columbus put over the biggest real-estate deal in history, yet the result is called not Christopher but America. Adam is recalled merely as the first man, a thing he had nothin' to do with, and Washington is remembered as our first president, the least thing he done. Cleopatra is known as a good-lookin' vamp—nothin' more. For a final test, how many of you gently readers know without rushin' to the library, who was Hyatt, Glidden, Thomson, Hardy, Janney, Burt, Otto, Vielle, and Unge, for the example? A champion baseball club or the leadin' contenders for the heavyweight title? Nothin' as well known as that—merely the inventors of celluloid, barbed wire, electric weldin', disk plows, automatic car couplers, the typewriter, gas engine, smokeless powder, and the depth bomb.

Now, if you yourself didn't know offhand who these guys was, even though their brains sent the world ahead a hundred years in their respective times, where do *you* get off to moan if you've figured out a stunt that's savin' your firm $67.80 a month on lead pencils alone, and yet the boss has failed to name his new plant after you, or if none of the thousands which passes you carelessly on the street every day has the faintest idea that you're the fastest stenographer in the Gazink Buildin'? And what difference does it make if they don't? If you're a trifle better than the other guy at anything in the world you're gettin' *somethin'* more than he is—more kick outa life, more opportunities, more jack, more respect from the other players in your particular game.

So if you got a trick, *pull it!* Don't hold back for fear that when you *do* put it across they'll spell your name wrong in the newspapers; don't lay buried in the ash heap because you're afraid if you stick your head out, the whole world won't drop everything to wave to you. The world's terrible busy these days, and success is too common to collect a excited crowd any more. But they's still a whole lot more to life than room and board and safety razors—one way to get the rest of it is to:

Set the cause above renown and love the game above the prize!

That motto, for the example, ain't bad stuff, is it? It was first pulled by a poet named Henry J. Newbolt, and has been repeated and applauded about eight billion times since. Yet, while we're on the subject, who ever heard of Henry J. Newbolt, hey?

The above priceless pearls of wisdom was slipped me by one Alex Hanley, known to his dumfounded friends as "Alex the Great." Alex is a cousin of a girl which wouldst of made Adonis tear up Venus' address, to the viz: my wife; and also he is the undisputed champion pest of the world. A couple of years ago this cuckoo descended on helpless New York from the dear old farm in Ver-

mont with nothin' but the need of a shave, the lack of a hair cut, the conventional extry clean collar, and the nerve of a blind aviator.

Instead of swoonin' away the first time he seen the crowds on Fifth Avenue, Alex sneers and says Gotham must be full of nothin' but boobs since they had to have a constabule on each and every corner to tell 'em when to stop and when to go. He claimed the Vermont moonlight wouldst make Broadway at eight o'clock look exactly as bright as the bottom of a coal mine and that his father had canned better-lookin' hired girls than the entire front row of the Follies.

Other pleasant remarks which Alex let fall on his first visit to our growin' hamlet was that in the midst of the Green Mountains the Woolworth Buildin' wouldst be known as "Shorty" and that the biggest giggle he got out of our fair city was hearin' a guy which lived in one of our flats callin' a stranger from the open country a hick. The Voice of the City, accordin' to this remarkable bozo, was the noise of the Times Square four-flushers tryin' to drown each other out, and New York's most prominent bluffs was by no means the Palisades. In short, says Alex, the overadvertised, heavily rouged, flashily dressed and blah-blahin' village of New York was made to order for a first-class, unspoiled, brainy, and cold-eyed rube like himself.

Well, that was that and from then on Alex turned everything he toyed with into pennies. Bein' by birth and inclination as close as a tie game, he soon had a bank roll which wouldst of drawed a polite nod from Rockefeller and, after sellin' the idea of matrimony to a girl which wouldst distract attention from the Grand Cañon, he opens a office and goes into the business of riddin' the world of failures.

"Alex Hanley, Inc.," were the gilt letters on the door of his deadfall, the three letters after his name bein' his motto, "Industry, Nerve, Confidence!" The customers provided the first and last ingredients, whilst Alex supplied the second in lavish quantities. The idea he worked on is as old as the hills and as seldom used by the handsome city chaps which likes easier goin' with less results. Alex figured that all of us have *one* trick we do better than the rest of the mob, and if we're not gettin' across it's because we're workin' at somethin' else. For the example, many's the tenth-rate banker might be the world's champion plumber if he found his buried talent. A second-class shippin' clerk might have it in him to be a sensational artist or a mediocre musician might have the undiscovered makin's of a successful lawyer and so on, as the tailor says.

So Alex wouldst take these dumb-bells apart, find out what was gummin' up the works or turn 'em out world beaters, draggin' down a murderous cut of the ensuin' loot for his services. That's all they was to his game, and whilst it might not *look* thrillin' —well, listen!

One afternoon I got wind of the sensational fact that my charmin' wife is goin' to have a bevy of her girl friends, none of which is sufferin' from lockjaw, up to the castle for the purposes of flauntin' a wicked teacup and partakin' of a alleged card game entitled "bridge." Now, whilst I like the speaker sex as well as Solomon ever did, I also like to get in a remark now and then when amongst company and not have to sit around like no dummy, forced to be satisfied with a occasional nod.

So immediately after noon rice, as the Chinese says, I put my hat on the place I bought it for and set sail for the great outdoors. On the ways out I meet the dowager empress of the kitchen, to the *viz*, the maid, and with her arms full of bundles she stops outside the door of the wife's room. Friend wife is dressin' or vice versa for this tea carnival and comes to the door in a gown which she figures is goin' to knock her girl friends for three bases. It knocked me for four! Whilst I am still dizzy gazin' at this dream of a opium fiend and wonderin' how in the wide, wide world she ever come to give *me* a tumble, the cold voice of the maid brings us back to everyday life again.

"From O'Goldberg & McEinstein's," she says, layin' down the packages. "C. O. D. two hundred dollars!"

"What's in them bundles—radium?" I says, clutchin' at my throat.

"Don't be any sillier than you can help," remarks the wife, handin' the maid a convenient check. "Those are favors for my bridge party."

"Two hundred fish for *favors*, hey?" I says, turnin' to the openly grinnin' maid which gets a great deal of innocent enjoyment out of watchin' married life in the tenth year. "Take this stuff back to O'Goldberg & McEinstein," I growls, "and tell 'em

we'll keep our jack and we don't want *nobody* to do us no favors. Make me?"

"Marie, you can go—leave the packages here!" snaps the wife. The maid's real name is Rebecca, but that's a tough one for a drawin'-room, so the wife calls her Marie for short. After she has went, the boss turns on me with a unmistakably angry frown. "I wish you wouldn't be constantly makin' those stupid remarks and showing the maid what a dumb-bell I married!" she says. "Don't you know what a favor is?"

"Sure," I says. "Somethin' you ain't never done for me!"

That went for a triple, and whilst she's fieldin' it, I examine the loot which the bridge players is goin' to cart away. One of the so-called favors which has nicked me for two hundred berries is a dish made by this guy Sterling which has the biggest silver factory in the world.

"You have no moan coming, because I spend a few pennies to entertain my friends," says the wife, whilst I'm turnin' this what not over in my hands. "The entire affair will cost less than two hundred and fifty dollars and the luckiest night you ever had in your life at poker you lost twice that much! Isn't that fruit dish cute? It only cost eighty-six-fifty, too. That goes to the biggest loser."

"The biggest loser at what?" I says.

"Why, silly," she says, usin' a old pet name, "the biggest loser this afternoon."

"Take it down and get *my* initials put on it, then," I says, wavin' the bill from O'Goldberg & McEinstein's. "I have already win this on the bit!"

Then so's in the order to avoid bloodshed, I took the air.

Well, I had the whole afternoon before me, and my choice of either goin' to a vaudeville show or down to the office of my cousin by wedlocks, Alex Hanley. I remembered that whilst now and then you will catch a terrible bill in vaudeville, Alex is always sure fire, so I motioned to a passin' taxi—that is, motioned for it to go ahead—got into the subway and went down to the boy wonder's office. I hadn't been a pleasant caller there for quite the while, and the first thing I notice is that he's got a new and eye-widenin' stenographer in the outer office.

Not bein' blonde proof, I presented her with a bewitchin' smile, but it failed to cause any panic. Instead I got a glance from a pair of steely blue eyes which wouldst of froze a three-alarm fire into a iceberg. At this critical minute, the door of the inner office opens and out steps no less than Alex himself. His hands is full of letters and, as usual, he looks busier than a four-headed cat at a bucket of cream.

"Well, Miss Wainright," he says, not seein' me, "I guess the Sampson case is about closed up. I've got the boy out of the note teller's department at the bank, and he's workin' on that patent churn of his at——" He flashes me and breaks off. "What are *you* doin' here, hey?" he scowls.

A fine, cousinly greetin', what?

"I come to see if you had any second-hand ink or the like you wanted to get rid of, you dizzy boob!" I says, with equal affection. "What d'ye think I'm doin' here? That's a swell way to welcome your cousin!"

"Er—I guess I'll get back to my correspondence," butts in Miss Wainright, evidently thinkin' blows wouldst be the next thing on the program.

"No—wait a minute," says Alex, layin' his hand on her arm. "I want you to meet my Cousin Alice's husband. You've heard me speak of her—a beautiful, sensible girl, and you'd never think she was wed to this —eh? As I say, you might as well meet him now and get it over with!"

You'd think I was scarlet fever, hey?

Well, after we have enjoyed the rare pleasure of meetin' each other, the charmin' Miss Wainright hurries to her typewriter and Alex takes me into his private cave in the midst of all the good-lookin' typists in the world. He then removes a six-bit cigar from his pocket and, after insertin' it in his mouth, he opens a drawer of his desk, fumbles around, and fin'ly shoves over to me a box of weeds such as sells six for a dime with seventy-five red certificates, four boxes of matches, a picture of Buffalo Bill, and a baseball score card throwed in. At that, the box is fixed so's you can only snatch one.

"Thanks!" I says, throwin' Alex's roperino in the wastebasket and lightin' a honest cigarette. "How's the ball and chain?"

Down comes his feet off the desk with a bang!

"How often have I told you not to refer to my wife like that?" he hollers. "A man which ain't got respect for——"

"How is it you knew what I meant, hey?" I butts in, with a grin. "How the so ever, if you're so wildly infatuated with your wife, what's the idea of keepin' yourself entirely

surrounded here by ravishin' janes all the time? This so-called office of yours looks more like back stage at the Follies than a business office, and every time I come down here you got a new one! You can't tell *me* you can keep your mind on no business letter when you're dictatin' to—well, let us take that little brunette over there, for the example."

"A occasional trip to the dry cleaners would do your kind a lot of good," says Alex. "If you seen a innocent lamb gambolin' on the green, you'd figure the spirits it was full of was not youth, but bought from a bootlegger! Bein' a typical wise guy—and you wise guys, by the way, is the main thing which makes the success of the boob possible —nothin' is level to you, not even a billiard table. To you the chorus girl which gets to be a star is always backed by some ancient Wall Street cut-up, the successful inventor stole all his ideas, every millionaire is merely a high-class crook, all artists have affairs with their models, and no girl can remain square in the movies.

"From this idiotic angle your type figures everything, and when the unsophisticated rube comes along you're a set-up for him! Because he come to New York from Succotash Crossin' instead of, say, Chicago, he gets no respect from you. You discount his ability, givin' him a chance to cash on the very fact that you underrate him. It's only when he tries to imitate you—tries to be a wise cracker himself, that the hick loses!"

"Listen," I says. "Don't rehearse them ten-minute 'Business Bombs' talks on me. What's all that apple sauce got to do with the fact that every stenog you hire looks more like she come direct from Mack Sennett instead of a business college?"

"Because," says Alex, gettin' up and beginnin' to walk back and forth across the floor in a effort to remember what he's sayin' so's that if it's any good he can repeat it at the next brokers' banquet he's invited to speak at, "because, bein' a human bein', I like beautiful things around me! I got to have stenographers, don't I? Well, then, why not get 'em beautiful as well as efficient? They refresh me, they refresh the people which comes here to do business with me, and they give the whole office a air of stimulation which has a wonderfully invigoratin' effect on the caller. In other words, they create a favorable impression and——"

"They is *one* caller, Alex," I says, "which wouldst find it all different! To wit: your wife. What d'ye suppose Eve wouldst say if she ever got a flash at these chore girls of yours?"

"I don't know," says Alex, walkin' over and openin' a door which says "File Room" on it. "Ask her!"

I gaze over his shoulder and all but swoon away when I see no less than Eve helpin' a couple of blond knock-outs with some papers.

"She's very much interested in my work," says Alex, "and I brought her down here to see just what we do and how we do it. Now is that evil mind of yours satisfied?"

"Alex," I says, "you win the beautiful chiffon ice pick! They's undoubtlessly a catch in it somewheres, but——"

"But nothin'!" he cut me off, closin' the door after Eve and me has exchanged waves of the hand. "Get rid of the idea that I hire these girls for their looks alone. Every one of them is a first-class stenographer, as a matter of course; but what's more important, they got brains and executive ability. They seems to be a idea amongst the ignorant that, whenever a woman is remarkably pretty, she's also practically senseless. Nothin'—outside of 'The Arabian Nights' —could be further from the truth. Cleopatra, for the example, fooled a lot of 'em which figured her stupid, and Antony wasn't the only Roman she made a Mark out of, by a long shot!"

"You tell 'em, Alex," I agrees. "Remember what Mark Antony said when he first met Cleopatra?"

"What?" says Alex, seemin'ly astonished that I have even heard of the famous after-dinner speaker.

"Well, the minute Mark got his breath," I says, "he shook his head and says, 'Woof—wait till Julius sees her!' "

I ducked the telephone book with the greatest of ease just as Miss Wainright, the guardian of the outer portals, comes noiselessly in, lays a pile of letters in front of Alex, and slides out again.

"Now take that young woman there," resumes Alex. "She's only been with me a short time, yet she's the most valuable employee I got. She understands thoroughly the work I'm doin' in redeemin' these human derelicts, and her woman's intuition and natural wit has been practically priceless to me in solvin' some difficult problems. Why,

you have no idea what a asset a woman of her ability and tact is to me in this game! She——"

"She'll about go out to lunch some day and come back married," I cuts in, with what is known as a sneer. "Them kind seldom lasts. I've had private secretaries of a similar sex myself, Alex, and just as I got 'em trained so's I could no more do without 'em than I could do without my right lung, some shippin' clerk or the like forced the muffled 'I do!' out of 'em!"

"This girl is different," says Alex. "She's no sixteen-year-old collector of movie heroes' photos, but a level-headed woman—beautiful, but about as easy moved as the Rocky Mountains! The snappy young salesmen and so forth which seemin'ly can't eat lunch alone tries their luck and then staggers away sufferin' from frostbite. My idea is that the girl has figured in a busted romance, and it's left her a bit hard boiled. Anyways, I'm payin' her a hundred dollars the week, so why *should* she get wed?"

"Search me," I says, yawnin' and gettin' up. "Prob'ly because they ain't much of a thrill in kissin' a pay envelope!"

We have walked into the outside office where Miss Wainright holds forth, when we notice a guy standin' in the middle of the room, gazin' at this girl which is busy boxin' the typewriter and apparently don't see him. This bird is as tall as the demands of the income-tax babies and as thin as your bank roll when you pay 'em. He ain't bad lookin' in a kind of out-of-town way, and could of greatly improved his appearance by turnin' a scissors out to graze on his long, black hair which hid his collar in the back. They is much more shine on the knees and elbows of his suit than they is on his shoes, and a battered soft hat clutched in a long, lean hand which also fondly clasped a umbrella, completed a picture which could hardly be called "The Height of Prosperity."

But this dumb-bell's appearance is much less interestin' than the way he's lookin' at the nerve-rackin' Miss Wainright. I've seen guys goaled by the sight of a pretty girl before, but this baby was absolutely knocked double cuckoo! Put either of his bulgin' eyes on the front of a auto and you'd get a ticket for not dimmin' the glare. He's moistenin' his thin lips with a tremblin' tongue, and his Adam's apple seems to be tryin' the difficult feat of climbin' out through his neck.

Then Miss Wainright happens to look around and her eyes falls on the newcomer, which don't say a word or flick a muscle. Her eyebrows comes together in a slight frown as she gets up from her desk, and I thinks here's where this guy gets chilled like I did when I first come in. On comes Alex's brain-turnin' secretary across the floor, and the strange goof looks like you could of amputated both his arms right then and he wouldst never of felt it.

"Who did you wish to——" begins Miss Wainright in that iced-sugar voice of hers, and then, as this guy's burnin' eyes bores through her, she stops, stammers, and a blush which begins at her neck and ends at her golden hair gives even *me* a thrill. The lovely but frosty eyes suddenly drops. Sweet papa—taken by a goofy-lookin' bozo like that, after all the collar-ad guys which must of tried to make her! The guy which can understand women can also understand what two flies says to each other when they meet on a windowpane, hey?

"Woof!" I whispers in the astonished Alex's ear. "There goes your private secretary, stupid! So that's the jane which was as easy to move as the Rocky Mountains, hey? Well——"

Alex grunts and pushes forward, bustin' the spell.

"Lookin' for some one?" he says to the hypnotist.

"I'm looking for Mister Hanley," says this guy, which evidently expects to find his man somewheres in Miss Wainright's face. "I have an appointment with him——"

"Your name Grimm?" asks Alex, "Philip Grimm?"

This bird nods in the antinegative.

"Come inside," says Alex. "You, too, Miss Wainright."

"Miss Wainright!" repeats Phil Grimm under his breath, like he wanted to memorize the name. The girl has recovered herself by this time, though, and she's all business again. A longin' look from Honorable Grimm gets him nothin' but a cold stare—prob'ly she's crazy mad at herself for bein' throwed out of her stride even for a second.

Well, they're all walkin' away from me, and as I come down for entertainment, I grabbed Alex by the arm and drawed him aside.

"Alex," I whispers, "I ain't seen you work for a long time. Ease me in on this, will you?"

"Will you promise to keep your mouth shut?" he says.

"I'll be as dumb as you look!" I answers, raisin' my hand.

But by that time we're in his den. Alex seats himself at his desk with Phil Grimm opposite, and I park in a chair near the window and the charmin' Miss Wainright.

"Eh—er—I came here, Mister Hanley," says Grimm, "directly as a result of your circular which I got in my mail about a week ago. Strangely enough, it came to me at a perfect psychological moment—at a time when I was desperate—ready to do anything!"

This was a bit new—Alex sendin' out circulars like a mail-order plant. I'd never know him to do nothin' so crude before.

"I've heard a great deal about you," goes on Monsieur Grimm, "or rather, read about your work. How you have taken scores of plodders—men who were miscast in life—and made them successful. I—that is no exaggeration, I trust?"

"Just what do you want me to do for you?" says Alex, snubbin' the question. "What's your trouble? Don't waste your time and mine with foolish questions. You believe I've did all that or you wouldn't be here. Tell your story in your own way from start to finish, just like you'd tell your doctor your symptoms! When you get all through, I'll tell you what to do. Don't try to hide nothin' or lie to me, because——"

"Sir!" interrupts Grimm indignantly. "Do I look like a liar?"

"Few liars does," says Alex, unruffled. "I'm simply warnin' you to stick to facts, because when you phoned me for a appointment, the other day, I had my investigatin' department look you up, and about the only thing I don't already know about you, Mister Grimm, is where you are goin' when you die. Git started!"

"If you already know all about me," says Grimm, lookin' a bit peeved at Alex's rough treatment, "what is the use of me telling you *anything?* Especially, before these—er—these other persons? I would prefer privacy—er——"

"I want you to tell me everything about yourself and your problem, young man," booms Alex, fixin' the gun-shy Grimm with a piercin' eye. "For the very reason that the report I have on you will enable me to check up on your truthfulness. One false statement and this interview comes to a end! As to the privacy, this here's as private as a crocodile's parlor. Miss Wainright is my secretary and will make notes as you go on. I'll also vouch for this big—ah—for the young man here. And now, my dear Mister Grimm, if you don't stop this quibblin' and begin your story, we'll call this conference over. When you get my bill, you'll realize I ain't jokin' when I say my time is valuable!"

"Very well, Mister Hanley," says Grimm, suddenly leanin' forward like he was glad to get the thing off his chest. "Here goes! A year ago I was happily married and the proprietor of a prosperous confectionery business in Hibblesdale, Massachusetts. To-day I have lost my wife, and I'm in debt for all my plant is worth, if not more. Brief enough?"

At the mention of the "happily married" thing, I shot a quick look at Miss Wainright, and I seen her bite her lip and then make a bluff at gropin' on the floor for her pencil. Bam, I thinks, the chance for her big romance is busted flat!

"That's the effect," says Alex, leanin' back and twiddlin' his thumbs. "Very good. Now for the cause. How did you happen to—ah—lose your wife?" he adds, like he can't understand such carelessness.

Plenty of interest on the part of Miss Wainright.

"Because I wasn't a success," says Grimm, with a sneer. "How many women will stick with a loser?"

"Most all of them—unfortunately!" pipes up Miss Wainright, and then gets busy with her notebook and pencil, her face the color of three hundred tomatoes. Alex glances at her surprised and nods to Grimm to go on.

"There—ah—there was another man?" he suggests gently to our stung visitor, whilst Miss Wainright sighs and shakes her head like she's terrible sorry for this guy.

"No," says Grimm shortly. "And I would advise that you insinuate nothing further along those lines. I'll tell you as briefly as possible just what occurred in the past year—in other words, why I am here seeking your assistance." With that he clears his throat a couple of times, pullin' his chair around so's he faces Miss Wainright, and durin' all the time he was talkin' he seldom if ever took his eyes off the girl's face. He seemed to me to be tryin' hard to square himself with her after that unfortunate crack about him bein' wed, but she kept lookin'

down at her notebook and never give him a tumble.

"Well," continues Grimm, "my antecedents and early history are of no interest to any one—not even to me. Suffice it to say that I have been of an inventive turn of mind since childhood—what *you* would call, I suppose, and what my wife sarcastically intimated, an impractical dreamer. While my schoolmates were puzzling over the three R's at home, nights, I was down in the basement of my father's factory—afterward mine—absorbed with what must have struck my family as a weird collection of test tubes, retorts, and various pieces of discarded machinery. In fact, when I was ten years old I was making most of my own toys and had many that were much more ingenious than those found in the shops. I——"

"Just a minute," butts in Alex. "Have any of your so-called inventions up to date been successful, financially or otherwise?"

Honorable Grimm flushes.

"They would have been," he says, "if I'd had the time and money to perfect them. But just as I'd have something worked out I'd have to drop it and give my attention to that infernal candy business left to me by my father. I'd have to stop work on a machine that might revolutionize one part of the confectionery industry, for example, to turn to selling caramels. Oh, the irony of it!"

"Humph!" snorts Alex. "I understand when you took over your father's infernal candy business, as you call it, it was clearin' somethin' like twenty-five thousand a year. You'd be surprised at the number of folks which would be highly satisfied to sell that many caramels. I'm—ah—slightly interested in a candy business myself and—why man, with a little enterprise you could have made——"

"Don't!" hollers Grimm, jumpin' up and beginnin' to walk back and forth across the floor. "I know just what you're going to say—you're going to tell me that I could have built up my father's business until in two years or so I'd have controlled the candy market, or something like that! My wife dinned that into my ears until—well, until she left me. We could have a town house, a yacht, automobiles, jewelry, Heaven knows what else, if I'd only drop this silly pottering around and throw myself into the business of selling candy. Imagine calling my life work 'silly pottering!'

"I'm not a salesman, I wasn't born to be one, and I never will be one! Money is not my god. I don't want millions. I want *fame*—I want to be known as a man who has done something no one else has done—I—oh, this must sound egotistical to you, so I'll drop it. But never until I was married did I realize how apt is the expression, 'filthy lucre.' Day and night, the vulgar pursuit of the dollar was urged upon me by the woman I had chosen for my life partner. Good heavens, there are other things in life besides money!"

"Yes," drawls Alex. "There are—*i. e.* the things it'll buy! Go on. As I understand your story to date, it's somethin' like this: your father died and left you a prosperous business; instead of applyin' yourself to it, you let it run itself into the ground whilst you did your dreamin' in the daytime instead of at night. That right?"

"Rather crudely put," snarls Grimm, "but essentially correct. The factory has been closed down for a month—not enough business to keep it going. But I——"

"Wait!" butts in Alex. "Like all idealistic theorists, whatever *that* is, you're longwinded. We got how you went broke all settled. Now, in a few truthful words, why did your wife leave you?"

"Ha!" snorts Grimm. "You're not as quick-witted as you pretend, or you'd never ask that question. As you have, I'll answer it as I did before—because I went broke!"

Miss Wainright makes a slight cluckin' noise in her throat, like she has her opinion of any woman which wouldst do a raw thing like that. Grimm flashes her a grateful smile, but she quickly turns her head.

"I find that hard to believe," says Alex, after a minute. "What prob'ly happened is that you broke your wife's heart with the way you let everything slide which might have meant so much to your future happiness and also with your neglect of her whilst you was fussin' around day and night with your alleged inventions. You had no time to take her around, and you no doubt was against her entertainin' much in your own home—you fellers usually don't want to be bothered with company. And on top of that, she sees your business slippin' away to nothin' and the debts pilin' up. Then again, I find from my investigations, that she comes from New York City. Well, it's quite a abrupt change from New York City to Hibblesdale, Massachusetts, for a young, spirited, pretty girl.

Yet you didn't allow for the effect of that change on your wife—did nothin' to make it up to her. Fin'ly, as I figure it, despairin' of bringin' you to yourself by pleadin' with you, she up and left you flat, hopin' *that* would bring you to your senses. Ain't that the way you figure it, Miss Wainright?"

The girl which Alex says was always there with priceless suggestions and advice, taps a yawn politely back into her pretty mouth.

"I don't know, I'm sure," she says, lookin' away from him.

Now that our hero has turned out to be wed, her interest has died completely out. Alex presents her with a puzzled frown, and then turns back to the victim.

"Do you—ah—would you want your wife to come back to you?" he asks Grimm.

This time I see the color vanish for a second from Miss Wainright's face and, prob'ly without thinkin', she leaned forward with parted lips and eager eye. Grimm takes a long look at her, kind of shakes his head, and then faces Alex.

"Yes," he says, in a firm voice, "I want her back!"

This is the last thing in the world I expected him to say, when, accordin' to him, said wife has left him flat, and here three feet away is a unqualified knock-out which a blind man could see was overboard for him. He had scarcely said the last word when Miss Wainright gives a little shiver, gets up, and looks over his head at Alex.

"I—er—excuse me, Mister Hanley," she stammers. "But I—I have an important phone call to make. If you want me later, I'll be ready to go over my notes with you. You have a directors' meeting at four."

And with a cold nod to me and the white-faced Grimm, she blows.

"Well," says Alex, bringin' the Candy Kid back to earth again, "I guess I have all the important facts. You want to get on your feet and you want your wife back. All right! In the first place, you're heavily in debt, ain't you?"

"Yes," says Grimm, comin' out of his trance. "But I can gradually pay off every one, if you can get me started again in some way——"

"Gradually nothin'!" snaps Alex. "We'll get you out of debt first and started in somethin' afterward. Could you sell your factory for enough to pay your creditors?"

"I suppose so," sighs Grimm. "But I can't give up the plant, much as I loathe it. You see, it's always been a sort of anchor to windward for me—I mean, I could always raise money on it whenever I needed it, and I guess I usually needed it. It gives me a certain sense of security to know its mine, even if the machinery is idle and the doors are closed. Besides, if I sold the factory now and squared up all around, I'd only have about a hundred dollars left to my name. The only value the place has to-day is what the machinery and fixtures are worth. There is no—er—good will, I believe you call it—to sell."

"What a crime," says Alex, shakin' his head. "Your poor father, which give his life to buildin' up the business, must be turnin' over in his grave! Now, Mister Grimm, what is your latest invention?" he asks, pressin' a button on his desk.

"Well," says Grimm, brightenin' up, "I have partially completed a machine for the manufacture of bonbons that will honestly create a sensation when it's perfected. Then I'm working on a preparation that will positively prevent chocolates and other soft candies from melting, whatever the temperature of the place they are kept in—storeroom, show case and so forth. I also have a——"

"I see—I see," Alex cuts him off. "Nothin' definite, nothin' concrete. Well, I don't think we'll have much difficulty in settin' you on the right track, Mister Grimm," he goes on. "I wish all my clients was as easy to straighten out as you are!"

Just then Miss Wainright enters, glances immediately at Grimm, flushes and turns to Alex.

"You rang for me?" she says.

"Yes," says Alex, "ah—get me a power of attorney." He swings around on Grimm. "I have decided to help you, young man," he tells him; "but I must insist that from now on you obey my orders without hesitation or quibble!"

"Very well," says Grimm, seemin'ly catchin' a little of Alex's pep. "What are they?"

"First," says Alex, "we'll sell your defunct factory and pay off your creditors. The plant is of no use to you whatever and never was. You're not a business man, Grimm, not a executive, and in tryin' to be what you're not you've let your natural talents—which runs in a entirely different direction—go to seed. That's what I'm goin' to correct!"

"But if I let the factory go and use the

proceeds to pay every one off at once, I'll be penniless!" moans Grimm.

"That's all right," says Alex. "You'll also be out of debt, and no man is worth anything to himself or anybody else whilst he's in debt. Your mind's not on your job or profession whilst you owe people money. You yourself said a little while ago that you frequently had to stop in the midst of perfectin' a invention to go out and sell candy so's to keep away threatenin' creditors. And as to your bein' penniless—well, you won't be that way long, because you're goin' to work before the end of this week!"

"Going to *work?*" gasps Grimm. "Where?"

"In the experimental laboratories of the American Candy Company," says Alex, "where your inventive talents will be gave full sway and where, bein' paid a good salary, you won't have nothin' to do but—ah—invent!"

"What?" hollers Grimm. "Sacrifice my independence for——"

"You'll do as I say or I'll wash my hands of you!" bawls Alex. "Your independence has been about as much use to you as another nose would be. As a result of bein' your own boss you got over your head in debt, ruined a flourishin' business, and lost your wife! Let me tell you, Grimm, you're not the type which succeeds with independence—you need a hand at the throttle and they's not only many men, but many nations the same way!

"I don't believe that a man has to be *born* a success, but I do know that he has to be born with the ability to capitalize himself or some one else has got to do it for him. Half the world's failures is the result of the lack of a guidin' hand to divert their gifts in the right direction, and everybody in the world has some peculiar gift which can be made to spell success! Some men knows instinctively what their gift is; to others it has to be showed, and that's the class *you* belong to. Now your trick happens to be a—ah—inventive mind. All right, we'll put you where that talent of yours will get yourself and the world at large the most results!"

"Very interesting," remarked Grimm, with a sarcastical smile. "But if you think for a minute that I'm going to bury my personality by becoming a mere number on the pay roll of a corporation, where whatever credit due to my inventions would be given to the departmental head—if, indeed, my ideas were not stolen outright before I was kicked out—you are very much mistaken."

"Get rid of the silly idea that to work for a corporation is to sacrifice your chances for success!" howls Alex. "Did Charley Schwab and a million others, includin' many of our railroad presidents which started as brakemen, sacrifice theirs? Let me tell you, young man, *that the hardest thing in this world is to keep from gettin' over if you have the goods!* It's practically impossible. You do somethin' better than any one else and, as Emerson says, the world will make a beaten track to your door if you live on top of the north pole. And if you happen to be out when the world calls, take it from me it'll wait!"

"But——" begins Grimm, kind of dazed.

"But nothin'!" bawls Alex, now hittin' on all cylinders. "You won't be workin' *for* this corporation, you'll be workin' *with* 'em—which is the attitude every man should adopt toward his job. Instead of the crude, homemade workshop you had in Hibblesdale, you'll have one of the finest laboratories in the country in which to develop your ideas, and instead of jeerin' neighbors which thought you a nut you'll have a interested and sympathetic audience, ready to back your brains with their money. Where you had to stop in Hibblesdale just as a invention was reachin' perfection because your scant finances prevented you from buyin' materials and the like, you'll have a corporation willin' to spend a *million* on your ideas, if you really have the goods. Here's a lifetime chance for you, Grimm. Opportunity is bangin' at your door with a ax! Sign this power of attorney and I'll run up to Hibblesdale, dispose of your factory, and we'll square accounts with your creditors. Then I'll place you with the American Candy Company and the rest is up to you!"

"But about my wife——" mutters the bewildered Monsieur Grimm.

"Any idea where she is?" asks Alex.

"Only in a vague sort of way," sighs Grimm, avoidin' Miss Wainright's hurt gaze. "I know that she's here in New York, and as she was a stenographer before our marriage, she's probably——"

"Wait till we see what you do with the American Candy Company," butts in Alex. "You show some speed, and we'll guarantee to find her—won't we, Miss Wainright?"

She nods.

"I, too, think it would be better to wait

until you have accomplished something before—er—attempting a reconciliation with your wife, Mister Grimm," she says, "since it was your failure that caused the break—as you say."

Grimm signs the power of attorney, gets up, and holds his hand out to Alex.

"All right!" he says. "May I ask how you are going to get me placed with the American Candy Company?"

"Sure!" grins Alex, shakin' his hand. "I'll have the chairman of the board of directors *make* a place for you. And now you run along and I'll notify you when I'm ready for you. In the meanwhile, if you want any advice or suggestions while I'm up in Hibblesdale, run in and see Miss Wainright. She's a wonderful young woman—knows the candy business, too—and I'm sure she can help you a lot."

"I'm sure she can!" agrees Grimm. And Miss Wainright seemed strangely upset when the door closed after him.

A few days after that I could of swear I see them together at the theater!

The Grimm Bonbon Filler, which I bet half of you never heard tell of—showin' that Alex was right about fame bein' fleetin', was the result of Phil Grimm's connection with the American Candy Company. This here machine picks up raw sugar and flavorin' and turns out a wrapped box of bonbons or somethin' equally thrillin', and it's in use in every candy factory of any size from here to Samoa. Oh, yes, Phil gets a royalty on every machine sold. Then they's "Grimmaces," them little candy peppermint things which sells for a jitney the package and has twice the circulation of a New York evenin' newspaper. Phil doped them out, too. Also they's—but that's ample. The point is, that placed in his proper surroundin's, this guy proceeded to set the river ablaze like all them boobs does which Alex takes hold of.

No less than the American Candy Company itself was the buyer of Phil's confectionery foundry and one day he drops into Alex's office on his way back to Hibblesdale, where he's goin' to superintend the installation of some of his own machines in his explant. Royalties from his trick candies and mixers has made him better off than he ever was in his life, and he's got between nineteen and fifty-four assistants under him at one of the swellest laboratories in the U. S. Oh, the boy is sittin' pretty, they's no mistake about that part of it! His whole appearance has changed and you'd never think this peppy, classy-dressed young bozo was the same down-and-out moaner which dragged himself into Alex's office a short time before.

"I don't know how I'll ever repay you for what you've done for me!" he says to Alex, wringin' his paw. "Why, I'm a new man! With the responsibilities of that darn factory off my shoulders I've been free to go ahead with my——"

"I understand your wife has came back to you, too," interrupts Alex, with a side glance at Miss Wainright, which flushes and, walkin' over to the window, begins to look out at New York. I sure felt sorry for that girl, believe me! The wide, wide world could see that she had fell hard for this Grimm baby and, after givin' him all her time and advice whilst he was gettin' lined up on his job, here he gives her the air as soon as he gets over. Tough, eh?

"Yes," says Grimm. "My wife's back again, God bless her—and that's another thing I have to thank you for." He looks over to where Miss Wainright is standin', and smiles. "We certainly owe Mister Hanley a lot, don't we, honey?" he says.

"Honey?" I hollers, before I thought. "What the——"

Monsieur Grimm turns and frowns at me.

"Certainly," he says coldly. "Have you any objection to—oh, I see—er—allow me to present my wife!"

Sweet mamma!

Well, a little while later, after they have both left, Alex stakes me to one of his real cigars and, slammin' down the cover on his desk, gets ready to knock off for the day.

"What *I* can't get over," I says, "is that dumb-bell comin' down here to see what you could do for him and runnin' right into his missin' wife! Fate's a wonderful thing, hey?"

"I don't know," says Alex. "From what I hear I guess it is—but Fate had nothin' to do with this! I know you'll never gimme no peace till I tell you how this all come about, so I might as well enlighten you now. This man Grimm's wife come in here one day to apply for a job as secretary. In talkin' to her I drawed out the whole story of how and why she left her husband, and I got very much interested in her case. I looked up Grimm and his Hibblesdale factory, and my interest increased, because I knew the American Candy Company was

tryin' to take over some plant in that part of the country to handle their New England business.

"I also found out they had been tryin' for some time to buy out Grimm with no success—you heard what he said about sellin' out when he first come in here. He couldn't have been won over in any ordinary way in a million years! Another thing, I was convinced that this fellow was far above the average crack-brained inventor with a thousand useless schemes—you see, I pumped his wife pretty thoroughly—and I figured a man like that would be a big asset to the corporation, where his inventive genius might result in some labor-savin' device or a trick candy which would give the American Candy Company the bulge on competition.

"Well, Grimm's wife and me got together, and I mailed him a circular letter which was calculated to touch on just the problems which was worryin' him. Of course, he thought I had mailed out thousands like the one he got, whereas that was the first and only circular which ever left this office or ever will—you ought to know that I never circularize nobody. He come here and you know the rest. I was responsible for his wife's cold attitude toward him at first, because I wanted him to have some incentive to step fast.

"Now they're together again and happy, he's successful and got more money than he ever had in his life, whilst the American Candy Company got a ideal factory very cheap and the almost priceless services of Mister Philip Grimm. The chairman of the board of directors of the corporation which made the openin' for Grimm and bought his factory, was rewarded with a large block of stock, by the way, for puttin' across a mighty shrewd deal. They should clear half a million this year on them little Grimmaces alone. In other words, we're all set all around!"

"*We're* all set, hey?" I says. "Where do *you* get off?"

"Ah-hah!" observes Alex, grimlike. "Remember me sayin' I was interested in the confectionery business myself? Yes? Well, I happen to be the chairman of the board of directors of the American Candy Company! Tell Alice we'll be up for dinner to-morrow night." He reaches in his pocket and takes out a package of them little peppermints which made Phil famous. "Have a Grimmace?" he says.

That's all.

A new series of stories by H. C. Witwer will start in the next issue.

A MATTER OF NAMES

JACK HOME, of San Francisco, is a globe-trotter who has tried his hand at mining, lumbering, and exploring, and, as is usually the case with men of that kind, has developed a healthy hatred of snobbishness.

On one of his trips through British Columbia he encountered Mr. Brown-Wythe-Brown, a descendant of the British family of that name and a highly objectionable type of snob. Home, having to transact business with him, stood for his insufferable airs as long as he could, which was about eighteen minutes.

"Now, see here, Brown!" exclaimed Home, intending to argue one of the clauses in their contract, but he got no farther.

"I say, old chap," the other protested, waving his monogramed cigarette, "I'll have to ask you not to call me Brown. Kindly remember my name is Brown-Wythe-Brown."

Home apologized and waited for his chance. It came a moment later when the Englishman began, "Now, Home——"

"I say, old chap," said Home sweetly, "I'll have to ask you not to be so brief. Kindly remember I prefer to be called Home-Sweet-Home."

The Werewolf's Cave

By Edison Marshall

Author of "The Man of the North," "Folk of the Gray Sage," Etc.

To achieve happiness, a man must fit his environment. In the city of his youth, "Wolf" Darby was a tragic failure; yet when he first entered the wilderness of the North, he knew that he had found his Lost Land—the land of his troubled dreams. Happiness awaited him there, and desperate strife, too, for it is the law of the Red Gods that the people of the wilderness must fight to live. In the telling of a story of this sort, Mr. Marshall is at his best.

(A Five-Part Story—Part I.)

The Werewolf—half beast, half man—crouched huge and black against the snow.—From a Medieval Legend.

CHAPTER I.

AS the wind goes over grass a little shiver of expectancy passed over the courtroom. There was a faint rustle of straining bodies, leaning forward in rapt attention; and the two attorneys—Rankin for the defense and Moore the prosecutor—turned their eyes full upon the quiet, thoughtful face of the judge. Rankin had asked for leniency for the prisoner, and every person in the courtroom knew that he had put his full powers into the appeal. Moore had asked only that the State do its duty, administering full justice to the guilty prisoner at the bar.

For an instant no one looked at Darby; and it was a curious fact that he did not look at the court. He had risen to receive his sentence, and now, as the crowd shivered and strained, he stood gazing out the clear, sunlit pane of the window. From where he stood he could watch the slow unfolding of a phenomenon more wonderful than any work of man, a drama more momentous than this that had brought the crowd to the court to-day.

Not many afternoons this rainy spring had the clouds broken apart and revealed the mountains. Ben Darby had looked westward from the window of his cell—throughout the long days of his imprisonment—but always the rain clouds had hung low, sullen, and drear. It was rather astonishing that the snow-capped range should choose to emerge from its dark curtains in this moment of all others—as he stood to receive his sentence.

It looked like a frame-up on the part of some erratic destiny—bringing this promise of hope and life in this moment of falling darkness. He saw the first wavering of the clouds as of a curtain in a theater; he watched them break apart, the sun slant through with unearthly beauty, and the white peaks emerge, one by one, into vivid focus against the sky line. It was curious how near they seemed—how straight the sight went home to him.

But all at once he started, lifting his face to that of the man on the bench. Judge Horton was beginning to speak. The crowd had seemingly stopped breathing.

The thrill hounds had rallied, row after row of them, just as he might have expected. His was just the sort of crime to draw the curious: masterful, clean-cut, involving the mighty rather than the humble, offering scare-head possibilities to the newspapers. Though it hadn't been sordid or ghastly, at least it was daring, sensational. The tiger diamond of the Willowbys'—newest of the newly rich—had been played up so often in print that anything that concerned it was *news*—news of the raciest and the best. The daring theft of the stone, the cunning with which "Wolf" Darby had laid his plans, his final downfall through an associate's treachery had been first-page material for many a day.

He was aware that the judge was studying his face, and frankly Ben returned his gaze. To save his life the latter could feel no rancor toward him. Ben could only remember that he had lost in a certain attractive gamble and that now he was about to pay the price. He rather liked Judge Horton's face. As is the case with most men in whom great authority has been vested for many years it was tranquil, strong, passionless rather than vengeful.

Horton, who had learned to read human nature, found himself studying the prisoner before him with even more than usual interest. He was used to seeing viciousness in the faces of the prisoners brought before him, but he could not see the least trace of it in Ben. This youth was not, obviously, the usual delinquent that committed Seattle's crimes. His face was neither flat and dull, nor coarse and brutal. But it was vivid; never a face to miss in a crowd.

It perplexed him a little, and disturbed him, too. The face was bronzed and rather deeply lined under a shock of carelessly combed, coal-black hair; yet it was good, clean-cut—even kindly and friendly. Crime had left no vicious imprint upon it. But strangest of all, Horton couldn't get away from the idea that it was an honest face—the face of a man whose thoughts were honest and whose word was good.

With growing astonishment he regarded Ben's eyes. He was not given to keeping the whole court waiting while he thought of a prisoner's eyes. He couldn't have told why they intrigued and puzzled him. They had a quality of strangeness—elusive but undeniable—and they looked squarely into his own. They showed dark in the vivid light from the window; they were deep, and likely enough they held potentialities for deep and tremendous passions. Yet they were rather wistful eyes—as of one who had lost something very dear.

Then Judge Horton drew himself together and opened his lips to speak. The youth was unquestionably guilty. He had never tried a clearer case. He was there to uphold the law, not to balance inner motives. His eye fell once to the prisoner's form, noted his powerful yet agile body, then his smooth voice rolled out over the courtroom.

"Ben Darby, I am about to sentence you for the crime of which you have been found guilty by a jury of your peers," he began in the old Horton way. "I have always held it true that in fixing a sentence I serve the ends of justice by telling, publicly, my motives and reasons for fixing it as I do."

He paused, and the crowd relaxed. Ben stood with lifted face.

"The law is not only retributive," the judge went on. "It is also corrective. Therefore I hold it the duty of the judge to explain to the prisoner the reason for the sentence so that he may see the justice behind it. This court is as desirous for the prisoner to know that he has received justice as for any other person to know it, any attorney or plaintiff that hears these words.

"We want him to know that he is paying a just price for his crime against the law; that he has neither fleeced the court nor been outraged by it. If the prisoner can leave this room without bitterness toward the laws of this land, and the courts that uphold them, the better chance there is of his regeneration and reformation. Besides, with every rightful sentence, rightfully given, the public acquires a greater respect for law.

"You, Ben Darby, have shown no respect for law. Perhaps, if it lay within the power of the human mind to see clearly enough into the motives behind any one crime, I would find that such was your greatest offense. You are about to pay the price for that disrespect.

"Just now you have listened to a masterly appeal for leniency. I want you to know why that appeal cannot, largely, be granted. Your attorney has pointed out that you were not a criminal in the accepted sense of the word, that you didn't habitually prey on your fellow human beings, that you have been a power in, but not a part of, the degraded life of the Tenderloin, and that you have never shed blood or inflicted physical pain on your victims.

"Evidence has shown, just as your attorney has said, that you have always despoiled the rich rather than the poor, mostly turning your attention to the theft of famous jewels. He has said that you committed these crimes more from an impulse of adventure than through a desire for illicit gain. He has pointed out that you went into your crimes with the desire to overcome difficulty and brave danger. He has spoken of your youth—how your career has been entirely an expression of youthful vitality and spirit. Strange as it may seem to this court, I personally believe that con-

ception is true. Darby, I do not think you are a criminal in the accepted sense.

"I am fully aware of your reputation in the underworld—how there you are known as Wolf Darby because of the cunning and craft, as well as boldness that has characterized your efforts and which has brought your fellows with an amazing servility to your feet. From them we also hear of a wolflike ferocity that you have sometimes shown in your fights with men of your sphere. I know, and every man in this court knows, that there is an adventurous spirit under your skin that has brought you to your downfall; and that beneath the exterior of what appears a healthy young business man there are the fires of seething ferment.

"But it is my duty to tell you that none of these things can be taken into consideration now. The restlessness you showed as a boy, the spirit of adventure that has made you the leader of the underworld, might have found a legitimate and worthy expression in some other time and clime. It might make you a reputation on a battlefield, and it would have been of the greatest advantage in the old West; but the spirit of the wolf that your associates saw in you only brought you to grief in the settled régime of civilization. You are out of place in Seattle, Darby, in the twentieth century. There is only one thing to do with such men as you—to put them where they may no longer show disrespect to the law.

"It would only be presumption for the law to enter into motives behind a crime. That lies with a court far higher than any court of this earth. You brought the savage laws of the wolf pack to bear in the settled quietude of the city. It didn't do, Darby. Civilization was too much for you. Laws must be enforced so that civilization may not crumble. Law that is not immutable is not law, and it must not know the meaning of laxity. You must pay the price of your crime, with the idea not only to teach you to respect the law, but that so all others may take example.

"Ben Darby, I hereby sentence you to five years in the penitentiary at Walla Walla."

CHAPTER II.

There was a great housecleaning in the dome of the heavens one memorable night that flashed like a jewel from the murky desolation of a rainy spring. The little winds came in troops, some from the sea, some with loads of balsam from the great forests of the Peninsula, and some, quite tired out, from the stretching sage plains to the east, and they swept the sky of clouds as a housekeeper sweeps the ceiling of cobwebs. Not a wisp remained.

The Seattle citizenry, for the first time in some weeks, recalled the existence of the stars, which emerged in legions and armies, all the way from the finest diamond dust to great white spheres that seemed near enough to reach up and touch. Little forgotten stars that had hidden away since Heaven knows when in the deepest recesses of the skies came out to join in the celebration until a magnificent moon rose in the east, too big and too bright to compete with.

It was not just a crescent moon, about to fade away, or even a rain moon—one of those sitting straight up in the sky so that water can run out as out of a dipper. It was at the full, preposterously large and round, and it made the whole city, which is rather like other cities in the daylight, seem like a place of enchantment. It was so bright that the electric signs along Second Avenue were not even counterattractions.

No living creature, who looked at it, was wholly unmoved by it. Wary young men, crafty and slick as foxes, found themselves proposing to their lady friends before they could catch themselves; and maidens who had looked forward to several years more of independent gayety found themselves accepting. Old tomcats went wooing, old spinsters got out old letters, old husbands thought to return and kiss their wives before venturing down to old, moth-eaten clubs.

But with no one in the city was the influence of the moon more potent than with Ben Darby, once known as Wolf Darby in certain questionable sections of the city, and now four days out of the penitentiary at Walla Walla. The moon had always had a mysterious influence on him. And this fact was the one thing of his existence that Ben would have found hardest to explain and which seemed to have its being in the deepest, most mysterious realms of his spirit.

Long before the gray walls of the prison had closed round him he had known of it, but it was not a secret that he could tell his fellow prisoners. He knew perfectly that he could not put it into words, even if it had been the sort of thing that a reserved man could tell his fellows. He remembered that

it was even too great a secret to tell his invalid mother in the far-gone days of his boyhood that now seemed as of another existence. He had only known one living creature that had seemed to share it with him, and that was a dog that a kindly uncle had given him and which had died of old age fifteen years before.

The dog, he remembered, had always lifted his nose toward the moon, howling. To Ben's sick mother the cry was a discord to shatter the nerves and upset the temper; yet, as a boy, he himself seemed to have an instinctive understanding of it. There was a meaning for him in the long-drawn, disconsolate cry—sometimes it hovered so close to him, just at the border of his thought, that he felt he could almost put it into words. The sound was never unmusical to him. Indeed, it seemed to find an echo in his own spirit: it seemed to be the voice of his own little-understood desires.

It was a queer flood of emotions that always swept him when he saw the silver sphere. It was always as if something very dear had been lost to him, as if he had been carried far away from the place where he ought to be, and the moon recalled it to him. But it was a long way off—this other place that he knew about in his secret self. He could not reach it by mere earthly journeys. Rather it seemed separated from him by the years—years past counting, not of one life but of a thousand lives. Could it be that through some accident of birth he had been exiled from his rightful home?

The judge had called him restless—perhaps the word described him. When he stopped and thought about it he remembered that he had always been restless, more restless than the wild duck when the north wind presages the coming of winter. There was always an itch in his muscles that was never soothed, a yearning and a sense of confinement and repression that was never quite allayed. But it was long ago that he had felt these things most. The prison had likely crushed them out of him for good.

It was curious how he used to slip out the door at night, and how he would go stealing down the darkest alleys and most unfrequented side streets, always seeking for something he could never find. He had always found it hard to go to sleep at night. It seemed to him that in the early night hours, when most of his fellow city dwellers were beginning to be drowsy and dull, some sort of delicious fever would steal into his veins and extinguish in an instant any possibility of sleep. But it *was* hard to stay awake in the long, dull hours of daylight. Particularly in his earlier years he could hardly keep his eyes open during the business day.

Insomnia, his distressed mother called it, and Ben had never questioned but that she was right. Insomniacs, however, very rarely have to fight down with sheer will power a desire to go crawling over the roof tops in the mystery of the moon. They do not lie with leaping blood and pounding heart, every nerve tingling with a blind craving to be up and out of the stifling closeness of the bedroom. The same impulse had carried him into adventure—first into harmless, boyish episodes at which the court would laugh; then into the daring depths of crime. He had never been a criminal in instinct, though; only an adventurer; but he had paid the full price for the last little thrill of his nerves, the last little leaping of his blood.

Wolf Darby his companions had called him, in recognition of certain traits they saw in him. But they would never call him that again. Surely the last five years had crushed out of him all impulse for boyish adventure, all courage and spirit and those strange, restless promptings that used to send him forth into the darkened streets, at night, and it was curious that he still remembered the stir and thrill of the moon. With the aid of the prison discipline he had fought all these impulses down, crushed them back into some secret part of himself from which they must never emerge to trouble him again. He had resolved to go straight.

As the judge had said, the "outlaw" part of him would only bring him to grief. The chance to express it on the battle front was gone: the cloud of war had broken and passed during his imprisonment. The wolf under his skin had no place in the busy centers of civilization. He mustn't let it draw him into crime again. He must keep the natural, honest side of himself in the ascendancy.

But at the end of four days he had learned a bitter lesson; namely, that the prison, in reforming him, had also branded him. It was not so easy to go straight, after all. His five-year term had been served, yet its stigma still clung to him. He had paid the price like a man, but justice was not content. By its own inclemency would it drive him into crime again?

The spring of 1921 was not an auspicious one for the unemployed. Ben had returned home in the moment when the business depression was at its worst; and for four days he had tramped the streets in search of any kind of job. Where there was an opening his prison record had irremediably damned him.

Did it pay to be honest, after all? Ben had never been a liar, and for these four days he had made the disastrous mistake of giving an honest answer to a prospective employer's questions. Always the questions came the same way—first, if he had served in the late war. Usually his negative answer concluded the conference. Jobs were scarce, and ex-service men must be given the preference. Once he had said openly that he had just completed his term in prison; and the irate employment man had driven him like a cur from the office. To his great amazement he found that he was not even eligible for peace-time military service. As a calling it had seemed to offer the greatest chance of happiness to one of his restless, adventurous nature; but Uncle Sam could not employ a felon.

Seemingly every gate except that of crime itself was closed to him. He could not live without work. The three hundred dollars that had come to him by inheritance during his prison term and which he carried with him would soon be spent. But the economic problem was not the worst. Men are a gregarious species, and an overwhelming loneliness had come upon him. He wanted human companionship with a desire that was like a scourge, yet in all this mighty city there was not one to give it to him. He felt no undercurrent of human companionship in his talk with prospective employers. This companionship was present between the beggar and the rich man who gave him alms, between the king and his humblest subject; and it dwelt, unseen and unnoticed, in every crowd that surged down Second Avenue, so universal and eternal that human beings are no more aware of it than the air they breathe; but because for him it was missing, Ben felt its absence like a stabbing pain. He was a jailbird; and his fellow human beings scarcely recognized him as one of their own breed.

It was the kind of thing that the souls of human beings can endure only so long—and Ben was breaking under the strain. Again and again he found himself remembering the old days before his prison sentence. He need only turn down a certain street he knew, cross an alley, and follow a darkened thoroughfare into a region of cheap lodging houses, and there he would find social intercourse a plenty. The people of the underworld had not forgotten Wolf Darby.

Yet the very thought of going back to his old life was hateful to him. Only too well he knew that the mazes of crime would ever deepen about him if he took the first downward step. True, he had been simply a power in, and never a part of, the underworld; but it would claim him, body and soul, if he went back to it. He had been sent to prison just in time: otherwise the full degradation of the life would have got to him already.

He was naturally honest, naturally kindly and friendly in spite of the ferment of adventure that sparkled like the bubbles of wine in his veins. But the tiger's claws would soon tear these traits from him. He wanted to hold his head up among decent men. Because circumstances were forcing him down into the mazes of crime, instead a bitterness unutterable descended and engrossed him. It was a bitterness that went right down to the soul of the man, to the inner springs of being. Only spiritual darkness lay ahead for him to-night—a realization of utter failure and impending degradation. No way was open, no path to manhood and self-respect.

Yet his eyes were not blinded to the beauty of the great white sphere now rolling so grandly above the distant buildings. Never had he felt its influence more keenly; his very bitterness and despair seemed to accentuate it. Just for a moment he halted in his weary tramping to regard it: standing erect, a tragic but imposing figure in the wealth of moonlight. Then he tramped on.

He had no desire to seek rest in a hotel. His only impulse was to walk on and on, perhaps to escape from the crowds in which he felt so lonely and estranged. Walking so swiftly that passers-by turned to stare at him, he headed into the North End, reaching at last the water front below Queen Ann. Then he turned north along the docks, passed old Rope Walk, and through the suburb of Ballard, coming out at last on the Great Northern Railroad tracks, running toward Vancouver and the Canadian border. He stood an instant on the crossing with every intention of turning immediately back. It

had not even occurred to him to venture on farther. This was the outer limit of the city.

Still—the night was beautiful, and the moon was in the sky.

He paused, enthralled by the mystery of this moonlit realm. All the meadows were ensilvered by the pale radiance, the steel rails gleamed, the treetops seemed to have white, molten metal poured on them. Curiously, he could not take his eyes off these moonlit trees. They were some way thrilling to him—stirring. Perhaps in his Lost Land the moon shone on the trees this same way.

No prison walls around him to-night! The high buildings behind him, pressing one upon another, had served to preserve the feeling of imprisonment, but it was quite gone now. There were only the moon and the stars and an occasional mellow gleam from the window of a home. The air was marvelously sweet. Clover was likely in blossom in near-by fields. He breathed deep, an unknown delight stealing over him. He stole on farther, into the mystery of the night. For a moment he had quite forgotten these last four days of bitterness, the prison and his loneliness. He advanced with stealing steps, ravished, tingling, and almost breathless with an inner and inexplicable excitement. The north star seemed to beckon him on.

But all at once he paused, half in disappointment, half in fear of himself. Seemingly Fate had cheated him after all—laid an ambush for him that he could not possibly escape. Three hundred yards farther down the track a little fire gleamed and danced, and shadowed forms were sitting beside it. Evidently the moonlight had decoyed him here only to lead him into the mazes of his old life, among the dwellers of the underworld.

He knew the type of men that sat about crackling camp fires in the "jungles" of the right of way. They were not men to exclude companionship from an ex-convict. Few of them, indeed, had failed to look at life, one time or another, through the barred window of a cell. They were of the breed he had used to know and rule—gangmen, lowly tramps, petty thieves.

There was still time to turn back. To go on meant to fall in with them, follow them back to their native slums, or else wander with them to another city where his old life could be relived with greater safety. He stood motionless on the right of way, his blood surging with mighty impulses through his veins.

"Oh, what's the use?" he suddenly said, aloud.

These men would give him companionship, at least. And there was nothing left but failure for him under the law. The prison had branded him. His plan to live straight had been only a dream! He might as well give up now as later.

He hastened on down the track toward the circle of firelight.

CHAPTER III.

The three men about the fire glanced up as Ben approached, and mostly he knew them very well. Seemingly they were only tramps of the most ordinary sort, and the pot of water over the fire indicated that they were about to cook supper. Oh, he knew this breed, from crown to foot, from cowardly soul to stupid brain.

He slowed up his gait and looked coldly into their ruddy faces. He knew just how to handle them. In an instant he was swept with a sense of mastery: he could bend them to his will just as he used to bend the gangsters of the underworld before his imprisonment. They were returning his stare, their lips drawn in an insolence they did not feel; but in an instant they would look away. Their courage would ooze out of them. Already the two younger men had glanced down.

He turned his eyes squarely into those of the third tramp; and at once he felt the first stir of quickening interest. The third of the trio seemed to be a white-haired, old wanderer of sixty years or more, and there was neither insolence nor a trace of fear in his gaze. Rather it was interested; even friendly.

Ben decided he would try no further to stare the old man out of countenance. He suddenly knew that here was one who would give him gaze for gaze without the slightest intention of cringing before him. And all at once a cracked, old voice spoke in the stillness.

"What's the matter, sonny?" he asked, not unkindly. "Don't you want to set down?"

Ben found himself warming all over with intuitive friendliness. "I'd be glad to," he

admitted. "I'll warm up a second in front of your fire."

He strode farther into the circle of firelight. Once more the two younger tramps looked up. Mostly the insolence was gone from their faces; and Ben thought they seemed somewhat perturbed and apprehensive. They were lightweights of similar type, brutal gangsters if the opportunity offered, but not courageous enough for really daring crime—just the dregs of the underworld of some great city. Both had strong bodies, above medium size, coarse features and bullet heads, and the battered ears and twisted lips of their kind.

Ben found himself wishing that he was armed. Sometimes even such a cowardly type as this will do bold things if reassured by the feel of a pistol butt at their hips, or under the stimulation of narcotic drugs; and the sum he carried was, by the standards of the underworld, an ample price for murder. But only the two younger men were to be feared: indeed the other's presence evidently constituted a measure of security for himself. Ben knew as well as he knew he lived that the old man was not of the world of crime.

He was of the "outside;" that much was plain. He was the kind of man with whom Ben would have liked to establish companionable relations, but whose condemnation was driving him back to crime. He was old and white-haired and withered, but undying youth dwelt in his twinkling, blue eyes. Poverty, age, and the hardships of the cinder trail had not conquered him in the least. He was small physically, but his skinny arms and legs looked as if they were made of high-tension wire. His face was kindly, but not weak, and the gray stubble on his cheeks and lips could not in the least hide a good-natured smile. His cracked, good-natured, friendly voice was perfectly in character; and at once Ben knew that, in a world of mediocrity, he had made a real find.

"Where you goin'?" the old man asked.

In the silence that fell after his words Ben was aware of a sense of something impending—some adventurous action and crisis, though he had not the slightest idea what form it would take. He knew it just as a sensitive man sometimes knows the advent of an earthquake. All he had given, all he had risked and lost was in payment for the same joyous stir that thrilled through his nerves now. To experience it had been the last and only motive, when all was said and done, for the criminal exploits of his youth.

Yet it was not quite the same. Nothing was missing—rather it was some way enhanced and made better. In his previous exploits his joy had always been dulled by a sense of wrongdoing he had never been able to escape. To-night he realized that in any stress that now was gathering, like a storm, he would be on the right side. His part would be for good, not for evil; in the way of service, rather than crime.

His voice quivered almost imperceptibly when he said in commonplace answer to the old man's question: "Oh, I'm just taking the air."

The patriarch seemed carefully to digest the reply, and Ben found himself waiting for his next words with a curious expectancy.

"And would you mind tellin' me what work you do in town?" asked the old man.

"Out of work right now," replied Ben shortly.

"Out of work, eh?" A pause of tremendous import ensued. "Well, well—out of work. Just one thing more. Have you had your supper?"

All at once Ben remembered that he had not. He remembered many things else—the long day of rebuffs, his bitterness, the allurement of the moon. "No, I haven't had supper," he answered gravely.

"Then you're just the boy I'm lookin' for." The old man gazed quickly at his two companions, and Ben was startled by the lightning change in his expression from friendly interest to dislike and defiance. "If you don't mind, I'll walk up the track with you a ways. I've got somethin' to say to you."

The old fellow scrambled agilely to his feet, and the two of them started together up the right of way. They had gone a hundred feet, well out of hearing of the two men in the circle of firelight, when the old man spoke again. His voice had wholly changed now. It was no longer cheerful. Rather it was hurried and urgent.

"Listen, son," he began, his lean fingers grasping Ben's elbows; "how are you with your mitts?"

Again Ben felt that rapturous shiver of impending excitement. He turned, smiling.

"I rather thought you'd want to know

that," he confided. "Old topper, I'm a whirlwind with 'em."

"I kind of thought you was," the old man exulted. "I don't want to get you into anything too tough, here, so I thought I'd better ask you. It might be even better if you had some brass knuckles—or perhaps a blackjack——"

"Haven't got anything like that."

"We won't need 'em! This is goin' to be a rough-and-tumble fight. You said you hadn't had your supper. If you go in with me on this, you're goin' to have a chicken dinner on me."

But at that instant Ben's caution that had for the moment deserted him completely, returned to him with a rush. The door of the prison had just opened to release him: he must not let his old love—the harlot men call adventure—decoy him into disaster. "You walk right out and turn around and walk right in again," was an old saying among the convicts—an epigram based on the fact of the number of convicts who in their first week of freedom commit crimes that send them back to the prison walls. In the exultation of liberty they forget their cunning.

"What's your trouble?" Ben asked coldly. "I'm not interested, myself. But maybe I'll go and find a bull for you——"

The light went out of the gray face before him, and the old head seemed to bow. "I guess I tackled the wrong man, after all," he grieved. "I don't want to see no bulls. All a bull would do would be to arrest me for vagrancy. Excuse me for troublin' you——"

He paused, absorbed by the growing smile on Ben's face. Then Ben leaned forward, his eyes sparkling in the wealth of moonlight. "That's all I wanted to know—that there aren't any bulls in this party," he said. "Shoot ahead and tell me what's up. Likely enough I'll want to set in."

The old man cackled in answer—a single note of inexpressible delight.

"I couldn't believe you'd pass this up," he said. "I wouldn't have told you about it, if it hadn't offered somethin' good. Those fellows haven't got any real nerve. With a few more pounds and a few years off the old shoulders, I'd be tacklin' them alone. As a free for all it would just be a picnic. They haven't got no gats nor brass knucks—leastwise I don't think they have. So they ain't any real danger. But lemme get down to cases. To-night I got hold of a chicken."

"A chicken?" Ben's voice harshened in spite of himself.

"Keep your shirt on, there, son. I mean a real chicken—a bird. A nice, tender, fat one, too—weighs a good four pounds. It was for my supper. I met them two hobos on the track and told 'em they could share it. Now lemme tell you the way they paid me for bein' so generous. Unbeknownst to me they'd had their supper. What they wanted worst was a drink, and they didn't have a cent. The way I know they haven't got gats is that they'd sold 'em before now, bad as they wanted liquor. This bird of mine is worth a dollar at any market. That's a drink apiece.

"I laid the bird down on the grass beside the track and went to get some water for coffee. I saw 'em get up and hurried back. When I got there one of 'em had my chicken under his coat and wouldn't give it up. He says he hasn't, and both of 'em are havin' a fine joke out of it. You see they're gettin' up now—in a minute they'll be sauntering off with my bird."

Ben turned and saw the two gangsters getting leisurely to their feet. "They're not just playing a joke on you?" he asked.

"I should say they ain't. They're going to take that bird into town and sell it. If you're goin' to help me, you've got to work fast. Then we'll cook the bird and have a real feed."

"You mean—you and I get it back."

"Maybe we can scare 'em into givin' it back without a fight. But I'd kind of like to feel my mitts poppin' into them, myself."

They eyed each other, just a breath, in the moonlight. It *was* a contemptible thing: this petty theft, this vicious answer to the old man's kindness. Men that were men did not sit by at a time like this. Instinctively attracted to the old fellow, more than to any other human being he had ever met, Ben felt a sudden surge of rising anger.

He wondered, deep in his heart, whether the actual right and wrong of the thing was getting to him; or whether his old love for excitement and danger was carrying him away. Yet a chicken—the meat of a single fowl—was not a matter to consider lightly. It meant supper to a hungry man, and the issue was just and fair. He knew enough of the dregs of life to find no amazement in the old man's offer. Out of work and hungry, he was offered a meal for a few seconds' work with his fists. To wage battle,

to free the long-repressed might of his arms, to avenge a contemptible wrong, to pay these gutter snipes in full for their base ingratitude! He suddenly knew that he wouldn't pass it up for the meat of a dozen chickens!

"Come on, you old codger," he cried with a laugh. "Of course, we'll put up a scrap, and a horsey one, too. And hurry up—they're getting away."

The old man's hand seized his. "What's your name, son?" he whispered eagerly. "We may have to shout to each other—so we can strike together."

"Ben Darby."

"Mine's Ezra Mellville—the boys call me Ezram. Then, Benjamin—lead the way."

Side by side they hastened back down the tracks, toward the flickering camp fire.

CHAPTER IV.

Ben felt his blood streaming with the old, beloved impetus through the channels of his veins, enlivening and refreshing every tissue. His powerful muscles were swelling and itching under his skin.

The two gangsters turned when they saw the other two approaching, and leered in defiance. Ben and his friend drew to a halt.

"Come across with the bird," Ben advised simply.

His voice had a cheerful, happy ring, yet the two thieves did not in the least suppose he was jesting with them. Their leers died down to some degree.

"What bird?" one of them ventured, rather feebly. "Go peddle your papers."

"I mean the chicken you took from my friend here. Just see how fast you can hand it over."

The tramp looked up with some care, After all, there was nothing to fear here. He himself was almost as large physically as Ben, and his buddy was much younger and stronger than Ezram. Because of the shadows there was one thing, however, that "Portland Pete" did not see: otherwise he might have been more polite in his responses. There was a peculiar, steely light beginning to grow and brighten in Ben's eyes.

That light was known and respected highly in certain sections of the underworld where Wolf Darby had once held sway, it used to bring guards with clubs inside the prison walls; but it was more than amazing to Ezram. From where the latter stood he caught just a gleam of it, and it was a curious fact that for the duration of an instant he forgot the main issues of the conversation to watch it. Although he was old and ripe and tried, he felt a strange thrill throughout his withered body.

Portland Pete's face grew scornful. He noticed something about Ben's garb that had escaped his eye before. It gave him a fresh burst of confidence. A man who could use his hands, thought he, was never seen in a garment such as this. Unfortunately he had never happened to hear, in years gone by, of a certain power in a certain underworld that was never seen without that particular emblem of weakness.

"Say, my white-collared beauty," he began. "Where do you get that——"

Ben couldn't restrain a widening grin. "Little boys mustn't presume on the white collar," he cautioned sweetly. Then his arm drove out like a sledge hammer.

It had the full might of his shoulder behind it, a blow that had death in it if it had struck just right. It broke down Pete's guard as artillery fire breaks down fortifications, and landed somewhere in the region of his lips. Portland Pete speedily shot through the air and onto the grass. Ezram saw the blow, uttered one shriek of wild delight, and leaped upon Pete's companion.

The battle, however, was not to end so swiftly. Ezram was hardly a match for the brawny tramp, and the first blow sent him on his face. Following his advantage the gangster leaped upon him, intending to hammer him into insensibility. Not many blows would be needed—not many seconds of tramping under the calked shoes.

At that instant something seemed to explode in Ben's body. He had been cool enough before, wholly self-contained and full of grim humor, but all at once ferocity seemed to come upon him. The Ben Darby of a moment before seemed gone, and what was left was simply a raging, slashing, savage beast, a more terrible opponent than either of these two petty thieves had ever faced.

It was easy to see, now, how he had won the name of The Wolf. No other designation could fit that fighting monster in the moonlight. He had seen the withered old man go down before the tramp's blow, and like a wolf springs at its prey he sprang to avenge him. He seemed to lunge through the air.

Instantly he was wresting the tramp about

as a storm wrests a sapling. Their arms locked: almost at once the tramp felt his strength flowing out of him. His companion had got to his feet again, now, and had leaped into the fray; surely the two of them could master a lone foe.

But the fighting knowledge of the wolf was upon Ben—such a skill of battle as is not to be learned in boxing schools. Rather it might have come down from the first savage days of the world when man and beast struggled for dominance. He was wholly lacking in the boxer's technique. Rather he fought by instinct—lashing fists and grasping hands, wrenching shoulders, neck and head and hips. Ezram opened his eyes and saw him and yelled in joy.

"Good Lord, boy, you're a champ!" he shouted. "Hold 'em till I get in!" He had never beheld such unbelievable swiftness of motion, such lightning blows.

The full glory of battle was upon the younger man, by now. He had wholly forgotten the day's rebuffs. He had forgotten everything except that he was fighting a mighty fight, in the glory of the moon, against long odds. And he never for an instant doubted that he would win.

The old rapture and exultation was upon him. The grinding work of the prison had fitted him for just such a test as this. Strangest of all, it seemed wholly natural and fitting that he should thus be fighting under the white moon, in the silence and the half darkness.

Already his two opponents were breaking before his eyes. Ezram got to his feet, swaying, but there was no need of his taking part. Portland Pete was down again, now, and Ben was finishing up his confederate at his own leisure.

Pete wakened soon, but did not at once get to his feet. Very carefully and slowly he slid away into the darkness—his face muscles stabbed with pain and his skin bleeding, and a vast bewilderment upon him. Once he turned to look back, just in time to see his confederate go spinning to the earth.

The latter, also, delayed rising. The fight had ended swiftly, as it had begun. For an instant Ben stood still, catching his breath in great gasps. It was all so odd and silent—the moon still in the sky and the little winds still brushing his face. He heard Ezram's voice beside him.

"The chap that's layin' there has got the bird," he announced. "You can see the neck stickin' out of his pocket."

He moved toward him, and Ben saw him bend and remove a young chicken from the pocket of the unconscious tramp. Then very slowly, even a little solemnly, he came up and looked into Ben's face.

The latter started, emerging from his reverie. In an instant his conscious world rushed back to him, just as if he had wakened from sleep. His fury was dead, and he remembered everything—the stigma of the prison, his walk in the moonlight, the conference with old Ezram about the chicken.

"My gosh, what a fighter!" Ezram was saying. "A whirlwind—I guess you *are* a whirlwind! If you ain't I'm a coon. Lordy, lordy, son, will you let me shake your hand?" His old eyes were twinkling, and Ben felt his hard, lean hand on his. "You ain't just a pugilist," Ezram went on, in unfeigned admiration. "You're a hurricane. A barrel of wild cats. Honestly—I was scared of you myself. Son, are you heading any way in particular?"

Ben steadied himself, then smiled into the quaint, wrinkled face. "I guess only back to town," he answered.

"Ain't goin' North?" his friend went on reproachfully. "Son, tell me this! Do you think you and me ought to break up?"

Ben found himself staring at the old man in vast and unutterable amazement. "Break up! Good heavens! You go one way and I another? We *can't*——"

"Son, ain't it queer, but I feel that way myself. Have you anybody dependin' on you?"

"No."

"Foot-loose and free! Thank God! Son, we were born to be buddies, and we've been a long time findin' it out. There's just one thing on earth to do."

"What is it?" Ben asked. Though to have it answered only meant self-torture, he could not restrain the question. All he would learn would be of a dream that could not possibly come true—a thing to haunt him in the bitter weeks to come.

"Come North with me," Ezram told him. "I'll tell you about it while we're cooking supper."

Ben did not in the least yield himself to hope. He knew hope, he had found her out in these past, bitter years; and he knew what a siren she was. In a moment more Ezram would learn the youth's identity, see

the brand of the prison on his flesh, and retract in an instant his invitation. The old man was not one of the morons of the underworld whom he could bend beneath his will. As soon as Ezram knew the truth he would turn him away.

The rebuffs he had lately received in applying for work had discouraged and embittered him; but this to-night would go deeper to the most secret heart of the man. The explanation lay in an amazing sudden depth of comradeship he instinctively felt for Ezram. Analyze it he could not; he only knew that this quaint old man had supplied something that was missing.

Always too much of a man to yield himself to self-pity, he had not realized until now how utterly companionless he was. He was without near relatives, and the last gate of friendship had been closed to him when the gate of the prison had shut behind him. Ezram had taken him on trust, given him companionship and respect, for the moment at least, and had fought side by side with him against a common enemy. And there is no such builder of comradeship between man and man as this; the touch of shoulders as they breast a common foe.

Besides, he instinctively liked the man. He liked his pleasant face and his twinkling old eyes, and he felt an added glow of affection for him at the memory of how he had yelled with glee and leaped into the fight. But their comradeship was of a moment only. Ezram would soon know the truth: the idea of concealing his identity did not even occur to Ben. Whatever opportunity for a fresh start the old man had offered would be in a moment withdrawn.

"You won't want me in your deal when you know a few things I've got to tell you," he said simply.

"Won't, eh?" Ezram chirped. "Maybe you'd better let *me* decide that. First, find out what I've got to offer, and maybe you won't even be interested. In the first place, maybe I'd better tell you that travel makes strange bedfellers, and I hope I ain't quite in the class with them two birds you cleaned up so handsome. In fact, I ain't a hobo at all, and if you think I'm one of these drunken loafers that goes up and down beggin' meals, you're mistaken."

"You don't have to tell me that, Mr. Mellville," Ben answered quickly.

"Let up on this *mister* business. The boys call me Ezram, as I said. I'm a workin' man myself, and always have been—a metal worker by trade. Due to the poker habit I've never saved a cent, hardly—or I wouldn't be ridin' the blinds North now. I tell you this so you won't think you're gettin' hooked up with a bum. There's work in plenty to do where we're goin', drillin' and washin' and prospectin', but I'll do my full share of it."

Ben stared in amazement. It was almost as if the old man were pleading a case rather than giving the glorious alms of hope to one overswept by despair. Ben tried to cut in, to reveal his identity, but the old man's words swept his own away.

"To begin at the beginning, I've got a brother—leastwise I had him a few weeks ago—Hiram Mellville by name," Ezram went on. "He was a prospector up to a place called Snowy Gulch—a town way up in the Caribou Mountains, in Canada. Five days ago, in San Francisco, I got a letter from him, and started North. It's right here."

He drew a white envelope from his coat pocket, opening it slowly. "This is a real proposition, son. I'm mighty particular who I let in on it. To-night you helped me out—not that I cared such a lot about that chicken, but I didn't want them two bums to slip anything over on me. I saw you fight—and there may be fightin' to do when we get up North.

"You're the most terrible, the most ferocious fighter I ever saw, and that's the truth. There may be fightin', and there's certain to be work—lots of work. I'm gettin' a little too old to do too much of it. I want a buddy—some one who will go halfway with me. When you climbed into them two bums to-night I knew I'd found him. I'm goin' to make this proposition fifty-fifty—and I ain't such a fool as I look, neither. I know the chances of comin' out right on it are twice as good, if somebody young and strong, and who can fight, is in on it with me. Listen to this."

Opening the letter, he read laboriously:

"Dear Brother Ezra: I rite this with what I think is my dying hand. It's my will, too. I'm at the hotel at Snowy Gulch—got about ten minits. You know I've been hunting a claim. Well, I found it—rich a claim as ever seen in these parts, worth quarter million, any way.

"It's yours. Come up, get it quick before some thieves up hear jump it. Lookout for Jeffery Neilson and his gang; they seen some of my dust. I'm too sick to go to recorder in Bradley-

"And is that all?" cried Rita. She felt, somehow, it was not.

Once more Gene looked the other way. "All that I can go into now," he answered. "I'm sorry, Rita, but I'm through."

Rita caught the young chemist by the hand. "But what are we going to do without you, Gene?" she wailed.

"The major knows," smiled Gene. "He can get any one of several good men to take my place. It's ten minutes since I left him. I'll stake my bottom dollar that he's got it filled already."

"But what are you going to do, Gene?" persisted Rita.

There was a new light in Gene's eyes. "Rita," he said, "do you know a man named Tanner here in town?"

"You mean Joe Tanner," returned Rita, "the city engineer?"

"The same," said Gene.

"Of course I know Joe Tanner," nodded Rita; "he was your predecessor in our plant."

"Rita," said Gene, "I get it on the best of good authority that Joe Tanner is going to resign his job and run for mayor."

"I hope not," cried Rita. "He's not the man for mayor."

"The major tells me that Joe is going to run for mayor," proceeded Gene. "That leaves vacant the job of city engineer. It's a civil-service job. I qualified for it some time ago. I'm high man on the list. When Joe gets out—and he's going out right soon—I get that job."

"You sound as though you wanted it," wailed Rita.

"I sure do, Rita." Gene's eyes glowed. "I have a feeling that that job is made for me. I want to help to steer a city straight. I want to have good streets—good drainage. I want to get good water for the city—and lots of it. I want to do things for the people. And if I can die in harness as Green Falls' city engineer, I'll come near dying happy." He returned the pressure of her hand. "Look here, Rita," he pleaded, "if I can help you any way, you let me know."

Rita took a long, long breath. "Gene," she said frankly, "you have helped. I thought over what you said the other night. A piker club with a thousand women pikers for its members. Gene, it is—they are. I want to tell you you were right."

Gene laughed merrily. "You want to die," he said, "in harness in a club."

"I'm going to see to it," nodded the girl, "that my club outlives the reputation that it's got."

"What are you going to do?" asked Gene.

"Never mind," said Rita. "You just wait and see."

And Rita saw to it that Gene was kept informed of what she did, was doing, and was going to do with the Green Falls Women's Club.

Rita, like her father, now burned her bridges all behind her. She forgot that she was Major Wrightson's daughter; forgot her social station in the city. She severed all the ties that bound her to convention. She saw her duty; she prepared to do it. When she got down to brass tacks she found the whole thing vastly simpler than it had seemed.

There was good reason for it. Every wide-awake woman in Green Falls wanted to join the Women's Club. Most of them wanted to because they could not get in. That dignified initiation fee, and those highly respectable annual dues kept many of them out. The black ball was kept too much on the qui vive, too. But the limit of a thousand members was the obstacle. The waiting list was one long, despairing moan.

Rita understood well that the women on the outside wanted to come in. Once they were in, the Women's Club began to pall. It had a status and a standing. It was a highly intellectual body that existed in a state of being. It *was*. But it did not *do*. The women inside naturally kept on wanting things; wanted things that the Women's Club did not give them, could not give them, might not ever give them. They wanted more importance. They wanted power. This was a very real desire—the women stifled it by imagining that they had importance; that they had power. But they did not. In their souls they knew it. And they wanted to do things in the world.

Fortunately for Rita, therefore, the time was ripe. And when she cast her bombshell into the very midst of the Women's Club, it exploded to the tune of enthusiastic, not to say rapturous applause. Rita followed up her advantage—flung her program, fully caparisoned, into their teeth. It was forthwith adopted as it stood. It became the law.

Following that program, the Women's Club of Green Falls stripped itself to fighting trim. It cut off its initiation fees; it cut down its dues to the minimum—a merely

tunes and herself—body and soul as she afterward discovered—to Green Falls Gas. Once the deal was closed the major shut himself once more into his library.

There was a gas log burning in his fireplace. The major gathered from his desk all the thoughts that he had placed on paper for the last ten days; he thrust all these sheets of paper into the flames. He burned his bridges all behind him. The old order was about to change. Then the major inserted fresh sheets, fresh carbons, into his machine.

"All right, John G. Fryling," he said softly to himself. "We'll let the best men go. Gene Carnaby and I have got to pull her through."

The major typed steadily for upward of two hours.

That night he summoned Gene Carnaby to his lair. Gene came, begrimed with grease and dirt. Gene had worked all day with his hands. His forces had successfully switched the Ballard Street mains over to uninjured tanks a few blocks farther on. The progress had been satisfactory to Gene, satisfactory to the major; but quite unsatisfactory to the public and to the evening papers. A gas company that wants to raise its rates to one dollar and sixty cents per thousand feet must naturally expect to be liberally kicked while down.

But Major Wrightson was not down. His eyes glowed with great good humor. He handed Gene a carbon copy of the material he had pounded out on his machine. "Give it the once-over, Gene," he said. "Easy reading and it sounds like fiction. While you read it, remember that it can be done. I tell you, Gene, this thing can be done!"

Gene read, to find out what thing could be done, and how it could be done. He read his copy halfway through. And then he stopped. His face reddened; then it paled.

"Major," he cried, "you don't—you can't mean this!"

"Mean it," snorted the major belligerently, "every word. Read on."

Gene read on to the bitter end. "Great guns!" he said at length. "It *can't* be done!"

"It *can* be done," reiterated the major, "what's more, it will be done. I'll send Green Falls Gas stock up to three times its present value, or I'll know the reason why. What's more, you're going to help me do it, Gene."

Gene shook his head. "I don't know about that," he returned.

"Gene," said the major kindly, "you're played out, old man. Listen. You go home and take a good night's rest."

"Can't," returned Gene. "I haven't got the time."

"Must," returned the major. "You take that carbon copy with you, Gene. You read it in the morning when you're fresh. Study it. You'll begin to see then, as I see now, that it's the only thing to do."

IV.

Next night, as Gene ventured out of the major's lair, Rita waylaid him. Gene, it would seem, was much perturbed. His face was white, shocked.

"What's the matter, Gene?" implored the girl. She had never seen him look just like that before.

"I don't know just what is the matter," he returned with a sorry smile. "Either I've just resigned my job, or else I'm fired. It looks to me as though I'm fired."

"But what has happened, Gene?" cried Rita.

Gene shook his head. "Matter of the major's policies," he said; "unfortunately my mind won't go willingly along with his."

"Tell me," insisted Rita.

Gene looked the other way. "It's a bit too technical to go into the details—that is, into all the details," he returned. "But part of it can be made clear at any rate. Do you know what British thermal units are?"

"I've heard of them."

"Our customers," explained Gene, "if they think about the subject—and I'm pretty sure they do—think they're burning gas of standard quality. Gas of standard quality is composed of six hundred British thermal units. As a matter of fact, we've dropped our product down to five hundred and thirty-five British thermal units. For eighteen months or so, we've dished 'em out a product that's down just about as far as it can get. Now, it seems, Green Falls Gas is up against it. The major's confronted by a blank wall, so he says. He wants me to cut our product down to five hundred and fifteen British thermal units, and let the public and the public-service board go hang. My point of view is that five hundred and fifteen British thermal units isn't gas. I quit."

lar, upon whom the major always could rely—and only two. One of these two was Gene Carnaby. Gene was the salt of the earth to Major Wrightson. Besides which, Gene was pretty apt to do just as he was told to do.

The other man was John G. Fryling. John G. Fryling was first vice president of Green Falls Gas, a man of standing in the community, a man of great executive ability. All Fryling needed was direction. Once started on the right way, Fryling usually made the fur fly. And in this crisis it was clear to Major Wrightson that both Gene Carnaby and this man Fryling were elements essential to the salvation of Green Falls Gas. In the face of this unprecedented situation Major Wrightson counted upon both.

In this, as will be seen, he miscalculated to considerable extent.

For at the break of day John G. Fryling stood on Major Wrightson's front porch arguing with the Jap butler. The argument was loud and shrill and lively, and the sound of it penetrated to Major Wrightson's lair. The major stole swiftly to the front door, gave the Jap the high sign, and dragged John G. Fryling to his den, and placed a chair for John G. Fryling, but that gentleman declined to take it.

"Major," said Fryling, "I came here in person to tell you just one thing—I'm through."

"Through with what?" demanded Major Wrightson.

"Last night settled it for me," proceeded Fryling, "I tell you that I'm through with Green Falls Gas."

"Great guns, no!" exclaimed the major.

John G. Fryling never blinked. "Owe it to my wife and family to get out, and get out now," he said firmly. "I tell you that I'm through with gas."

"You're crazy," cried the major. "What do you intend to do?"

Fryling nodded nonchalantly, with the air of a man whose mind had long been made up. "Going into industrials," he said; "going into the manufacture of motor cars. Automobiles, that's my dope."

"But you can't get out of gas," exclaimed the major.

"Got to," returned Fryling. "Eventually, so why not now? Self-preservation, first law of nature. Listen, Wrightson. This is gospel truth. Every good man is getting out of utilities and going into industrials. You take my word. It's true."

The major stared at Fryling. "Fryling," he commanded, "you say that again and say it slow. I didn't get it when you said it first."

"The best men," reiterated Fryling, "are getting out of utilities and going into industrials. I've watched 'em, major. And I know."

The major thought it over carefully, quietly. He thought it over for a long, long while. Finally he nodded slowly.

"I see you mean it," said the major, "and what about your stock?"

"I'm going to dump it on the market," returned Fryling.

"No, no! Not that," protested the major.

"What else?" demanded Fryling. "You're loaded up."

"How do you know I'm loaded up?" retorted the major. He started for the door. "Fryling," he said, "you wait here a minute. I'll be right back."

Fryling nodded and slumped into a chair. The major darted up to the third floor of the house. He rapped on Rita's door and pushed it open. He gently shook his daughter by a bare white shoulder until she wakened.

"Rita," cried the major, "your mother's money—how have you got it tucked away?"

Rita sat up and stared at him drowsily. "I haven't slept a wink all night," she said.

"You haven't winked all night, you mean," chuckled her father. "Come, come! How is your money fixed? Liberty Bonds, I think you said."

"Yes," nodded Rita, "bonds—Liberty. Why did you want to know?"

"The rats," returned her father, "are deserting me. I am a sinking ship. It's Fryling, and he's going to leave—going to dump his stock upon the market. Gas sold at sixty-five yesterday. To-day it goes off fifteen points or I'm a Dutchman. If he sells out that makes it worse. I want your say so, Rita. It's gilt-edged, Rita. I'll double your money. Inside of a year, Rita. Green Falls Gas!"

"Why, yes, of course," said Rita, now wide awake. "I want to help in any way I can."

The major took the stock off Fryling's hands at fifty-two. The deal was closed with Rita, at the bank at half past ten that morning. And by that deal Rita tied her for-

amazement. This uncanny yellow glare—this vivid, steady yellow glare! What did it mean? The whole city was bathed in this unholy light; for an appreciable length of time the streets were bright as day. Then, slowly, it died down—flickered out. But not for long. There was, immediately, another heavy crash. And not of thunder. And then, once more, following this second crash, another all-enveloping garish glare of brilliant yellow light.

Gene, obeying impulses, flung shut the door. Inside a servant came whimpering down the front stairs, calling on the names of all the saints. And even while she crept down toward them, another new thing happened. The house lights all went out. They stood in darkness—darkness dense, complete. The servant screamed. Her scream was answered by another scream upstairs.

Gene dragged Rita into the living room, which was as black as midnight. "Something's happened!" he cried huskily. "Candles—oil lamps. Where?"

For the Wrightson homestead, being the home of Green Falls Gas, had never yet been wired. Rita dragged Gene to a fireplace. She groped about for ornamental candlesticks. She found one. As Gene lighted his first candle, the figure of a man came stumbling toward them across the overfurnished room. It was Major Wrightson, considerably profane, well-nigh hysterical.

"What the devil is the matter?" cried the major.

The telephone rang frantically. It brought more oaths to the lips of Major Wrightson.

"It's Flo Fogarty again," cried Rita.

"No, it's not," said Gene with certainty of tone. "I'll answer it." He disappeared into the darkness. "You two light up!" he yelled.

They stood huddled together by the one candle he had lighted. Two helpless women servants stood cringing in the background. And now Gene's voice at the phone was clear, harsh, high-strung. For already Gene had guessed.

"Is that you, Louis?" they heard him say. "Oh, Louis—this is Gene——"

Then his tone lowered and they lost the rest. Inside of three minutes Gene came stumbling back to them.

"Just as I figured, major," he exclaimed. "The two Ballard Street gas tanks have gone. One of 'em struck by lightning. When that one went the other one went, too."

"Struck by lightning?" yelled the major. "Why, man, our gas tanks can't be struck by lightning. And, if they are, they won't explode."

"I know they can't and won't," said Gene, "but, unfortunately, these gas tanks were—and did."

The major groaned. "Great guns," he cried, "this is the last straw!"

Gene turned up his coat collar as he made for the door. "Louis wants me at Ballard Street at once," he said. "I'm off."

III.

Rita's father, Major Wrightson, was something of a go getter himself. He prepared himself immediately for an all-night siege. He felt instinctively that after this deluge, immediately would come another. He corraled two good student lamps, had them filled, trimmed, lighted. He installed them on a table in his library next to his typewriting machine. He disconnected the house telephone with his own hands, leaving only his private wire intact. His Jap servant had slept peacefully through all the tumult. The major roused him, got him to dress himself, commanded him to meet all comers as they came, and to shunt them and their inquiries in the general direction of the Green Falls Gas Company's main plant, which at this hour, of course, was closed to all save the night shift. He even sent his daughter Rita up to bed.

Then Major Wrightson got out fresh carbons. He opened a fresh box of typewriting paper. He started in, as was his custom, to put his thoughts on paper. He drew a long, long breath; and that was just about as far as he could get.

He found he had not any thoughts. He had said emphatically, half an hour before, that this catastrophe was the last straw. It was. For the first time in his life Major Wrightson was confronted with genuine disaster. Unknown to himself, he was at tremendous disadvantage. Green Falls Gas, due to its nature as a monopoly, had always been a huge success. The major had trained himself to succeed. He knew all the rules of success. But he had not learned the formula of failure.

He felt assured his was a master mind. His always had been a master mind. He had, it is true, good men to carry out his policies. There were two men in particu-

club to join with hers. She suggests a name—the Green Falls Women's Democratic Club."

Gene thought about it for a moment. "It is the way to oblivion," he said. "There's only one thing that would kill you quicker than becoming a Democratic organization."

"What's that one thing?" demanded Rita.

"Becoming a Republican organization," returned Gene. "Steer clear of both."

Rita did not catch his drift. And she was not quite sure of her own ground. She had not answered Flo Fogarty's arguments over the wire. She had said she'd write. As a matter of fact, though, she detested this Flo Fogarty, and with just cause, Flo Fogarty's points seemed, somehow, logically unanswerable. Women had the vote. The clear duty lay upon all women to use the vote. Organization was the watchword of the day. Without organization the female voter must be all at sea. With organization she could hold her own. It seemed a pity, as Flo pointed out, that where a thousand women were already gathered together they could not be collectively a tremendous power.

"I don't quite follow you," said Rita to Gene.

"Dear me," said Gene; "simple as A B C. The instant you permit yourself to be absorbed by either of the parties, you're done for, aren't you? Suppose your club turns Democrat, what consideration can you ever get from the Republican organization? And how, if you turn Democrat, are you going to get any consideration from the Democratic party?"

"I don't see why not," said Rita.

"You will see, if you join 'em," nodded Gene, "for then they'll have you in their midst. You're pledged. Once with them you can't be against 'em. No longer will you be a menace. You cannot wield the big stick any more."

"I begin to see," said Rita.

"My idea is," went on Gene, "that the ring is out to get you. This Flo Fogarty, as I see her, is a right slick wolf who has donned grandmother's—er—evening garments, just to gobble up the finest little 'Red Riding Hood' that ever came down the pike."

Rita flushed becomingly. "I gather," she returned, "that you refer to me. Well, this little 'Red Riding Hood' hasn't any grandmother and doesn't wander through the woods in search of one. Miss Flo Fogarty can't make a tasty meal of me."

"And yet," mused Gene, "this girl, in one respect, is absolutely right."

"How right?"

"Your Green Falls Women's Club is an exclusive organization, with a thousand members and a waiting list. You've got a real initiation fee; your annual dues command respect. You've got a tanky clubhouse. You're banded together for civic betterment and social uplift in a city of a quarter million souls. Yet after all, what are you? An amateur debating society and nothing more. What have you really done?"

"Everything," cried Rita.

"Rats!" exclaimed Gene Carnaby, "you haven't scratched the surface of the problems that you've faced. In the honest opinion of every thinking man in town, Rita, your Women's Club is nothing but a piker, with a thousand women pikers for its members."

Rita thought she liked plain talk. But this was just a bit too strong to stand. Rita, her eyes flashing, was upon her feet.

"Gene Carnaby!" she cried. "You get out of my house this very minute," she demanded.

"I was—just about to go," gulped Gene.

She saw him to the front door, probably to make sure that he really went. Gene swung himself out upon the porch; a mighty deluge faced him. Reeking with rain, he crept back into the house.

"Gosh hang it all," he said, "I thought this storm was over."

"Perhaps," said Rita, relenting, "you'd better wait."

"Looks like it was only just beginning," grumbled Gene. As he spoke there was one terrific flash of lightning, followed immediately by a deafening crash of thunder. So overpowering was this crash that the two stood there, speechless, frightened, clinging to each other, almost stunned.

Then something really happened. For close upon the heels of this salvo of artillery, there came a sharp boom from somewhere to the south—a crash nearer, clearer, more deafening than the thunder. And following this, a brilliant flare of vivid yellow light.

Gene caught the girl by the arm. "Not lightning," he exclaimed at the top of his voice, "not lightning—not at all. This—this is something else. Look!"

Rita was looking—her eyes wide with

way, climb in. They tool a high-powered car. Rita, dear, you must get your eye-teeth cut."

"I've just had 'em cut," dolefully responded the forlorn young lady. But she hadn't had them cut—not yet.

"Look here," went on Gene seriously, "if you promised Harvey Minion that you'd help him, keep your promise."

Rita was tremulous with indignation. "I certainly will *not!*" she cried. And that was the end of Harvey Minion so far as Rita was concerned. At least she thought so.

II.

"You tell me about Gas, Gene," persisted Rita.

Green Falls Gas, be it understood, was a family matter with Rita Wrightson. She had grown up with Green Falls Gas. Major Wrightson, her immediate progenitor, was also the immediate progenitor of Green Falls Gas. In addition, he was saturated with it. The major invariably had gas for breakfast; he took gas to bed with him at night. Daytimes he spouted gas. The major, naturally, held one point of view and only one. Rita had grown up in the belief that gas was always right; right beyond the possibility of argument; that its critics and revilers were always in the wrong. She had come to regard Green Falls Gas as the under dog in a never-ending fight.

"Tell me about Gas, Gene," she insisted.

Gene tossed his thumb over his shoulder. "Hasn't the major told you what we're up against?" he queried.

Rita shook her head. "Not in detail," she returned. "He doesn't think I'd understand."

"He could have talked this over, pro and con with you," grumbled Gene. "Women know about gas. Light in the darkness—a stove out in the kitchen. That's all gas is. Look, Rita, here's the dope. We haven't tinkered with our plant since long before the war. No repairs, you understand. And now it's full of holes. We want to spend fifteen hundred thousand dollars fixing up. The public service board is delighted that we do. More than delighted. Fact is, if we decline to spend two million for improvements and repairs, the public service board is going to know the reason why. Here's the rub. That expenditure we've got to meet. We sell gas now at one dollar and forty cents a thousand feet. We want to raise our rates to one dollar and sixty cents a thousand feet. The public service board says no. Result, we're at a deadlock. Therefore, the good old major's wrecking his typewriter trying to solve a problem that can't be solved."

Rita stared helplessly at Gene. "How can I help?" she asked at length.

The chemist shrugged his shoulders. "Come to think of it," he conceded, "you can't help. Nobody can help. Green Falls Gas will have to stand the biggest loss it's ever had to face in all its life, that's all."

The telephone bell rang. The ringing of that telephone at this juncture marked the commencement of a long and crooked journey that Rita Wrightson was to set forth upon, over a long and crooked trail. She had a rough road to travel. She couldn't know this, naturally. In this case ignorance was bliss.

Rita placed the phone receiver to her ear. "Rita Wrightson speaking. Oh, yes, Miss Fogarty," she said.

Gene Carnaby lit a cigarette. He watched her sympathetically while she wrangled endlessly over the wire. At the close of a fifteen minutes interview, Rita hung up and turned to Gene.

"Do you know Miss Florence Fogarty?" she queried.

"She writes letters to the papers," nodded Gene, "Flo Fogarty. Young, good looking, flashy. Joe Tanner's girl. What does she want of you?

"She wants," said Rita, "to turn my Women's Club into a political organization." Rita's lip curled. To her this suggestion was quite as welcome as a proposal to change the club into a gambling house.

"Is she a member of your club?" queried Gene.

"She never will be, if I can help myself," returned Rita disdainfully. "She knows she can't get in."

"Close corporation," mused Gene.

"Thank goodness," sighed Rita, "we've got a waiting list that's ten miles long or so."

"What particular ax," asked Gene, "has this Miss Fogarty to grind?"

"She's pestered the life out of me," Rita explained. "About half the members of my club are Democrats. This Fogarty girl has a Democratic club composed of female voters—a hundred women, maybe less. This girl has monumental nerve. She wants my

nese puzzle. I've been with him, helping him to try to square the circle. We haven't done it, yet—not quite. No, don't go to him, Rita. He's at his typewriter. This is one of the times when he prefers to be alone."

Rita sank back into her chair and waved this newcomer to another.

"What's the matter with Green Falls Gas, Gene?" she inquired.

"Hasn't the major told you?" returned Gene.

Rita shook her head. "My father," she complained, "doesn't know that I've grown up. What's the matter with Gas, Gene?" she persisted.

They were interrupted by a vivid flash of lightning, a terrific peal of thunder. Gene drew up his chair and spread his hands upon the desk. His were well-shapen hands but they were not pretty to look at. They were liberally covered with brown and yellow stains. The faint odor of chemicals emanated from his clothes. Otherwise, be it noted here, this Gene was quite unobjectionable. True it is that he became quite objectionable later—but that's a mere detail. When Gene wanted to be nice he could be very, very nice. His eyes were frank and steady, sympathetic. His was, at times, the winsome smile of a friendly child. He had the air of being always perfectly at home. He was, of right, a frequenter of this household. He was Gene Carnaby, head chemist and engineer in chief to Green Falls Gas. He was Major Wrightson's general factotum. Gene was an all-round kind of man.

"Matter enough with Gas, Rita," returned Gene Carnaby; "but before I get to that, let me say that I chased myself in here chiefly because I imagined that I heard Harvey Minion's voice."

Rita started. "You know him, then," cried Rita.

"I know him very, very well," smiled Gene. "And what did Harvey Minion want?"

Rita told him. As she did so, Gene Carnaby chuckled softly to himself.

"What do you know about Mr. Harvey Minion?" demanded Rita.

"What do you think of him?" parried Gene.

"I think he takes the wrong way of getting what he's after," returned Rita.

Gene smiled some more. "But he always gets it, just the same," he nodded. "This Harvey Minion is one of the classiest lobbyists in town."

Rita stared at him. "Lobbyist!" she echoed. "Lobbyist—for whom?"

"For anybody that'll pay his price," said Gene; "the brewers paid his price for ten long years."

"Brewers!" gasped Rita. "He says he's secretary of a law and order league."

"If he says he is, he is," said Gene. "For that matter, I have no doubt that he's an elder in a church."

Rita sprang to her feet in alarm. "S. D. M. A.!" she exclaimed.

"I beg your pardon," faltered Gene.

"He had a card," cried Rita; "it said S. D. M. A."

Gene considered this a moment—then he chuckled once again.

"You say he wanted you," he mused, "to help suppress the sale of malt and hops?"

Rita nodded.

Gene settled back into his chair. "Rita," he expounded, "figure this out. Suppose, now, that all the women in Green Falls should start in to make their own hats. What about the milliners? What would be their fate? Now, one step farther, Rita. Suppose, now, all the women could make better hats for themselves than the milliners could make for them. Good night! And there's the answer to the mystery called Harvey Minion."

"I don't quite understand," said Rita.

"Oh, yes, you do," said Gene. "The Soft Drink Manufacturers Association is Harvey Minion's client of the moment. If you and I, Rita, can brew a beverage with a good stiff kick in it, where do the soft-drink manufacturers get off? Therefore, down with hops and malt."

"You mean to say," demanded Rita, "that this Minion seeks to use my Women's Club, just for his own nefarious ends?"

"Why shouldn't he?" queried Gene. "You want to suppress the sale of malt and hops. And so does Harvey Minion."

"For private interests," snapped Rita. "I—to pull their chestnuts out of the fire!"

"Dear, dear," returned Gene cheerily, "let 'em pull yours out of the fire. Private interests—use 'em, Rita, every time you get the chance. They've got backing, Rita—they've got money. They're on the job twenty-four hours a day for seven days in the week. If so be they're traveling your

been two weeks too soon. It was not long, however, before she came into her own.

To Rita Wrightson, with her thousand votes at hand, the new régime proved startling, not to say appalling. For six months past, both in her individual and in her representative capacity, she had approached the powers that be with bated breath, on bended knee; she had groveled and abased herself before them to get anything she wanted, anything she was of right entitled to. She had been content with crass rebuff; happy merely to negotiate a hearing, no matter how pitifully unsatisfactory and unsuccessful the result. Now all was changed as in the twinkling of an eye. The city mandarins set her forthwith upon a pedestal, made obeisance to her, bade her mention anything her little heart desired. In other words, they placed her on a par with Labor. A woman with a thousand votes behind her could have anything—that is, almost anything—that Green Falls had to give.

The dawn, in other words, came up like thunder.

With it, incidentally, came the young man of the name of Minion. Young Mr. Minion was, so to speak, the first of the push. He was a serious-minded, bashful, but withal, magnetic personage. He saw Rita one evening by appointment at her home. Rita scanned his card. It bore his name, of course, and something else—four cabalistic letters in one corner.

"S. D. M. A.," mused Rita, wondering.

Young Mr. Minion started. He changed color. He blinked his eyes. "Got my fraternities mixed," he stammered in apology. He fumbled in his pocket and drew forth another card; this, deftly, he exchanged for the card that Rita held.

The new card set Mr. Minion right. It seemed he was the secretary of a law and order league. As such, he explained in a pleasing but somewhat penetrating voice, he had an ax to grind. He started in to grind it.

"The indiscriminate sale of malt and hops in——" he began insinuatingly. He might as well have touched match to powder keg. Rita was dry to the *n*th power, to the thirty-third degree.

"Oh!" explosively cried Rita.

"With recipes attached," smilingly proceeded Mr. Minion, "solemnly warning the concocter to add the full quantity of aqua pura——"

Rita took the words out of his mouth. "Because if he does not the alcoholic content will be illegally too high. Oh!" explosively cried Rita, once again.

Mr. Minion made his mission very clear. He did not mince matters. The Women's Club of Green Falls was one of the strongest forces for prohibition in the whole community. It had taken a decided stand in the past when it did not have the vote. Now that it had the vote it must hold to its colors in the future. The law must be enforced. Mr. Minion called upon the Women's Club to become the aggressor in this matter. He was very plain, very outspoken, very frank. He was not there to get mere acquiescence or indorsement. He demanded affirmative, enthusiastic action on the part of a body whose crusade would count. He asked, in so many set words and phrases, that the Women's Club, of which Miss Wrightson was the head and front, forthwith take the initiative to crush this universal, this iniquitous, this insidious sale of malt and hops.

Fortunately for Mr. Minion, Miss Rita Wrightson liked plain talk. It always did her good. There was not another woman in the city he could talk to as he had talked to her. Rita smilingly assured herself that this young man would never make a politician. But she also assured herself that he was everlastingly right. She held out to him the hand of comradeship.

"I promise you," she said to him, "that I'll go ahead at once."

Rita graciously escorted Mr. Minion to the front door. As she opened it a gust of dust-laden air swept tumultuously into the house. There was a flash of distant lightning.

"We're going to have a thunderstorm," said Rita apprehensively; "hadn't you better wait until it's over?"

But Mr. Minion shook his head. He had accomplished his object. "I have a closed car out here," he returned. "I shall have to go. I thank you very much."

As Rita drew back into the house huge drops of rain began to patter lazily upon the porch. Half a minute after her arrival at her desk, the door leading from her father's library opened stealthily. Another young man crept noiselessly into Rita's presence. Carefully he closed the door behind him.

"I left the major in there, Rita," nodded this new visitor. "He's working out a Chi-

Scandalous Asphyxiation

By William Hamilton Osborne

Author of "The Blue Room," "Skinny's Sanctuary Suds," Etc.

The cutting of Rita Wrightson's political eyeteeth was painful, but she didn't do all the suffering

When lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray.
VICAR OF WAKEFIELD.

THIS is the story of one of the sweetest young women in the world. It relates the harrowing details connected with her first false step; pictures her vividly as she toboggans swiftly down the mephitic slopes of Avernus; tells how she was gassed on the way down; ends with her cutting her own dear father's throat and attempting self-destruction, only to discover, when almost too late, that there really is an Ethiopian in every woodpile. At that climactic juncture, it goes on to narrate how, in her extremity, she caught up, out of the hands of one of the he-devils, a barb-pronged pitchfork and jabbed it into——

But this tale, to make its warning quite effective, must follow her progress inch by inch. Here goes.

During the eventful course of the dramatic year gone by, there came at last a day marked with a white stone. This day represented the dividing line that separated a struggling, strenuous past from a glittering, glorious future. It worked strange miracles. It was a peach of a day, in sooth.

Just about two weeks before its advent Miss Rita Wrightson, of Green Falls, entered the presence of the Green Falls director of police. Miss Wrightson was a young woman of appealing personality. She appeared before the director of police with purposeful intent. She was well known in the city. She might have brought powerful influence to bear upon him. She forbore. She preferred to rest her case upon the inherent righteousness of her mission. Her grievance was one involving an old evil in Green Falls; in the name of the women of the city she complained to the director of the intolerable, persistent gathering of young loafers on the street corners of the town.

The director of police gave her what is technically known as the once-over and then shook his head. He denied with most emphatic vigor that there were any loafers to be found on any corner of Green Falls.

"Send a plain-clothes man along with me in my car—I'll show him hundreds," said Miss Wrightson. The director of police declined to comply with her request. He had not a fly cop to spare, he assured the lady. For why? Easy. His entire reserve force at that very moment was energetically engaged in chasing loafers off the corners of the streets. What more, now, could the lady ask? What could, in short, be fairer than that?

Dejectedly Miss Wrightson drove home in her coupé. The heaviness of failure settled down upon her as she went. En route she was invited fifty times, in raucous tones, to take some flash male companion with her for a drive. Some of the invitations may have emanated from a plain-clothes man or two. There was no uniformed patrolman anywhere in sight.

So much for that. Two weeks slipped by. And then the golden day arrived.

Twenty-four hours after its advent one of the humblest, most obscure, most shrinking of all Green Falls housewives called up the board of works. She got the board of works upon the wire.

"There are three women voters in my home," faltered this good woman in tremulous and fearful accents; "it is three weeks since my garbage was collected. I'll give you three hours to send a scavenger."

Within the hour the scavenger was there.

The advent of the day had made the difference. Miss Rita Wrightson had merely

father—a couple of years ago, when she came back from France, that she was going to marry my son. The matter, I informed Mary—as I informed you just before you kicked over the traces—was arranged. Mary, of course, laughed at the very thought of such a thing—I can hear her yet! And here the pair of you are, with the day fixed! So you see, son? Waiting—just waiting—is the trick!"

Tancred thought about that for a while.

"D'you know, governor," he said, at last, pretty easy in his mind despite the revelation, "Mary has never said a word to me about this?"

"So I perceive," said his father. "And that was like Mary. Unselfish girl. Wanted to let me have the fun of saying it. And wanted, too, of course, to size you up in your capacity of indigent, peripatetic painter unaware of his impending luck. Well! So after all your dad has picked out your wife for you. You're satisfied, I hope?"

"Satisfied!"

The young man laughed with the joy of life.

Another short story by Mr. Cullen in the next issue.

EYESIGHT AND EFFICIENCY

FOR some time back the low rate of production of many workers in some of our industries has been a puzzle to employers. Workers whose general intelligence and faithfulness are well up to the average, often, though they do their best, fall behind in production others who are neither as intelligent nor as conscientious.

It is known that a good many people whose eyesight is defective are unaware of the fact. Among these it has been found that there are some intelligent factory workers who did not realize their handicap. When they were fitted with proper eyeglasses, their efficiency was increased.

The question of eyesight and efficiency was very recently taken up at a meeting of the officers of the American Optometric Association in New York City, which was attended by representative members from different States. It was decided to urge upon Congress the passage of laws to advance the work of protecting the eyes of school children and make possible the early correction of defects in the eyesight. In discussing the urgency of such legislation, Doctor H. C. Augustine, president of the association, said that the public should be informed of the fact that only three people out of ten are wearing glasses today, though by actual survey six out of every ten should be wearing them.

"It is no secret," he continued, "that lowered production is one of the problems of modern economic life, and we are confident that eyestrain is one of the chief causes of lowered efficiency among workmen. In one factory in Massachusetts eighty per cent of the workers were found to have defective eyes, and when they were fitted with suitable glasses the output of the factory was increased twenty-eight per cent."

People of middle age, when they first begin to use eyeglasses, sometimes find their efficiency increased, to their surprise. As a matter of fact, in their younger days they had small defects of eyesight which they did not realize, and when they were fitted with proper glasses these defects were corrected. Their defects in vision had made them less efficient in earlier years. Sight is in most respects the most important of the senses, and defective eyesight in men or women, no matter how small the defect may be, is always a handicap, especially when they do not know that their sight is not normal.

Eyestrain from such defects often produces headaches and a feeling of tiredness, which for a time seem unaccountable to those suffering from them. When they realize that their eyesight is not normal and begin to wear eyeglasses, the headaches and languor usually disappear.

young woman's morning dress was of tailored white linen. A velvety pomegranate blossom, redder than the rubiest of rubies, glowed like a living ember at the left side of her dark-brown hair—few tourists in Miami miss seeing the pomegranate grove in blossom at the Jasper H. Smith place.

"Luncheon is waiting, Tanc," she informed the artist.

"Good!—I'm famished," he replied. "Just been appraising this Degas daub, Mary. It's a libel on Degas, of course, but I know fellows—accepted painters, I mean—who could have done a worse job."

"Do you?" she asked, smiling. "How, then, were they accepted? Luncheon is on the table and dad's waiting."

"Oh! be right with you. There's a leetle bit more paint left on this brush——"

"Besides, there's a guest. From the North. My godfather."

"In seven more seconds! How can a hamadryad"—glancing at the pomegranate blossom—"have a godfather?"

"He's a duck, and I love him! He and dad started life together, working in a plow factory. Later, in partnership, they had a little plow factory of their own. Then godfather moved to another city. This is the first time I've seen him for nearly two years."

"Be glad to meet any duck that you love, Mary. D'you think the old boy'll approve of your unfortunate choice of a——"

"Not unless you wash that paint off your hands—and there's a smear of green on your nose. And hurry!"

Weedon, bounding up a back stairway for a wash and for his coat, appeared in the shadowy archway of the luncheon room two minutes later. A very tall and very broad man, aquiline-featured and silver-haired, standing with Mr. Smith and Miss Smith by the table, called to him across the room.

"Well, old son——"

Weedon made one mighty leap and slide for it across the vast rug to grab his father in a grizzly hug.

"So that's that!" broke out Mr. Smith, the host, after a couple of minutes. "Now, I s'pose, we can have something to eat? Been working like a hound all morning, George"—addressing Weedon's father—"buying tackle for our tarpon-fishing trip, and I'm feeble for food."

Then the elder Weedon made an unfortunate remark.

" 'Tarpon fishing' sounds good, Jasper," he said superiorly. "They're there to be fished for, of course. Getting 'em's something else again."

The elderly Smith rose magnificently from his chair.

"Chuggers," he directed the butler, "hustle up to my play room and fetch down that fish."

Whereupon the puzzled Weedon, senior, gazed about him inquiringly.

"Tanc"—the host, still standing grandly, addressed the young man—"d'you remember my saying to you, that day on the sand bar, that there were certain braggy old friends of mine up North that'd made it their business to poison my life boasting of their fishing exploits?"

Tancred nodded.

"Well," and the host pointed a rigid, accusing forefinger at Tancred's father, "that man there was one of 'em—and the worst of 'em! So I'll just show *him*——"

Chuggers, all but invisible as he staggered into the room bearing, from behind, the great black board, with its easel, upon which the huge, silver-curving tarpon was mounted, halted with his burden only when he had reached a point directly opposite the elder Weedon's seat at the table.

"What a stunner!" was the ejaculation of the man who had been fishing for tarpon, off and on, for thirty years. "You're not telling me, Jasper, that *you* landed that——"

"I *ain't*, hey?" stormed the elderly Smith, smiling from ear to ear. "Well, you ask your own son here whether I landed him or not!"

Late that night Tancred and his father were having a good-night smoke together under the moon-swathed bugainvillæa arbor at the left of the long front drive. After a contemplative silence the elder Weedon, flicking his cigar ash, smiled.

"Tanc," he said, "all my life I've found waiting—just waiting—to be a pretty good system to play in family matters. Things work out—if you'll only wait. I'd dislike to say how often I've had my own way—by just waiting."

The young man, not discerning what this might be apropos of, did a little waiting himself.

"Take, for example," his father proceeded after a pause, "the case of you and Mary. I told Mary—after talking it over with her

a year or so ago, while I still was in Paris, pegging away with paint, he wrote to me—out of a clear sky—that I was to come home right away and learn the automobile-building business from the ground up and get married and settle down—no more dam' fizgigging around with paint!"

The oldster chuckled. Noticing which, Weedon laughed with him, and went on:

"As to the girl I was to marry forthwith and out of hand, that was all arranged. He'd picked out the girl, he wrote. Just the girl for me, he added. I'd *have* to like her!—that could be read between the lines."

"Who was the girl?—anybody you knew?" inquired the oldster.

"That's the joy of it—the governor didn't even write me her name!" exclaimed Weedon, his laugh this time slightly acrid. "The governor has a bluff epistolary style, you see—I have spoke—the matter is arranged—that sort of thing. I was to come home at once and be paraded before this girl, whose father, it appears, had been approached on the subject. If the goods proved satisfactory to the girl and to her father, after due inspection—well——"

The elderly Smith was laughing silently; and the effect upon him of laughing heartily and silently, both together, was to make him purple in the face and to cause him to blow his nose with extreme violence.

"So that was the scrap," went on Weedon. "I didn't leap to the governor's invitation—invitation to appear at my wedding—and I wrote to him why. I believe I wrote, among other things, that I'd like to have seen *his* dad telling *him* what girl *he* was going to marry! And so we came to epistolary blows—all on the governor's side, of course. You'd never guess what a varied vocabulary he has, nor the different kinds of heads he called me by mail—chucklehead, leatherhead, corkhead, lunkhead, woodenhead, pinhead, fathead, the whole catalogue of heads! He didn't stop my allowance, but I stopped it myself—seeing how he felt about things. So now I'm on my own, a dauber of sorts, and bound for Miami to tackle my first real-money job, the copying of a plowmaker's Cézanne and his Degas——"

"Now we'll get those hands bandaged right!" came, from behind, in the contralto tones of the camp tyrant. "Don't stand, please—reaching up so far tires my arms. What a mess! But they've stopped bleeding. You'll never drive with such hands!"

"Must—and soon—as soon as you've finished, in fact," said Weedon, this time determinedly. "Room engaged in Miami—expecting me to-night—Miami's crowded, I hear—they might give the room to somebody else."

His determined tone availed and he was not further pressed. When, the bandaging finished and thanks rendered, he was ready for immediate departure, the camp tyrant smilingly held out her hand. Weedon, being twenty-four years old and of a family whose pioneer history had included a desperado or two, pressed the hand, with no ensuing catastrophe. On the contrary, he even liked to imagine, later, that the pressure had been faintly returned.

"Good-by, son," said Smith, his hand extended. "I've given you our Miami address? Well, look us up!"

Weedon, leaving the camp at sundown, drove the unreversible Ford through a torrent of golden moonlight which harmonized well with his back-harking to the tones of a contralto voice.

By the middle of February, after two months of steady work, Weedon had virtually finished copying the Cézanne and the Degas which gave the final touch of distinction to the famous collection of French moderns that were on public view—by ticket, at stated hours on certain days—in the great, oblong, olive-and-gold picture room which formed the north wing of the show home, outside Miami, of Jasper H. Smith, manufacturer of plows.

During these two months Weedon, upon the cordial insistence of Mr. Smith, had been lodged in the Miami home, which—French Renaissance, with a dash of Florentine as to the balconies—reminded the young man of certain houses overlooking the sea on a road running southward from Nice.

On this forenoon, working in white trousers and canvas shoes and with the sleeves of his outing shirt rolled well back, he was filling in, with a fine brush, certain almost miscroscopic details on the silver-filigree skirt of Degas' stormy-looking Spanish dancing girl. We catch him at a moment when, stepping back for a comprehensive view of his work, he mutters to himself:

"Pretty bad—naturally! But I've seen rottener copying at that."

He turned at the sound of a springy tread and a swish as of well-laundered linen. The

called "red," immediately resumed his perch on the palmetto trunk.

Pelicans, fishing in the near-by inlet shallows, croaked hoarsely; a flock of white cranes, flying in triangular formation over the pine-and-palmetto-ringed camp clearing, squealed their approval of the amber sunshine; a mocking bird, on a moss-plumed oak deep in the jungle, rejoiced in the noticeable faltering of the great wind; an occasional car spat or clanked or boomed by on the adjacent Dixie Highway: this was a smoke that Weedon would remember!

"But I like to play around with daughter, no matter what the playgrounds," he heard dad's continued murmur as from a distance. "Never had much time—any time—to play around with her mother; always too busy—while she was with me—trying to get somewhere; and she went before I got anywhere worth mentioning. Always've regretted that I didn't play around with her more, work or no work. So now, when daughter makes a suggestion like this"—more waving about of the cigar—"I'm at her disposal and glad of the chance."

Weedon, remembering how he had heard his own father say virtually the same things on the same subject, nodded understandingly.

"Aiming to winter in Miami, son?" inquired the oldster after a silence.

"Well—yes, if I make myself believe I can undertake the job," replied Weedon.

"Never admit you're not up to any job," advised the overalled Smith. "What kind of a job—if I'm not intrusive?"

"Painting."

"Oh, painting!" Weedon, looking in the other direction, did not catch the twinkle in the elderly Smith's keen, gray eyes. "House painting, I suppose?" Weedon laughed enjoyably. "Oh, then it's not house painting," the oldster kept on. "But you needn't laugh, my boy. Nothing in house painting to be ashamed of. When I was a lad, back in Indiana, I knew a pretty good man who painted houses and signs and things—barns, too. Man named Jim Riley. You'll have heard of him by the name of James Whitcomb Riley."

"Yes, I know—the 'Goblins'll Get You' man—I've read most of his stuff," said Weedon. "I wasn't belittling house painters. I was laughing at my own nerve."

"Wouldn't do that," suggested the oldster. "Boy your age can't have too much nerve."

"Well, gall then—gall is better," said Weedon. "It's this way, sir. There's a rich man—manufactures plows, I believe, somewhere out West—with a winter home down Miami way—magnificent place, his home, I'm told—who's got, among other priceless French pictures, two particularly famous ones: one a Cézanne, the other a Degas. Well, I've got a commission from a New York dealer to copy those two. That's what makes me laugh—laugh every time I think of it! The gall of me—of anybody!—deliberately setting about to copy a Degas or a Cézanne! But this dealer thinks I'll make some kind of a fist of the job; so I'm going to Miami to tackle it. My first commission. Need the work—and the money."

"Don't see anything so gally about that," declared Smith. "The dealer knows you've mastered your trade, I s'pose. Learn how to paint in France?"

"Yes—got my schooling there so I could dabble in paint at the same time," replied Weedon. "My father was dead against the arrangement"—the young man felt the blood swirling in his face again, though he had a purpose this time in mentioning his father—"but he stood for it to please me. So I became a sort of a painter. I'll never be better than a tenth rater, but, having scrapped with my dad, I'm going to get a living by painting somehow——"

"Scrapped with your dad? How come, son?" inquired the oldster, thereby giving the young man the chance to square his bad break for which he had been angling.

"I'm glad you've asked that question, sir," said Weedon, "because a while back on the bridge, when I let it slip—not meaning to—that the maker of the Weedon car is my father, I felt, as soon as I'd said it, that that statement, considering—well, my obvious circumstances—might well admit of an explanation which I didn't feel the need of making, then. But now—well, after all your hospitality and kindness—and your daughter's—I want to set the thing right."

Weedon, even while striving to disengage himself from the convolutions of this formidable sentence, became subconsciously aware that the clink-clink of the aluminum dishes had ceased.

"I'm the son—the only one—of George Weedon, all right, and a great dad he is, too," he went on, with a certain boyish naïveté. "I'm for him to the end of time, scrap or no scrap. But there are some things—— Well,

"Mr. Tancred Weedon," he was saying, "is—I think you said your name was Tancred, didn't you, son?" The oldster, as he spoke, again was intently watching his daughter's face.

The wonderment on her cameo-of-Clio countenance—Weedon's own mental figure of speech!—had intensified, with her father's last words, into something more like amazement. Seeing which, Weedon did not then know where to look. Pshaw! How he had spilled the beans! Here were people with whom he might have been on pleasant terms during his stay in Miami—a superb girl whom he might have been asked to call upon—had it not been for that idiotic break! Now they—she—could only be frostily polite, viewing him, as they must, as a cheap pretender to a high-placed father of wealth and civic distinction. Well! No use standing on the order of his going—go at once!

"Tancred—yes, sir, that's my name," he replied with a certain brittle defiance. "And now, sir, seeing it's after one o'clock—sun sets early in December—disabled car—I'll be moving on for——"

"Oh, but no—no, indeed!"

The occasional poet of twenty-four mentally compared the girl's smile—and later used the comparison in deplorably limping lines!—to sunlight sifting through white lilac blossoms; having already, despite his chagrin over his bad break, reached that stage of fatuity.

"Impossible for you to go, Mr. Weedon, before you have your hands done with real bandages," she went on. "And you're to have a bite of lunch with us—mostly canned stuff, so don't fall to anticipating! And after that it'll be considered whether, with your hands, you are to be allowed to——

"Things to do in Miami—er—appointment there," Weedon began to mumble, knowing full well that they—she—still considered him the brazenest of impostors. "Besides, my car's out of whack—busted reversing gear—make a poor fist of night driving with that——"

"Busted reversing gear!" mocked the girl. "How many times in France did you—did all of us—have to drive through the black of night with busted reversing gear and busted everything else—but—just the wheels! Besides, to-night there's a moon—if you're to be allowed to go to-night! Get in, dad. We'll start for camp. I'm starving. I came to get you for lunch just when you two got interested in that absurd lummox of a fish, and I had to sit, perishing for food, in the car at the end of the bridge while the whole ridiculous ritual of landing that fish was gone through with! Mr. Weedon, you'll follow us in your car—the camp's only a stone's throw from the south end of the bridge."

Weedon, beginning to understand dad's docility in obeying daughter's orders, cranked the antique Ford and trailed the new Weedon to camp.

The camp tyrant—crooning, very pianissimo, the air of Madelon—was sousing the aluminum lunch dishes in the sulphur-water spring that bubbled close to the brown A-tent, while the two men, perched on palmetto stumps, smoked. Coffee even of the so-so sort will make a proper base upon which to superimpose tobacco. But daughter's coffee, made on the one-burner oil stove, had been so celestially perfect that Weedon, now smoking one of dad's large-and-mild but very fillin' Havanas, could even have viewed a buzzard—at a decent distance—with equanimity.

Dad, coffee-and-nicotinized to a toxic T, and therefore feeling fine, expatiated in the inflectionless monotone of the fed male.

"Daughter's idea, this camping business," he said, waving his cigar about. "Said she was tired of living respectably in a pent-up house. And, driving about, she'd seen so many contented-looking folks doing this sort of thing all over Florida that she wanted to try it. So we came—been here four days. 'Sall right. Don't mind it at all. But then, again, I'm old enough now to like a sure-enough bed—my own bed—pretty well. To say nothing of my own bathroom. Down near Miami I've got a little pl—well, a place that'll look good to me when we get back there."

Weedon, for the comfort of sprawling, squatted on the thick carpet of pine needles, resting his back against the palmetto trunk. A cool voice from the sulphur spring promptly caused him to sit upright.

"I don't believe the red bugs of Florida will take a dare like that, Mr. Weedon," said the contralto voice. "You'll be eaten alive!"

Whereupon Weedon, the warning recalling a painful boy experience, for which no known unguent availed, with the notorious, burrowing insects of Florida graphically

he have had to shake hands with her, anyhow?

"Why, look here, boy," broke out the elderly Smith, staring at the red splotches on the bridge planks on either side of the young man, "I didn't know——"

"Wait a minute," said the girl. She passed around to the invisible side of the big car. There were repeated sounds—kweeeeesh!—as of rended linen. When she reappeared she had several foot-wide patches of snowy-looking stuff in her hands which Weedon correctly associated in his mind with the froth from which he had averted his eyes when first she had appeared on the bridge.

"These will stanch the flow till we get to camp—I've some bandages there," said the girl, and, with the deftness of a graduate nurse, she wrapped the Cuttyhunk-sawed, profusely bleeding palms with the snowy patches, tying them in place with strips of embroidery edging. Weedon felt sheepish and looked sheepish. Still—— Well, if his fool hands had to be swaddled, it was agreeable to have the job done by this capable and astonishingly good-looking girl, seeing how few of 'em—the callow bitterness of youth!—were both capable and good looking.

"Dad," the girl, still busy with the hands, broke in on these vapid reflections, "you get into the car, this minute, and change those wet socks! You'll find the dry pair on the back seat." Dad obeyed with the alacrity of a well-disciplined little boy. "Men, pooh!—men are all children—infants in arms," she went on, beginning on the second hand. "All of this—torn hands and wet feet—on account of one old fish! Two full-grown men imperiling their legs and lives—I saw the both of you make those silly big jumps from the bridge to the bar—just to get one stupid, ridiculously oversized fish!"

Weedon was getting a lot out of life. Those musical, low-pitched contralto tones—the cello, or, better, the viola quality—how he'd like to hear her sing! She was of good height, but not so tall that he, with his six feet, could not look down at her as she worked. She had thrown off her wide-brimmed hat the better to bend close over the hands, and he liked the way her glossy, dark-brown hair—wavy or crinkly or something, wasn't it?—was gathered up at the back from the nape of her white neck—and wasn't pink gingham amazingly effective stuff against a neck of just the right shade of ivory!

"There!" said the girl, finishing with the hands. "Now you look like a war-scarred veteran." A slight, but very significant pause. "You served——"

Weedon had never been so glad of being able to nod affirmatively.

"Drove a French ambulance for two years," he said. "Was living in France when it broke. Too young then—only seventeen—for the line. Wouldn't even admit me to the Foreign Legion. So I took the ambulance. Invalided after two years."

"Hit?"

"Scratch."

Dad, dry-socked, coughed behind them.

"Now you two'll be jabbering French, I s'pose, leaving me up in the air," he cut in. "A peculiarity of this young lady"—he addressed Weedon—"is that she'd let you talk for a year about the ambulance you drove in France without ever saying a word about the ambulance she herself drove in France—yes, and under fire!" and the overalled Smith's keen old eyes gleamed proudly.

Weedon looked wide-eyed at the girl, who was flushing.

"I haven't yet introduced you two," went on dad. "Your patient's name, daughter"—he seemed to be watching her face with unusual steadiness as he spoke—"is Mr. Weedon. Mr. Weedon, my daughter, Miss Smith——"

"Weedon!—that name has been a good deal in my mind the past few days, since dad gave me that Weedon car," said the girl, holding out her hand. "It's a mighty good car."

"A mighty good man makes it," said Weedon, taking her hand in his bandaged one. "He's my father."

Instantly, with the blood in his face, he was sorry he had made that last remark. He caught a swift exchange of glances between the elderly Smith and his daughter. There was a sort of wonderment on the girl's face. And why not? self-disgustedly reflected Weedon. Here he was, certainly not a very flourishing-looking customer—the owner of that rusty, dilapidated old Ford standing there in front of the Weedon—here he was, like a fool, telling strangers—agreeable strangers, one of them a pretty, plucky, ambulance-driving girl in whose good opinion he would like to shine—that the maker of the Weedon car was his father! Of course they believed him to be lying. But the overalled Smith was speaking again.

"Weedon—Tancred Weedon," absently replied the young man—absently because his eyes were sweeping, for a possible ladder, the palmetto piers of that part of the bridge which spanned the sand bar. Had he not been so absorbed in this search he could not have failed to notice the sudden peering, appraising gaze, and after this the quickly erased smile of an old man, which his mention of his name had evoked.

"Mine's Smith—the inevitable Smith," said the oldster. "The thing that's bothering me, Tancred, is how in blazes we're going to get back on the bridge, much less drag the tarpon up there. And rather than leave that fish here I'd stay with him and perish!"

"Ladder ho!" sang out Weedon, pointing to a pair of rough scantlings, with half a dozen rungs nailed to them, extending at a precarious slant from the projecting bridge planks at the north edge of the bar. "I thought," he added, "the fellows with casting nets, looking for shrimp bait here, must have rigged themselves some ladder."

"Almost too cut and dried to be true, ain't it?" laughed the elderly inevitable Smith.

Weedon, forcing the great bronze hook from the tarpon's lip, cut fifty feet from the Cuttyhunk line, looped the line eight times, and knotted the loose ends, rigged it through the fish's mouth and gills, and together they dragged the tarpon along the sand to the base of the ladder. Then, mounting to the bridge, the young man, vain of his strength, pulled the immensely heavy fish by main lifting power to the bridge planks. His vanity, which took the form of declining to wait for the older man's hoisting aid, cost him a painful bleeding welt, deeply sawed by the hard Cuttyhunk line, in the palm of each hand.

The day seemed to be marked for pat occurrences. A heavy Miami-bound touring car, the substantial-looking, middle-aged driver of which, traveling unaccompanied, proved to be a most deferential acquaintance of the elderly Smith in overalls, pulled up to admire and exclaim over the tarpon two minutes after the fish had been hauled to the bridge.

"Want to have this one mounted, Jim," complacently remarked Mr. Smith to this exclaimer. "Rather a large tarp—first one I've landed this season anywhere near his size"—with an astonishingly furtive and crafty wink at Weedon—"and I want 'im preserved for posterity. If you don't mind driving to Miami—you're on your way home, ain't you?—with a deceased tarpon in the back of your car, you'd oblige me a heap by carting him to the Miami Fishing Club and getting 'em to send the fish to a what-d'ye-call-'im—taxidermist."

"Sure will, sir—be a pleasure, sir!" cut in the extremely-willing-to-oblige Jim. Weedon lugged the great fish into the back of the Miami-bound car, which resumed its southward run.

For the young man, this memorable incident on bridge and sand bar seemed to be at an end. He wanted to fix the scene in his mind, that he might reconstruct the picture in hours of stagnation, and his gaze swept the blue inlet with the oddly mingled pines and palms on both banks, the palms bending with a swish-sh-sh like the hiss of escaping steam under the heavy wind that whooped through the sunshine of a cloudless sky. Well! He would remember it all right. But now—back to the job in hand!

"Well, governor," he started to say, "I'm aiming to pull Miami by sundown, and so I'll be on my——"

"Here comes daughter back—with the socks, I suppose," interrupted the oldster, pointing to the big, gleamy car which just then had rumbled on to the south end of the bridge. "I want you to meet my daughter."

And so, the fish having departed, Fate—alias The Girl With the Socks—stepped in.

The introduction was a broken one.

"Daughter," began the overalled Smith when the dark-haired young woman in the camping-length pink gingham dress and the blue stockings and the becoming ten-cent-store, wide-brimmed straw hat alighted on the bridge planks from the car, "let me make you acquainted with a young gentleman who, when it comes to tarp——"

"But those hands——" the young woman exclaimed, in a shocked tone.

Weedon, for the moment, had forgotten about his hands. It would have been asking a good deal to expect a man of twenty-four to remember his hands, no matter what ailed them, when confronted by so unbelievably pretty an apparition in pink gingham as this present one. Now he recalled that his hands, hanging at his sides, were still dripping. It was too late to conceal them. And wouldn't

lurches, for a little while on the dry, white bar, then lay still, noble even in quietude, an incredibly perfect example in gleaming chiseled silver of nature's supreme artistry.

The oldster handed the rod to Weedon and mopped his bedewed brow with a billowing handkerchief of white silk that contrasted oddly with his overalls.

"Son, listen to me," he said in short, panting gasps. "You're almost as good a prevaricator as you are cusser, which is saying a heap. You weren't sick when you called me down here, boy."

Weedon grinned sheepishly under his wind tan. A six-foot, block-shouldered, middle-tapering fellow in khaki breeks and worn, brown puttees and a cravatless khaki shirt open at the throat—firm-featured, brown-eyed, clean-shaven, bareheaded—he did not have the look of an individual possessed of the finesse called for if a lie—even a well-meant lie—was to be carried to a successful conclusion.

"Temporarily squeamish from overexertion—that's all it was, sir," he nevertheless tried.

"No more sick than I was, son—nor than that tarpon was," the oldster, mopping still, cut him off. "I haven't got along this far in life, my lad, without being able to do a little reading in a good, strong light. I don't believe. from your looks, you were ever sick a minute in your life. But you wanted to give a fussy, vain, old man a chance. You wanted me to land that tarpon. Well, I did land him—after you'd put the kibosh on him—and I'm here to say that there ain't anything in the world that I can think of just now that I'd take for the fun and the name of having landed him!

"I'm going to have him mounted, and there are some braggy old scoundrels of friends of mine up North, that've been breaking my little heart for years boasting of their fishing exploits, that I'm going to make burst into large salty tears when I show 'em that mounted fish. But that ain't what I started to say. Most young people—I was young myself once, and so I know—are selfish in these matters. They like the spotlight and the cream and whatever goodies are a-going, themselves. I've got a daughter that's an exception to that rule, but you're the first young fellow that I can remember having met that's an exception to it. Well, I'm going to remember it—that's all. Any young feller who, having a good corn-fed working hold on a fish like that one, will just out of unselfish good nature hand the rod over to a clumsy duffer of an old man——"

"Dad!"

The voice from above, femininely peremptory, stopped the old boy's grateful speech and lifted the eyes of the two men on the bar to the bridge at their backs, whence the call came clear to them on a gust of wind.

Weedon, catching sight of a pink skirt, and underneath that a froth of snowy lace, all being wrapped flappingly by the great breeze around an unavoidably liberal display of blue stockings, promptly looked the other way in accordance with the amusingly superior modesty of the young male. Not so dad. Dad gazed straight back at the pink-white-and-blue apparition on the bridge and answered the hail.

"What say, daughter?" was his shout. Then, with all the gloatful joy in achievement of an exultant small boy he added, pointing to the now all-tranquil tarpon that still flashed back the sun's rays from his silver armor, "Looka here, Mary, what I got!"

From the bridge came the instant reply, musical in its contralto pitch:

"Yes, I saw it all from the start—but I know you've got your feet soaking wet and caught your death of cold! Come back to camp this very minute and change your socks!"

The two men broke into a mutually understood laugh. Wet feet and a change of socks—what an anticlimax for all the heroic doings of the past hour! Man proposes, woman disposes. From the irresponsibleness of a pair of boys sloshing around their caught fish on a sand bar, they had been woman summoned—the ancient story!—to their responsibilities as men.

"Oh, dad!"

"Yes, daughter."

"I'll drive in a hurry over to camp and get a pair of socks and you can put them on in the car."

"Good girl! Fetch 'em and I'll change."

Pink-white-and-blue fluttered away from the rail, and a big, gleamy touring car, that had been drawn up back of Weedon's disreputable old Ford, rumbled southward over the rickety bridge.

"What's bothering me," broke out the father of daughter, "is how the dev——" He stayed this abruptly to inquire: "By the way, son, what is your name?"

only jump down here——" He stopped, and waited. The wait was ever so short.

"That's me, boy!" the voice of an elderly he-man rang above the whoop of the wind. "Hold 'im fast—be there in a jiff!"

He climbed over the rail with his sturdy old legs. If it had been a ticklish jump for an athletic young man under thirty, it was a really wild-looking one for a time-stiffened man past sixty. But the sand that showed on the character-stamped countenance of this elderly man was no less present in his craw. He bent down and forward, as he had seen Weedon do in making the jump, and let himself go for general results. He landed hard, and he landed sprawling—but he landed! He was up like a flash, with the right set to his clean, old jaw and his eyes gleaming with well-being and with a boy's enjoyment of the situation.

"Great work, governor!" said Weedon, careful so far to retain the demeanor of a sick man, and he transferred the rod to the other's hands. The oldster, profiting by his observation of the young man's handling of the rod, took hold of it in a workmanlike manner and with a grip of power. Weedon, standing a little back of him to give him room, volunteered advice, not bossily but in the tone of suggestion.

"Sounded again—mad as a hornet! Better let 'im sulk it out a bit, governor. Now he's tippytoeing in a little—I wouldn't give him an inch of slack. Hard-pulling rascal, eh? Reel slowly, sir—steady does it. Better keep your rod tip pointing a little more upward—gives you more purchase. D'you know you're dragging that divvle in, sir? He changed his mind about making another leap, but his tail flickered on top, and he's only two hundred feet away! Weaving from side to side now, looking for something to wrap the line around—but no chance! Steady away, sir—I'll bet you yanked him in forty feet that time!

"Keep your thumb on that brake, in case he runs. Say, governor, you're going to land a whacking tarpon—he's only a hundred feet from the caps of your shoes! Good thing you've got a rod that'll stand the work—look how he's got it pulled nearly double! Watch out for a little fireworks when you get him in shallow water—he's liable to do his damnedest to shake the hook out of his face. But you've tired him, sir—he's yielding line a-plenty to you now. You'll want to stand clear when you haul him up on the bar, for when he finds himself stranded he'll thrash around like a lady killer whale guarding her cub from a shark."

"I thought you were sick, young man," the panting oldster, without turning his head, said softly.

"Am sick!" protested Weedon, suddenly conscious that he'd been showing a lot of normal interest in the work in hand for an ill person. "That is, I was. Feeling some better since you took that job off my hands. I'd never have got him in this far. But watch him, sir—thumb on the brake—he may run yet!"

The tarpon, weary and sullen, but still powerful, was weaving about in great, tugging half circles as he yielded foot by foot to the ever-taut line.

"Let's get farther away from the bridge before hauling that fellow on the bar, governor," suggested Weedon. "If ever he catches sight of these bridge piers, while he's still got enough water to work with, he'll dash around one of 'em, saw the line clean through on the barnacles, and start for the Canaries with the hook in his mouth."

Still reeling slowly but steadily, the pupil tarpon fisher, obedient to all of the suggestions of an instructor who himself had never caught a tarpon, trudged cautiously seaward about a hundred feet on the edge of the now almost dry sand bar, Weedon following. Fifty feet away, in the shallowing blue water, the giant fish, rising when he found himself so close to bottom, angrily tail-slapped the surface with a series of reports that sounded like the bark of a quick-firing gun, churning the space for fifty feet around him into a caldron of bubbling cream. But the amateur old-timer, smiling grimly, kept the rod butt braced against his waistband and held on.

"Come on in, tired tarp—you've dashed through your last school of fool mullet!" exulted Weedon when, now well into the shallow water and firmly held despite his savage thrashing, the fish showed his great curving length on the surface. "Governor, he's six foot or better, and he'll scale a hundred and eighty if an ounce! Step a little back from the edge, sir—now!—the one big, hard yank!—let him flop around all he likes, he's cooked! Once more over that edge—*got 'im!*"

The giant tarpon, a bewilderingly beautiful specimen of the loveliest of all sea creatures, strove frenziedly, in great curving

nodded downward at the sun-dappled white sand bar. The oldster, leaning with his arms outstretched on the bridge rail, followed the nod with puckered eyes.

"Too much of a jump down there, son," he called back, again funneling through his hands. Then he added in the homely vernacular which the most genuine of men often employ by choice in moments of excitement: "An' the 'gators'll git you, boy!"

" 'Gators," Weedon laughed back, "don't make salt water unless a drought dries up the back creeks. And I'd stand on a 'gator if that was the only way to land this tarp!"

"You're the doctor, boy—and a tarp, as you call 'im, is a tarp!" the older man sang back.

The tarpon, at the end of his last long run, had sounded and was sulking. The line slackened, the slack fluttering in a wide, sidewise bend under the impact of the wind. The tarpon, experimenting for a means of getting free from the queer thing cleanly hooked through his upper lip, slowly came in a piece. Weedon reeled in the slack until the line tightened again with an ugly jerk, and he laughed.

"No slack for you, cunning devil!" he said as if talking to the fish, man to man. "Let's go!"

Never relaxing his two-handed grip on the upright-held rod handle, he threw one long leather-putteed leg and then the other over the bridge rail, and made sure of his balance and bearings on the scant foot of planking projecting beyond the rail. Then, bending low, and with an assured clutch on the rod, he jumped for the sand bar.

It was a ticklish-looking, fifteen-foot jump, but he landed, with a fine splash and square on the balls of his feet, on the cement-hard sand with its diminishing covering of sea water. Instantly upon straightening he reeled in the slack produced by this change of position, and got another answering tug when the line became taut.

"Atta boy!" sang out the oldster, his keen, gray eyes shining with excitement. "Never had so much fun in my life! Now lemme see you git that fish, lad—I need the experience."

Weedon, laughing, began slowly—and only by exercising the uttermost strength of his right-hand fingers—to reel in. His recollection of his father's tactics at this laborious and crafty work served him in handy stead. When the fish stiffened like a calf at a rope's end and refused to budge another inch inward, Weedon indulged him with a few feet of grudging, carefully thumb-braked line; then, waiting, reeled in again.

Four times the tarpon, panicky and increasingly embittered by the only momentarily relaxed pressure that was being relentlessly exerted upon him, fled seaward; Weedon, each time sensing that bulldozing would only result in the loss of the fish and the tackle besides, gave the fish his way and let him run. But the runs, slowing up in initial zipp and sustained speed, showed that the tarpon, when Weedon had been playing him for twenty minutes from the bar, was tiring. With each reel in now he came a little more tractably.

Weedon, knowing now that there'd be a superb tarpon flapping out the remainder of his strength on that sand bar within a quarter of an hour or so, reflected. His reflection took this twist:

Here he was, only twenty-four years old, and with a whole lifetime ahead of him to get tarpon if he wanted 'em, reeling in a beauty-bright bear of a tarpon with another man's rod and line. Well, that other man, a fine, helpful old boy, probably well past sixty, had never, on his own admission, caught any kind of a fish in his life; Weedon felt that there was something almost pathetic about that elderly man's brand-new overalls and hickory shirt and his shiny new rod and reel which never yet had caught a fish. How the old lad would enjoy landing that tarpon! And how he would enjoy bragging about the feat to his envious old buddies up North! Weedon, steadily reeling in a tired tarpon, decided that he'd defer getting a tarpon for himself until some future time.

"Governor," he called up to the oldster, who still was leaning, rapt, with his arms over the bridge rail, "I wish you could get down here. D'ye think you could?" He spoke in a strained and somewhat weak voice —apurpose, as children say.

"What is it, son—anything wrong?" was the oldster's quick, solicitous question.

"Well, kind o' wrong, yes," lied Weedon, in his assumed feeble voice. "This tough beggar's tuckered me out, I guess. Feel horribly nauseated; so sick at the stomach, in fact, that I'm afraid I might——" He permitted that to trail off, allowing his hearer to infer what he might do. "And it'd be a crime to lose this tarp now. If you could

the same instant as Weedon, stopped suddenly in the middle of the bridge when he saw the tall yong man, with a diving movement like that of a ball player starting a slide for a base, grab the handle of the rod with both hands.

"No mistaking that speed—he's a tarp!" Weedon, getting a thumb on the leather brake, shouted above the boom of the wind. "Here, governor—try for him, anyhow!" he added, preparing to hand over the rod to the older man. But the rod's owner had not advanced from the middle of the bridge.

"No, son—I'd only blunder and lose him—you can christen that rod!" the elderly man, making a funnel of his hands, shouted back. "You get the tarpon and I'll get the experience!"

Weedon had straightened, and, pointing the tip of the rod skyward, exerted a gradual but firm pressure on the thumb brake. Three hundred feet seaward there flashed, twice in dazzlingly quick succession, a beautiful arc of dripping silver, the sun catching the spraying water and forming swiftly vanishing rainbows where the great fish had leaped.

"My God!" gasped the elderly man, standing petrified at the sheer loveliness of the picture. "To catch a fish like that——"

"But, governor, you can't catch a tarpon from a bridge!" Weedon chanted high, to make himself heard above the wind's steady roar. He was paying out more line now, because he had to, for the captive, after leaping, was trying another great run for freedom; but his thumb was glued to the brake and he was as stingy with line as he could be without imperiling the tackle.

"Why not—from a bridge?" guilelessly asked the older man. Weedon, striving to make himself clear while discreetly serving out line to a tarpon bound in the general direction of the Azores, shouted over his shoulder in choppy sections of sentences.

"Tarpon's got to be gaffed—got to be gaffed even before you get him into a boat—or he'd knock the everlasting giblets out of all hands—can't gaff a tarp from a bridge—not from a bridge like this that's fifteen feet from the water, anyhow—and there's no gaff here at that—and no tarp's going to let himself be lifted out of the water over a bridge rail like a mud cat. Whee! there he flickers again, the hull whalin' six feet of him—and wouldn't I give a couple of perfectly good fingers to land him if only there was a way!"

The older man listened agape to Weedon's explanatory chant and once more broke into an ejaculation almost of awe when the magnificent fish, now desperate and fighting mad at the end of his four hundred feet of tightening tether, twice again sought to break the hold of the hook by darting high, like a sort of subaqueous rocket, out of the water, each time leaving behind a misty rocket flare made by the millions of showering prisms catching the glancing rays of the sun.

The oldster, the backs of his hands pressed hard into his sides, was roused to eloquence by the tantalizing loveliness of these tarpon-created rainbows.

"A way?" he echoed Weedon's words. "Boy, listen! There's got to be a way! If somebody—you—me—us—but *somebody!*—doesn't get that handsome, damn silver scoundrel out of the water so's I can get a close-up look at him, I'll consider the ship sunk with all hands and no insurance, and I won't care a hang whether I'm rescued or not!"

The tarpon, running again—and with twice the speed of a timber wolf outracing a forest fire—pulled at the rod. Weedon yielded grudgingly at the thumb brake, until the carefully selected piece of matchlessly tough, second-growth Kentucky hickory looked like an upside-down letter L. The young man, bracing the rod's butt against his belt buckle, had to use every ounce of the gripping power of his hands to hold the fishing tool upright. Once, at the beginning of a singularly vicious jerk and run, the thumb brake slipped back when Weedon, for easement, was changing thumbs; and, in clapping his left thumb on the unwinding bare line to stop the racing fish from hogging the whole reel of Cuttyhunk, he felt the skin of that useful digit burning as if held over a candle's flame. But he got the thumb brake back into position and disregarded the burning, in his elation over a discovery which he had made during that last great run of the tarpon.

This discovery was a sand bar, a couple of hundred feet wide, which at low tide—as now—clove the inlet only a little to the left of his position over the boat channel on the bridge, and which, with the tide still on the ebb, showed white and firm under less than half a foot of water.

"Maybe there's a way, governor!" he called back over his shoulder. "You can't lift a tarp over a bridge, but if you're lucky you can drown him on a bar!" and he

her to another junkman for what I paid for her. I'll hate to see the last of the old girl, at that."

"Better back her, son—the right wheel's sagging over that busted plank," suggested the fisherman. Weedon started to climb out of the driving seat to crank the motor, but the elderly man raised a staying hand. "You stick at the wheel—I'll crank her," he said, and he wedged the shiny, silver butt of his fishing rod—a massive, two-piece affair, plainly dead-new—between two warped-apart bridge planks and approached the car.

"That rod'll be yanked overboard, I'm afraid, sir, if there's a hard strike while you're cranking," warned Weedon.

"Strike?" inquired the older man, looking puzzled. Weedon saw at once that he was not an experienced fisherman.

"If a big fish hits your hook, I mean," he explained. "You're after tarpon, judging from the heft of your tackle; and if a tarpon struck your bait he'd be hauling your rod to sea by the time you turned your back."

The owner of the rod clapped the backs of his hands to his sides and regarded the young man with a whimsical assumption of profound respect.

"Son," he inquired, "d'you mean to tell me you ever caught a tarpon?"

"Never tried," laughed Weedon. "But I've seen my dad get many a one. He used to fetch me to Florida with him on his tarpon-fishing trips over on the Gulf side—years ago, when I was too small a shaver to try for tarpon myself."

"Well, my hat's off to anybody that's caught a tarpon," said the oldster. "Me, I've never yet caught any kind of a fish, big or little. This is the first time in my life, in fact, that I've ever been a-fishing. Never had time to fish—never had time for anything but making a living. But I'm rigged for tarpon, all right, as you've noticed. What I'll do, though, if ever I hook a tarpon is more than I can say. Now let's get this bus backed off that broken plank," and he gave the crank handle a mighty twist.

The aged motor rushed throbbingly to life, and Weedon, with his foot on the reversing pedal, gave her gas. Nothing happened. The reversing pedal, pressed all the way down, engaged no gear, and the car, for all the deafening roar of the gas-choked motor, stood stock-still. Weedon throttled down and gazed over the smashed wind shield at the fisherman who'd never caught a fish.

"Reversing gear's gone bust," he said succinctly. "And, saving your presence, sir—damn!"

"You're forgiven, son—I've stripped reversing gears, not once, but often," said the older man. "Probably happened when that clumsy eagle was trying to get into the car with you. 'Stead of jamming down your foot brake you must've jabbed at the reversing pedal in your excusable excitement. You've either snapped a transmission band or busted your reversing drum—maybe both. Lemme crawl in there and have a look. I know a little about some cars—even about Henry's."

Weedon—after six hours of steady driving that day and nine days of driving before that—pulled an ache-registering face as he uncoiled his long legs and climbed stiffly out of the car. The white-mustached man, taking his place, got immediately to his knees and expertly yanked the wooden footboards from around those three familiar everywhere-known Ford pedals. With a wrench which Weedon handed him he soon had the transmission gear exposed.

"Reversing drum's stripped slick as a pump rod," he presently announced, crawling backward out of the car. "You'll never back this bus again, son, till you put a new drum in her. Of course she'll drive ahead all right—and, if you're going to Miami, only a five-hour run, what's the use of backing till you get there, anyhow?"

"Right-o, sir—straight ahead to Miami and no backing does it," acquiesced the disabled car's owner. He released the hand brake, and together they pulled the car back from the edge of the bridge. "Much obliged for your friendly offices, sir," said Weedon, getting into the driving seat after cranking. "I'll be rooting for you to hook a tarp——"

"Clee-ee-ee-eesh!" at that instant sang the reel of the plank-wedged rod.

There was no stiffness this time in Weedon's movements as, shutting off his motor with a swift dab at the underneath switch, he leaped from the car. The fishing rod, its butt pulled free at the first yank from its plank-wedged position, was dancing like a thing alive along the bridge rail, with the big reel, wrapped to the leather thumb brake with hundreds of feet of the heaviest Cuttyhunk, shrilling its sibilant squeal as it paid out, unchecked, to the seaward-racing creature at its baited end. The white-mustached man, who had leaped for the jiggling rod at

still-squirming sea trout firmly gripped in its talons, was sailing swiftly over the blue water, close to the bridge, with the characteristic fish-hawk idea of making the highest dead branch of a naked old pine near the inlet's verge and there enjoying his dinner.

But a fish hawk, in his business of getting a living and continuing to live, is always a clear-headed interpreter of the facts of life when he sees an eagle about. "I don't want the fool fish—you can have it!" screamed this one in the language of a scared but wise fish hawk, when, darting wildly from under the eagle's swoop, he let go of his dinner; whereupon the bullying eagle, deflecting his swoop with dazzling speed, catapulted downward for the dropped sea trout, catching it in his hooking talons when the fish had fallen within a foot of the surface of the water.

A tremendous wind, the fag end of a Caribbean hurricane, was booming from the southwest through the hot December sunshine; blowing even hard enough to carry a fish-burdened eagle out of his upward-reaching course.

Weedon, driving at very moderate speed in the wind's teeth over the unsteady bridge with its loose, warped planks, blinked with startled incredulity when the great eagle, that seemed to fill the whole front of the world with its enormous wind-pounding wings, loomed upon him, not five feet away and square in his path, over the top of the bridge rail.

At the very instant that the eagle topped the rail—banging, in the upward struggle, the fish's body against the wood—the wind, with a great rushing chant of triumph, caught the bird in a sudden unbalancing puff of irresistible power. The eagle was dashed like a thrown missile against the car's half-opened wind shield, shattering it to fragments that were blown in a stinging shower of splinters about the young man's head.

Weedon's experience as a driver, while extensive, did not comprise encounters with wind-blown eagles. Feeling the steering wheel slipping in his grasp as he wriggled in his seat to dodge the flying glass, and with the stampeded eagle still pressed against the whole upper front of the car by the wind's invincible force, he jabbed with his right foot at—as he thought—the brake pedal, at the same time thrusting up his throttles.

The car, making a swift skid to the right, slammed luckily into a rail post that happened to be heavier and more firmly nailed than most of the others. The post held, though the sound of ripping wood told him that the lower rail had been knocked to flinders, and his right wheel slanted precariously on the down-tipped end of a loose plank. The motor expired with a hissing sigh. The eagle, cravenly leaving his stolen fish on the car's hot hood, leaped high into the embrace of the whooping wind, and, catching the needful current, soared into the blue.

The young man flopped back disgustedly in the driving seat and uttered aloud, deliberately and even choosingly, with a certain knack that denoted both versatility and research, a series of remarks suitable to the circumstances. But he had got nowhere near to the end of his objurgative repertoire when a hearty, deep voice, coming at him from the left side of the bridge, struck in upon and interfered with this really recondite flow of forbidden language.

"Say it, son, say it!" the cheery voice egged him on. "If you haven't got a say-it a-coming, I'll be damned!"

The owner of the voice, who was fishing from the bridge, was a square-shouldered, well-kept man of sixty odd with a close-clipped, silver mustache and with crisp, snowy hair showing at the sides of a cap drawn tight against the pull of the wind. He wore a brand-new, one-piece suit of brown overalls—the creases still showed in them—and a straight-from-the-shelf shirt of coarse blue hickory. He was smoking the short end of a wind-frazzled cigar, back of which appeared a fresh-shaved, ruddy smile as his twinkling gray eyes met the young man's.

"Pretty complete assortment, my boy—sounds as if you'd specialized in useful cuss words, foreign and domestic, ancient and modern, at your school," he said.

"Didn't know anybody was around to hear, sir, or I'd have held in—maybe!" Weedon, with a young man's becoming deference to elderliness, replied. "Hated to have anything happen to the old bus after she'd hauled me safe all the way down from New York."

"One of Henry's earlier examples, ain't she?" the oldster, surveying the antique Ford, inquired. "Weather may rust but age can't wither 'em."

"She's a fourteen," said Weedon, smiling. "Bought her for a hundred dollars at an automobile boneyard and tinkered her up for this trip. When I make Miami I'll peddle

Fate and a Florida Fish

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "The Yap from Ypsilanti," "A Strategist in Citrusia," Etc.

Sometimes they also are served who only stand and wait

THE Florida buzzard, for reasons not to be dwelt upon, is the obscenest of all creatures wearing either feathers or fur. And the Florida eagle, like eagles everywhere, is an abominable bully.

Nauseated at the day's beginning by the bird of carrion, and imperiled now by the bird of prey, Weedon wondered savagely why in Gehenna—or why out of it!—such feathered devils were.

Small birds—yes! He could understand sure-enough birdie birds. They belonged. These ever-choiring mocking birds for example, that voiced their rapture even when awing, that came never to the end of their glorious pealing medley—all Florida seemed to thrill to their music. And these tufted red birds that flamed everywhere against the Florida green; the fatuously busy little wrens with the bell-toned, absurdly oversized voices; the mourning doves with their monotonous yet not depressing plaint—yes, even the noisy blue jays: a reason underlay the existence and the activities of all of these; they fitted decently, decorously, into the cosmic scheme.

But these huge, swirling, heavy-bodied, cruel-beaked demons—offal birds and birds of prey! Dog-gone! The phrase whereby the young man consigned them to night's Plutonian shore, or farther, was not, however, dog-gone.

The buzzard, soon after the start of that day's southward run, at dawn, had come close to ruining him. In taking a hairpin curve in a narrow jungle road, his right front wheel had rolled full tilt into and over the bald-skulled brute, which, at the end of its banquet on a dead king snake, had been too sluggish to take to the air in time to avoid the suddenly appearing car. Weedon, hoping to prevent any part of his clangorous old Ford—clangorous, yes, but too willing and companionable a buddy to be contaminated by carrion!—from touching the offense, had given his steering wheel an overhard wrench to the left; wherefore, having slammed into and rolled horribly over the buzzard anyhow, he had come within a scant inch of slamming into and not rolling over a big china-berry tree.

Having got his worn brake bands to obey in the nick of time to achieve this miracle of stopping, Weedon, looking rearward, had seen the mates of the dead buzzard already flapping downward. The sight had caused him to experience an extreme craving for a fumigation that would penetrate to the very source and center of his physical life. The mere thought of the scrubbing ecstasies of an all-night sozzle in a Turkish bath had been almost more than he could bear. It was then, for the first time, that his mind had groped blackly for an answer as to the why of such birds.

And now here again, only six hours later, to be thrown once more into peril, and as suddenly as the flash of great wind-battling wings by another one of these utterly useless feathered fiends! This one not a carrion beast, but a devil of prey; an eagle, no less.

About ten seconds before Weedon had steered his rusty old car to a spot near the middle of the narrow and fragile wooden bridge spanning an arm of the sea in far southern Florida, this eagle—a subtropical hoodlum with as vast a wing spread and as merciless a beak and talons as any eagle of the Rockies ever used—had espied from on high a hard-working fish hawk in the act of diving for and capturing a fine, fat sea trout. A fine, fat sea trout, without the expert labor of submerging for it, instantly became for this eagle the one indispensable dish—the eagle, everywhere, being the leading feathered exponent of the let-George-do-it system.

From on high, then, the eagle made his swoop upon the fish hawk, which, with the

After the sale was made Ezram and the stranger soon got on the intimate terms that almost invariably follow a mutually satisfactory business deal. In the talk that ensued the old man was to learn a fact of the most vital importance to their venture. And it came like a bolt from the blue.

"So you don't know any folks in Snowy Gulch, then?" the stranger had asked politely. "But you'll get acquainted soon enough."

"I've got a letter to a fellow named Morris," Ezram replied. "And I've heard of one or two more men, too—Jeffery Neilson was one of 'em."

"You'll find Morris in town, all right," the stranger ventured to assure him. "He lives right next to Neilson's. And say—what do you know about this man Neilson?"

"Nothin' at all. Why?"

"If you fellows is prospectin', Jeffery Neilson is one man you won't care much to know—nor his understrappers neither—Ray Brent and Chan Heminway. But they're out of town right now. They skinned out all in a bunch a few weeks ago—and I can't tell you what kind of a scent they got."

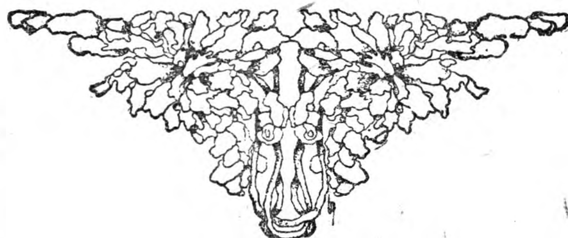
Ezram's blood seemed to chill in his veins. He glanced covertly at Ben—fortunately his young partner was busy among the supplies and was not listening to this conversation. Yet likely enough it was a false alarm! Doubtless the ugly possibility that occurred to him had no justification whatever, in fact. Nevertheless, he could not restrain the question that was at his lips.

"You don't know where they went, do you?" he asked.

"Not exactly. They took up this creek here a ways, through Spruce Pass, and over to Yuga River—the country that kind of a crazy old chap named Hiram Mellville, who died here a few weeks ago, has always prospected."

The stranger marveled that his old listener should have suddenly gone quite pale.

TO BE CONTINUED.



INDUSTRY'S CASUALTY LIST

MORE than 22,000 people are killed in industrial accidents in the United States each year, according to statistics compiled by the American Red Cross. During 1918, the last year for which complete figures are available, seven workmen were killed by accident out of every 100,000 employed. Coal and metal mining are especially dangerous occupations. During the last seven years each million tons of coal produced has cost the lives of four men. In 1918, more than 2,500 men were killed in coal mines. In the combined coal and metal mining industries, 33 men were killed out of each 10,000 employed. A quarter of the men employed in metal mining were injured during the year. In stone quarries, in 1919, 144 workers were injured out of each thousand employed. Out of every 10,000 men employed by railroad and street railway companies in 1918, 19 were killed in accidents while at work. Much is being done in these and other industries to protect and educate workers against accidents, and it is hoped that each year will see a lowering of the casualty rate. "Safety First" is something well worth the earnest thought of both employer and employee.

who had redeemed him and brought him to his Lost Land.

He was introduced to another, no less vitalizing passion, the morning that his keen eye discovered a flock of geese at the water's edge. They were great Canadian honkers, resting in their northern flight. Ben took Ezram's rifle, paddled slowly toward them, and, with his heart thumping like a hammer in his breast, landed and crept softly along the shore.

The emotion he felt now was not the simple excitement of fishing. It had a more deadly quality and a more hidden origin—and it was a direct inheritance to him from the youngest, most savage days of the earth. It was simply a phase of the unspeakable blood lust—the desire to test one's skill and craft, even to the death when the occasion arose, with the habitants of the wild.

He crept within seventy yards, then slowly drew his rifle to his shoulder. Such a shot was easy to miss by an experienced hunter, but the Red Gods—wishing to give full initiation to this man from prison—sped his bullet true. The lead pierced the neck of the great flock leader, and it never moved from its place.

He felt no mercy or remorse at the sight of this noble bird, master of the aërial lanes, struck down before his aim. Never again would it wing from zone to zone in a single night, its wild, plaintive cries throbbing in the air like the voices of unhappy souls. But Ben knew only his triumph.

Their journey ended at last. They saw the white peak they had been told to watch for, and soon after they came to a green bank from which the forest had been cut away. Softly, rather regretfully, they pushed up and made a landing on the banks of a small stream, tributary to the great river, that marked the end of the water route.

This stream, Ezram knew, was Poor Man's Creek—the stream of which his brother had written and which they must ascend to reach Spruce Pass. Only five miles distant, in a quartering direction from the river, was Snowy Gulch—the village where they were to secure supplies and, from Steve Morris, the late Hiram's gun and his pet, Fenris.

For a time, at least, they had left the utter solitudes of the wild. Men had cut away the forest, and built a crude wagon road to Snowy Gulch. And before they were fully unpacked they made out the figure of a middle-aged frontiersman, his back loaded, advancing up the road toward them. Both men halted in their work to stare.

They had not realized how out of touch they had been with their fellow human beings. They eyed this man as if he were a being from another sphere. Ben could understand now the tendency of the woodsman to stare—that trait so disconcerting to a tenderfoot on his first big-game trip. Both of them stood erect as the stranger neared.

Ezram knew something of the ways of the frontier, and he turned in greeting. "Howdy," he said pleasantly.

"Howdy," the stranger replied. "How was goin'?"

"Oh, good enough."

"Come all the way from Saltsville?"

"Yes. Goin' to Snowy Gulch."

"It's only five miles, up this road," the stranger ventured. "I'm goin' up Saltsville way myself, but I won't have the river to tow me. I've got to do my own paddlin'. Thank God I'm only goin' a small part of the way."

"You ain't goin' to swim, are you? Where's your boat?"

"My pard's got an old craft, and he and I are goin' to carry it out next trip." The stranger paused, blinking his eyes. "Say, partners—you don't want to sell your boat, do you?"

Ben started to speak, but the doubtful look on Ezram's face checked him. "Oh, I don't know," the old man replied, in the discouraging tones of a born tradesman. In reality, the old Shylock's heart was leaping gayly in his breast. This was too good to be true—a purchaser for the boat in the first five minutes. "Yet we might," he went on. "We wasn't countin' on goin' back in it soon."

"I'd sure like to buy it, if you want to sell it. In this jerked-off town there ain't a fit canoe to be had. Our boat is the worst tub you ever seen. How much do you want for it?"

Ezram stated his figure—and Ben was prone to believe that he had adopted a highwayman for a buddy. The amount named was nearly twice that which they had paid. And to his vast amazement the stranger accepted the offer in his next breath.

"It's worth somethin' to bring it up here, you dub," Ezram informed his young partner, when the latter accused him of profiteering.

Ezram himself. Before the journey was half over, Ezram yielded the stern seat to him, and let him master the boat when they took the rapids. He had his taste of woodsmen's pleasures, too. The second day out he rigged up his fishing tackle—an outfit that would have drawn only scorn from an expert fly fisherman, but which was wonderful past words to Ben. To a short rod, cut on the river bank, he attached thirty feet of cheap, white cord, and to the cord he fastened a bright spoon hook—the spinner that salmon fishers know.

By all the rules of angling he should not have got a bite. The cord was visible in the clear water, he had no leader, and the spoon itself was scarcely more than thirty feet from the stern of the boat. But this Northern stream was not at all like the famous salmon rivers known to sportsmen. In years to come, when the lines of communication are better and tourist hotels are established on its banks, the river may then begin to conform to the qualifications of the conventional fishing stream—and then Ben's crude tackle would be unavailing. But at present the salmon weren't so particular. As fishermen came but rarely, the fish were in countless numbers—and in such a galaxy there were bound to be a few misguided fish that did not know a sportsman's tackle from a dub's.

Just to be fishing was excitement enough for Ben. From the first moment he held the rod in his hand and felt the faint throb of the line, he knew that Waltonian blood flowed in his veins. A born habitant of the wild, he might have expected nothing else—and he was wedded to the streams forever. Fifteen minutes later, as the lightning strikes a tree, a gigantic salmon took his spoon.

Ezram's first knowledge of it was a wild yell that almost startled him over the side. When he recovered himself he looked to see Ben kneeling frantically in the stern, hanging for dear life to his rod and seemingly in grave danger of being pulled overboard.

No man who ever has felt that first, overpowering jolt of a striking salmon can imagine the rapture of that first moment. The jolt carried through all the intricacies of his nerves, jarred the soul within him, and seemingly registered in the germ plasm itself an impression that could be recalled, in dreams, ten generations hence. Ben wouldn't have believed it was just a fish at the other end of his line; it was a fighting demon. Fortunately the pole withstood that first frantic rush—and then things began to happen in earnest.

The great fish seemed to dance on the surface of the water. He tugged, he swam in frantic circles, he flopped and darted and sulked and rushed and leaped. If he had not been securely hooked, and if the luck gods had not all been with the fisherman, Ben would not have held him a moment.

But the time came at last, after a sublime half hour, when the salmon's steam began to die. His rushes were less powerful, and often he hung like a dead weight on the line. Slowly Ben worked him in, not daring to believe that he was conquering, willing to sell his soul for the privilege of seeing the great fish safe in the boat. His eyes protruded, perspiration gleamed on his brow, he talked foolishly and incessantly to Ezram, the fish, the river gods, and himself. Ezram who had fished before, managed the canoe with unusual dexterity, and chuckled in the contagion of Ben's delight. And lo!—in a moment more the thing was done.

"Throw me overboard now if you want to," Ben said, when he got his breath. "I've lived!"

And his words were not so greatly exaggerated, after all. Just to be born, just to breathe the air and consume food and move the lips in speech does not constitute life. *Life* is a thing that the wilderness creatures know, and which goes much farther than this. It is only attained by the leap of the blood that sweeps away lifeless and palsied tissue and builds a more sentient structure in its place, by the march of thrill after thrill, sensation after sensation, over the avenues of the nerves, by such vitalizing forces as adventure and danger and battle and triumph. His most daring crime, in his youth, had never yielded half the joy of this.

The time might come when Ben should know the fine art of angling—the play of a river trout upon a willowy fly rod—but no fishing experience could ever surpass this he had just had. Such sport as this might have been tame to one of those tried old sportsmen who know what it is to play a fly upon a rod of silk, to feel the first thrill of the strike, and with smooth-running reel and abundant line to give the fish free play—but it had been Ben's virgin adventure in the sport—and thus it was marvelous beyond all expression.

And his gratitude and affection went out, ever more and ever stronger, to old Ezram

of unknown source. A great question was shaping itself in Ben's mind, but as yet he could not find the answer.

All his life Ben had dwelt among the works of man instead of the miracles of nature. He had known the lowness of an underworld, rather than the wholesome breath of open places, prison walls instead of the healing sweetness of the outdoors. There was silence here, vast and incomprehensible beyond all sweep of thought; there were the hushed tree aisles, the gray radiance of the afterglow—soft as a hand upon the brow, the all-pervading health and peace of the wilderness. Except for an old and trusted companion, for the first time in his life Ben was alone—alone with the forest.

He walked softly to the edge of it and sat down to wait. Never before had he been so at ease. Never had he been so vividly aware of *himself*—of a sense of strength and power within himself.

He saw the twilight descending over the forest. The sharp edges of the individual trees faded and blended, the trunks blurred. He turned one fleeting glance of infinite, inexpressible gratitude to Ezram—the man who had brought him thence and who now was busily engaged in unpacking the canoe and making camp—then looked back to his forests. The wind brought the woods smells—spruce and moldering earth and a thousand thousand more no man can name. The great, watchful, brooding spirit of the wilderness went in to him.

All at once his heart seemed to pause in his breast. He was listening—for what he did not know. His eyes strained into the shadows. Brush wavered, a twig cracked with a miniature explosion. And then two figures emerged into the beaver meadow opposite him.

They were only creatures of the wild—an old cow moose, black and ungainly, and her long-legged, awkward calf. Yet they supplied the detail that was missing. They were the one thing needed to complete the picture—the crowning touch that revealed this land as it was—the virgin wilderness where the creatures of the wild still held full sway.

But they did more. Suddenly Ben's mind seemed to leap and seize the answer to the question wakened in his mind by the judge's words of years before. The spirit of the wolf that had led him into crime, the underlying savagery that his associates had seen in him long ago, had somewhere in the world a fitting niche and sphere; and at last he had found it. He would not be at a disadvantage here. This was the realm of the wolf—the dark forests governed by the basic laws of nature and of life rather than the laws of men; a region in which the seething ferment in his blood could find expression in mighty and worthy deeds. It was the place he had dreamed about, under the moon.

He sprang up, his eyes blazing. He had found his Lost Land at last.

CHAPTER IX.

That night Ben Darby got his first taste of wilderness life. He helped to cut the boughs for their beds, spread the blankets, and cook the simple meal; afterward he knew the indescribable peace of pipe smoke beside the camp fire. He saw the moon come up at last, turning the spruce forest into a fairyland. The spires of the trees were ensilvered, immense nebulous patches lay between the trunks, shadows stole mysteriously, phantoms met, lingered, vanished.

This was the North! This was the land untamed since the beginning of the world. In that moment Ben knew the infinite beneficence and hospitality of the wild. But also he knew its sleeping terrors. The winter had just departed, and all the wilderness creatures rejoiced. But summer would linger just a breath, and then the cold would scourge the land again. The little flowers that blossomed so bravely now would soon be covered with many feet of snow.

He went to his bed, but sleep at once did not come to him. He lay listening to the little, secret noises of the wilderness night. He heard the wild creatures start forth on their midnight journeys. Once a lynx mewed at the edge of the forest, and once some large creature—probably a moose—grunted and splashed water in the near-by beaver meadow.

Thus ended the first of a brilliant succession of wonderful days. They descended the stream in the daylight hours and camped on the bank at night. Every day they plunged deeper into the heart of the wilderness, and every hour Ben learned more of its secrets.

He seemed to be a born voyager; and before the third day was done he seemed almost as well able to handle the craft as

the hay. For the sake of warmth alone they were obliged to hire their night's lodging at cheap hotels. Spring was full in the land they had left: it was just beginning here. The mountains, visible from the village of Saltsville, where they left the railroad, were still swept with snow.

They swiftly made preparations for their journey down river. A canoe was bought for a reasonable sum—they were told that they had a fair chance of selling it again when they left the river near Snowy Gulch—and at the general store they bought an ax, rudimentary fishing tackle, tobacco, blankets, and all manner of the simpler provisions—flour, rice, bacon, coffee, canned milk, and sugar. And for a ridiculously small sum which he mysteriously produced from the pocket of his faded jeans, Ezram bought a secondhand rifle—an ancient gun of large caliber, but of enduring quality—and a box of shells to match.

"Old Hiram left me a gun, but we'll each need one," Ezram explained. "And they tell me there'll be a chance to pick up game, like as not, goin' down the river."

They would have need of good canoe craft before the journey's end, the villagers told them. It developed in the first mile, however, that Ezram had, if anything, underrated his own ability with the paddle. Any misgivings that Ben might have had vanished like the first puff of smoke from his pipe.

There was little paddling to do, at first, with the force of the stream behind them; yet Ezram had no intention of doing more than his share of it. The first hour he devoted almost entirely to Ben—teaching him the rudiments of the craft. He showed him how to hold his paddle, the stroke that gave the greatest impulse to the canoe for the least effort, the little half turn of his hands that put the blade on edge in the water and gave him his control. Ben caught on quickly.

But with the long, warm hours of afternoon came indolence—and they were both willing to glide with the current and watch the ever-changing vista of the shore. For the first time since they had come into the real North, Ben found opportunity to observe and study the country. Already they were out of sight of the last vestige of a habitation; and the evergreen forests pushed down to the water's edge. From the middle of the stream the woods appeared only as a dark wall, but this was immeasurably fascinating to Ben. It suggested mystery, adventure. Yet its deeper appeal, the thing that stirred him and thrilled him to the quick, he couldn't understand or analyze.

Sometimes a little clump of trees stood apart, and from their shape he identified them as the incomparable spruce, perhaps the most distinguished and beautiful of all the evergreens. He marked their great height, their slender forms, their dark foliage that ever seemed to be silvered with frost; and they seemed to him to answer, to the fullest extent, some vague expectation of which he had scarcely been aware.

The wild life of the river filled him with speechless delight. Sometimes he saw the waters break and gleam at the leap of a mighty salmon—the king fish of the North on his spring rush to the headwaters where he would spawn and die—and often their canoe sent flocks of waterfowl into flight. Ben dimly felt that on the tree-clad shore larger, more glorious living creatures were standing, hiding, watching the canoe glide past.

Late in the afternoon they worked closer to the shore. They were watching for a place to land. But because the shadows of twilight were already falling, the forest itself was hardly more vivid to their eyes. Once it seemed to Ben that he saw the underbrush move and waver at the water's edge, and his heart leaped; but whatever stirred kept itself concealed.

In the gray of twilight, Ezram saw the place to land. It was a little lagoon into which a creek emptied—and beyond was an open meadow—found so often, and so unexpectedly, in the North woods. Swiftly he turned the canoe in to shore.

So busy was Ezram with his work that he did not glance at Ben—otherwise he might have beheld a phenomenon for which probably he could never receive satisfactory explanation. His young charge had suddenly grown quite pale. Ben was unaware of it himself—he only knew that his heart was hammering in his breast and that his blood was making curious leapings in his veins. He was stirred and held by a sense of vast, impending developments. Every nerve tingled and why he did not know.

They pushed up to the shore, and Ezram drew the canoe safely up on the bank. Still he did not glance at Ben. He did not see this man from prison suddenly catch his breath in awe and his eye kindle with a light

back part of the house, he would not have felt so confident about her. She was watching the moon over the spruce forest, and she was thinking, with repulsion in her heart, of the indignity to which she had been subjected at her father's door. Yet the kisses Ray had forced on her were no worse than his blasphemy of her dreams.

The spirit of romance was abroad to-night —in the enchantment of the moon. She was wistful and imaginative as never before. This was just the normal expression of her starved girlhood—the same childlike wistfulness with which a Cinderella might long for her prince—just as natural and as wholesome and as much a part of youth as laughter and happiness

"I won't believe him, I won't believe him," she told herself. "There *is* a man like that—good and true and not wicked—and yet manly and strong. And some time he'll come to me."

CHAPTER VIII.

At a little town at the end of steel, Ben and Ezram dismounted from the gunnels for the last time. They had had good traveling, these past days. Steadily they had gone north, through the tilled lands of northern Washington, through the fertile valleys of lower British Columbia, traversing great mountain ranges and penetrating dark forests, and now had come to the bank of a north-flowing river—a veritable flood and one of the monarch rivers of the North. Every hour their companionship had been more close and their hopes higher. Every waking moment Ben had been swept with thankfulness for the chance that had come to him.

They had worked for their meals—hard, manual toil—but it had seemed only play to them both. Sometimes they had mended fences, sometimes had helped at farm labor, and one gala morning—with entire good will and cheer—they had beaten into cleanliness every carpet in a widow's cottage.

Ben had indeed begun life anew. But he was none the less humble. Life had taught its lessons too well for him ever to forget; he knew how many and how resistless were the powers that held dominion over the lives of men. However, once more he could hold up his head among his fellow men. He could look them eye to eye, knowing that by light of one man's trust and God's help he could make his way among them.

The change showed in his face. His eye was more steadfast, his lips more firm, the lines of his face seemed to have strengthened. His fellows of the underworld would have scarcely known him now—his lips and chin darkening with beard and this new air of self-respect upon him. His life of crime and the prison walls seemed already a half-forgotten dream. He loved every minute of this journey—freshness instead of filth, freedom instead of fear, fragrant fields and blossoming flowers. Even the stars and the moon, remembered of old, yielded him a peace and a happiness beyond his power to tell. And his gratitude to Ezram grew apace.

There was adventure in plenty—one little heart-gladdening episode after another. Always they had to avoid the watchful eyes of the trainmen, and once or twice they had to dodge back and forth between the cars to keep out of the grasp of zealous constables. On finishing one meal they never knew how or when or in what land they would receive the next. Ben learned all the wiles of the old-time hobo in "holdin' down the rods," and slipping into the blind baggage when the brakeman's eyes were elsewhere.

"When we make our strike," Ben informed Ezram, "we'll send these railroads some money to pay for our fare."

"But we won't send 'em very much," Ezram muttered. "If I discounted a nickel for every cinder I've got in my eye, so far, they'd owe me money at the end of the trip."

Always these two found each other steadfast, utterly to be relied upon, wholly fearless in the other's behalf. Ezram never regretted his offer to Ben. The young man had developed under his eye, and was a real aid to him in all the problems of the journey. They found each other the best of companions—good-natured in misfortune, exultant at good luck, never complaining, never losing heart. "Son" and "Pop" were the names they had for each other now.

As the days had passed, Ben had felt a growing excitement, vague but exquisite, that he could only attribute to the change in his surroundings. The air was sweeter, there was a sparkle and stir in it that he could sense but couldn't analyze, but which thrilled him with an unexplainable happiness—and sometimes he discerned a fleeting, delicate odor that would draw him up short in his talk and hold him entranced.

It was no longer pleasant to sleep out in

"Wait just a minute. Where would he get 'em? There's something else suspicious, too. He wrote a letter, the day before he died—and addressed it to Ezra Mellville, down in San Francisco. He must just about got it by now. Hiram had the clerk mail it for him, and told him it was his will—and what did that old hound have to will except a mine? Next day he wrote another letter somewhere, too—but I didn't find out who it was to. The point is—I'm convinced it's worth a trip, at least."

"I should say it was worth a trip," Ray agreed. "And a fast one, too. There might be some competition——"

"There won't be a rush, if that's what you mean. The men in this town wouldn't any more believe that there was gold in that end of the mountains——"

"True enough—but that Ezra Mellville will be showin' up one of these days. We want to be settin' pretty when he comes."

"You've got the idea. It's my idea Hiram had his claim all laid out, monuments up and everything, and was on his way to go on down to Bradleyburg and record it, when he died. He just went out before he could make the rest of the trip. All we'll have to do is go up there, locate in his cabin, and sit tight."

"Wait just a minute." Ray was lost in thought. "There's an old cabin up that way somewhere—just above the rapids—on the river. It was a trapping cabin belonging to old Bill Foulks."

"Yes—but it likely ain't near the mine. Boys, it's a clean, open-and-shut job—with absolutely nothing to interfere. If his brother does come up, he'll find us in possession—and nothing to do but go back. So to-morrow we'll load up and pack horses and light out."

"All easy enough," Ray agreed. He paused, and a look of singular speculation came in his wolfish eyes. "But what I don't see—how you can figure all this is going to help me with Beatrice."

Jeffery Neilson half turned in his chair. "You can't, eh? Just think a minute. Say you had fifty or sixty thousand dollars all your own—to spend on a wife and buy her clothes and automobiles. Don't you think that would make you more attractive."

The lines of Ray's face drew, and it was plain to see that an old and terrible passion seized him. Such a sum meant *wealth*—the power his ambitious nature had always craved, idleness and the gratification of all his wishes.

"It'd help some," he admitted in a low voice. "But what makes you think it would be worth that much?"

"Because old Hiram talked a little, half delirious, before he died. 'A quarter of a million,' he kept saying. 'A quarter of a million.' If it's worth that much, that's fifty or sixty apiece for you and Chan."

Ray's mind worked swiftly. Sixty thousand apiece—and that left one hundred and thirty thousand for their leader's portion. The old rage and jealousy that had preyed upon his mind so long swept over him.

"Go on," he urged. "What's the rest of it?"

"The second thing is—we'll need some one to cook and look after us, when we get up there. Who should it be but Beatrice? She wouldn't want to stay here—you know how she loves the woods. And if you know anything about girls, you know that nothing counts like having 'em alone. You'd have a clear field."

Ray's dark eyes brightened. "It'd help some," he admitted. "That means—hunt up an extra horse for her to-morrow."

"No. I don't intend she should come up now. Not till we're settled."

"Why not?"

"Think a minute, and you'll see why not. You know how she regards this business of jumpin' claims. She's dead against it, if any one could be—bless her honest heart!"

"Don't go getting sentimental, Neilson."

"And don't let that mouth of yours get you into trouble, either." Once more their eyes locked; once more Ray looked away. "I'm glad she is honest, and sometimes I wish her old man was, too. As I say, she's dead against it, and she's been a little suspicious ever since that Jenkins deal. Besides, it wouldn't be any pleasure for her until we find a claim and get settled. When she comes up we'll be established in a couple of cabins—one for her and me and one for you two—and she won't know but what we made the original find."

"How will she know just where to find us?"

"We're bound to be somewhere near that old cabin on the Yuga. We'll tell her what day to come, and I can meet her there."

It was, Ray was forced to admit, a highly commendable scheme. But if he had known Beatrice's thoughts, as she sat alone in the

leader of the three. He had heavy, grizzled brows and rather quiet eyes, a man of deep passions and great resolve. Yet his lean face was not all bad. There had been some gentling influence in his life, and, although it was not in the ascendancy, it had softened his smile and the hard lines about his lips.

Chan Heminway, who sat at his left, a weaker man than either Neilson or Brent, was simply a tool in Neilson's hand—a smashing sledge or a cruel blade as his master wished. He was vicious without strength, brutal without self-control. Locks of his blond hair, unkempt, dropped over his low forehead into his eyes.

"Where's Beatrice?" Neilson asked at once. "I thought I heard her voice."

Ray searched for a reply, and in the silence all three heard the girl's footsteps as she went about the house.

"She's going in the back door. Likely she didn't want to disturb us." Ray looked up to find Neilson's eyes firmly fixed upon his face. Try as he might, he could not restrain a surge of color in his cheeks.

"Yes, and what's the rest of it?" Neilson asked.

"Nothing—I know of."

"You've got some white marks on your cheek—where it ain't red. The kid can slap, can't she?"

Ray flushed deeper, but the lines of Neilson's face began to deepen and draw. Then his voice broke in a great, hearty chuckle. He had evidently tried to restrain it—but it had got away from him at last. No man could look at him, his twinkling eyes and his joyous face, and doubt that this soft-eyed, strong-handed daughter of his was the joy and pride of his life. He had heard the ringing slap through the ramshackle walls of the house, and for all that he favored Ray for a son-in-law, the independence and spirit behind the action had delighted him to the core.

But Ray's sense of humor did not run along these lines. The first danger signal of rising anger leaped like a little, hot spark into his eyes. Many times before Ray had been obliged to curb his wrath against Neilson; to-night he found it more difficult than ever. The time would come, he felt, when he would no longer be obliged to act a part with Neilson—but it wasn't yet. Some time the situation would be reversed; he would be leader instead of underling, taking the lion's share of the profits of their enterprises instead of the left-overs—and when that time came he would not have to endure Neilson's jests in silence. Neilson himself, as he looked at Ray's stiffening figure, had no realization of Ray's true attitude toward him. He thought him a willing helper, a loyal partner; he would not have sat so contentedly in his chair if he could have seen the smoldering fires of jealousy and ambition in the other's breast.

"It may seem like a joke to you, but it doesn't to me," Ray answered shortly. Nor was he able to keep his anger entirely out of his voice. "Everything that girl does you think is perfect. Instead of encouraging her in her meanness, you ought to help me out." His tones harshened, and he lost the fine edge of his self-control. "I've stood enough nonsense from that little——"

Neilson's face suddenly hardened into iron. There was a curious glitter in his eyes, too, like the reflection from bright steel. "Don't say it," he ordered simply.

For an instant eyes met eyes in bitter hatred—and Chan Heminway began to wonder just where he would seek cover in case matters got to a shooting stage. But Ray's gaze broke before that of his leader. "I'm not going to say anything I shouldn't," he protested sullenly. "But this doesn't look like you're helpin' out my case any. You told me you'd do everything you could for me. You even went so far as to say you'd take matters into your own hands——"

"And I will—in reason. I'm keepin' away the rest of the boys so you can have a chance. But if you think I'm going to tie her up to anybody against her will, you're barking up the wrong tree. She's my daughter, and her happiness happens to be my first consideration." Then his voice changed, good-humored again. "But keep cool, boy—wait till you hear everything I've got to tell you, and you'll feel better. Of course you know what it's about."

"I suppose—Hiram Mellville's claim."

"Of course. Of course we don't know that he had a claim—but he had a pocket full of the most wonderful nuggets ever seen. No one knows that fact but me—I saw 'em by accident—and I got 'em now. You know he's always had an idea there was gold down Yuga River—and we always laughed at him. It looks to me like he found it before he died."

"But he might have got the nuggets somewhere else."

some face. Evidently she found it hard to meet his eyes—eyes that were speculative and crafty, but unquestionably vivid and compelling under his heavy, dark brows. "I'm going home," she told him at last. "I guess, if you're going to go up and see pop, you can walk along, too."

The man fell in beside her, his powerful frame overshadowing hers. It was plain at once that the manner of her consent had not pleased him. "You're just letting me because I'm going up there anyway, eh?" he asked. "I suppose you wish I'd walk on the other side of the road."

The girl paused, as if in appeal. "Ray, we've thrashed that out long ago," she responded. "Why can't you let the matter drop? If you want to walk with me——"

"All right. I think you'll be changing your mind one of these days." Ray's voice grew quarrelsome. "I know you don't think I'm good enough for you—you think you're so much prettier and better than all the other Snowy Gulch girls. Why don't you believe what your pop says about me—he thinks Ray Brent is all right."

"I'm not going to talk about it any more. I've already given you my answer—twenty times."

They walked together down the board sidewalk, into the shadows, finally turning in at a ramshackle, three-room house that was perched on the hillside almost at the end of the street, at the outer limits of the village. The girl turned to go in, but the man held fast to her arm.

"Wait just a minute, Bee," he urged. "I've got one thing more to say to you."

The girl looked into his face, now faintly illumined by the full moon that was rising above the spruce. For all his rather handsome features, his was never an attractive face to her; and in the moonlight it suddenly filled her with dread. Its lines were suddenly dark and deep, like scars, and curious little flakes of iniquitous fire danced in his eyes.

There was little to redeem Ray Brent's face. The lips were hard, cruel, and the flesh sacks beneath the eyes were peculiarly swollen.

"Just one minute, Bee," he went on, his words dragging. Evidently the dark passions of the man were getting out of bounds. "You've scorned me enough. You've turned me down enough times. You've acted as if I was the dust under your feet."

The girl straightened. "I've just asked you—to leave me alone."

"You've just asked me—to leave you alone! As if I wasn't good enough for you. I'll tell you something, now! I'm good enough for your dad. He sent for me to come down here—to be his partner in a big deal."

"If my father wants men like you—for his partners, I can't help it."

"Wait just a minute. He's told me—and I know he's told you, too—that I'd suit him all right for a son-in-law. He and I agree on that. And this country ain't like the places you read about in your story books—it's a man's country. Oh, I know you well enough. You want some sissy from a Sunday school. I tell you that men like that can't live up here. If you're going to be a Northern woman you've got to be content with a Northern man."

Because he had attacked her dreams, the dearest part of her being, she felt the first surge of rising anger. "And I tell you," she answered, straightening, "that a man can be strong—and good—and gentle—and not just a brute to swear at women and jump other men's claims—and still not be a 'sissy,' as you call it. I'm going in, now. Please take your hand from my arm."

"One thing more. This is the North. We do things in a man's way—not a story-book way. Your pop and I have agreed what's best for you. And in the end you'll come to it. Whether you like it or not, I'll take you—just like I take this kiss."

He suddenly snatched her toward him. A powerful man, she was wholly helpless in his grasp. His arms went about her, and he pressed his rough lips to hers—three times. Then he released her, with a laugh.

But the laugh was not of long duration. As he freed her, her strong young arm swung out and up—with all her force. Her half-closed hand caught him across his lips, a blow that struck away his laughter as the wind strikes a match blaze.

"You little—devil!"

She darted away into the house.

CHAPTER VII.

Jeffery Neilson and Chan Heminway were already in session when Ray Brent, his face flushed and his eyes glittering, joined them. Neilson was a tall, gaunt man, well past fifty, and, from his manner, evidently the

CHAPTER VI.

Night is always a time of mystery in Snowy Gulch—that little cluster of frame shacks lost far in the northern reaches of the Caribou range. It was not that there was anything mysterious about the town itself, neither in its humble homes, in the pale lights that sprang up in its windows, nor in its people that lived such lonely lives surrounded by the wastes. Rather the mystery and the enchantment that always marked the twilight hour was an essence that stole out, like a mist steals over water, from the gloomy, limitless forests that pressed upon the town from every side.

Not even the most dull of the trappers and prospectors that made their homes in Snowy Gulch were wholly insensible to this night magic. But even the most sensitive could not tell exactly what it was. They only knew that the air had a breathless, electric quality, that the silence was a spell that man seemed afraid to break, and that the shadows were inscrutable. The wind brought the fragrances of the spruce, and the trees seemed to talk, one with another, across the little gap where the town lay.

It was the breath of the forest, coming so strangely and fragrantly down the main street of the town, it was the forest silence, falling so deeply and so heavily, and it was the wild magic of the hunting hour, known only to the beasts of prey, that gave the air such a tense, electric quality. The wood gods, cowed perhaps by the sound of human speech in the daylight, crept in and claimed the village at night. When the enchantment of the night hours fell upon the wild, the town itself—just a dot in the far-flung wastes of woodland—could not escape its spell.

It affected the townspeople in divers ways. To some, it brought only a desire for strong drink and forgetfulness; others played music loudly to drown out the whispered voices of the forest. The evil-hearted were a little afraid with a creepy, haunting fear they could not name, and the high-spirited were somewhat sobered. Only a few, those who had given their love and their lives to the wild places, were really made happier by it. Among these was Beatrice Neilson—and she herself did not fully understand the dreams and the longings that the fall of night always brought to her.

The forest had never grown old to her. Its mystery was undying. Born in its shadow, her love had gone out to it since her earliest years. All her dreams—the natural longings of an imaginative girl born to live in an uninhabited portion of the earth—were inextricably bound up with it. Whatever plans she had for the future always included it. Not that she was blind to its more terrible qualities; its might and its utter remorselessness that all foresters, sooner or later, come to know. But she was strong, and she loved it all the more for the tests that it put its children to.

To-night the same moon that, a thousand miles to the south, was lighting the way for Ben and Ezram on their northern journey, shone on her as she hastened down the long, shadowed street toward her father's shack, and revealed her forest parentage in her swift, graceful, silent stride vaguely suggesting that of the wild creatures themselves. She was like a deer—strong, straight-limbed, graceful, slender, dainty of hands and feet.

The soft contour and delicacy of the girl's features seemed hardly fitting in this stern land. It was not a face to glance at once, admire, and forget; nor had it the attractive, ordinary beauty that is so often seen in healthy, rural girls. Rather its loveliness was of a mysterious, haunting kind that one associates with old legends and far-distant lands. Perhaps its particular appeal lay in her eyes. They were marvelously deep and dark, and perhaps they were sad, too. She had fine, dark, straight brows, accentuating the beauty of her eyes; wavy, dark-brown hair that she wore not too carefully dressed. About her garb there was naturally nothing rich or smart, but it was pretty and well made and evidently fitted for her life: a loose "middy," blue skirt, woolen stockings, and rather solid little boots.

As she passed the light at the door of the hotel, one of the younger men who had been lounging about the stove strode out and accosted her. She half turned, recognized his face in the lamplight, and instinctively recoiled.

"Going home?" the man asked. "I'm going up to see your pop, and I'll see you there, if you don't mind."

Even a stranger in Snowy Gulch would not have liked Ray Brent's voice. Its overtones were harsh, it was presumptuous rather than ingratiating, and vaguely arrogant. The man was evidently sure of himself.

The girl looked with unmistakable apprehension into his even-featured, not unhand-

"But I've never been in a canoe in my life."

"And I, glory be, am an expert. I was pretty near born in one."

Thereafter Ben had a vague idea that Ezram was still talking to him, but the words were constantly more muffled and harder to understand. It was highly satisfactory to be lying here in the soft hay, gloriously warm all over, and to feel the spirit drifting away in sleep. To-morrow the Open Road awaited him. Reality gave way to dreams.

At the first gray of dawn Ben felt Ezram's hand on his shoulder. "Wake up, son," he said. "The freight'll be along soon."

Ben opened his eyes, crawled out of the hay, and stretched luxuriously. Then the two of them hurried out into the crisp dawn.

They hovered in the shadows while the freight switched, then crawled swiftly onto the gunnels. A moment later the train pulled on, bearing the adventurers another lap on their Northern journey. At nine the freight drew up at a little city in Snohomish County—and the two unanimously agreed that it was high time for breakfast. They swung off, went down a little lane, and finally Ezram paused before a white cottage with green roof and blinds.

"Any woman that keeps such a nice house as this," Ezram explained, "must be a good cook—and Heaven knows I'm hungry. We'll go around to the back door."

"We're—we're going to beg breakfast?"

Ezram whirled to face him, marking the reluctance behind the tone. "Who said anything about beggin'?" he demanded. "If there's one thing I'm strong against, it's that. I'll work for a meal, and I can even imagine myself, under tryin' circumstances, stealin' a pie, but I won't beg a nickel! She'll have some work for us to do, all right, all right."

Ben's face was radiant, in full confidence of the muscles swelling under his sleeves.

When the middle-aged housewife came to the back door the old man lifted his hat in gallant salutation. "Lady, my pardner and I wish to know if you have any work you want done around the house," he began. "We'll each do a half hour's work for our breakfast."

"No, I haven't any work for you to do," was the cold response. "I've had tramps work for me before."

Ben felt the quickening of his courage. "Try us and see," he urged. "We'll work honestly for you—clear until you think we've earned our breakfast."

"Yes—and break up all my tools, if you don't take them off to sell. Sit down. I'll give you your breakfast. I suppose that's what you wanted, anyway."

The reply of the two wanderers was the last thing on earth that she expected. They put on their hats and turned to go. "We're not beggin' to-day, lady," Ezram informed her with entire good nature. "Good day."

She let them go clear to the corner of the house before she called them back. "I do believe you're the right thing, after all," she admitted. "There's some cordwood out behind the woodshed—a sawhorse and an ax. Cut up some for the kitchen stove."

Gayly Ezram headed back, and eager as a boy Ben followed. "You're the biggest," the old man told him, "and you can do the splittin'. I'll show you how to work a bucksaw."

The logs were of tough oak, and lifting one of them upon a sawhorse Ezram gave his lean, powerful shoulders to the task. Driving the ax blade into tough wood was only play for Ben. In the joy of the labor both of them forgot to keep track of the time. A half hour went by in a breath, and an extra quarter besides, before the housewife—wondering what had befallen—went out to investigate.

They leaned on their tools and smiled at her, and beamed like children at her surprise at the size of their woodpile. They were in the best of spirits. The hard work had sent the blood leaping through their arteries; and in realization of their own strength they were sitting atop of the world.

She inspected their work, complimented them simply, and returned to serve them their breakfast. It was not the breakfast usually given tramps—unsavory left-overs, weak coffee, and dry bread. She furnished them as hearty and as appetizing a meal as that her husband had received earlier that morning—three fresh eggs apiece, fried potatoes, coffee, hot biscuits, and honey.

After their plates were clean the two headed back toward the railroad right of way. No longer need Ben fear their ability to make their way. The days would pass, ever to find them nearer their destination—catching rides during the day, working for their frugal meals, sleeping in the fragrant hay at night. They were men of their hands, and nothing could hold them back.

Then when your hat went off in the fight—and I saw your hair was clipped—I knew for sure. I just put two and two together."

CHAPTER V.

Over a little, dancing camp fire beside the right of way Ben cooked the chicken—and no task of his lifetime had ever yielded greater pleasure. Nor was it such unskilled labor as any one could do. Beside him, old Ezram gave directions and made the coffee.

No gypsy camp could have been more picturesque than this. It would have made an unforgetable picture—the crackling fire in the shadows, the ruddy light on the eager faces of the two men, the frugal supper in preparation over the flame, the enchantment of the moonlight upon the meadows. Never before had Ben's spirit been so calm, or his surroundings so in harmony with his mood.

He could begin anew—his past dead behind him—in the far-spreading wilderness of the North. There would be adventure, the leap of blood in his veins—to him as actual a need as food and drink. Best of all, he was no longer an outcast from the world of men. Ezram gave him a companionship so fine, so natural, that the dark clouds of his loneliness were instantly swept away. Here was one that would not hold against him the smirch of his past, who would take the long trail clear to its end at his side. Already he knew, deep within him, that he would give his life for this man who had redeemed him.

Ben felt an immediate love for this new life into which he was now cast. He liked the soft glow of the fire, its cheerful crackle in the amazing depth of silence. He knew at once that it was an old counselor and friend—a place to come to at the end of the day. Now it was cooking the fowl a delectable brown.

"I believe the old bird's done," he said at last. He passed it over to Ezram for inspection.

The old man bent his twinkling eyes to it, poked at it with a match end, and then solemnly stretched forth his open hand.

"Shake, old man," he said. "If there could be any accomplishment ratin' higher than cleanin' up them two thugs to-night, it is what you've just done to this bird. You could almost stick a straw right through it."

Ben was a little embarrassed as to what would follow. The ways of the cinder trail were new to him. No plates were in sight, no knives or forks, and he was somewhat doubtful as to the flavor of unseasoned fowl. Old Ezram, however, solved all these matters swiftly. With the grace of an accomplished carver he slit the bird in two, handing half of it to Ben. Then from an upper coat pocket he produced a little envelope of salt.

With no dressing, no gravy, no seasoning but salt, the flesh went straight home to the place Ben desired it to go. He had no trouble at all about finishing his portion. Thereafter they made a loving cup out of the coffeepot.

Supper over, the question of sleeping quarters took scarcely a moment. Ezram had noticed a hospitable-looking barn a quarter of a mile back—and warmth was always to be found under the hay.

They found the barn with ease, and they washed their faces under the pump beside the watering tank. Then they crept into the darkened, silent haymow.

Ezram showed him how to bury in the hay, cautioned him not to smoke, and after they were both comfortably embedded, they had a few moments of whispered planning. "As my brother says, we won't tell anybody what our business is," old Ezram began. "We're prospectors, but we won't let any one know we've got any connection with poor Hiram. We're just goin' up prospectin' on the Yuga River."

"But why do you suppose he advised against it?"

"I suppose he was afraid some one would follow us and jump the claim. Maybe it's all nonsense—old men are given to havin' delusions. But we might as well follow out what he says."

"To-morrow I'll copy the letter, and you can leave the original at Bellingham. And what do you think about buying a couple of railroad tickets the rest of the way?"

"I don't think it's a good scheme, Ben. We're goin' to have expenses in plenty when we get there—grub and horse hire. We can make it through pretty near as quick in blind baggage. And I suppose you know—a railroad doesn't go within two hundred miles of Snowy Gulch."

"Walk from there on, eh?"

"If you want to walk in twenty feet of water. No, I've looked the matter up. At Saltville we've got to hire a canoe or a small boat. It's an easy course, with pretty fast water, and we can just go through a-sailin'."

burg and record claim. Get copy of this letter to carry. Put this in some safe place. The only condition is you take good care of Fenris, the pet I raised from a pup. You'll find him and my gun at Steve Morris's.

"I felt myself going and just did get here. You get supplies horses at Snowy Gulch, go up Poor Man Creek, through Spruce pass over to Yuga River. Go down Yuga River past first rapids along still place to first creek. You'll know it cause there's an old cabin just below and my canoe landing. Half mile up, in creek bed, is South East monument and new cabin. And don't tell no one in Snowy Gulch who you are and where you going, accept Steve Morris.

"Go quick brother Ez and put up a stone for me at Snowy Gulch. Your brother,

"HIRAM MELLVILLE."

There was a long pause after Ezram's voice had died away. Ben's eyes were glowing in the moonlight.

"And you haven't heard—whether your brother is still alive?"

"I got a wire the hotel man sent me. It reached me weeks before the letter came, but I guess he must have died a few minutes after he wrote it. And I wonder what he meant by tellin' me to carry a copy, instead of the original."

"For the simple reason that that letter constitutes his will—your legal claim. Just the fact that you are his brother would be claim enough, I suppose, if the mining claim was recorded; but this simplifies matters for you. I'll make a copy of it and you can leave this letter in some safe place. How are you going to get enough money for supplies?"

"I don't know. Borrow or charge 'em or somethin'. What I want to know is—how does it strike you?"

"Wait just a minute. You've asked to take me on as a partner in a scheme that looks like a clear quarter million, even though I can't give anything except my time and my work. You've only known me an hour—how do you know I haven't had something in my past that would make me unfit to be your partner?"

It might have been, in the moonlight, that Ezram's eyes glittered perceptibly. "A man's past is behind him. We ain't goin' behind. We're goin' ahead."

"Wait—wait." Ben's voice sank low. "I sure—I sure appreciate the trust you put in me," he said slowly. "A man's past is behind him, but I've learned it throws a shadow on the future. I want to tell you first, that if the way was open, I'd simply give everything I've got and all I'd hope to ever get to go with you. It's a chance such as I never dared to hope would come to me—a chance for big success, for adventure that I wanted bad enough to let it ruin my life—for everything that matters. A chance to go away and get a new start in a country where I feel I could make good. But that's only the beginning of it.

"You'll forgive me if I talk frank, and if it sounds silly I can't help it. You're the first human being that's treated me like a man in something over—five years. You've wakened up a little self-respect in me when I thought it was dead, and you were friendly to me when I'd given up any thought of ever knowing human friendship again. I'm down and out, Ezram. Anything you wanted me to do I'd do to the last ditch. I could fight hard—you don't know how a man can fight until it's his last chance—his only chance. In my pocket I've got three hundred dollars, left me when I was—away—and I'd put that in, too, because we'd be needing horses and supplies and things that cost money. I'd put it in the quickest you ever saw."

"You said you didn't have no dependents," Ezram reminded him, his voice sharp.

"And I haven't. The reason I can't go is—because you won't want me to go, when you know who I am. I won't hold you to your offer—decent men can't trust or associate with men who've been through what I have."

He paused, looking down into Ezram's face. In the moonlight it showed singularly drawn, deeply lined. But slowly his lips drew into a smile. His eyes puckered, and a look of inordinate delight was half concealed in the gray stubble of his beard. He clapped Ben on the shoulder.

"Hold me to my offer!" he cried. "I should say you ain't goin' to have to hold me to my offer." His voice fell a note. "Son, when I asked you to be my pard in this deal I meant what I said. I knew what I was a-doin'. Don't worry about that past of yours. I knew perfectly who you was—all the time."

Ben stared as if he were gazing upon a miracle—blankly.

"You didn't say—you don't really know who I am——"

"Don't, huh? Boy, the minute you told me your name I knew I'd heard it before. Five years ain't so long a time that the Darby case would be completely forgotten.

nominal charge. And then it opened wide its doors and invited ten thousand Green Falls women to come in.

The women came in with a rush. And the first person to press through its portals was Miss Flo Fogarty. Miss Flo Fogarty came, she saw, she tried to conquer. She brought with her, en masse, the members of her now disbanded Democratic Women's Club. They were harpies, these ladies, riding on the wind. They sought to sweep everything before them. But they did not. Overnight Rita Wrightson had developed a masterful personality. She held her Women's Club in the hollow of her hand.

The Green Falls Women's Club did not become a political organization. But it did become something. It became a political pendulum. Out of the circumambient air it gathered unto itself an aggressive slogan: "We give women's votes to get what women want." It allied itself with no party; it was not a party in itself. Its members took a solemn pledge; a pledge to vote—without fear or favor—for anything that made for civic betterment and social uplift. For a time, at least, this pledge was strictly kept. Result—the Women's Club had ten thousand women's votes at hand to lend to any candidate, to any organization who would make for civic betterment and social uplift. Here was a pendulum always pivoted and always swinging; while it battered down stone walls for one party, it was able to kick the other party swiftly and energetically in the face. It held a wicked solar-plexus blow.

Miss Flo Fogarty was the first to recognize its power. She insinuated herself as much as possible into the good graces of Rita Wrightson. She had an ax to grind.

"My dear," said Miss Flo Fogarty affectionately, "I've come to you to get you to throw your weight with Joe."

Joe Tanner's friends had announced his candidacy for mayor. Miss Fogarty, his fiancée, was moving heaven and earth to help him get the job. She began an enumeration of his qualities.

"You don't have to tell me about Joe Tanner," replied Rita, smiling. "I've known him almost all my life." She had known him and she did not like him. Besides which, there had been something nebulous about Joe Tanner's leaving Green Falls Gas—an irregularity or two chalked up against him on the book of the concern.

Rita had to be diplomatic, however. "What," she demanded of Flo Fogarty, "does Joe Tanner stand for?"

Flo Fogarty reassured her on that score. "Joe," returned Flo Fogarty, "will stand for anything that the Women's Club demands."

"Regardless?" smiled Rita.

"Regardless," replied Flo. "Miss Wrightson, if the Women's Club is for him, it can make him mayor. And it will be for him, if you'll only say the word."

"I'll think it over," returned Rita Wrightson, "and I'll let you know."

She did let her know and within the next twenty-four hours. Rita declined to support Joe Tanner, and she informed Miss Fogarty unqualifiedly of her decision.

"Very well, then," said Flo Fogarty, showing her fine teeth, "then I'll get the Women's Club to support him without your indorsement. You watch out and see."

It seemed an idle boast. Flo Fogarty was a man's woman, not a woman's woman. Flo was a live wire, a firebrand, a monumental bluff. At least, so she seemed to Rita. Her boast then would have been an idle boast had it not been for one man in Green Falls. That man was Rita's father, Major Wrightson. For in an evil moment, the major had taken on a new chemist and head engineer. He had reduced his product to five hundred and fifteen British thermal units and with dire result.

At a mass meeting of the Green Falls Women's Club held in a local theater one afternoon, Rita, in an unguarded moment, permitted Flo Fogarty to have the floor. Flo took the floor; she held it defiantly for half an hour. She held it because she was a sensation, and a mass meeting always wants sensations. During that half hour Flo flaunted Joe Tanner in the faces of the women, told them defiantly that he was their candidate—told them that they must flock to his standard; and showed them why.

It took all Rita's strength of will power, all the exercise of her authority to squelch Flo Fogarty. She did it in the end. She did it with such overwhelming success that Miss Fogarty, in disdain, turned on her heel and left the meeting, with half a hundred of her clan trailing after her. Flo stood not on the order of her going—she went at once. Where they went nobody knew; nobody really cared. But, unknown to Rita and unknown to the members of the Women's Club, there was method in the madness of these

disaffected members. They left the meeting in a body for a purpose. They had other fish to fry.

When Rita reached home late that afternoon, she thought that bedlam must have broken loose. The Jap butler let her in. His eyes were wild—his demeanor frenzied.

"She-devils!" he exclaimed. "She-devils scream and yell!"

He was quite right. There were she-devil screams—she-devil yells. Rita pressed on toward her study. There was no one there. But the library door was open. The library was filled with women and the sound of women's voices. Rita peered gingerly into the room.

Her father, Major Wrightson, was sitting at his desk. He was holding his hands to his ears.

"One at a time," cried Major Wrightson. "Give me air!"

He kept his temper well enough. He seemed amused. He certainly was cool and collected. Rita felt a touch of admiration for this man who could remain calm in the midst of this vituperation. For there was vituperation, be it understood. And there was much else. There were newspaper reporters, half a dozen of them, clustered about the major's desk. There was Joe Tanner, his manly brow as black as thunder. There was Flo Fogarty. Joe Tanner and Miss Fogarty helped the major still the tumult. It finally was stilled.

And then Joe Tanner spoke. He spoke, with one eye on the newspaper men, to be sure they got him right. "I am not yet mayor—I am no longer city engineer," exclaimed Joe Tanner. "I speak here, thank God, merely as a private citizen——"

"Let me be heard, Joe," cried Flo Fogarty, probably according to program. "I am a housewife—I speak for all the housewives of Green Falls. I am a housewife—let me speak——"

Rita knew that Flo Fogarty came as near to being a housewife as Joe Tanner was himself. She glanced once more about the room. She knew this crowd of women—there was not a housewife among them. But Flo spoke as a housewife. She spoke from a carefully typewritten paper—taking good care to get yellow "flimsy" copies to the newspaper men before she started in.

And when she spoke, she spoke of gas—of nothing except gas. She arraigned Green Falls Gas at the top of her lungs. She convicted it of all the crimes on the calendar. She informed Major Wrightson in particular and the world in general that the women of Green Falls had risen in their might. Not men, be it understood—women. Women who toiled over the washboard; women who ironed clothes; women who baked; women who boiled; women who fried—women who had put up with Green Falls Gas now for three long years. These women cared nothing for city policies or city politics. They wanted gas—they intended to have gas. And Flo Fogarty turned from Major Wrightson to Joe Tanner. She stopped appealing to the major. She appealed to Joe. And of Joe Tanner, on behalf of all the women in Green Falls, she demanded one thing and only one. She demanded of Joe Tanner, gas. Then she sat down.

Joe Tanner gave her gas. He gave everybody all the gas he had at his command. For fifteen minutes he spouted natural gas. His peroration was a gas explosion. And then he, too, stopped short.

Everything about this meeting was dramatic and abrupt. The instant that Joe Tanner finished the women all filed out. Flo Fogarty covered their retreat. Joe Tanner followed in their wake. After Joe Tanner went the newspaper reporters. When they had gone there was just one other man beside the major left in the big room. Rita started as she saw this other man. And this man started as he caught sight of Rita.

This other man was Mr. Harvey Minion, one time of S. D. M. A.

What he was doing there Rita could not know; she cared less. She closed the door and retired to her own room. Five minutes later the major joined her there.

"Phew!" cried the major. "Pandemonium, my dear!"

Rita was troubled. "Don't you think," she demanded, "that it was justified? Don't you think that Green Falls Gas is the last straw? I think it's scandalous."

"Don't you worry, Rita," cried the major, "I'll double your money. See if I don't."

"I don't want my money doubled," returned Rita. "I want the people to have good gas. Father, when this thing is published, as it will be, every woman in the city will be up in arms."

"Let 'em be up in arms," returned the major.

"Father," demanded Rita, "what was that Harvey Minion doing here this afternoon?"

"Minion—Minion?" echoed her father. "Oh, that chap—that Minion chap. Oh, yes. My dear, he's publicity man for all the housewives in Green Falls."

"I doubt it very much," said Rita.

"And so do I, my dear," guffawed the major. "This Minion chap is just Joe Tanner's man. He's going to run Joe Tanner on a platform built of gas."

V.

Harvey Minion did run Joe Tanner on a platform built of gas. This platform was constructed and ready for the people at an indignation meeting held the very next night. Harvey was striking while the iron was hot. This indignation meeting was well named. It was crowded with indignant Green Falls housewives, the genuine article this time, who had been treated like dogs by Green Falls Gas.

Joe Tanner had the floor, and kept it. "You can't tell me anything about this Major Wrightson," he exclaimed. "I worked for him for seven years. I know his tricks and his manners. If this man Major Wrightson makes up his mind that you are to get bum gas, you'll get bum gas, that's all. All the women in Green Falls can't move Major Wrightson. Make up your mind to that. He's in that business for every dollar that he can squeeze out of you."

Joe Tanner took his seat. He twiddled his thumbs.

"Is that all?" cried the women. "Is that all you've got to say."

Joe Tanner sprang to the front of the platform. "It isn't what I've got to say," he cried. "It's what you've got to do. Either you're going to do what I just did—sit back and say nothing, or else you're going to do the other thing."

"What other thing?" demanded the housewives.

"The only thing there's left to do," yelled Joe Tanner. "Make your own gas, in your own way, at your own price. If I go into office, I go into office upon one issue, only one. A municipal gas plant—a gas plant of the people, run by the people, for the people."

Flo Fogarty leaped upon a chair. "Every woman in this community," she cried, "who stands for civic betterment and social uplift, must support this man for mayor!"

The enthusiasm was tremendous. It was lasting. The women of the city were now up in arms for good. Rita Wrightson saw that it was so. She saw something else. She felt instinctively that these women were absolutely right. She knew that Major Wrightson and Green Falls Gas were absolutely wrong.

"It's not too late," she told her father. "You don't want Joe Tanner to be mayor. It's not too late. Give them good gas. They're entitled to good gas. It's your business to see to it that they get good gas," she pleaded.

"It's my business," said her father, "to run my business at a decent profit. Parcel of women! What do they know?"

"Parcel of women!" echoed Rita. "Father, they'll ruin you. You don't seem to understand. The city is going to make gas itself."

"Let it go as far as it likes," returned the major. "You can tell 'em that from me."

Miss Flo Fogarty called on Rita once more at her home. Miss Fogarty had blood in her eye.

"Miss Wrightson," she demanded, "isn't it about time the public knew just where the Women's Club stands on this matter of municipal gas?"

"That," returned Rita frostily, "is a matter for the board."

"And you," nodded her visitor with a smile, "are chairman of the board. And you are the daughter of Green Falls Gas. And you are more than that—you own a block of stock in Green Falls Gas. You are tied up with Green Falls Gas so hard and fast that you never can get loose."

Rita smiled soberly. "And what do you suggest?" she demanded.

"No woman living can serve God and mammon," said Miss Fogarty. "As a member of the Women's Club I feel justified in pointing out your future course for you. I suggest that you resign from the presidency of the club."

"And who," demanded Rita, "do you suggest might take my place?"

Miss Fogarty modestly cast down her eyes. "There are others who can qualify," she said.

Rita picked up a typewritten sheet of paper. "Miss Fogarty," she said, "this is a proposed resolution that I handed to my floor leader some two days ago. A copy of it will appear this afternoon in all the local

papers. It is a club resolution casting the club support with the movement for municipal gas. You can keep that copy and show it to your friends. In doing so, it will be unwise for you to claim that you have forced this issue. I am forcing it, myself. The only drawback, so far, to my whole-hearted support of municipal gas, lies in my objection to the personnel of its chief champions."

Miss Fogarty quailed under Rita's lofty glance. Miss Fogarty was distinctly disappointed. "Then," said Miss Fogarty, "you are deliberately cutting your father's throat."

"And slashing my own," nodded Rita.

"I am afraid," said Flo Fogarty, as she rose to go, "that you are a bit deeper than you seem to be. My advice to you is to keep out of all this mess."

"I am in this mess," returned Rita Wrightson, holding out her hand, "to stay."

She was. The published announcement of her stand caused a tremendous sensation in the daily prints. Her renunciation of her personal and private interests in favor of the public had an immediate effect. She was the daughter of Green Falls Gas. She must know about Green Falls Gas. And if she believed in people's gas, then why should anybody doubt its feasibility?

For municipal gas—or people's gas, as they began to call it—had its doubters and its enemies. The conservative male vote was probably against it. They were against it on the principle that it is best to let well enough alone; against it on the principle that whatever is, is right.

Gene Carnaby was against it. Gene got up on his hind legs and howled. He had the right to howl—he was now the city engineer. He did not howl diplomatically, pleasantly. He just howled. He knew how to howl. He told the people straight from the shoulder, in as many different ways as he could, in as many issues of the daily press as he could command, that the people must not, at this juncture, make their own gas. The war had left Green Falls almost bankrupt. The city could not take on anything new.

Gene showed the people that it would cost thirty million dollars to erect a plant. To do this now, at this juncture, would spell ruin, nothing less. To run a plant like that would mean ruin, nothing less. Gene Carnaby talked figures, he talked facts. He took every one of Joe Tanner's specious arguments and ripped it into shreds. He told the people that this thing was a chimera, a will-o'-the-wisp, a wild daydream. He told them, solemnly, that it could not be done.

He did not tell them all. There was more to tell. Gene Carnaby knew there was more to tell. But only Gene Carnaby knew that he was holding something back. Gene Carnaby was in possession of a vital secret that in honor bound he could not well reveal.

Joe Tanner had his answer ready. Joe Tanner had been a gas man in the past. He was no longer a gas man; he had not been such for years. No longer, he reminded his people, was he under the control of Green Falls Gas. Could Gene Carnaby say that much for himself?

Joe Tanner's answer made all things clear to Rita Wrightson. Always slow to suspect the motives of anybody that she knew, Rita had been intensely puzzled by the manner of Gene's leaving Green Falls Gas. There had been mystery surrounding it. This mystery, she saw, was solved. Gene Carnaby had not resigned—he had not been fired. Gene and her father, she now reasoned, had seen this movement coming. Gene and her father had determined that Gene should take the job of city engineer to keep the people from making people's gas. Rita's wits had sharpened; her eyeteeth were always getting cut. Bit by bit she was losing faith in human nature. Swiftly, as in the twinkling of an eye, she lost faith in Gene. Joe Tanner's answer dovetailed with her every doubt.

Rita did not blame her father. Her father owed no duty to the public except to make good gas. She knew his point of view—that Green Falls Gas always had been the subject of attack. He had the interests of his stockholders at heart. Her father was a private individual with his own view of his own responsibility. With Gene Carnaby it was different. Gene had sought a public office to betray the people. He clung to mammon. Still under her father's influence, still in the pay of private interests—how she hated that phrase—Gene frantically waved the people back and warned them against securing what they needed most.

Rita was thunderstruck. She became embittered aganist Gene. All the more so because she, herself, was fighting the good fight, keeping the faith.

She plunged desperately into the fight for people's gas. She flung aside her personal opinions. She worked shoulder to shoulder

with Joe Tanner and Flo Fogarty, and their distasteful myrmidons. After all, Gene Carnaby was merely a male; after all, the opposition to people's gas was male opposition. Rita Wrightson had the women of the city at her back. The women of the city could decide; they could elect Joe Tanner; they could make people's gas a living fact. Their souls went marching on.

Then something happened that smote Rita Wrightson hip and thigh.

Rita had been working like a slave. She worked every day but Sunday. One Sunday night she went to bed at seven. She woke at twelve and could not sleep again. Her nervous system kept her on the jump. She could not lie in bed. She needed occupation. There were papers on her desk downstairs. She wanted them—she could arrange a week's campaign. Softly she descended to the first floor. The lights downstairs were on, save in her study; that was dark. She groped her way to her desk. Then she stopped. She heard voices. From the library came raucous tones. Through the closed library door there came to her a penetrating voice—it was the voice of Mr. Harvey Minion. Her father spoke. In his voice there was anger and offense.

Rita Wrightson was a lady—but she also was a woman. She stole out into the hall, and there she found an open door at which to see and hear. She heard more than she saw. Her father clearly was finding considerable fault.

"Why the devil," Major Wrightson cried, "didn't you keep your hands off my daughter, Rita? Why drag her into this?"

Harvey Minion was on the defensive. "I didn't drag her into this," protested Harvey Minion. "I didn't ask her to mix in. She stands at the head of the Women's Club. You knew that."

"Well, what's a woman's club?" cried the major testily.

"That's your point of view," said Harvey Minion. "Nevertheless, it is a fact that your daughter's at the head of the Women's Club. It wasn't up to me to warn you that she would mix in."

"You can't tell me," returned the major, "that you didn't egg her on. Your fine Italian hand sticks up through everything. Ye gods, do you suppose I'm the kind of man that would use his own daughter for a cat's-paw?"

"One moment, major," cried Mr. Harvey Minion, and his tones were cold as steel; "let us understand each other. My contract in this matter is with you and only you. I've been directed to obtain results. And I've obtained them. It was my idea, not yours, to drag Joe Tanner into this—Joe Tanner and his girl. Joe Tanner and his girl have done as they've been told. This thing has gone through as per program from the very start. Your daughter is an incident, that's all."

"My daughter," said the major, "is the event. And you've made her so. She's the head and front of this whole movement. You forced her hand, and after that you let her go her gait. You knew, and I didn't, that she and her Women's Club would go the limit. It's damnable! It isn't square to Rita. If somebody suspects—if somebody finds out—— Ye gods, the girl is innocent. She's honest. She knows not what she does."

"What matter," said Harvey Minion, "so long as your daughter doesn't know the facts? And she doesn't know the facts. The chances are, she'll never learn the facts. You know the facts. I know the facts. Joe Tanner knows the facts. The Fogarty girl doesn't."

"Gene Carnaby knows," groaned Major Wrightson.

"Ah!" returned Harvey Minion, "and fortunately for you and me, Gene Carnaby is the kind of boy who'll never tell. Gene is the soul of honor. Major Wrightson, there's nothing to be feared. And if there was, there's nothing we can do. The thing's beyond us now. Nothing can keep Joe Tanner from being Green Falls' mayor. Nothing can keep the people from having people's gas."

Major Wrightson groaned. "All that I ask," he cried, "is that my daughter never knows."

He started suddenly, saw that a door was open, rose and closed it. He should have done this half an hour before.

Rita crept upstairs to her room. She did not go to bed. For that night she was through with sleep.

VI.

The next day she saw Gene Carnaby in his private office at the city hall. She humbled herself before him in apology. She told him she had suspected him of the worst.

"Oh, I knew you did," smiled Gene, "and

I couldn't help it. I didn't blame you, though."

"Last night," said Rita, "I heard Harvey Minion talking to my father——"

Gene started. "Were you present at the conversation?" he demanded.

"Fortunately," said Rita, "I was not."

Gene was worried. "What did you hear?" he asked.

"Enough," smiled the girl forlornly, "to learn that Harvey Minion is still representing private interests."

"What else did you learn?" demanded Gene.

"I learned that Joe Tanner is nothing but a crook," said Rita.

"We all know that," said Gene. "Go on. What else——"

"I heard too much—and not enough," returned the girl. "I've come to you, Gene, to have you tell me all there is to know."

Gene turned color. "I can't do that." He choked. "I can't turn traitor, Rita. But I can go this far, and this is God's own truth. Rita, I know whereof I speak. Take it from me that Joe Tanner's gas plant is going to be the ghastliest crime that's ever been committed in Green Falls. I want you to believe that I'm telling you the truth."

"I believe you, Gene," said Rita.

"Great guns," cried Gene, "the women of this city need to have their eyeteeth cut."

"I'll help to cut 'em," returned Rita.

She started in to do her level best. Next day, in the public press and on the public platform, she reversed herself on gas. She took Gene Carnaby's figures, Gene Carnaby's arguments as her text; hammered them home. She told the women of the city that the men that knew were right; that Joe Tanner's gas plant would spell ruin—stark, staring ruin for the city.

The expected happened. The women laughed her to scorn. They pointed out that she must have just waked up to the fact that Joe Tanner's gas plant spelled ruin for her father and herself. They did more than laugh. They demanded her resignation as president of the Green Falls Women's Club. They wanted Flo Fogarty in her stead.

Rita refused curtly to resign. She had done her duty to the club, and to the women of the club. She stood her ground. But her power and influence were gone. Flo Fogarty was the power behind the throne. Rita, almost weeping, fled to Gene for comfort.

"Never you mind, Rita," nodded Gene. "You've done the right thing. You've put yourself on record. You've made your point."

"But they think," wailed Rita, "that at the last moment self-interest has caved me in."

"Great guns!" replied Gene with a smile. "And they've also known me for a crook ever since I took my place as city engineer. You wanted to have a finger in the political pie, Rita. Welcome. Come on in, the water's fine!"

Rita smiled through tears, and held out her hand. "Gene," she exclaimed fervently, "you are a brick."

"No, I'm not a brick," smiled Gene, "I'm only honest. And being honest doesn't get me anything—not from the people. The people are never going to know what's best for them."

"Can't we stop Joe Tanner and his gang?" cried Rita desperately.

Gene shook his head. "Nothing but the act of God can stop Joe Tanner and his gang," said Gene. "But don't worry yet. Joe's getting in doesn't give us people's gas. We won't have people's gas until we get it. Don't cross that bridge until we get to it."

"Meantime?" cried Rita.

"Just grit your teeth," advised Gene. "Maybe it will help to get 'em cut."

Rita gritted her teeth. And no act of God intervened to stop Joe Tanner. Joe Tanner went into the office of the mayor, with bands playing, colors flying. His common council took their places in the council chamber in the city hall. The air was shrill with the acclamations of the housewives of Green Falls. For people's gas, in their estimation, was an accomplished fact.

Joe Tanner, once in, was as good as his word. He had promised the people gas; they had voted gas; gas was the first consideration with Joe Tanner. Joe proceeded to get gas for the people.

Unfortunately for Joe Tanner and his council, Gene Carnaby was the city engineer and was under civil service and could not be removed. As a mere matter of form, it was necessary for Joe Tanner and his council to submit the matter of the gas plant to the city engineer. Gene's reply was brief and to the point. During the campaign he had made up his figures and the people already had them. Those figures remained unchanged. A gas plant for the city would

cost the people thirty-two million five hundred thousand dollars—not a dollar less. The figures were appalling, naturally—but Gene Carnaby stood to them like a rock.

Joe Tanner merely laughed.

"I see," said Joe Tanner to the people, "that we shall have to call in a special expert whose private interest is not opposed to the public welfare. We shall see what we shall see."

Joe Tanner called in his independent experts. He called in two or three. The independent experts put their heads together. They did the best that they knew how. They made up their figures and handed them to Joe Tanner. And one fine afternoon Joe Tanner sprang them upon an unsuspecting public.

The independent experts reported that the contemplated gas plant, including all street piping for the city, would cost more than thirty-two millions five hundred thousand. It would cost from thirty-five millions to thirty-seven millions and a half.

The people gasped. Joe Tanner never blinked an eyelid.

"Never fear," said Joe Tanner to the people, "put your trust in me. I promise you to get people's gas for the people."

Next day he promulgated a brand-new idea. He said that he had hoped all along—and, in fact, had figured during his campaign—that an enterprise of this kind would not cost in excess of eighteen million dollars. After his election and before his experts entered the arena of events, he had jacked up his estimate to twenty millions. He now conceded that his information had been misinformation—he was satisfied that his independent experts were correct. Thirty-five million dollars was too much—far too much to pay. Beside which, it would take many weary months to build a plant; years to pipe the city streets. In view of all the difficulties, it now seemed to him that there was but one thing left to do. That was to buy a plant—to buy a plant already built, already piped, already in good working order.

The Green Falls Gas plant was the only plant in town. Joe Tanner hated Green Falls Gas as he hated the devil, but he did not hate their plant. The plant was inoffensive, save to the olfactory nerves. It was a good plant and practically in good working order. And this plant could be bought, said Joe Tanner, for twenty-five million instead of thirty-seven million and a half.

It took the public two full days to get the full significance of this. Then there was a howl that could be heard from here to there. This gas plant had been the enemy of the people. The people did not want it. They would not touch it with a ten-foot pole. They said so, in disdain.

Joe Tanner laughed in his sleeve.

The people had already decided one fact for themselves. That fact they had voted on. That fact had become law. Law said that Green Falls was to have people's gas. It was not because Joe Tanner and his council had been pledged to people's gas that the people were to have it. It was law. He and his council were compelled to give the people gas. Gas was no longer a campaign slogan. It had become—in theory—an accomplished fact.

The details, however, remained with Joe Tanner and his council. He and his council must get the people a gas plant that would make good gas at the lowest figure. The cost of building was prohibitive. The price of purchase was not prohibitive.

Therefore, he and his council must do the only thing in sight. They must buy the plant of Green Falls Gas. And twenty-five million was Green Falls Gas' best price. So there they were.

Rita saw it all now. Her eyeteeth had been painfully cut, but they were in good working order. This was the thing that would double her money. This was the thing that would make money for the stockholders. This was the thing that made the major content to let the best men get out of utilities and leave them free to go into industrials. She saw it all.

Rita, with blood in her eye, went to Gene Carnaby. She told him that she knew. Gene soothed her.

"I would have told you before, Rita," Gene said to her, "if I could have seen my way clear to do it. But I couldn't, naturally—I couldn't tell you, even, the thing I learned in confidence from my employer. Now that you know——"

"When did he tell you, Gene?" demanded Rita.

Gene hesitated for a moment. He went to his safe, unlocked an inside compartment, and drew forth the carbon copy of a closely typewritten manuscript.

"I'm showing this to you, Rita," said Gene, "and to no one else. There are reasons why you've got to know that I've been

straight. The major gave me this the day before I fired myself. He expected me to fall in line with his suggestions. I declined."

Rita caught the paper from Gene's hand. She read it through.

"You've kept this ever since," she mused.

"Ever since," said Gene. "He forgot to ask me for it."

Rita studied it closely. The major had corrected it here and there in his own unmistakable handwriting. Acting under sudden impulse, she started to tuck it into her waist. Gene caught her hand—he wrested the document almost forcibly from her.

"This is not for evidence," said Gene.

Rita's eyes flashed. "Do you mean to tell me," she demanded, "that you're going to consider that a confidential communication?"

"Absolutely," returned Gene. "It's a thing I cannot use."

"Not even in the people's interests?" demanded Rita.

"Not in anybody's interests," said Gene. "I haven't even used it in my own."

"That's just like a man," protested Rita.

Gene tucked the carbon copy back in the compartment of his safe.

"Listen, Rita," he assured her, "don't condemn the major too much for this. He had the right idea, you understand. The major's solution is the only real solution to the matter. The people should have people's gas. If you'll read the evening papers you'll find out that I come out strong for the purchase of this Green Falls plant."

"You don't mean it, Gene," cried Rita.

"I mean it," nodded Gene, "provided that plant can be bought at fifteen million dollars. I know that plant. I've run it for five years. I know just what that plant can do. I can keep it running and can make it more than pay, if the people will put it into my hands at fifteen million and not a dollar more."

"But Joe Tanner," wailed Rita, "is going to pay twenty-five million dollars for that plant—the deal is to be closed at my father's house, to-night."

"And I shall be there," nodded Gene, "to prevent it, if I can."

The gathering at Major Wrightson's house that evening was small but exclusive. Mayor Tanner was on hand. Mayor Tanner's wife was there—Flo Fogarty of the fighting days. The city attorney was present with a contract to be signed. Besides them, there were Harvey Minion and the major. It took a full hour to arrange details. Before the hour was up the door opened. Gene Carnaby stepped into the room.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Joe Tanner.

"I'm here pretty much of right," replied Gene smilingly.

"Gene," said the major, "I see by the papers that you want me to sell out for fifteen million, instead of twenty-five."

"That isn't what I said," returned Gene. "What I said was that if the plant didn't cost the people more than fifteen million I could run it for 'em at a profit."

"Same thing," said Harvey Minion.

"Hardly," returned Gene. "We've got to spend a couple of million in repairs."

"That makes thirteen million," observed the major indulgently.

"I think," said Gene, "that the people should get this plant for twelve. That will get your stockholders par for their stock, major. It will double the present value of their holdings. Nothing, as I see it, could be fairer than that."

"Ho-hum," quoth the major. "Gentlemen, I see no reason why we should not consummate this deal."

Gene held up his hand. "I see a reason," he warned them. "A reason that will appeal to you."

"Get it out of your system," said the major.

"I've got to," said Gene, his eye troubled and uneasy, "I have spent two hours being converted to a woman's sense of honor and I am——"

"Come down to the point," cried Joe Tanner.

"I'm getting there," said Gene. He took a long breath. "Months ago," he said, "Major Wrightson outlined to me his whole scheme to sell Green Falls Gas at a thundering profit to the city. He doped out all details. He named all names. His program as prepared was carried out to the letter. Unfortunately," faltered Gene, "the major always thinks in type and——"

"By gum!" cried the major, springing to his feet.

"And corrects his type in ink," went on Gene Carnaby.

Gene groped in his breast pocket for an instant. In that instant Harvey Minion and Joe Tanner made a dive for him and got him. Gene was limp and helpless in their grasp—

he submitted to a search. The paper was not there. There was nothing to be found.

Gene shook himself into shape. He grinned. "I take note, gents and lady," went on Gene, "that I have hit you where you live. My carbon copy—I forgot to bring it with me. It is stowed away where none but I can find it. My carbon copy of the major's scheme—I'm glad that you agree with me as to its importance and its force. That carbon copy can ruin every man and woman in this room."

"Tell me one thing," gasped the major. "Is it still in your custody?"

"It is," said Gene.

"In that event," nodded the major, "we can proceed. This is a bluff on Gene's part, gentlemen. I know Gene well enough to know that he will never use this information that he got from me."

"There, major," exclaimed Gene, "is just the rub. I was forced, in self-defense, to confide its contents to one discreet young woman. Her knowledge of it is as safe as mine. Beside, I have the paper in my custody."

"All right," said Joe Tanner, "you and she know and no one else. And we know you'll never make that copy public."

"Unfortunately," replied Gene, flushing, "I know I will."

"You're a damned traitor," cried the major.

"So I should have said myself an hour ago," said Gene; "but now I have been converted to the woman's view. My sense of honor would lead me to suppress this information. Her sense of honor leads me to divulge it to the people who want people's gas. This girl says my sense of honor is going to cost the people ten million dollars, maybe more. She doesn't think my sense of honor is worth that to the people. Gentlemen," went on Gene, "I must proclaim to you the fact that I prize this young woman's sense of honor much more highly than my own."

"In plain words, what do you mean by that?" cried Harvey Minion.

"I mean by that," smiled Gene, "that I shall do my duty as she sees it—and I shall do my duty now."

Silence for the moment. "What's the alternative?" demanded Major Wrightson finally.

"The alternative," said Gene, "is that you cut your price in two. I want the people to buy this plant from you at twelve million and a half."

That very night the people bought their plant from Major Wrightson for thirteen million dollars—not a dollar more.

VII.

"Rita," said Gene Carnaby, "realize it. You and you alone have gotten for the people what the people want and what they ought to have."

"This," Rita flouted him, "from you—who did it all."

"Not in ten thousand years," smiled Gene. "I was lacking, Rita, in the one essential. It was your woman's sense of honor that turned the trick for us."

"I'll die happy," cried Rita, "if I can only know I helped." Her face clouded. "Will the people ever know," she faltered, "that you—and I—got them what we did?"

"Never," smiled Gene. "Joe Tanner and his wife already grab the credit for the thing. The people will regard us, Rita, as tied up with private interests."

"I detest those words," said Rita.

"Sorry," said Gene with a smile, his lips trembling just a bit. "I don't know—I've always said that private interests—they aren't so very bad——"

"You mean Green Falls Gas—and such," said Rita.

"Not exactly—that," spluttered Gene Carnaby. "I sort of meant—your private interests—and mine."

"House Devil," by Mr. Osborne, will appear in an early issue.

SOMETHING TO GUARD AGAINST

YES," said the advocate of universal disarmament; "America must disarm. The time has come for us to beat our swords into plowshares."

"I see," said the more cautious man; "but, when we do that, we want to be sure we won't have to do the other countries' plowing."

An Exhibit in the Dessauer Case

By Thomas McMorrow

Author of "Hookey's Dust," "The Brand of the U. S. A.," Etc.

A spark from old New York almost causes a conflagration in the modern city

THROUGH the office window of my friend Quackenbush, I looked at the clock in the steeple of old Trinity. It showed a quarter after five. The downtown streets would be difficult going for an hour to come. Broadway was jammed with home-going office workers, eddying about the subway kiosks and pouring in full tide toward the Elevated stations and the ferry landings. Above Canal Street the factories and lofts were letting out their hundreds of thousands of operatives.

"Better wait until after six," said Quackenbush, stretching out in his swivel chair and kindling his corncob. He handed me a volume of the Sessions Laws of 1921 which had lain opened and face down on his desk. "Look this over. It's something in your line."

My friend Quackenbush is the gumshoe man of the Land Title Company of New York City. He is the company's diviner of family secrets, its investigator of family history.

I glanced at the book, polite but dubious. It was open at chapter 927, which is entitled, *"An Act to vest the title, if any, of the People of the State of New York in and to the property formerly known as the Dessauer Farm in the present tenants and owners of record, to the same effect as if Dederich Dessauer had died intestate."*

"Thank you," I said, throwing the volume back upon the desk. "What's it about? Thrilling story of a condemnation proceeding to acquire title to a lot for a new municipal bath? Tell me in English."

"Did you never hear of the Dessauer claim?" he asked.

"Dessauer," I repeated. "Dessauer. The name is familiar, somehow."

"So passes the glory of New York," said Quackenbush. "The name is to-day 'somehow familiar' to a New Yorker! The Dessauers, my untutored literary friend, were one of our real old New York families—our Knickerbocker gentility. They were among the patroons—if that conveys anything to you. We have here a print of the Dessauer manor house as it appeared a hundred years ago in the vicinity of the present Forty-fourth Street and Ninth Avenue.

"It was one of the show places of Manhattan—green lawns of noble sweep, ranks of ornate shrubbery, winding drives lined with towering elms. The Dessauers were great folk. But they were already approaching the sere and yellow when 'Fulton's Folly' could have been seen from their windows passing magically up the Hudson a thousand yards away.

"Although they bulked so large in the public eye a century ago, I had a time to find one of them still above ground when I set out last year to locate a Dessauer. I was surprised to find him. These historic families often die out, whereupon any interest in the family estates remaining to them escheats to the people of the State in default of lawful heirs, and that's the end of them.

"But I found one. There was only one left, but I found him. I have a knack for such things. I found the last of the Dessauers one evening in a hall bedroom up in Harlem near the Central tracks.

"He insisted hospitably that I should sit upon the bed, it being more comfortable than the chair.

"He was a tall and slender man of about fifty-five, clean of person and linen, but very much down at the heel. The world had forgotten the Dessauers, and was shoving about this straggler from the days gone by as though he were some importation from Czecho-Slovakia and smelling of the ship. He was kept alive by some kind of a rotten job going about with a sheaf of slips and verifying addresses for a publisher. That was the straw at which he had snatched when New York had swallowed the Dessauers up.

"But the old fellow hadn't quit. He was blooded stock.

" 'I am sorry that I cannot offer you refreshment, Mr. Quackenbush,' he said, his manner that of one who spends a hundred thousand a year, with relish, for pomp and circumstance. 'But I always say that it is our duty to obey the law of the land, however it may constrict our power to entertain a guest. Perhaps you would care for a tasty sandwich and a cup of fine coffee? I will speak to the cook at once.'

" 'Never mind, Mr. Dessauer,' I said, halting his flight to some local delicatessen. 'Try one of these cigars!'

" 'Quackenbush,' he said, repeating my name meditatively, as he cuddled his lips around the cigar. 'Perhaps you are related to that Johann Quackenbush who was a burgomaster in this city under Peter Stuyvesant? There was an Ulrich Dessauer who was *schepen* at the time.'

" 'Not unless the family were here on a visit before they came to stay in 1872,' I smiled. 'We are examining the title to the Dessauer farm,' I explained. 'You can tell me something of the early family history, if you will.'

" 'The farm is being sold again?' he said, raising his heavy black eyebrows.

" 'Hardly. You will recollect that the Dessauer farm comprised the tract bounded roughly by the present Thirty-fourth Street, Forty-seventh Street, Sixth Avenue and the Hudson. The value of that tract of land is to-day in excess of two hundred millions.'

" 'Indeed,' he said casually, crossing his legs, and then uncrossing them when he became aware that he was exposing the broken sole of his shoe. 'It is quite a large sum. Quite a staggering bit! As I recall the description of the farm, it was bounded on the north by Verdant Lane, on the east by the Middle Country Road, southerly by the lands of Aycrigg, Riker, and Osgood, and westerly by the Hudson River. The Mauritius River it is called on the old grant. Two hundred millions, eh? That was more than Dederich Dessauer sold it for in 1825, if my memory serves. But then he was no business man.'

" 'Probably Dederich sold it for less,' I agreed gravely. 'We are examining the farm title to complete our records. When the real-estate market is quiet, as at present, we turn our examiners onto farm titles. It is really only to complete our records—the information has no monetary significance. We have already examined and insured title to the many separate parcels which were once included in the Dessauer farm. Heretofore we have not run our searches beyond that Dederich Dessauer whom you have mentioned, who was the last owner of the undivided farm. We have assumed title as good in him in the year 1825.'

" 'An unwarranted assumption, Mr. Quackenbush,' said Dessauer stoutly. 'I have it in my mind to speak to my attorneys about reopening the suit by my branch of the family to recover possession of the farm. I will do so in the near future, sir. Our family records are very full, and our claim is thoroughly documented, but we need not go into that, just now. My attorneys have numerous letters, maps, receipts, and like data, all of which are at your service. But indeed I do not need to consult them for the story of the ownership of the farm. I am entirely familiar with it. Entirely familiar, although I am not in the direct line, the Dessauer from whom I am descended being this Dederich's first cousin.'

"I did not quite understand what he was driving at in talking of the Dessauers' claim to a huge tract in the center of New York. I saw that I was about to hear aired some ancient grievance. Hardly any of these old families but nurses one.

"He brightened up, and his eyes lost that woolgathering expression.

" 'It has always been a source of wonder and regret to the family that the farm ever passed into the hands of this Dederich,' he resumed. 'He was quite unworthy of such a stately inheritance; he was a worthless fellow, a gamester, a wasting good-for-nothing. I have many letters from his father to that Dessauer who was my direct forbear in which Dederich's father expresses his grief and indignation at his son's evil courses, and asserts an intention to cut him off in his will. In one such letter he even speaks of having made a will, and our understanding was that thereby he devised the Dessauer farm to my branch of the family.'

" 'But there was no will,' I put in, hoping to block a long recital.

" 'Pardon me,' said Dessauer, raising a thin and finely molded hand. 'None was ever found, but there must have been a will, for the letter so states! It is absurd to say there was not a will. It is our understanding

that this Dederich found it, and destroyed it.'

"I shook my head smilingly.

" 'Let me tell you something of this,' said Dessauer animatedly. 'It will detain you only a few moments.

" 'This Dederich's father was a recluse, a queer and misanthropic sort. He had lived alone at the family seat, following his son's disgraceful affair with a lady of family. He died there one summer evening in the year 1822. It was in July—or was it in August? No matter for the time. Alone with him at the time of his death was his son Dederich.

" 'Dederich explained afterward that he had called upon his father to secure financial assistance necessitated by his spendthrift habits. He said that in the course of the altercation his father became greatly excited, and fell across the table lifeless. That part of his tale was probably true as the old man was of a choleric humor and the physician certified that he had died of a cerebral hemorrhage.'

"Dessauer leaned forward and tapped me on the knee. His expression was rapt.

" 'But Dederich,' he went on, 'did not explain why he failed to call aid to his father until several hours had elapsed! Indeed, the event was not known until the neighbors came of their own motion, being attracted by seeing a candlelight flitting about the house, upstairs and down, in the small hours. When they forced their entrance they found the house in utter turmoil, looking as though it had been pillaged. The old man's desk had been broken open, bureau drawers had been pulled out and their contents strewn about, furniture had been moved from the walls as though in search of secret hiding places; torn envelopes and folders were thrown around as if in course of a frenzied quest.

" 'They found Dederich sitting calmly in the living room, refreshing himself from the whisky decanter. He was quite confident and composed.'

" 'He had been looking for money,' I diagnosed.

" 'He had been looking for the will,' said Dessauer sternly. 'And he found it! He secreted it that night, and thereupon entered upon the inheritance as the only heir.'

" 'An interesting story,' I said. 'But it is all very long ago. And at least the will was never found. A devilish awkward thing, if it turned up to-day.'

" 'A rather fortunate thing for me if it should reappear in the mysterious workings of Providence,' said Dessauer. 'Ah, well—it is not so important now. I am not young, and I am the last of my family.'

"He sat bent over, with his mouth pressed against his clenched fist.

" 'Two hundred millions,' he murmured. 'Two hundred millions!'

" 'A very interesting story,' I repeated in a tone to indicate that it had no practical bearing. It is unwise and unkind to encourage people to entertain such fantasies. The wish becomes father to the thought; and the company has been called upon to defend enough of its clients from like crack-brained assaults. 'And now—if you will let me have some information as to the earlier lineage of your family? The first Dessauer took by royal grant from Queen Anne, did he not? Perhaps you have the original grant in your possession?'

" 'Eh?' he exclaimed, starting as though I had waked him from a dream. 'What was that? I beg your pardon, Mr. Quackenbush. The original grant was from the West India Company, of a patroonery. It was later confirmed by the British royal grant.'

"He did not revert to the supposed will of the elder Dederich Dessauer until I bade him good night, an hour later. But when he spoke I felt that the subject had been continuously in his mind.

" 'And if the will were found?' he said, holding me by the sleeve. 'If it were found—would it hold good to-day, and restore to me the Dessauer farm?'

" 'It is not impossible,' I said. 'But the legal difficulties are great. Let alone the proving of the attestation and publication, you would be confronted by our present statute which requires that a will be offered for probate within four years of the death of the testator in order to oust innocent purchasers from the heir at law. Four years! And here a hundred have rolled by. There is no reasonable chance. Do not dwell on such a fantastic notion.'

" 'Four years,' he muttered, dampened. 'And is there then no exception to this harsh rule?'

" 'There is one exception,' I stated unwillingly. 'Where the will was concealed by the heir the four-year period does not apply. And also—if you must hug such a delusive phantom to your breast—where the will is all in the testator's writing—so that

there can be no question but that he knew he was executing a will—then the rules concerning attestation and publication are somewhat relaxed. That is to say, if you were to offer for probate to-day a will entirely in the handwriting of the father of Dederich Dessauer, and if it should appear to the court that Dederich had deliberately concealed that will, then your chances would be greatly enhanced of entering again into possession of the Dessauer farm and ousting from it the thousands of innocent persons who now hold supposed interests therein.'

"As I spoke there came before me a picture of that section of New York which was the Dessauer farm when dour Wall Street was a gay promenade and dingy Pearl the abode of wealth and fashion; when Talleyrand lived on Cedar Street; when Louis Philippe had buried himself from the world in the wilds about the present West Seventy-second Street. I saw the cloud-kissing lofts and office buildings, the thronged theaters, the hotels of countless rooms, the Great White Way, the noisy streets. The Roaring Forties!

"I glanced wonderingly at the shabby old man who was hanging on my words. I laughed. Sympathetically, pityingly, but heartily I laughed.

" 'It is rather an idle speculation, Mr. Dessauer,' I said.

"He held the door for me. I saw an untidy woman with an underhung jaw standing on the stair landing. She was the landlady, and the flame from the jet at that unaccustomed hour had drawn her like a moth.

"Dessauer urged me quickly back into the room.

"He spoke stiffly and dignifiedly, but with a telltale clearing of his throat.

" 'There was a matter of business which I failed to speak to you of, sir," he said, staring fixedly at my cravat. 'I find that certain exigencies will compel me to negotiate a loan very shortly, and I prefer to put it on a strictly business basis, although my friends would hasten to oblige me. Your company has banking facilities, no doubt? I will open a substantial account with them in the near future, so soon as I have received a remittance from the Dessauer estate. I cannot think how my attorneys could have failed to send it when due, except their natural assumption that I had no immediate use for it. In the meantime, if you could accommodate me—purely as a business venture—if you could accommodate me by taking my I O U—eh, it can be done?'

" 'How much?' I asked.

" 'Three dollars,' he said, blowing a thin wisp of smoke from the corner of his mouth and examining the ash of his cigar.

" 'Certainly, Mr. Dessauer,' I said. 'Like all banking institutions we are glad to oblige prospective depositors. No—don't mind executing a note. I will probably call upon you again in connection with the family history.'

" 'I will be ever so pleased to have you, sir,' he said, inclining from the waist and tendering his hand with as courtly an air as though he were speeding me from a colonial portico. 'I have enjoyed your visit. Good night, Mr. Quackenbush. Good night! Be careful of the stairs.'

"I dallied on the landing below to relight my cigar. Dessauer was speaking to his landlady.

" 'I have just received a remittance from the trustees,' he said. 'Is it possible that I have overlooked your little account? Perfectly shameful of me, Mrs. Schlumbohm, I am sure. You are very kind to wait upon me for it.'

" 'Three is right,' said Mrs. Schlumbohm. 'And turn out that gas!'

"I returned to the company and turned in my report, and then forgot Hermann Dessuaer. I have a queer job, and I meet many queer people. You could muster quite a regiment of decaying gentlemen by beating New York's hall rooms. It is a necessary result of having our Almanach de Gotha compiled by Dun and Bradstreet.

"Hermann walked in on me here several months later.

" 'I cannot think how I could have neglected paying off your loan until now, Mr. Quackenbush,' he said contritely. 'The pressure of business, eh? Yes, a man is confoundedly rushed these days.'

" 'Rushed to death, Mr. Dessauer,' I agreed, placing him when I saw the three dollar bills before me.

" 'And now as to a matter of a more personal nature,' he said, sitting in that chair and spreading a plan out on the desk.

"It was a very old drawing, done in pen and ink, decorated with pictures of trees, domestic animals, houses, barns, negroes in a field, fine ladies holding diminutive sunshades and promenading in a garden; rather a work of art. I was unable to read the

descriptive matter at the base of the plan because of the intricate curlicues and whirling festoons with which the letters were severally bedeviled.

" 'It is the plan of the Dessauer farm,' he said proudly.

"He rested his chin on his right thumb and pressed his long index finger against the side of his nose.

" 'The problem which confronts us now, Mr. Quackenbush,' he said, frowning with concentration on the precious question, 'is to determine the precise site or location chosen by this Dederich that summer night of 1822 in which to secrete his father's will. You will remember that you informed me that in your opinion Dederich had secreted the will, and that it was entirely in the handwriting of his father?'

" 'I don't remember having expressed such an opinion,' I said.

" 'Probably it has slipped your memory,' he said, pursing his lips and nodding his head. 'No matter. It happens that I myself after taking thought on the subject have arrived at the same conclusion. I have accordingly procured from my attorneys the various documents which we will need to facilitate our search. Do not deceive yourself: it will not be easy. No, indeed; it promises, on the contrary, to be quite difficult!'

" 'You spoke to your attorneys?' I said. 'They will probably prefer to handle the matter.'

" 'I spoke to them,' he replied perplexedly. 'Strange to relate, they do not appear to be adequately impressed with the importance and urgency of the work. Since seeing you I have been to the city tax department, and I have compiled the assessed values of the properties which are included in the Dessauer farm, and the total considerably exceeds your estimate of two hundred millions of dollars. So, you see, I am in a position to fee them very handsomely. But as they display a certain reluctance to attend to the legal details of recovering the farm it would be absurd of me to press them.'

" 'Quite absurd, Mr. Dessauer,' I said, debating how to turn him away. 'What can they have been thinking of, I wonder?'

"He beamed upon me. 'I have therefore decided to retain you,' he announced. 'No, no, my dear fellow—you deserve it. I will not hear a word about it! You recalled my attention to it, and to you shall go the glory and the profit. What would you say to accepting one million dollars as your fee?'

" 'Well, Mr. Dessauer,' I replied hesitatingly. 'I really don't know what to say. It is certainly handsome of you. If it weren't that my time is taken up by my duties here——'

" 'Resign,' he said, with a wave of the hand. 'Resign! Here are other documents,' he offered, separating numerous papers from amid the heap of slips on which were typed the addresses sought by his employer, the publisher. 'And here in this book is a family history of the Dessauers, beginning with that Hermann Dessauer who came here from Holland in the *Seamew* in 1626. A fellow passenger was the new director general, Peter Minuit, he who bought the entire island from the Indians for sixty guilders. A transaction which should interest you, as it was effectuated to establish a title by purchase as against the English claim through the discoveries of Cabot. This Hermann Dessauer was a Walloon. The book was gotten up by my father, and was printed by the Harpers in 1859. Here is recorded the marriage of my father to Cynthia Vandervoort, of which union I am the only issue. Here, too, is a plan showing the manor house, and its immediate surroundings.'

"He sat back in his chair and replaced his finger contemplatively against the bridge of his nose. 'It has occurred to me that the will was probably secreted either in the house itself or in its immediate vicinity. Don't you think so?'

" 'It is most plausible from what you have told me,' I said, humoring him.

" 'I am so glad to hear you say that, Mr. Quackenbush,' he exclaimed. 'The difficulties of our task would be greatly increased if we had to explore the entire four hundred and ten acres of the farm. Bless me, you must consider the changes of topography since those days! A man would secrete such a thing in a hollow tree, or perhaps beneath a stone——'

" 'Why hide it at all?' I asked. 'Why not tear it up, or touch a match to it—destroy it?'

" 'That I cannot say,' he said, after a moment's sage reflection. '*Why* Dederich did not destroy the will I have not the least conception, my dear fellow. But I ask you in turn: why bother to find a reason for his hiding the will? It is quite enough that

he hid it and did not destroy it. Don't you think so?'

" 'That would be quite enough certainly,' I agreed. The unfortunate fellow was the victim of a fixed idea. 'Very well, Mr. Dessauer,' I added, dismissing him. 'Leave these documents with me and I will give them my attention. I do not promise anything, I warn you!'

"I was glad to be left in possession of the papers. They had for me an extraordinary technical interest, and were indeed simply invaluable for the peculiar purposes of this company. Our system of land tenure is based on a theory of descent of title through deaths, and transfers *inter vivos*, and this company has insured the ownership of most of the land in the city. But the theory of descent which we have insured is liable to be attacked at an unexpected point—as by the appearance of a lost heir, or a claim of dower through a secret marriage—and sometimes unknown defects in title persist and are asserted after the passing of generations. We are always pleased to secure original documents bearing on the histories of great landholding families, and maps showing the exact limits of their domains—especially if such things serve to confirm titles as insured by this company. I must show you our library of such matters some time. You would find it interesting."

"You will show them all to me? All?" I asked.

Quackenbush laughed.

"A few such—a very few—are in solitary confinement. In such we presume conclusively that you have no interest.

"A day or so later," he continued, "I sent for the abstract of title to one of the parcels of land included in the Dessauer farm. It began, as I had been informed, with an assumption of title as good in Dederich Dessauer upon the death of his father intestate.

"But from then on I found that there had been an amazing mass of litigation concerning the title to the farm. For nearly fifty years the Dessauer family had fought furiously among themselves, one faction striving to prove the contents of a destroyed or secreted will of Dederich's father, and the other as stubbornly opposing. The Dessauers must have been all wealthy people, and their many attorneys either very hopeful or very greedy, for the legal battle was something prodigious. They had litigated on every possible theory, and through every court of the State. Several times they had gone to the supreme court of the United States on constitutional points. I believe that they finally beggared themselves all around.

"The last citation in the abstract was of a supreme court decision, dated in 1871, finally affirming a decision of our court of appeals, and refusing to disturb the possession of those claiming through Dederich Dessauer. He, incidentally, had hanged himself in the year 1831. He was dead many years, but his turbulent soul was marching on.

"Here is an excerpt from that final decision:

"Counsel for the plaintiffs take the position that we are dealing here with a destroyed or secreted will. That is not the sense of this court. The vital fact that there ever had been a will has not been established. With that necessary link in the chain of evidence supplied the decision of this court might be different.

"I saw then the nature of the wasting disease of which the Dessauer family had perished, so that their name was strange in the city. And I understood how deeply rooted was the belief in the existence of a will in the mind of the last surviving member.

"He visited me a number of times, at intervals of a week or less—an uncouth and melancholy figure in his greenish swallowtail and tight-fitting gray trousers. I told him that I was giving his affairs my close attention, and he left me, comforted like a child. He was here for the last time in November past, when I returned to him his material for safe-keeping.

"This spring I saw a house-wrecker's advertisement in a newspaper. The wrecker had bought the old structures on the site of the United Printers' Building—now under construction, and was offering the material for resale. Wreckers do this before tearing down so as to avoid the expense of handling and carriage.

"The address was in West Forty-fourth Street. In the list of structures was 'an old colonial residence, containing several fine fireplaces faced with antique tiles, a stairway with a carved balustrade, hand-wrought hardware, and like material interesting to collectors, builders, and others.'

"I went up to West Forty-fourth Street.

" 'The old house?' said the foreman, after I had failed to see from the street anything more fascinating than dirty rookeries dating

from the Eighties. 'It's in back there. Inside the block. Go in this way.'

"I clambered through a tenement hallway littered with rubbish and emerged into the open court inside the rectangle of houses. I saw before me a low, two-story frame house with gable walls of square, yellow bricks. It covered a plot of fifty feet by seventy. It had not been occupied for many years. Its doors now stood open and its diamond-paned windows had been kicked out by the wrecker's men. A steep roof of moldering shingles extended from the eaves of the porch in front to the extreme rear, with dormer windows on the second floor.

"I entered the house, noting, as I went, the typical, wide, hand-hewn planks of which the floor was made. A wide central hall ran from front to rear. Through narrow doorways on either side I saw low-ceilinged rooms—living rooms of some sort. I continued into the largest of these, admiring the carved and paneled door, the corner cupboards, the ornamented window casings—honest and laborious products of the ancient joiner's art. Around the great fireplace was a row of blue-and-white Antwerp tiles, each showing a scene from the New Testament, with the chapter and verse to which it referred indicated in large characters.

"In this room then, I thought, the elder Dederich Dessauer died on that summer night of 1822. From it, after an eager pressure of a hand to his father's breast, fled his unworthy son. These cupboards were flung open that night and their contents indecently snatched forth. Up and down that stair out there ran the son, like a hound on a puzzling scent. His hot hand clutched that mahogany rail, while the light from the guttering candle struck out his wet and agonized face. Where was the will? Where?

"I glanced about me whimsically. If his dark spirit were watching here, visiting again the old familiar places, it must have taken a sardonic joy in me. Where was the will, indeed?

"He knew. One does not sit down to a leisurely drink when the footsteps of those who will rob him of a great prize are sounding from the outer porch. He knew!

"With a shrug of the shoulders I walked from the house.

" 'I am a collector,' I said to the foreman, who was directing the construction of a rubbish chute. 'I am in the market for all and any kind of papers, books, or documents having to do with early New York. If you find any such in the house let me know at that address, will you? Tell your men to watch for them. There are often papers which have gotten behind the backs of clothes presses, or found their way into joints of rafters, and the like.'

" 'We often find them,' he nodded, putting my card carefully away. 'I'll let you know!'

"I did not hear from him. The matter was not weighing on my mind, and it was probably a month later before it recurred to me. I chanced to be in the neighborhood, and I walked over to see what progress was being made.

"The wrecker was gone. The buildings had been completely swept away. The several tenements had disappeared, and the sun was shining into their roofless cellars, left broom clean. Workmen were throwing down their foundation walls with crowbars, a steam shovel was snorting and plunging at a bank of earth at one side of the excavation, and rockmen were operating rattling drills on the other side where the flinty blue gneiss which is the bed rock of Manhattan stood in a sheer wall.

"There was no trace left of the ancient homestead of the Dessauers.

" 'The wrecker cleaned up about a week ago,' said the Irish foreman of the excavating gang. 'We've been in here for the last three days. No, he didn't leave no message with me.'

"Of course, I had expected it, but still I felt a twinge of regret for poor old Dessauer. I walked idly along the sidewalk to watch for a time the rockmen battling the stubborn stone, joining the fringe of idlers which attends all building operations in the city. Nothing fascinates a loafer so delightfully as to gape at men engaged in heavy manual labor.

"One of the drills ceased rattling. Two workmen lifted it, withdrawing the lengthy iron bar beneath it from the boring in the living rock. A stick of dynamite was inserted in the hole and connected with an electric battery on the street. A rope blanket was drawn over the spot, and heavy beams piled upon it together with fragments of stones from the foundations. The rockmen climbed from the excavation and walked up the street. Men with red flags shouted to warn pedestrians to hold back.

"The foreman nodded to the laborer oper-

ating the battery. The laborer pushed the plunger home, and with a smothered reverberation the rope blanket lifted powerfully while the giant force beneath it made one fierce thrust for liberty.

"The rockmen clambered back to their appointed task. They withdrew the timbers, chain mattress, and rope blanket. A derrick swung an arm over to pluck up the broken rock, and deposit it in the trucks waiting at the foot of the runway. I watched with interest, as the boiler on the street coughed and puffed and the stiff leg of the derrick strained at the mass of rock. It pulled a huge chunk free.

"The rockmen let themselves down into the gap and pried with bars at the inner angle cut by the dynamite in the gneiss. The foreman joined them. I saw them lift pieces of the material and throw it onto the waiting truck. One of the rockmen stumbled toward the truck carrying a shapeless mass in his hands. He stopped, looked down at it, and called the foreman. The latter took hold of the mass and bore it to the street. He threw it down on the sidewalk and gave it a meditative kick. I walked over to him.

" 'Now, what in thunder is that?' he said. 'It was there in a fault of the rock.'

"On the pavement lay a shell of metal, twisted and wrenched by the blast. It had been a small brass chest of less than a cubic foot capacity.

"I handed him my card. 'I am interested in the property,' I said. 'The Land Title Company is insuring the Urban Mortgage Company which is making the building loan here. Let's take this thing over to your shanty and pry it open.'

" 'Take it over, you,' he said. 'I'm busy.'

"I bore the box to the excavator's shanty at the gutter edge. I found a cold chisel among a pile of tools in a corner and ripped up the lid of the chest. It had been heavy metal, but was oxidized until its strength was eaten away. The verdigris was an inch thick."

Quackenbush paused to rekindle his corncob. He is a tantalizing devil.

"Well? Well?" I cried. "Shoot! What was in your old tin can that you found in the bowels of the flinty rock? The will of the elder Dederich Dessauer?"

He nodded at me over the leaping flame.

"You're a good guesser," he said. "In the box was the will of the elder Dederich Dessauer, and some odds and ends of papers of no special value. There was also five hundred dollars in American double eagles.

"The will was perfectly legible. I took one glance at it, called the foreman, showed him the broken box and the gold, and then hurried as fast as outraged traffic cops would let me down here to the company. I had hold of one of the greatest sensations ever uncovered in New York!

"I rushed in upon the company's solicitor, and showed him my find. In ten minutes the board of counsel was in session. Piled on the table before them were the abstracts, small boxes, street reports, searches, all the company's data bearing on the title to the Dessauer farm.

" 'Can you find this Hermann Dessauer?' asked the solicitor.

" 'I believe so,' I said.

" 'Find him,' ordered the solicitor. 'Find him within the hour. Secure from him all those original documents bearing on the family history of the Dessauers, all original maps, plans, sketches, and memoranda affecting the title to this tract.'

" 'I imagine he prizes them highly,' I demurred.

" 'Get them,' said the solicitor. 'Naturally you will be careful not to let him know that this will has been discovered, or that any question has arisen affecting the title. You are aware that the affair is of the first magnitude.'

"I bowed, and walked from the room. The cab was waiting in Cedar Street.

" 'How fast can you get up to Harlem?' I asked the chauffeur, springing in. 'Twenty-five minutes! What is this—a local? It's worth ten dollars extra to you to make it in twenty. Come—let it roll!'

"Within the allotted twenty I had arrived at Mrs. Schlumbohm's holding of bright and sunny rooms, with and without bath.

"I ran up the stoop. Mrs. Schlumbohm opened the door, and looked out at me hostilely, keeping me standing in the vestibule. She had no use for strangers unless they came to hire rooms, and a man about to take a room in Mrs. Schlumbohm's house did not bound up the steps in uncontrollable excitement. Rather he came slowly and draggingly, with a glance behind him at the dirty street, and a doubting survey of the broken-shuttered façade of her domicile.

" 'Well, young man?' she said.

" 'You have a Mr. Dessauer here,' I said, with a winning smile.

" 'I have not,' she said, closing the door.

" 'But I am a friend of his,' I explained. 'He lives here, doesn't he?'

" 'Take your foot out of that door, young man,' she ordered. Her under-hung jaw snapped shut, accentuating the hollows in her cheeks. 'Your friend does not live here. Them that pays, stays—them that don't, *gits!*'

" 'I am from the trustees for the Dessauer estate,' I said. 'I have a remittance for Mr. Dessauer, and if you'd only be good enough to tell me where I can find him I am sure it will be to your advantage. In fact, if you can assist me, I will gladly discharge now any debt Mr. Dessauer may have incurred with you. Won't you please tell me?'

" 'It is six dollars,' she said.

" 'You will find your friend sitting over there in Mount Morris Park,' she directed. 'He went there last night, and he was there this morning!'

"She shut the door. I was sorry for old Dessauer, but I didn't blame poor Mrs. Schlumbohm. Kindness is for those who can afford it, and there was no room for such a luxury in her budget. I turned my back on her grimy little house and hurried over to Mount Morris Park.

"Dessauer was seated on a bench near a leaf-choked fountain. He was not slouched down on the bench. He was sitting upright, with his head raised. Beside him was a large valise of limp leather, with gaping seams.

" 'I love to come here on sunny afternoons,' he said, after I had greeted him. 'It is pleasant here—so sylvan. It is a perfectly delightful day, don't you think so, Mr. Quackenbush?'

" 'Beautiful,' I said. 'You are fortunate to be able to spare the time from business.'

" 'I resigned my position yesterday,' he said, 'following a regrettable exchange of personalities with my late employer. I may say that under other circumstances I would not have been unwilling to continue at the work, but an impasse arose and I had no freedom of choice. I have had several very flattering offers for my services, but I have not yet decided as to the point at which I shall again reënter the business world. I have been turning the matter over in my mind, Mr. Quackenbush.'

" 'Very wise of you.' I gave him a cigar. 'As you have no present business engagements now to detain you, you will shortly leave the city in this hot weather for a while, I dare say. I'm lucky to have caught you, I imagine. I came to consult you about your claim to the Dessauer farm. Have you ever considered adjusting that affair, and letting your claim drop? I might arrange to get you a reasonable settlement if you would entertain it.'

"He looked at me sharply.

" 'Of recent years,' he said, 'there has been no talk of settlement. No doubt you will be quite amazed to hear me say that, but such is the condition. I do not say but that if you could arrange a settlement commensurate with the interests involved I might be willing or, at least, not entirely averse to giving the same my earnest consideration.'

"I looked him squarely in the eye.

" 'Mr. Dessauer,' I said, 'I tell you frankly that I have scruples concerning pushing your claim to its logical conclusion. When I think of the thousands of innocent men and women who would suffer or even be totally ruined by the restoration to you of the Dessauer farm—I hesitate. I hesitate! Think of the poor widows and orphans whose little savings will be swept away, the tender-hearted mortgagees who would lose their security, the merciful landlords who would be robbed of their little holdings; why, even the subway runs through your property, and you must have read in the newspapers that it is owned by a corporation of the purest philanthropy, run at a loss for the sake of public service and paying its dividends over to a vast army of the said widows and orphans. I hesitate, Mr. Dessauer.'

" 'I had not considered the matter from that angle, Mr. Quackenbush,' he said. 'You make a very strong point. You believe that the claim can be settled?'

" 'I am quite sure of it,' I said confidently. 'Tell me that you will take an annuity of two hundred dollars per month for the rest of your natural life, and I will strive to arrange it on that basis.'

" 'Very well,' he said, after a moment's dazed contemplation of the prospect of comparative ease and comfort. 'You may proceed on that basis, Mr. Quackenbush.'

" 'As a necessary term of the settlement,' I said, 'you must turn over and relinquish claim on all the material concerning the title and family history which is in your

possession. You will be at liberty to examine the same whenever you wish. Come with me and we will go immediately downtown and throw the agreement into legal form.'

"And on that basis was made a final settlement of the Dessauer claim."

Quackenbush leaned back in his chair, and knocked the heel from his grocery meerschaum. "It's after six," he announced. "Let's go around and get your car and run uptown."

"When you've told your story," I said firmly. "How did that box get into the rock? And what was the will of the elder Dederich Dessauer?"

"I went later to examine the place where the brass chest was found," continued Quackenbush. "It proved to be an old well. It had been filled up, and then sealed with two feet of concrete. It is evident that Dederich Dessauer did not discover the will that night a hundred years ago. But he did find the old man's strong box, and being contented that the will was inside—and being probably unable to force it open at the time—he hurried with it to the well, and hurled it down. That is my theory and it seems to be sound. Thereafter he filled the well and sealed it.

"As to the will itself you will find an exact copy of it in that chapter of the Session Laws of 1921 lying there before you."

I seized the book, and flipped the leaves over until I reached chapter 729. This was the will of Dederich Dessauer:

In the name of God, Amen: I, Dederich Dessauer, being of sound mind and in good health, but mindful of the uncertainty of this life, do make this as my Last Will and Testament:

My Soul I commend to my Maker, and my Body I give to the Earth. in the firm Belief and Christian Trust that my Maker will raise it up again on the Last Day.

To my ungrateful Son, Dederich Dessauer, I give the sum of One Dollar.

To you, my Relatives and Kinsmen, who listen to the reading of this Will, and who rejoice in your Hearts at the disinheriting of my only Son, and in the Profit to accrue to you thereby, I give my admonition to put by such unChristian Thoughts, to compose your unnatural Quarrels, and to live together hereafter in Peace and Good Will. To aid you in so far as in me lies, I am removing from among you the Source of your Contentions.

All the rest, residue and remainder of my Estate whether Real or Personal of which I die seized, including the Dessauer Farm, I give, devise and bequeath to the People of the State of New York to expend the Same as may to them in their surpassing Wisdom seem meet, fitting and proper.

Signed, DEDERICH DESSAUER.

Dated, October 18, 1817.

"I imagine he would have taken the farm with him when he died if there was any way to do it," said Quackenbush. "Failing that, he disposed of it as though he had died intestate and without a friend or relative in the world. In that event it would have escheated to the State. A lovely character, I must say.

"We then proceeded to get through the legislature that Act, Chapter 729 of the Laws of 1921, in which the State renounces the devise under the will, and vests title in the present owners as though there had been no will at all. We used much the same line of appeal as I employed with Hermann Dessauer.

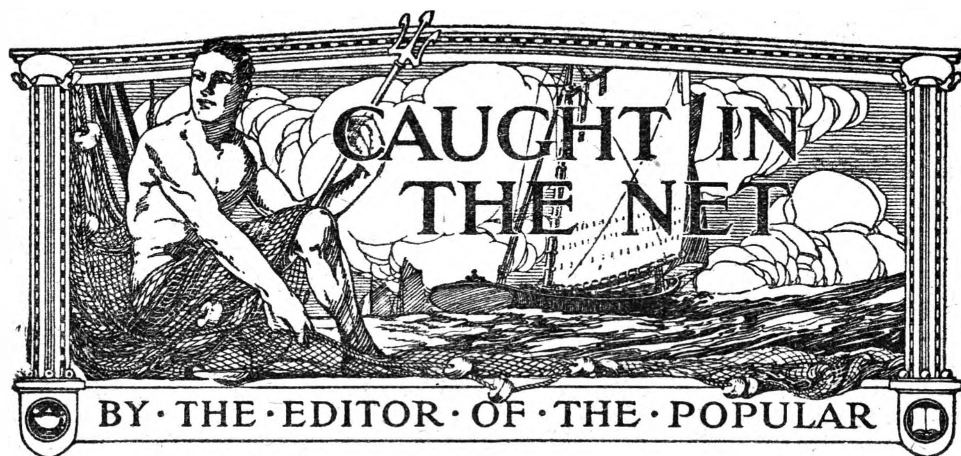
"We needed those papers in the event, which was unlikely but, nevertheless, to be provided against, that the State should endeavor to secure title to the Dessauer farm. It was a good bargain, although they were of no money value to old Dessauer.

"He comes in here occasionally. You can find him on any pleasant afternoon in front of the old Brevoort on lower Fifth Avenue, or walking in Washington Square."

Another fine story by Mr. McMorrow in the next number.

RATS!

A "STARVE AND SLAY" campaign against rats is being urged by the government's biological survey bureau, which asserts that there are more than a hundred million common brown rats in the United States. As each one of these rats destroys two dollars' worth of foodstuffs a year, it takes the full-time labor of 200,000 men to support them. And in addition to being a costly nuisance, they are dangerous disease carriers.



IN WASHINGTON

IN Washington, on November 11th, three years after the day when the glad news that victory had been achieved set bells ringing and whistles blowing, there will meet, at the invitation of President Harding, representatives of the five great nations that were allied in the war against Germany—the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan. The purpose of their meeting will be the discussion of some plan for the limitation of armaments, and of the grave problems of the Pacific and the Far East. They will try to find a way to relieve the peoples of the world of the terrible burden of supporting great armies and navies. They will try to take another step forward in the work of freeing the world of the menace that threatens our civilization—modern war, only less ruinous to the victor than to the vanquished.

The task of these men will be difficult indeed. The mere technical obstacles that must be surmounted in formulating an agreement, fair and satisfactory to all nations, to limit naval and military strength would tax the powers of the greatest of statesmen. But an even harder task than that faces the conference. The surest way to stop war is to remove the causes of war, and many thoughtful men are convinced that the germs of the "next war" already are developing in the Far East. The delicate task of adjusting conflicting national ambitions in the Pacific will call for the best of heart and brain that those who attend the conference can give, and all of us who hope for future peace must echo the wish, stressed in Secretary of State Hughes' invitation to the nations to attend the conference, that a "spirit of friendship and a cordial appreciation of the importance of the elimination of sources of controversy will govern the final decision." The invitation to China, a nation intimately concerned in the settlement of Far Eastern questions but not at present a power in international politics, to participate in the discussion of Pacific problems, is an indication of our government's desire for a fair and honorable settlement of these problems.

The conference must be successful. The psychological effect of a failure to reach some agreement that will at least lessen the danger of another world war would be most grave. But all will not be smooth sailing. The period of the conference will be a trying one for the president and for the men he has appointed to represent our government. During this anxious time they are entitled to the moral support of every good American. Give them yours!

CHICAGO AS A SEAPORT

FROM Bremen, say, to Duluth or Chicago, by ocean liner, would appear at first blush to be a sort of bizarre dream to entertain. Nevertheless, it seems safe to predict that it will before long be a trip for the ocean traveler to think as little of as he now does of steamship travel from Bremen to New York. The plan making this possible, already reported on by a joint Canadian-American commission, is one providing for the construction of a St. Lawrence River-Lakes-to-Sea waterway approximately

miles in length, extending from Montreal to a point on the St. Lawrence opposite Prescott, Ontario, and Ogdensburg, New York, whence the way down the St. Lawrence to Lake Ontario is clear. Taken with the completion of the new Welland Canal, connecting Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, on which Canada is now expending $100,000,000, the provision for passage from the Atlantic into all the Great Lakes for ocean-going steamers would thus be complete—canal communication between Lake Erie and Lake Huron and between the latter and Lake Superior being, of course, long accomplished facts, with Lake Huron and Lake Michigan having natural waterway connection.

While there are longer constructed waterways in this country, the new St. Lawrence waterway would be longer than any European canal, with the exception of the Hohenzollern Canal from Berlin to Stettin, 136 miles long. International experts have estimated the cost of it at $250,000,000, with which may be compared the cost of the Suez Canal, 103 miles in length—$127,000,000, and the cost of building and improving New York's Erie Barge Canal, 340 miles in length—$139,000,000. The Panama Canal, some fifty miles in length, is figured to have cost us about $375,000,000. In this connection, of course the varying prices of materials at various periods should be considered.

Naturally, the financing of the St. Lawrence project is the most serious obstacle to be overcome. The possibility of either the Canadian or American government appropriating funds for it has never been seriously considered by either country. A favored plan is the formation of some sort of international corporation to issue bonds guaranteed either jointly or in part by the two governments, the floating of which, under a fair rate of interest, it is felt would offer few difficulties even under present money conditions. The expense of construction, of course, would be divided between the two countries, in respect to which matter informal talks have taken place already between the Canadian minister of finance, and Sir Robert Borden, former prime minister, and Senator Lenroot, father of the new waterways project in Congress.

As for the construction of this great waterway, four methods have been suggested: 1. By means of locks and navigation dams in the St. Lawrence; 2. By means of locks and side canals; 3. By combination of these two methods; 4. By means of locks and power dams. The system favored in the international report, as submitted to the international commissions at Ottawa and Washington, is for a combination of all four plans —which, incidentally, would allow of invaluable utilization of the waterfall power of the river, which, through the building of ten locks, as suggested, would yield a total of more than twice the horse power of Niagara Falls. Concerning this developed water power—at least 1,500,000 horse power—Senator Lenroot has said: "There is no doubt that the power will pay for the entire project in fifty years, and when that happens it will become a great national asset." The department of commerce estimates the present water power in the United States at some 50,000,000 horse power. Of this theoretical power, developed water power in 1918 was estimated at 6,000,000 horse power. Any considerable addition to this, such as our share of developed St. Lawrence water power would amount to, is no small reason, in itself, for our joining in the speedy putting through of this immensely significant new water "trail" for great ships.

THE RED CROSS AND WAR'S AFTERMATH

HERE, outside of financial burdens, we are apt to think of the war as a closed incident. It is sadly far from that. In other words, the warning of the surgeon general of the army's office that the number of those disabled by the war would not reach its "peak" before 1925 is being only too well fulfilled. At the end of the fiscal year in June there were 29,609 discharged army and navy men in government and private hospitals, and this number will undoubtedly continue to increase for several years to come. One thousand additional men a month are reporting for hospital care to which they are entitled at the hands of the government. It is especially in connection with this work that the Red Cross is now doing some of its most vital work.

The United States Bureau of War Risk Insurance—now incorporated in the veterans' bureau—asked the Red Cross to assist in locating every war-disabled man, so that, in the words of President Harding, just aid might be tendered to those "defenders of the Republic who need the supporting arm of the government." Many of these men, buoyed up by

the excitement of home-coming, at first felt fairly well and thought only a brief period of rest was needed to fit them to resume their normal lives. Time and renewed physical effort, however, only too often reopened old wounds or caused hidden disabilities to appear. Such cases are found daily by Red Cross workers, who tell the men how to file application for hospital aid and who prepare the applicants' proper descriptive papers for presentation to the veterans' bureau. Whatever difficulties hinder their going to the hospital the Red Cross removes, attending to immediate needs and obligations for them and providing care for their families until their government compensation comes through.

When desired, the Red Cross handles claims for such compensation or for allowances or insurance for the men. It put through over 60,000 such claims in the past year, to say nothing of supplying comforts and recreation to soften the monotony of hospital life for the patients. Of the organization's 3,402 active chapters 2,397 are maintaining service for these men. In 62 public-service hospitals alone the Red Cross has 448 workers to provide friendly offices for veterans. Especially does it extend care to those who gave their eyesight for their country.

A further great branch of Red Cross post-war work is the searching out of disabled soldiers for vocational training under the auspices of the veterans' bureau. For such of these men as considered the problem of the support of their families an obstacle to the accepting of such training, the Red Cross had from November, 1919, to July, 1921, a loan fund of $375,000, three fourths of which was turned over to the government to lend to men actually under instruction. The balance was expended in advances to men whose cases were still under investigation. Such loans as the latter the Red Cross is still making, though Congress has now established a fund of $500,000 for the benefit of men actually in course of training. In all, 32,495 loans were made, in the last fiscal year, by the Red Cross, 85 per cent of which have been repaid. Eighty thousand men are now under instruction, to which number an average of 5,000 a month is being added.

Altogether, last year, the organization spent about $10,000,000 in serving 1,500,000 ex-service men in various ways. Let alone the vast volume and cost of its traditional customary activities, post-war work, in the last fiscal year, cost the Red Cross $4,000,000 more than the aggregate receipts from last year's membership dues. In the new membership drive about to begin, running from November 11th to November 24th, is not this one fact in itself enough to make you fall in line and give to the extent of your ability? Help the "Greatest Mother" to prove that republics are not always ungrateful.

POPULAR TOPICS

A NEW record for the value of mineral products of the United States was established last year, according to the division of mineral resources of the department of the interior. Such products sold during 1920 are valued at $6,707,000,000. For many commodities increased production over 1919 was shown. The output of bituminous coal was 556,563,000 tons, as compared with 458,063,000 tons in 1919; of anthracite coal, about 78,000,000 tons, as compared with 77,000,000 tons in 1919; and of coke, 51,888,000 tons, as compared with 44,821,000 tons in 1919. Gold production decreased to less than $50,000,000, from 1919's production of $59,000,000. The quantity of silver produced was about the same as 1919's production of 55,285,196 troy ounces, but there was a decrease of 10 per cent in value from the figure for 1919, $61,966,412. Copper showed a slight falling off from the production of 1,310,541,529 pounds, valued at $243,761,000 in 1919. The output of lead and of iron ore last year was greater than for the preceding year.

THERE is a telephone for every eight people in the United States, there being approximately 13,500,000 "hello" instruments in use. In the United Kingdom there are about 988,000—one for every forty-seven people.

EVERY State of the union now has a compulsory school attendance law. In five States children must attend school until they are eighteen years old; in three until they are seventeen; in thirty-two until they are sixteen; in one until they are fifteen; in six and the District of Columbia until they are fourteen; and in one until they are twelve. In most States there are exemptions granted for farm work, and in cases where it is necessary for the child to work to help support himself or others.

ACCORDING to the department of records of Tuskegee Institute, there were 36 lynchings in the United States in the first half of this year—24 more than in the first half of 1920, and seven more than in the first half of 1919. Of those lynched this year, 34 were negroes—two of them negro women. There were ten lynchings in Mississippi; nine in Georgia; four each in Arkansas and Florida; two each in North Carolina and Louisiana; and one each in Alabama, Kentucky, Missouri, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

WHEN the war ended there were 4,439,664 government war-risk insurance policies in force. By May 21st of this year, 3,836,835 of them had been allowed to lapse.

MEXICO CITY now has a population of approximately a million, an increase of more than 100 per cent in the last ten years. This big gain is attributed to the unsettled conditions that have obtained in outlying parts of the republic.

FARM tools valued at $537,000,000 were produced in the United States in 1920, according to figures compiled by the Federal bureau of public roads. Among the items are 203,000 gas tractors valued at $193,000,000; more than a million plows valued at $40,000,000; 225,000 farm wagons valued at $25,000,000; and 412,000 haying machines valued at $25,000,000.

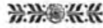
THE Society for Electrical Development takes exception to a statement we published some time ago to the effect that electricity causes more fires than any other single agency. The society does not imply that the figures of the board of fire underwriters, which we quoted, are inaccurate, but does claim that a careful investigation of 138,553 fires that occurred in 1919 in 345 cities and towns having electrical service shows that only 2.57 per cent were of electrical origin. Unfortunately we lack space to go into this interesting technical discussion deeply, but the apparent discrepancy between the figures of the underwriters and the society admittedly is the result of different methods of investigation.

INTERNATIONAL trade in 1920 totaled approximately $100,000,000,000, as compared with $63,000,000,000 in 1918, and with $40,000,000,000 in 1913. Our share of this world trade last year was about 14 per cent, as compared with 11 per cent in 1913, and eight per cent in 1870. Last year imports were 55 per cent of the total world trade, as compared with a pre-war average of 52 per cent.

THE value of the catch of the fisheries of Canada in 1920 is estimated at $49,321,217, a decrease of $7,187,262 from the previous year. Over 57,000 men were engaged in the fishing industry, and capital amounting to $29,663,359 was invested in it. Canning and curing establishments employed over 18,000 people, and $20,512,265 was invested in that branch of the industry.

THE new bridge across the Delaware River, which, when it is completed in 1926, will connect the cities of Philadelphia and Camden, will have the longest single span between towers of any bridge in the world—1750 feet. The bridge will be 125 feet broad, and will be suspended by two cables thirty inches in diameter, each composed of 16,000

carbon steel wires, from towers 380 feet high. The cost is estimated at almost $29,000,000. The longest span now in existence is 1710 feet, a bridge across the Firth of Forth, in Scotland. The Williamsburg Bridge, connecting New York and Brooklyn, has a span of 1600 feet, and the old Brooklyn Bridge a span of 1595 feet.



ON June 30th last there were 8,178 national banks, with an authorized capital of $1,276,720,565, in operation in the United States. During the fiscal year ended on that date, 212 new national banks were chartered, with aggregate capital of $18,925,000. Twenty-eight national banks failed and were placed in charge of receivers, and of these, three have been restored to solvency.

THE LIONS AND THE LAMBS OF MODERN CHEMICALS

TELL the average housewife that in her harmless, necessary table salt exists also the deadly chlorine gas so wickedly used in the war; or tell her that in her other useful friend, common laundry soap, exists both the poison gases of warfare and also the elements which purify drinking water—and she will likely exclaim "impossible." It is too paradoxical for common belief that roaring lions and little household lambs should lie down together in the tiny chemical molecules.

But the American development of chemicals, under war-time pressure, has brought knowledge of these marvels—heretofore the intensely secret possessions of the Germans—in a way that opens up very curious and vitally interesting possibilities of chemical manufacture in America.

Few people in America, until our war experience, realized what strange bedfellows there were in chemicals, and how astonishingly interrelated they are.

Drugs, dyes, and dynamite are so closely allied with pleasing odors and restful colors that the analytical chemist has come to regard them all as mere "coal-tar products," regardless of whether they make their appearance in the diaphanous azure of a fabric, a sweet-smelling perfume, or an explosion in a stone quarry. Therefore, as part of post-war "reconstruction," an investigation of our chemical warfare service confronts us forcibly with the fact that our war activities and our peace-time industries are very closely associated and that the same chemical process which produces a soothing drug may, with a slight modification, produce a deadly gas or an explosive. This fact naturally is significant from a national defense point of view, now that we have seen how industry, as well as men, must be mobilized in war time.

Take sulphur, for instance. When sulphur is treated with chlorine a liquid is produced which is the basic ingredient of "mustard gas"—that wild beast of warfare—and also for the vulcanization of rubber. If, in turn, we burn the sulphur in air and form sulphur dioxide we produce a substance which is widely used in the manufacture of paper, and further chemical reactions furnish us with products which are valuable as bleaches, medicines, and fertilizers.

Coke, illuminating gas, and tar are obtained by the distillation of ordinary coal and from the nitration of tar the famous "TNT" is produced on the one hand and the mild preservative, benzoate of soda, on the other. In the munition factories in England, during the war, the girls used to chew some of the most deadly of this family of chemicals as chewing gum!

Oxygen and nitrogen are obtained by reducing air to a liquid and by varied chemical processes the former becomes the basis for a deadly war gas or a fluid for the welding of metals.

When calcium carbide is combined with nitrogen, a valuable fertilizer is produced from which, in turn, ammonia is obtained, the latter being the basis for nitroglycerin and other high explosives, as well as many aniline dyes.

Common table salt does not seem capable of much exploitation, but chemical analysis

discloses the fact that its two main ingredients—caustic soda and chlorine—form the basis both of deadly war gas and harmless laundry soap and, more paradoxical still, the chlorine which on the one hand is used largely in the manufacture of poison gas, if used in smaller quantities will purify drinking water.

By far the most interesting ramification of coal-tar products, however, is the dye industry, which has assumed tremendous proportions in this country since the war and which bids fair to rank as one of our leading industries in a comparatively short time.

So much publicity has been given the dye industry since the beginning of the war that everybody associates coal-tar products with dyestuffs at the present time, but, generally speaking, the most the average person knows about dyes is what he hears over the counter when he buys his clothes, yet often this information is unreliable and merely promulgated as an excuse for selling inferior or poorly dyed fabrics. There is known to be a lingering persistent German propaganda endeavoring to put over the idea that the only fast dyes are German dyes.

The information proceeds to insinuate that our coal is not sufficiently rich in tar to make satisfactory dyestuffs. As a matter of fact, the Germans imported great quantities of coal tar from this country from which they manufactured their world-famed dyes. The insinuations proceed that the Germans have perfected the art of dyeing and copyrighted the knowledge, expecting us to believe that it is possible to copyright brains and ability.

When the fabrics we bought during the war faded and cracked, we blamed American dyestuffs and paid a silent tribute to German efficiency, thereby helping to spread the vicious propaganda that was everywhere instigated in connection with the dye industry, as well as all other phases of our industrial and political life.

Before the war, Germany was acknowledged as a supreme factor in the production of dyestuffs. To-day the world is practically independent of her. It has been found just as possible to manufacture "fast" colors in the United States, France, and England as it ever was in Germany. Fortunately, there is no monopoly of brains and the German chemist is no more able to corner the knowledge of making fast colors than a baker is able to corner the knowledge of baking bread.

Because of the great volume of use, the dye industry is the newest and lustiest of these "infant industries" evolving out of the war. In 1919 there were 214 concerns engaged in the manufacture of dyes and intermediates; 116 concerns engaged in the manufacture of intermediates; 155 in the production of finished dyes and other synthetics and 90 of these turning out only dyes, with a valuation of $67,598,855.

So healthy an infant, indeed, is the dye industry in America that the total production of finished dyes in the United States in 1919 was 38 per cent greater than the total imports of dyes in 1914. As a matter of fact, we are now large exporters of these goods. The dyes exported from this country in 1919 amounted to more than the total imports of dyes in 1914.

Nearly all synthetic or "built-up" dyes are produced from ten simple ingredients found in coal tar and technically referred to as "ceudes," such as: benzole, toluene, napthalene, anthracene, carbolic acid, xylene, methyl anthraceen, phenanthrene, cresylic acid, and carbazole.

It is possible to develop an endless variety of colors from combinations and dilutions of these various dyes. But to the layman the marvel is that, should the chemist so desire, he can alter the product in the height of the process and, instead of a color, produce a perfume, a drug, or a photographic developer.

It seems as though coal-tar dyes have something of the endless mystery and variety of radium; they are startlingly suggestive of the magician's plug hat out of which he so blandly pulls a rabbit, a silk handkerchief, and a gold watch! The magician-chemist pulls out of his vat a gas that can destroy a city, and then out of the same vat, a perfume and a laundry soap.

The energy and resourcefulness of American chemists in seizing from Germany the lead in chemical matters is as lively and "zippy" a chapter of American enterprise as the story of the automobile or the telephone, especially as it was accomplished in the face of powerful and secret opposition by friends and representatives of German interests, who have put up a game fight to hold their place.

Magic

By Henry C. Rowland

Author of "The Annex," "The Shaming of Andy McGill," Etc.

Perhaps it was just as well that De Lancray did not know the condition imposed by Uncle Jasper's will. It might have cramped his style

AS Robert de Lancray raised his hand to the push button, the front door opened suddenly and a fattish man with a face the color of his Palm Beach costume plopped out almost into Robert's arms.

The young man was a little startled to recognize a Mr. Guilford, a shipping merchant who lived at the University Club, where Robert also lived. He had been an old friend of Robert's uncle, though not, as Robert knew, a very intimate one. Mr. Guilford was known to his circle of friends and acquaintances as a prosperous, clear-headed business man of kindly disposition, a prominent member of the Second Presbyterian Church, by social condition a childless widower. It was therefore a distinct surprise to meet him emerging hastily and with pallid face and sweating brow from the consulting parlors of Mrs. Snaith Smithers, the celebrated clairvoyant.

Robert had often chatted with Mr. Guilford at the club, though the disparity of age and interests had not led to any especial intimacy. But Mr. Guilford looked, at this moment, so very badly that Robert decided to postpone his own consultation and take him back to his quarters. So, with a brief word of greeting and a remark that Mr. Guilford did not seem to hear in regard to his looking ill, Robert helped him down the steps of the high, old-fashioned stoop, signaled a passing taxi and directed that they be driven to the club.

The August afternoon was excessively hot and sultry, quite trying enough for one of Mr. Guilford's full habit to account for his unfortunate condition, if he had been out of doors. He was a man of about sixty-five, plethoric and obese, and it looked now to Robert as though his heart was acting badly.

For a few moments they drove in silence. Then Robert said reassuringly: "Don't let any of the stuff you may have been told disturb you, sir. It's all a lot of bunk, anyhow."

Mr. Guilford shot him a nervous glance. "Then why were you going there, Robert?" he asked.

"On a forlorn hope, sir," Robert answered. "I'd rather like to tell you about it, if you care to listen. You knew my Uncle Jasper pretty well and might give me some advice. Then, if you feel so disposed you can return the confidence. But my own case is pretty desperate."

"Wait till we get to the club," said Mr. Guilford. "I've had a shock and must pull myself together."

Nothing much was said thereafter until they were in the apartment of the older man, when Mr. Guilford sank into a morris chair by the window and looked at Robert with a pallid smile. "Now let me hear what took you to that place. Then I'll tell you my story. It's nothing to be ashamed of."

"No more is mine," Robert answered. "Very likely you know that my Uncle Jasper made a most extraordinary will."

Mr. Guilford nodded. "I heard something about it. Left you five thousand a year for life and the bulk of his big estate not to be administered until three years from the date of his death, depending upon some condition imposed by him on you." He reflected for a moment. "I believe you were to be kept in ignorance of this condition, were you not?"

Robert nodded. "Yes, sir. Everybody was kept in ignorance. The condition or conditions imposed are described in a sealed envelope in the hands of the executors, and to be opened in the presence of at least two of them three years from the date of his death. If in the meantime I shall have complied with it or them, I am to inherit about two and three quarter millions. If not, I

shall have to scrape along on my five thousand per annum. The deuce of it is the three years will be up in a fortnight, and I haven't the least notion that I've complied with what's been ordained, because I haven't been able to do anything the least bit out of the commonplace. So I decided to consult this sibyl on the off chance that the spooks might give me a tip."

Mr. Guilford smiled. "Rather late in the day, isn't it?"

" 'Fraid so," Robert admitted. "I'd never have thought of it, myself. Met an old friend yesterday who goes in for that sort of thing. He suggested it."

Mr. Guilford, a kindly man, appeared to be trying to focus his mind upon the peculiar problem faced by his young friend. But it was evident to Robert that he found this difficult, in the face of some absorbing and distressing situation of his own. So Robert thrust his own affair for the moment aside.

"She must have told you something pretty grisly," said he, "but I wouldn't take it too seriously, if I were you."

Mr. Guilford sat suddenly upright. "But I can't help but take it seriously," he moaned. "I've had proof positive. I went to this woman to ask if in her professional opinion such things were possible, and she told me that the records of spiritist phenomena contained a great many well-demonstrated instances of such diabolic practice. She appears to be an honest woman, for she told me frankly that she doubted her ability to counteract the evil influence at work, her "controls" being gentle entities who could do no more than put her en rapport with those on another plane."

Robert looked at Mr. Guilford with a sudden misgiving which he tried to mask. "Are you the victim of some form of bedevilment?" he asked.

"Not personally," said Mr. Guilford, "and I know what you suspect. But I am not a paranoiac. I do not care to go into the details of how I got dragged into this horrible business, so I shall confine myself to the mere statement of present facts. There is a certain person, a sinister and low-grade spiritist, who has proved to me his diabolic ability to break down gradually the health and morale of almost anybody whom he chooses for a victim. Given a portrait of the object of his attack, with a bit of hair or nail parings or even some object worn in contact with the body, he has demonstrated his power to induce immediate illness, more or less severe, but which I firmly believe might prove rapidly fatal." He mopped his dripping forehead.

Robert no longer believed Mr. Guilford to be unbalanced. "I have read and heard of that sort of diabolism," said he, "especially as practiced in the Middle Ages. Many primitive races appear to understand it. The Kanakas call it praying to death.' "

"This wretch I mention is Eurasian," said Mr. Guilford. "Half Portuguese, half Chinese. There is a young woman, a pupil who works with him. I fell in with them by accident, and my challenging of their powers led to all this trouble. I even went so far as to furnish material, God forgive me. At first I refused flatly to believe that it could be more than coincidence. But when four people in distant localities had suffered from their devilish sorcery, I caved in. And now, they are in a way to profit by my conviction in their powers to their considerable pecuniary benefit."

Robert nodded. "I saw that coming, sir. They begin to threaten you?"

"Not me," said Mr. Guilford. "They threaten a sweet and lovely girl whom I love as dearly as I would my own daughter, if I'd ever had one. She is my niece, a Miss Cynthia Guilford."

Robert echoed the name with some astonishment. Not only was he very well acquainted with Cynthia Guilford, but he had been at the time of his Uncle Jasper's death all but engaged to marry her. The understanding had been sharply broken off at Robert's having—with that debatable conviction as to what is required of a man of honor before engaging himself to marry—made full confession of past peccadillos.

He now remembered that Cynthia was Mr. Guilford's niece, this relationship having made no great impression on him at the time. Robert had first met her at one of his Uncle Jasper's celebrated dinners, at his house in Gramercy Park, when she had been invited with her uncle. Cynthia was an orphan and lived with Mr. Guilford's maiden sister at Stamford, Connecticut. Robert had been told by Uncle Jasper that they were both dependents of Mr. Guilford.

"I don't know that you are aware of the fact, sir," said Robert, "but your niece, Cynthia, and I were at one time almost engaged."

Mr. Guilford nodded. "Now that you

speak of it, I do remember, Robert," said he. "But I'd forgotten all about it. What was the trouble?"

"She broke it off because I told her what a rotter I'd been at certain times," Robert frankly confessed. "It seemed to me to be the thing to do."

Mr. Guilford looked a little dubious. "Well, maybe you were right," said he, "but it seems too bad. My Sister Abbie brought up Cynthia under a Puritanical system. I must say, I rather approved it. Look at the girls to-day, with their bare knees and cocktails and licentious dances. But never mind about that, now. The question is, how am I to protect her from these fiends?"

"Can't you get 'em jugged for threats or intimidation or blackmail or something?" Robert asked.

Mr. Guilford shook his head. "I have no written proof nor witnesses," said he. "Their communications have all been verbal and in private. A warrant for their arrest would not prevent their diabolic activities, and if I were to try to convict them of having killed or injured Cynthia by witchcraft, the court would pronounce me either crazy or a credulous old fool."

"Just what do they threaten, and how much do they want?" Robert asked.

"They have told me," said Mr. Guilford heavily, "that unless I hand them twenty thousand dollars in cash before ten o'clock to-morrow morning, my niece will not be alive at the full of the October moon."

"Bunk," said Robert, but he did not say it with any great conviction. Metaphysics had always interested him, and some of the curious phenomena reported in recent months had gone far to convince him that there were more things in heaven and earth than were contained in present-day philosophy.

"But it isn't bunk, Robert," protested Mr. Guilford. "That's what I said, at first, and challenged their powers without the faintest apprehension of any harm happening to the objects of their attentions. I'm ashamed to admit that they were all individuals to whom I thought a bit of bedeviling might not be a lick amiss. I was living in a housekeeping apartment on Riverside Drive at the time. The victims were successively my janitor, a surly scoundrel, my chauffeur, who was a bandit, third, a man who had tried to swindle me on a deal and partly managed it, and the fourth a certain person in a city about a thousand miles from here. This last seemed a perfectly safe bet to me, because it was a scoundrel who needed killing off on a number of separate counts, and I figured that the devil wasn't through with him yet."

"What happened, sir?" Robert asked.

Mr. Guilford broke into fresh perspiration. "Well, Robert, the janitor was taken with some sort of a fit while stoking the furnace that same night. His wife found him unconscious, and he nearly died. My chauffeur took some friends of his joy riding, of a Saturday afternoon when I had gone out to Stamford to see my sister and niece, and the car collided with another in the Bronx, and he was two weeks in hospital with cuts and bruises, nobody else being much hurt. My swindling real-estate agent dined with a chance acquaintance, feminine, at a little Italian restaurant in Greenwich Village and nearly died of what the doctor pronounced ptomaine poisoning. As for the Chicago victim, he was taken with the flu, when these diabolists had the cheek to come to me and tell me that they would finish him for me, if I'd make it worth their while. Needless to say I declined the offer, and he recovered."

"How soon after they started to work did these things happen?" Robert asked.

"Within twenty-four hours," said Mr. Guilford. "It leaves us our choice between three theories: coincidence, crafty physical interference, and diabolism. The first would be most extraordinary, to say the least, the second possible, but difficult of accomplishment. They might have managed to poison the janitor and agent, run into my car with another, and the case of the man in Chicago might really have been coincidence. But the astonishing things I have seen them do at their séances, with what I have read about black magic, had already got my goat; and now what I have been told by as reputable a spiritist as I can discover puts the finishing touches on my fears."

Robert was impressed, despite himself, but he attempted to encourage Mr. Guilford. "All the same, I think there's something phony about it," said he. "I'd call it fifty-fifty coincidence and physical trickery. But not witchcraft. We've all heard more or less of the black magic worked to kill or injure people by sticking their portraits or images of them full of pins and things, and getting their blood or hair or finger nails or something and doing disagreeable things with it.

All bunk. Sheer rot. If that sort of stuff was possible it would be worked on a general scale."

Mr. Guilford glanced at his watch. He was sitting by an open window, through which no air stirred. The midsummer afternoon was hotter than ever, and sultrier, but a thunderstorm banking up beyond the Palisades promised relief before nightfall. Robert, glancing anxiously at the older man, thought that he looked very badly.

"I was warned," said Mr. Guilford, in a voice which sounded a little thick to Robert, "that unless I telephoned at noon my acceptance to the conditions imposed, something decidedly unpleasant would happen me between the hours of four and six. It is now four-thirty."

"If anything does," Robert said sharply, "it will be from sheer funk on your part."

"No, you do me injustice, Robert," mumbled Mr. Guilford. "I am a mild-mannered, easy-going man, but I have never been a coward. I am not afraid for myself, but I am very much afraid for Cynthia."

"You're not going to fall for this devilish holdup, are you?" Robert demanded.

"No," said Mr. Guilford. "It would only mean further extortion a little later. I am not as rich a man as most people think, and I have recently suffered some heavy losses." These last few words were almost inarticulate. Robert rose and offered his arm.

"Come into the bathroom, sir," said he, "and let me splash some cold water on your head."

Mr. Guilford started to rise, with a sort of jerk. He gasped, pitched forward and, as Robert caught him, sank to the floor, unconscious but alive, and breathing stertorously. Robert knelt to make a brief examination, then hurried to the telephone.

II.

The physician summoned pronounced the case to be one of heat apoplexy, but it struck Robert that he was not entirely satisfied with this diagnosis: seemed, in fact, a little puzzled. He ordered the patient's immediate removal to the Presbyterian Hospital, and when he had been borne away Robert went to his own rooms in a very thoughtful frame of mind.

Mr. Guilford's singular narrative, culminating in his stroke, while not convincing proof of diabolism to Robert's mind, yet disturbed him greatly. Since his break with Cynthia, Robert had told himself a good many times that her cutting words on hearing his confession had killed to the roots the bourgeoning of what might have been a very big love. But many of us lie to ourselves as much as we do to other people, and now that some vague, sinister danger appeared to threaten her, Robert began to think he had, perhaps, been guilty of such falsehood.

His mind presently returned to his own peculiar fortunes or misfortunes. In two weeks' time he was to learn with certainty whether he was to be a millionaire by the terms of his uncle's will, or obliged to work to piece out a yearly income on which he found himself barely able to live in any manner befitting his generally accepted station in life. From a commercial point of view, Robert's occupation was scarcely worth considering, and, in the opinion of most people, or even lesser value from all other viewpoints. It was the searching and writing up of genealogies, which sounds like perfectly good employment for an elderly spinster but may yet prove interesting if one chooses to make it so, like stamp or coin collecting or tracing back the descent of the human monkey to his arboreal ancestors.

Robert had got rather to enjoy it, and he was enabled to make pleasant jaunts about the country taking notes and to do his writing when and where he chose. Being a Manhattanite, born and bred, he was quite content with New York City as a summer resort for a bachelor.

There was another good reason for Robert's harmless occupation. He thought it possible that the sealed condition of Uncle Jasper's will might decree that the end of the three years find him industriously engaged. It had also occurred to Robert that, perhaps, as he was what the French call *"sauveur de' race,"* the only living male of that branch of the Huguenot de Lancray family, his uncle might have required that he be the father of a boy. But old Jasper de Lancray had been a just and reasonable man if at moments eccentric, and Robert felt that he would have been allowed more time in such a case, for there might easily have been a girl or two before the son and heir, and Robert had not even been engaged at the time of his uncle's death.

Robert threw out of the count the supposition that his uncle required his ability to show a large bank balance as the result of

individual effort. Uncle Jasper knew his literary tastes, and approved them, though rather indifferently. Neither did it seem probable that he insisted on a brilliant war record, with promotion and decorations, because he had prophesied a speedy termination to the war on America's mobilization. It was much easier for Robert to decide what Uncle Jasper would not have been apt to require than what he actually wanted or decreed for his nephew. That he merely wished him to marry did not strike the potential heir as likely, because Uncle Jasper had been quite aware of the attachment between himself and Cynthia Guilford and had seemed neither to approve or disapprove it, so that one might assume him to have taken it for granted that the affair would run its normal course.

Taken full and by, the enigma had remained as such, and no amount of pondering had thrown the slightest ray of light upon it. Uncle Jasper had lived and died a bachelor, a grave, dignified, and courteous gentleman devoted to his banking business and his books, his recreations being golf and fishing. He was a rather silent man, reticent about his personal affairs, past or present. His relations with Robert had been kindly though never intimate. He had assisted Robert's father, a visionary promoter of land-development schemes, who had not lived to see the realization of any of his big ideas, and after his death he had sent Robert through school and college with an adequate allowance. Otherwise he had occupied himself but little about his nephew. And then he had died, leaving Robert in this singular state of uncomfortable uncertainty.

Robert ate an early supper and at half past seven called up the Presbyterian Hospital and was informed that Mr. Guilford had recovered consciousness with no apparent paralysis, though his intellect was still clouded. There was, in the opinion of the visiting physician, no cause for immediate alarm, the prognosis being favorable. There were no symptoms of cerebral hemorrhage, and the case was diagnosed as one of brain congestion due to heat and doubtless some mental strain or distress.

Robert decided therefore to carry out his plan of going directly to the old Guilford homestead in Stamford and explaining to the sister of the stricken man just what had happened and how it had come about. Miss Guilford might then use her own discretion as to how much Cynthia should be told.

It was about ten when he arrived at the comfortable old house near the foot of Strawberry Hill. Considering the nature of his errand, Robert thought himself justified in requesting hospitality for the night at least, if not inconvenient, and he was quite prepared to protract his sojourn should the singular story rouse superstitious or other fears to make a male protector desired by the ladies.

His train had run through a thunder shower and the evening air was clean and cool with the fragrance of flowers and foliage refreshed. As Robert walked up the path from the gate a little dog on the darkened porch scuffled to its feet and began to bark in a peculiar, dismal way, as if more from displeasure at being disturbed than to give the alarm it felt to be its duty. The bark ended in a curious, mournful howl. Robert mounted the steps when the small brute, apparently an Aberdeen, lurched off a few feet and sank down silently, but whimpering a little.

There was a faint light in the side windows, as though from a lamp in the hall. Robert pressed the bell, then waiting for some few moments was about to press it again when a low-pitched voice called from a window overhead: "Who is there?"

The familiar tones set Robert's heart to beating faster. "It's Robert," he said. "Robert de Lancray."

There was a moment's pause, of astonishment no doubt. Robert hastened to explain. "Cynthia, your uncle, Mr. Guilford, had a stroke to-day while I was talking to him in his room at the club. He's in no immediate danger, but there are some peculiar features about the case. I thought I'd better run out and explain them to your aunt."

"That's very kind of you, Robert," Cynthia answered, in a cool, limpid voice. "The aunts went to prayer meeting and ought to be back at almost any moment."

"All right," Robert answered, "then I'll sit on the steps and wait. Don't bother to come down. But I say, Cynthia, I think there's something the matter with your little dog—or does he always bark that way?"

"What way?" Cynthia asked. "I didn't notice particularly. I was almost asleep."

"With a sort of yowl at the end of it. And he flopped down all of a heap and seems to be gurgling in his throat. I don't want to

frighten you, but these are dog days, you know."

"I'll come down," said Cynthia, and disappeared. The door opened presently and Cynthia stood on the threshold against the dark interior, for she had switched off the light. It was characteristic of her, Robert reflected, to have thought of the possible impression on a passing neighbor of herself in peignoir and hair loosened for the pillow, talking to a young man on the porch. She gave Robert a cool little hand which, with the sweet, elusive aroma fanned from her, set Robert's heart pacing a couple of notches higher.

"You say that uncle is in no immediate danger?" she asked.

"They don't seem to think so. A sort of heat vertigo, I imagine. But his mind was wandering when I telephoned to the Presbyterian Hospital from the station, just before the train left. Be careful how you touch the dog. That barking wasn't normal, and this is the bad season for 'em. Let me fetch him in——"

"No, you're a stranger. He might snap, anyhow, sick or well. He was all right at supper time. Here, Scotty!"

But Scotty seemed disinclined to budge. He gave a whimper and rolled upon his back. Cynthia took a step toward him, but Robert barred her way. "Let me," he said, and drew on his gloves, light suède but better than bare hands. Stepping to where Scotty lay, he advanced his hands slowly, took the little dog under the shoulders, and carried him limp and unresisting to the door.

"Come in," said Cynthia. They entered, when she closed the door and switched on the light again, then led the way to a back parlor of the old colonial house. Robert laid Scotty on the floor. Scotty looked up wistfully, wagged his tail, and licked his chops, then whined.

"He *is* sick," said Cynthia. "Do you think it's rabies, Robert?"

"Hope not, but that yowling bark is suspicious at this season. Don't take any chances, not even with a chain. They sometimes slip their collars and run amuck in the community. Then it's awful. Let's see if he can drink without gagging."

Cynthia went to the pantry and drew some water in a basin. Scotty drank eagerly and without strangling, rested for a moment, then showed symptoms of distress, writhing his small, thick body.

"Looks more like colic," Robert said. "Can't take any chances, though."

Cynthia stood contemplating Scotty. Robert transferred his scrutiny to the girl, who in her absorption did not notice it. She was more alluring than ever, Robert thought, and with the added maturity of between twenty and twenty-three. Eyebrows and lashes seemed to have lengthened and darkened, but this effect might have resulted from the pallor of her clear, fair skin. Her loosened hair, profuse and fine, shimmered iridescently in the glow of the tall reading lamp, though in daylight it was a curious dusky shade of gold streaked with darker locks, like a black-maned lion's, and her eyes were to match, dark amber with an outer rim of brown.

Nobody but a futurist would have called her face beautiful, though giving the palm without hesitation to her bodily molding. But her face was too boyish for beauty, with its wide, full-lipped mouth and combative chin and very small-boy nose, turned up and even with some few freckles across its concave bridge. Violent laughter made of it almost the face of a pretty monkey, if one can imagine such a prodigy.

But it had proven a dangerous face to men, especially with so austere a mind behind it. By some curious freak of nature or destiny or whatever agent shapes up girls, Cynthia, a Puritan, blue-stocking religionist, at times, to the fervor of fanaticism, desiring to inspire only the purest of uplift in her masculine associates, unwittingly inspired precisely the reverse. They did not even have to be associates. Passing strangers on the street, whether meeting or overhauling, lost their heads about her, as they might have done with a siren or Lorelei.

Presently feeling the radio of Robert's englamoured eyes, she turned sharply and with a swift flush burning quickly through her clear, fair skin.

"Well, don't stand there staring at me," she snapped, "but try to suggest something. What had we better do?" She drew the silk peignoir closer about her full, soft throat and seemed to draw herself into her draperies like a turtle into its carapace. "Rabies give some warning symptoms, don't they? Wait —I've thought of something." And she hurried from the room.

Robert himself no longer believed the trouble to be rabies. Scotty's symptoms seemed rather to suggest arsenical or other

poisoning, though not strychnine, which would have produced tetanic spasms similar to those of rabies. And Robert considered the water-drinking test a diagnostic one for hydrophobia. Then Cynthia returned, shaking her head—which tumbled the loosed hair upon her shoulders in demoralizing fashion.

"I thought he might have been at my box of candy, but he hasn't," said she. "Should I try to get hold of a vet?"

"Not to-night," said Robert. "Lock him up in a safe place. We might give him salt water and mustard or ipecac or something, though."

But at this point Scotty gave symptoms of having already taken an emetic. Robert picked him up and carried him to the porch, barely in time. Cynthia, forgetting Mrs. Grundy in her concern for Scotty, snapped on the light.

"That's arsenical poisoning," observed Robert, when the paroxysm had ceased. "Somebody's tried to poison him, and——" A sudden suspicion flashed across his mind.

"There are always mean or timid people who scatter poison in the dog days," Cynthia said. "But that rules out rabies. What's the antidote for arsenic?"

"Iron rust and wall plaster—when you can't get anything better," said a sharp, prim voice at the foot to the steps. The two aunts, Miss Guilford and her widowed sister, Mrs. Childers, who was visiting at the house had arrived unperceived from their religious exercises. "Mercy, Cynthia, whatever will the neighbors think? Go in at once! Is that *you,* Robert? What's brought you here at this hour?"

"I'll tell you all about it in a minute, Miss Guilford—or Cynthia can tell you while I run down to the drug store to get an arsenic antidote."

He hastened off, presently to return with ferric hydrate, et cetera, of which he undertook the administration, assisted ably by Miss Guilford. Cynthia then took the patient in charge when Robert was led first to wash his hands, then into the library.

"Is my brother Philo really out of danger, Robert?" asked Miss Guilford, while Mrs. Childers leaned forward to catch Robert's slightest word, she being slightly deaf.

"So I was told at the moment of my leaving. But there's more to his stroke than a few days' illness, or I shouldn't have come. Cynthia had better not hear, unless you prefer to tell her."

Miss Guilford nodded. She was a prim and rather pretty little old maid, typical of New England. "Fancy her receiving you like that," said she, "and all this hubbub over Scotty. I hope none of our neighbors saw her. She complained of a splitting headache to-night——"

"She did?" Robert interrupted.

"Very unusual for Cynthia, but the day was excessively hot, and she'd been playing tennis all the afternoon. A wonder she didn't have a heat stroke, like poor dear Philo."

Cynthia entering at this moment was sent to bed, albeit rebelliously. "It's about your uncle's affairs. Something he had just confided in me when he was seized," Robert explained, at which Cynthia nodded and said good night.

Robert was a good narrator as well as a good listener. Speaking slowly and carefully, he put the two ladies in possession of all the astonishing facts, beginning with his meeting Mr. Guilford as he came out of the clairvoyant's, but omitting to say that he was on the point of entering, himself. But before he had finished, it became evident to Robert that these stout-hearted Puritan ladies were not to be dismayed by any threats of witchcraft, however seriously these had been taken by their Pilgrim ancestors.

"Well," said Miss Guilford, when Robert had finished, "if our dear brother had been the stanch Christian believer we always thought him he would never have let himself be frightened by these wicked wretches. It's too absurd for any serious consideration!"

"I'm not so sure, my dear," said Mrs. Childers; "the devil is always walking up and down—and only the other day I read in a magazine——"

"Stuff and nonsense, Ruth!" snapped Miss Guilford. "You believe everything you read in these silly, shopgirl trash bags!"

"The point is this, ladies," Robert interrupted quietly. "We three may refuse to believe in black magic, but your brother was coerced into a dread of its workings, and these scoundrels know of it. Unfortunately there is no way of finding out who they are until he regains his mental faculties, and the doctor could not say how soon that might be expected. He may have a brain fever. But his persecutors being ignorant of this will probably take it for granted that he has determined to defy their powers."

"Then let them!" snapped Miss Guilford. "That's precisely what I do!"

"So do I, so far as their black magic is concerned," said Robert, "and so would Cynthia. But in order to terrify Mr. Guilford into meeting their demands, they may try in some stealthy way to do Cynthia physical injury. And that possibility is what has brought me here."

This chilling suggestion produced its immediate effect. Miss Guilford's prim mouth set tightly, but her thin face paled. Mrs. Childers raised her hands to her temples and cast a frightened look back over her shoulder. Neither spoke, but their eyes were fastened fearsomely on Robert, who said gently:

"I don't want to be an alarmist, but I really think that under the circumstances Cynthia ought to be pretty closely guarded for a while, and I have the honor to offer myself as her protector, if you wish."

Mrs. Childers reached out and, laying her prettily shaped hand on the back of Robert's, gave it a little squeeze. She was much younger than her sister, fifty, perhaps, and still physically attractive by reason of her thick, white hair, big, dark eyes, and a soft complexion. "Do you think," she whispered with a swift, frightened glance at the window, "that they poisoned Scotty?"

This possibility had already occurred to Robert, though he had decided not to suggest it. But it was a new idea to Miss Guilford, who grew even a shade paler and caught her breath quickly. Serene in her Christian faith, militant in it to no contemptible degree, the good lady was ready and willing to defy the dark myrmidons of Antichrist for her niece or for herself. But mortal malefactors were a different matter. Even then she might have faced a burglar bravely enough, but not such foul, slinking miscreants as might be here. So she looked more kindly at Robert and said:

"That's *very* good of you, Robert. What you have just suggested puts a different face on the matter. I'm sure we should all feel safer if you could stay here with us for a while. But wouldn't it interfere with your affairs?"

Robert shook his head. "It doesn't make the slightest difference about that, Miss Guilford. I'm writing up a genealogy of the Saltonstall family, and I've got all the data. And I'll promise not to make love to Cynthia nor ask her to marry me again. You see, when I wanted her to marry me three years ago I counted on inheriting a good bit from my Uncle Jasper, some day. But now that he's left me only five thousand a year, any idea of matrimony is out of the question. I haven't the faculty of money-making, so I've about reconciled myself to a future of respectable poverty." He did not think it worth while to mention the forlorn hope of possibly inheriting a fortune within the next fortnight.

Miss Guilford stared at him fixedly for a moment. Then her prim face softened.

"There, now, Robert," said she impulsively, "I've done you a great injustice, and I might as well own up to it. I thought you had seized upon this pretext for renewing your suit with Cynthia. I was even so unjust as to suspect you of—of——" She hesitated, coloring with embarrassment and finding it difficult to go on. Robert guessed what was in her mind.

"Of figuring that your brother might die and Cynthia inherit the bulk of his fortune? No, I can honestly say I never thought of that. As a matter of fact, Mr. Guilford told me just before his stroke that he had suffered some financial reverses and would find it very difficult to meet the demands of these scoundrels even if he so desired, which he did not. I don't think he'd mind my telling you this, but of course it must not be repeated."

"I knew it already, Robert. Will you forgive me for thinking such horrid things about you?"

"Of course. It was natural enough. We never really knew each other very well. Are you going to tell Cynthia about this?"

Miss Guilford nodded.

"I think we'd better, if only to put her on her guard. And she'd have to know why you were staying here. I must go to Philo to-morrow, and I shall feel much safer to know that you are in the house. My sister will be here, of course, and your uncle and Philo were lifelong friends, as were also your uncle and Cynthia's father. Jasper de Lancray helped him out of more than one financial embarrassment, and even backed some of his wild schemes. But poor William was always so visionary, and never in any sense a business man."

"After you have seen Mr. Guilford," said Robert, who had scarcely heard these last words, "I think you had better go directly to police headquarters and tell the chief the

whole of this grisly story. I'll jot down some notes, to-night, and sign my name."

"He'd laugh at us, I'm afraid," said Miss Guilford.

"Not a bit of it. Uncle Jasper was well known, and you can tell the chief that I'm his nephew. Besides, such cases of working on superstitious fears are not uncommon. There might have been other similar complaints. As soon as your brother's mind clears sufficiently they can get it firsthand from him. They might detail a man to keep an eye on Cynthia."

"Very well, Robert. At any rate it can do no harm."

They talked a few minutes longer when Mrs. Childers, who looked pale and frightened, suggested that they retire, saying that she was afraid to go to bed alone.

"Can you give me a room next to Cynthia's?" Robert made bold to ask. "I don't quite like this poisoning of Scotty."

"Nor I, Robert," Miss Guilford answered. "He has slept on the porch this summer. Sister and I are in the front of the house and Cynthia in the rear. I can put you directly across the hall from her, but the room is small and I'm afraid you'll find it hot."

Robert declared this to be the very least of his troubles. The little room assigned to him was quaint in its furnishings, needless to say of aseptic cleanliness and gay with bright chintz and some college trophies and tokens, for Cynthia had graduated that year from Wellesley and visiting classmates were often lodged in this cheerful little nest, which Robert felt that he almost profaned.

Leaving the door open, he got into bed reflecting on the strangeness of a situation which at the end of three years had brought him back to safeguard the slumbers of a girl with whom he had been so ardently in love and who had sent him from her with such cold and bitter scorn. Robert wondered if, perhaps, she might have grown more lenient for the thoughtless indiscretions of hot-headed, impetuous youth. Her greeting had been on the whole more gentle than he could have hoped. But he reflected sadly that it made but very little difference, now. Anyway, he determined that while a member of the household he would not allow himself to lose his heart again, nor what seemed even more important, his head. And with such good resolutions he fell asleep.

At some small, uncertain hour he suddenly awoke with an enervating sense of sinister danger close at hand. For a moment or two utter stillness reigned. Then, it seemed to Robert's hypersensitive ears that there came from across the hall a low sound of heavy breathing, scarcely that of a person under anesthesia, but suggesting it. It was stertorous, and reminded him of the way Mr. Guilford had breathed just after his stroke.

He wondered if Cynthia could be ill, or suffering a nightmare. And then, as he listened, he heard suddenly from her room what sounded like a scuffle and a sort of muffled bleating, like a lamb. Robert sprang up from his bed and, as he did so, the bleating welled into a scream which was instantly stifled, and there was a thud upon the floor.

III.

Cynthia's door was locked, and like all in the ancient house it was solidly made. Getting no response to his knocking, Robert stepped back, then threw the whole of his weight against a panel, striking it with his shoulder, and in the hope of either forcing the bolt or smashing an aperture through which he might reach and unfasten it. But door and bolt resisted his repeated efforts so firmly that Robert was about to take one of a pair of dumb-bells which he had noticed in his room and attack the panel with this when he happened to remember having seen a communicating door between the large modern bathroom more recently installed next to Cynthia's bedroom. He entered this, switched on the light, and, finding the door locked, thrust his weight against it when, like most present-day fixtures, the fastening gave way.

By the light from the bathroom Robert saw the girl sitting upright on the floor, holding her head in her hands.

"Cynthia—what's happened?" cried Robert in a low voice.

For a moment she seemed oblivious to his presence. Robert leaned over her and repeated his question. Cynthia let fall her hands and stared up at him dazedly. Her nightgown was torn away from one shoulder. She peered questioningly at Robert's face with no evidence of alarm, but blindly, although the light streaming in was quite enough for immediate recognition. Then slowly and with apparent effort she seemed to get possessed of her mental faculties.

though not in full, for she said in a curious, thick voice: "Is that you, Robert?"

"Yes—I heard you scream——"

"You—heard me scream—Robert——" Her mind was clearing rapidly. "What do you mean by coming into my room? What's happened to me?"

"Let me help you——" Robert raised her and laid her on a divan, throwing a sheet over her. She flung one forearm across her forehead.

"I'll call Miss Guilford," Robert said gently. He was surprised that the commotion had not already roused the two ladies, especially as they must have gone to bed with their minds full of some stealthy menace. As a matter of fact, they had lain awake listening to every nocturnal noise until about an hour before the unusual one had been made, at which time they were plunged in the sleep of nervous exhaustion. The possibility of this occurred then to Robert, who quickly decided that since the danger had passed for the present there seemed no necessity of disturbing the few hours of rest left Miss Guilford before her departure for New York, where she had a hard day ahead of her.

Robert unbolted the hall door and, stepping into his room, took from his night table an electric torch he always carried when traveling. Then, quietly reëntering Cynthia's room, he made a quick and searching examination of it. The room was a corner one with three windows, all screened. One of them was directly over the roof of a small back porch, but the hard shower of the afternoon had so swelled the tongue and groove on which the screen slid that Robert had considerable difficulty in raising it.

He flashed his torch on the sloping, tinned roof of the porch, but could see no marks upon it. The other screens, on the lee side of the house during the shower, slid easily; but on turning his light downward Robert could not discover any tracks in the pansy bed beneath. Neither was there the slightest trace of any footprint on the floor, which was of yellow pine, stained and varnished with some pretty, old-fashioned circular mats upon it.

Robert had nearly finished his swift inspection when a tremulous voice from the divan asked: "Will you please tell me how you got into my room, and what in the world you think you are doing?"

Cynthia had raised herself on one elbow, and, holding the hem of the sheet to her throat with her free hand, was staring at the intruder on her maiden privacy with puzzled anger. It was evident to Robert that she was quite herself again, though her tongue seemed still a little thick—much as Mr. Guilford's had been immediately before his stroke.

"How much of this do you remember, Cynthia?" Robert asked in a lowered voice.

"How much of what?" she demanded. "I had a horrid nightmare and must have fallen out of bed. I remember your helping me up, just now. But how did you get into the room?"

"I woke up and heard what sounded like a struggle going on in here. You were making a low, bleating noise, like a new-born lamb. Then you screamed, but seemed to choke. I rapped at the door and you didn't answer, so I went to the bathroom door and forced the lock. You were sitting on the floor."

"Well," said Cynthia, "I don't suppose I ought to blame you. I had a most horrible nightmare. But it's all right now. You had better go back to your room. Don't call my aunt. She'd be frightfully upset about this."

"All right," Robert agreed. "I'm upset about it myself. I was positive that you were attacked by a burglar or something. Glad to know it's nothing worse than a nightmare, although they're bad enough. Good night."

He went out, and heard Cynthia rise and bolt the hall door again. Robert felt convinced that it was really no more than a nightmare, the result of overexercise at tennis in the blistering heat of the afternoon before. Cynthia might herself have torn her nightgown in her struggle with some horrid dream assailant. The peculiar thickness of her speech could be accounted for by the dryness of mouth and throat produced by terror, or perhaps she had taken an overdose of headache medicine. He had noticed some powders on her night table. This also would explain the sluggish return to full waking consciousness. Robert made a mental note to question her on the point.

Before he fell asleep again he reflected that such a coincidence as Cynthia's violent nightmare would have left no lingering doubt in the mind of Mr. Guilford, had he been there, but that his beloved niece was, indeed, the victim of black magic, and that she had been actually assailed by some demon ma-

terialized for the purpose. Robert felt pretty sure that in such a case the unfortunate gentleman would have paid the blackmail, and it seemed perhaps not such a bad thing that his intended visit to the house had been made impossible.

After all, it was strange that a strong, athletic girl like Cynthia should have had a nightmare so vivid and terrific as to cause this violent physical reaction. It also struck Robert as odd that the first discovery of his presence had even in her vague condition of mind aroused no agitation or anger. Knowing Cynthia's sense of propriety as unfortunately well as Robert did, he would have expected a burst of outraged modesty, especially in consideration of her disheveled state. On the contrary her tone of voice had been calm, almost to the point of expressing a sense of relief. It was all most puzzling.

The sun and the birds awakened Robert at about six, when he made his toilet quietly, dressed, and went out. He desired to inspect the premises before any of the family were up. His first act was to go to the stable to see how Scotty fared, but it was locked, as he had feared, now garaging a little car which Cynthia drove. Robert examined the flower beds under Cynthia's windows, but could not see that the earth had been disturbed. He found nothing at all to indicate that Cynthia had been molested by a living person.

Miss Guilford called to him from the kitchen door. "Why up so early, Robert?"

"To see you off," he answered, and went inside. The bright little lady was getting her own breakfast and Robert told her the precise details of the early morning episode.

"Dear me," sighed Miss Guilford, "now if we were not good Christians we might really begin to believe that there was something in bedevilment after all. I must say it *is* odd, though, as I never knew Cynthia to have a nightmare since she was a little girl. At least, nothing so awful as this. But it must have been the heat and the news of her dear uncle's illness, and the excitement over Scotty—and—and——"

"Now, hold on, Miss Guilford," Robert interrupted, smiling, "that's quite enough. Don't drag *me* in as a causative factor of anything like that." Then, seeing from her sudden blush that his guess had gone home: "If you'll give me the key to the stable, I'll go out and see how Scotty feels this morning—and I might drive you to the station."

"That *would* be nice, Robert." Miss Guilford took the key from a nail by the door. "You did quite right in breaking into Cynthia's room, poor child. But wasn't she furious with you?"

"Why, no," said Robert. "But after a dream like that one's apt to be relieved to see 'most anybody."

"Did she tell you what it was about?"

"No. As soon as she got wide awake she told me to beat it. I'll go add the incident to my notes I jotted down for you, just to make the story up to date. Some day we might report it to the S. P. R."

Robert took the key and went to the stable where he was shocked and saddened to find poor Scotty cold and still. The little dog appeared to have been dead for some hours, as he was in a state of rigor mortis. When Robert reported the tragedy to Miss Guilford, her tears filled her eyes.

"Poor Scotty," she said, "and poor Cynthia. They were devoted to each other. But fortunately she has only had him since she graduated about six weeks ago. He was given to her by a classmate who sailed for Europe, and he was getting on in years. I suppose he had absorbed too much of the poison before you came."

"Another item for my notes," said Robert gravely, and went into the library to append the added data. "This thing is getting pretty thick," said he, as he handed the sheets from his notebook to Miss Guilford. "Let's hope I land you safely at the station," and he went out to look over the car. Miss Guilford, watching his square shoulders through the kitchen window, sighed. It occurred to her confirmed spinsterhood that, after all, there were times when it was comforting to have a man about the place—especially one as young and sensible and generally attractive as was Robert. Miss Guilford knew the reason for her niece's breaking with him, and while she deplored it she had yet given Robert due credit as a man of truth and honor.

They breakfasted together, Robert insisting on the kitchen table. He then drove her to the station without mishap, and put her on the train, a commuters' express. Returning to the house, he found Mrs. Childers and Cynthia, who looked rather pale, just sitting down to breakfast, served by a buxom and pretty maid.

"It was very thoughtful of you to take Abbie to the station, Robert," said Mrs. Childers. "Dear Cynthia wasn't really up to it after her headache—and a horrid nightmare. And now we're both heartbroken over dear little Scotty's death. Sit down and have some more breakfast."

"Only another cup of coffee, thanks," said Robert, and joined them at table. He looked a little questioningly at Cynthia. "Has Mrs. Childers told you that Miss Guilford asked me to stop on until her return, and that I've accepted?"

"I think it's very nice of you," Cynthia answered noncommittally. "But unless Uncle Philo shows very marked improvement pretty soon you might find yourself let in for rather a dull time, I'm afraid."

"We don't think so, do we, Mrs. Childers?" asked Robert, who scarcely knew the widowed aunt, but had immediately liked her. "I've got a stack of writing to do and for relaxation I'll shove the lawn mower and play chauffeur and be the handy man about the house. I've promised your aunts not to bother you, Cynthia." And he gave her a level look. Cynthia met it with a faint flush, then lowered her eyes to the coffee she was pouring.

"I didn't know that you and Uncle Philo were so intimate," said she.

" 'Intimate' is scarcely the word," Robert answered, "but he was an old friend of my Uncle Jasper's, and we live at the same club and talked together a good deal, and he has recently done me the honor to tell me something about his affairs. In fact, we have exchanged confidences to some extent."

"Really?" Cynthia raised her straight, dark eyebrows and shot Robert a suspicious, almost unfriendly look. It brought the blood to his cheeks.

"Yes," he answered evenly, "but for some reason neither of us ever happened to mention your name until yesterday, just before his attack. *He* mentioned it."

Cynthia dropped her combative chin on her knuckles and looked fixedly across the table at Robert. "In what connection?" she asked.

"In connection with his affairs. He's worried about them. All the shipping people are up against it, just now. Competitive freight rates and foreign cargoes held up to wait for better exchange. Two years' freights of Australian wool alone lying in the warehouses. Besides, your uncle wasn't feeling well. He was worrying about your future. You see"—Robert gave a bitter little smile—"he seems to think a lot more of you than my rich uncle did of me—and he's right."

Cynthia's curiously colored eyes opened a little wider. "But I thought you were to inherit the bulk of your Uncle Jasper's estate, provided you filled some condition or other. Do you mean to say you haven't done it?"

Robert laughed. "I don't know whether I have or not," he said, "but it's a perfectly safe bet that I haven't, because since his death I really haven't done anything at all. I got to France too late to win any medals or things, and since I've been home I've devoted my attention to proving that many of our profiteers are of noble or royal descent."

Cynthia looked puzzled. "I don't quite understand. What *was* this condition you had to fill, Robert?"

"That's what I've beaten my bean in vain to try to guess," said Robert. "If I'd ever known, you can bet I'd either have filled it or died in the attempt—or gone to jail, maybe. I never knew. Nobody but Uncle Jasper ever knew. Apparently he wanted me to fill it of my own righteous, disinterested, high-minded impulse, so he wrote what it was and sealed it up, like a bid for a government contract. And in two weeks—thirteen days, to be exact—it's to be opened by the executors, and then I'll probably find out that I'm sentenced to a life of poverty."

Cynthia, to whom this was news, looked intensely interested. "So *that's* why you've been living such a poky life!" she exclaimed. "I'd expected to see you break out in a rash of yachts and motor cars and racing stables and things. I couldn't understand it—and didn't try, particularly. But I thought, of course, that you'd be just the sort to go the pace!"

"Then you had me wrong," said Robert shortly. "And I wouldn't now, if in thirteen days I should discover that I had filled Uncle Jasper's condition by going on the water wagon and sticking on it since I got back from France. There are too many suffering people that need the money. But I guess there's no bally chance of my relieving crushed humanity. Uncle Jasper knew that I liked to keep myself fit and was never a lush. It's something more spectacular—for the glory of God and the good old heretic name. He was a Quaker, you know, and

kept on his top hat in church, though he *would* uncover to a pretty lady."

"Perhaps, Robert," suggested Mrs. Childers, "he wanted you to marry."

"Well, for one thing he thought I was already headed that way and going strong, and for another, he must have known that I'd be more apt to do it with a couple of millions back of me than on five thou' a year. No, I'm convinced that Uncle Jasper's wonderful idea was to reward me for some sort of distinguished achievement on my part. You see, he never really knew me very well. Rest his ashes, anyhow. No doubt I'm better off without, even if I can't manage to see it that way."

"A good many young people marry on much less than five thousand a year, Robert," said Mrs. Childers.

"Yes, there's no law against it. But all of them regret it, or else their wives do or their in-laws or somebody. Besides, it makes a difference when you've got scarcely a friend who doesn't spend that much on his garage. No, ma'am, not for *this* genealogist. If I may now be excused, I think I'll go to the public library and try to discover whether it was three bottles of rum or five that Lord Saltonstall paid Chief Mugwump for New Haven County."

Robert's interest in the real-estate transactions of Lord Saltonstall was merely a pretext to get himself out of the way of Cynthia, who was very evidently nervous and depressed. He did, however, have a pleasant chat with a pretty librarian who hunted up for him one or two rather unconvincing works on demonology. It struck Robert that perhaps they were making a mistake to keep Cynthia in ignorance of what had happened to her uncle, and why. She was very far from being a fool or a coward, and it was very possible that her interest in the situation might have a tonic effect. What was more important, it would put her on her guard. Robert decided to tell her. But first he desired to question her a little about her dream.

The opportunity was offered on his return to the house in the middle of the forenoon. He found Cynthia reclining in a hammock couch under the high shade of one of the venerable elms reading a magazine. Robert asked if he might join her, and a little to his surprise the permission was accorded not only ungrudgingly, but with a graciousness as pleasant as it was unexpected. It struck Robert also that she was much prettier than he had ever remembered her, and less sedately costumed than was her wont, in a pretty, pale-green muslin frock, very simple but chic, and sleeves above the elbow which left her round, tapering arms with their fine, satiny skin to gather the admiration they deserved.

Far more important than these details, Robert sensed immediately a distinct if subtle change in Cynthia's bearing toward him. There was a warm luminosity in her long eyes with their changeful notes of color. The primness seemed to have departed from lips not fashioned for any such expression. It occurred to Robert that his frank acceptance of a respectable poverty and renunciation of all future matrimonial intention had been convincing, and removed Cynthia's defensiveness. Or, perhaps, with the perversity of her sex, she desired to test it out a little. Where she had previously been always alluring, despite herself, she now impressed him as seductive, which is a more active than passive quality.

"Did you find out about Lord Saltonstall?" she asked, with her one-sided smile.

"Why, no," Robert flung off his coat and turned back his cuffs, for it was getting hot again. "I got sidetracked onto metaphysics."

"Spiritism?"

"Worse than that. Bedeviling and possession and things. I also took a whack at Freud. That nightmare of yours upset me a bit."

"It has me, too." Cynthia took a sudden deep breath, and Robert, watching her closely, was surprised to see a dull flush, which brightened as it spread, creeping up slowly until the whole of her face was suffused. It was not the reaction he would have expected. A pallor seemed more indicated.

"Do you mind telling me about it——" he began, when Cynthia writhed over on her side and stared at him with a sort of horror.

"Mind telling you!" she echoed, and went on with a sort of low, protesting wail as if the words were being wrung out despite herself. "It makes me positively sick to tell myself that I could have had such an unutterably horrid dream. If you happen to know anything about Freudian theories I wish you would tell me how it is possible for a girl like me to dream horrors that

would turn her ill with disgust and humiliation if they were so much as to throw their shadow on her waking mind!" She covered her face with her hands.

"I'm sorry, Cynthia," said Robert gently. "My knowledge about such things is very slight, but I know that they do happen, and that the purest minds are sometimes when defenseless polluted by the most unthinkable impressions."

Cynthia let fall her hands and stared at him fixedly. "What made you think it might be something of that sort—so that you went and read up on possessions?"

Robert was quick to seize the opportunity. Cynthia's question and her distress about the dream appeared not only to justify his telling her what had happened but even to make this advisable, for the sake of her comfort of mind. So in his quiet, even voice he proceeded to put her in possession of all the facts, talking slowly that she might assimilate what he was saying and adjust her ideas to it as he went along.

Cynthia did not once interrupt. She listened breathlessly, and her intensely expressive face reflected the varying emotions of pity, anger, horror, doubt, a whole gamut of emotions, but never once that Robert could see, the slightest trace of fear or the nervous dread which might have been expected. Anger, perhaps, predominated. But when Robert had finished, she slid her bare arm from under the cushion and her small, firm hand stole into his, and rested there. Robert's closed upon it, resisting a powerful temptation to raise it to his lips. Some instinct told him that Cynthia would not have tried to prevent his lifting it to his lips, but this seemed scarcely the thing to do after his promise and valiant renunciation of love.

"So that's really why you came," she murmured. "To stand guard over me."

Robert nodded. "I shouldn't have told you but for this beastly dream. I thought you ought to know that you are the object of diabolic attention. Mind you, Cynthia, I flatly refuse to believe for an instant that the huskiest demon from the pit could do a pure-minded girl like you the slightest physical damage; but whether or not he might manage to catch your mind in a relaxed condition and inject it with a hell brew I'm not prepared to say. At any rate, it didn't last long. As soon as you discovered what was happening you hove him out. It took some doing, but you put it over."

Cynthia was silent for a moment. Then she said softly: "You are a dear, Robert. I'm glad you told me this. It makes me feel much better about myself. I was beginning to wonder if, perhaps, after all, there might not be something evil about me."

"There isn't, dear," said Robert promptly if a little unguardedly. "You are pure gold."

"Poor Uncle Philo," murmured Cynthia, and the tears welled into her eyes. "How he must have suffered. I wonder how he ever got mixed up with such a frightful affair."

"Well," said Robert, "good people sometimes do, whether through curiosity or maybe just by accident. He happened to be in a low physical and mental state, and it got him. The pores of his morale were wide open and he got infected, just as you might if you shook hands with a leper, and had a scratch."

Cynthia, still holding his hand, raised on her other elbow. "Robert, I wonder if you could forgive me if I told you what I thought about your coming here?"

"You are already forgiven and you needn't tell me. Your aunts thought the same thing, and 'fessed up and were forgiven. It was a perfectly natural thing to think. But I wish you would give me some sort of hint about the character of your nightmare, if only in a sketchy way. I'd like to know how it matches up with my suspicions."

Again the flaming color swept into Cynthia's face. "I simply can't. You mustn't ask me."

"Then I'll outline it," Robert persisted, "and if my rough chart is anywhere on the map, you give my hand a good, hard squeeze. You were attacked by some sort of monstrous creature in the semblance of a man. He got a strangle hold of you, and in struggling to free yourself you tore the neck of your nightgown. He might have exerted some sort of fascination or hypnotic influence at first, but you managed to resist it and free yourself. Am I right?"

His hand was squeezed so that the seal ring bit into his middle finger.

"That's enough, dear. Now, let's try to forget it. I'm positive it can't happen again. You're warned."

"You're a wonder, Robert—but that wasn't all——"

"It's enough."

"No. You—you showed up when I called. It was you that saved me."

Robert's clasp of the small hand contracted violently. "Cynthia—really?"

"Yes. That's the reason I wasn't shocked to find you by me when I woke up—until I realized that it was all a dream. I—I'm afraid I'm—I'm falling in love with you all over again—and—and you say——"

"Hold on, Cynthia"—Robert tried to make his voice firm, but without any brilliant success—"you're nervous and overwrought. Let's talk of something else. You know my position and heard what I said this morning. Besides, there's my promise to your aunts." He loosed her hand of which the fingers clung for a moment. Then Cynthia sat suddenly upright, and raised her hands to smooth back her hair. She looked at Robert with a little frown.

"I guess you're right, Robert. I'm all unstrung. Poor Uncle Philo! What you told us about his business affairs was no news to us. He didn't tell you all. He's on the verge of bankruptcy—says only a miracle can save him. I'm—I've about made up my mind to help that miracle along—by—by accepting a position that was offered me not long ago."

Robert leaned suddenly forward. "Cynthia—what do you mean? What sort of a position?"

Cynthia gave him a steady look. Her lips were tremulous. "A position as the wife of a very rich old man." She fell back among the pillows, buried her face, and her rounded shoulders shook with convulsive sobs.

IV.

Some people seek relief from nervous worry and perplexity in meditation and prayer, while others turn to strenuous physical effort. Robert, being sound of wind and limb, preferred this latter method. Wherefore, having already observed that the front and side lawns were threatening to break away from the restraining influence of the lawn mower and require the more sweeping control of a scythe, he went to the stable, clanked out the suburbanites' bete noire and launched a well-organized attack.

There is this to be said in defense of lawn mowing as an outdoor sport, that it combines no lack of wholesome exercise with a useful objective to be attained, and, like the writing of genealogies, though a little discouraging at the start, the interest grows as one proceeds, not only because the end of the task is not so far removed, but from a growing acquaintanceship with the different varieties of *mauvaises herbes,* whether these worthless weeds be vegetal or animal. In Robert's case the profitable pastime was enhanced in value because it enabled him to keep an eye on Cynthia in the hammock couch without pacing aimlessly back and forth or glooming at her side.

Robert could not see that there was very much for them to say to one another. He felt no more justified in telling her not to marry her sexagenarian millionaire suitor than he would have felt in advising her to marry himself. He wondered savagely if, perhaps, he might not have done the devils an injustice, and the nightmare be inspired by her mind's dwelling on her projected espousal with this old satyr—for thus is youth inclined to regard even estimable age when Age endeavors to preëmpt Youth's right.

Robert, at most times gently humored, now attacked the ragged grass with a sort of savage relish. Starting at the outer edge, his swathe brought him each time nearer to Cynthia, whom he felt to be watching him covertly under her long, dark lashes. He was right. Almost any girl would have liked to watch him. Lawn mowing, like guiding the plowshare, is a splendid demonstrator of physical strength, especially when the grass is tough or the field rich in stumps and stones. Both while seemingly humble are actually heroic gestures, because they demand an exhibition of bodily force with mental patience and determination. Robert with his clean-cut profile, full chest, muscular forearms, small waist and supple thighs looked far better to Cynthia as he shoved that lawn mower than did her old beau being propelled in his costly touring car. He looked better than a million dollars.

That part of the lawn where the sledding was rough had been neatly cropped when Robert, cutting the more tender grass in the shade, came upon an old ladder about fifteen feet in length. As he picked it up to place it out of his way, two facts impressed his observation. The first was that the ladder could not have lain where it was for more than a few hours, as the grass was wet beneath it, and scarcely crushed enough to prevent its straightening. The second,

more significant, was that the ladder had lain almost but not quite in the same spot for a number of days, as was indicated by the near-by long grass-bleached lines where the uprights had pressed. Most evidently, therefore, the ladder had been taken from its resting place, made use of, then returned almost where it was since the shower of the day before.

Robert slung it on his shoulder and strolled to the hammock couch. "I'm afraid you're a little slack about putting things in their places, Cynthia," said he. "How long has this ladder been parked out there by the hedge?"

Cynthia smiled. "Since cherry time, I'm afraid," said she. "I left it under the tree and forgot all about it."

"Are you quite sure that it hasn't been used recently?" Robert asked.

She looked a little surprised. "Not to my knowledge. Why?"

"Well, I've got the strongest kind of a hunch that somebody's used it," Robert said.

"But if somebody had," Cynthia objected, "it must have been around the house. And in that case they wouldn't have lugged it 'way back there to the hedge. It would have been put in the stable, where I should have garaged it long ago, if I had thought."

"Cynthia," said Robert, "this ladder was used last night!" And he told her of the proof. "Don't go over there to look for yourself," he warned. "We may be under observation."

Cynthia sat up in the hammock. Her eyes showed traces of tears, but they now sparkled with excitement. "Do you mean to say that you think somebody used it to——"

"It looks that way," Robert answered. "The first thing I did last night on breaking into your room was to examine the windows to see if anybody could have entered. On this side of the house the screens were dry and slid up easily. How many of those sleeping powders did you take?"

"Well, Robert"—Cynthia looked embarrassed—"I took two, and then as they didn't seem to have any effect I thought they might be stale or weak or something and I took two more."

"What is the usual dose?"

"One—to be repeated in an hour if required."

Robert frowned. "And so you took twice the maximum dose and probably in half the time directed, as time always seems longer when you can't sleep. No wonder you were groggy!"

"But I was so nervous and upset over the news you brought and poor Scotty, and seeing you, and the fear that uncle might die and I'd have to—to——"

"Never mind. So you thought you might as well poison yourself! Well, the thought which now suggests itself to me is how much was really nightmare and how much a real experience masked by the drug. Was your dream terribly vivid?"

"Horribly so. In fact, I thought it was real until I saw you standing there."

"Perhaps it was," said Robert. "You looked as if you had been struggling with something more tangible than a spook. You might have been seized in your semistupor or drugged sleep and the impression been left as that of a nightmare. *Somebody used this ladder last night*, then put it back as near as possible where found. That arc light on the street would have shown the spot."

"But you came in so quickly——"

"Not so very. I didn't get up until I heard you fall. Then I lost several moments trying to force the hall door before I happened to think of the one in the bathroom. After I got into the room I went first to you, and put you on the divan and looked you over for a second or two before going back to my own room to get my torch. If anybody *was* in the room he'd have had plenty of time to slip out and get away with the ladder before I started to examine the windows. Your scream would have started him on his way."

Cynthia gave a little shudder. "If that really happened, it would account for Scotty. I asked the postman if he thought that anybody had been scattering poison, and he shook his head and said that nobody ever did that any more."

Robert reflected for a moment. "After supper," said he, "while it's still light, you bring the car to the door and I'll come out with my empty valise and say good-by to Mrs. Childers, taking plenty of time about it. Then you drive me to the station. I'll slip back here after dark and apply some of my trench-raiding drill that so much time was wasted over.

"But if it really *was* anybody, he'd scarcely dare come back again to-night," Cynthia objected.

"I'm not so sure. All we've done to-day

would seem to indicate that he knew about this threat and believed it really to be some sort of deviltry. There was no alarm raised, no hollering for the police, no running outdoors or any of the row you'd naturally raise if attacked by a burglar. Then, your Aunt Abbie's leaving for New York would look as if she meant to report what had happened to your uncle and beg him to pay up or compromise or something. But he hasn't, of course, so they may try another scare. You see, the object may have been to give you no more than a beastly fright, then get away before you could be sure whether it was a man or devil."

"It succeeded in that respect, Robert. Very well, then. Do as you think best. It's going to be a dark, muggy night. But do be careful, dear——"

"Taboo on that last word," said Robert grimly. "I'll leave that ladder here where it's nice and handy and go back and finish mowing the lawn."

It was pitchy dark when Robert, with the technic of a trained man, stole along the thick, arbor-vitæ hedge and burrowed into it not far from where he had found the ladder. His army automatic was slung under his blue serge coat, and Robert asked nothing better than a good excuse for using it. He considered the particular species of big game he was out for to be about the foulest and filthiest this side of the infernal regions. Two hours passed. Robert, busy with his reflections, became oblivious to the flight of time. He was wrestling with the absorbing problem of how he might save Cynthia. He knew that he could never love any other woman as he loved her, while every accent of hers but that of speech proclaimed the past forgiven and forgotten in the ripening of a love of which their former attachment had been no more than the unopened blossom.

Something stirred in the hedge about fifty feet away. Then, a dark shape bulked against the flare of an arc light some distance off. Robert almost heard the breathing of the prowler as he passed close on his way to where the ladder had been. Missing it, he stood for a moment as if in doubt, then slunk off toward the house. This course would take him past the hammock couch beside which Robert had left the ladder.

It was darker still under the shade of the elms and evidently the human hyena or devil or whatever he was stumbled over the ladder, for Robert thought he heard a slight commotion. Trusting to the Stygian blackness he followed after, keeping a thick maple between himself and the arc light. Then, in a zone less opaque he saw the marauder pass around the corner of the house with the ladder hanging from his shoulder. This change of location puzzled Robert, who decided that some other entry to the house was being sought.

Apparently such surmise was correct. Robert, peering around the corner of a wing which projected on the other side from Cynthia's room, now watched the man as he planted the foot of the ladder and let its upper end cautiously approach the sill of a second-story window. And then, to Robert's amazement a pair of white arms were thrust out from this window to ease the ladder against the sill. The next instant he beheld the white-stockinged, white-shod extremities of a robust young person emerge from the window, followed by the rest of her, she then descending in a dainty, mincing manner. She set foot on the ground, then turned, and for the moment gave herself to the impassioned embrace of the hyena.

Robert sank limply against the waterspout at the corner of the house. So *this* was the result of his brilliant espionage! This buxom, pretty country girl whose demure and modest manner had impressed him and whose exemplary content at remaining quietly at home had been so lauded by Mrs. Childers had a little postern of her own by which to slip from the castle into the arms of her cavalier.

As few men care to spoil this particular branch of outdoor sport, when not conflicting with their own, Robert started to fade into the circumambient penumbra. It was no affair of his. He had heard a flivver stop some distance down the street before the man came through the hedge, and he thought it probable that the pair were going for a nocturnal drive, or perhaps to some dance hall. Then, all at once, he thought of Scotty.

This idea put quite a different aspect to the matter. If the maid's beau had been the one to poison the little dog, then Robert desired to know about it for more than a single reason. He halted, turned, and, passing around the corner of the house, caught sight of the pair making their way toward the end of the low terrace which bordered on

the sidewalk. They heard his rapid overtaking steps, paused and turned to face him. Robert decided on a direct indictment for the canine murder.

"So you're the man that poisoned Miss Guilford's little dog!" said he harshly. "And this is the reason why you did it!"

The resourceful gallant, a burly, thickset fellow, looked Robert over briefly, then spat. He glanced at the girl.

"Say, Fanny, this guy must ha' been a second lootenant."

The innocent and unsophisticated country maid—according to Miss Guilford—scented trouble, and stepped in front of Robert. "Oh, Mr. de Lancray," said she reproachfully, "I'd never 'a' thought you was that kind. To pretend to go away, and then come back to get a girl in wrong——"

"I did nothing of the sort," Robert interrupted impatiently. "I knew that somebody was prowling around the place last night and might try to get into the house to-night. When a dog is poisoned you think of burglars. Did you know that this man had poisoned Scotty?"

"No, I never," protested Fanny. But her denial lacked conviction. "Would you be that mean as to tell Miss Guilford and get me in a heap of trouble?"

It struck Robert that the silly, pretty girl did not need much help in this direction, but he ignored the question. But Fanny's companion, enraged at being found out and foreseeing Fanny's dismissal in any case, now lost his head. He stepped threateningly toward Robert.

"You ain't got no proof I poisoned the mutt," said he. "Now you better beat it while the beatin's good—see?"

"I'll beat *you,* damn you!" growled Robert, and got immediately to work. He had been suffering all day from the imperative need of easing his high nervous tension and resentment of things in general. Mowing the lawn, while helping a little, was far from adequate. Robert was enraged clear through. He felt that Cynthia was lost to him, a large fortune slipping through his futile fingers, and that, although this lumpish disturber of his peace had not admitted poisoning Scotty, yet it was a perfectly safe bet that he had done so for the safety of his amorous designs. It really did not need his threat to open active hostilities.

A good many of the sporting fraternity have paid large sums of money to see far less spirited encounters than that which immediately followed Robert's promise. This Romeo had taken Robert's measure and may have thought that here was a good chance to shine in the eyes of his ladylove. "Come get it, lootie," said he, and mobilized a straight left-handed punch at Robert's chin. It was sent astray by a cross counter, for Robert had boxed at college in the middleweight class, and even won a trophy or two. His own left fist went hurrying home to the angle of his adversary's jaw, and would have closed the event then and there had there been a little more weight behind it.

Nevertheless, it confused Romeo a little, and before he could collect his ideas entirely a right-handed jab intended for the solar plexus, but a little high, fetched him up on his heels. This is a faulty position for a pugilist and, although he swung at Robert's cranial vault and landed, the blow lacked emphasis. Robert's left fist then found a fitting spot to light in the socket of Romeo's left eye, and in order that his face might match, Robert deftly laid his other bunch of fingers tightly folded, in the right eye.

Romeo went over backward and sat down. Robert grabbed him by the collar, helped him chivalrously to his feet, then without waiting for an acknowledgment for this courtesy, flattened a nose that was not in any particular need of such cosmetic alteration. Romeo sat down again. Robert surveyed him with disgust.

"Oh, get up and fight, you big boob!" said he, relapsing to the argot of the ring. "Fanny, go bring him a chair."

This taunt had a tonic effect. Robert's punishment, while skillful and snappy, was more stinging than crushing, and his words even more so. Romeo jumped up and rushed him, and for a moment or two their society was more mixed than elegant. Then Robert felt instinctively that Romeo was going to clinch and try his luck with a catch-as-catch-can, or rough and tumble, and he forestalled this unlawful shifting from one sport to another by an uppercut that started down by his knee and carried him up on his tiptoes as it hurried on its way to the overhang of Romeo's prognathic chin. It cost the latter the tip of his tongue—silly fellow—and promised some work for the dentist, and as he tottered back Robert caught him before he fell—full in the mouth, and added a considerable item to the bill. This time Romeo was too exhausted to sit. He lay.

Robert surveyed him coldly, his breath whistling through his nose, for he had over-exerted himself in administering the last two sleeping potions. *"Hic jacet Romeo,"* said he, and turned to Fanny. It seemed to him that there were two of her, and he wondered for an instant if Romeo had slued his vision. Then he discovered that there was only one Fanny, and that what he had taken for her double was Cynthia. Fanny began to wail:

"Oh, Mr. de Lancray—have you killed him?"

"How do I know," Robert panted. "I'm no doctor. If I haven't, then it wasn't my fault." He looked at Cynthia. "When did *you* get to the party?"

"What have you done to him, Robert?" Cynthia asked, a little tremulously, for in the darkness it was difficult to see that Romeo was not dead, but sleeping.

"Poisoned him," Robert answered, "but more mercifully than he did your little dog. Scotty's shade may now rest in peace."

Romeo stirred and started to sit up. He seemed trying to speak, but his words were such primitive ones as "phoo" and "oof."

"Get some water and let him gargle his face, Fanny," Robert advised. "Then speed him on his way. Come on, Cynthia, let's go in." He looked at his torn knuckles. "I think I'd better cauterize my hand. Might catch hydrophobia or something. Good night, Fanny. Better pick a *real* man next time. Good night you—you *pulp!"* Which fitted the fallen swain as to his face.

Cynthia forgave Robert his quarrelsomeness. What was harder, she forgave the foolish Fanny, with a caution. She might not have done so but for Fanny's unquestionably sincere disgust with her beau for the poisoning of Scotty, and perhaps, being a bit of a sport herself, for having started something with a much less bulky man which the latter had finished so easily for him. Fanny also swore her innocence of any sin worse than dancing.

The morning brought a letter from Aunt Abbie. Mr. Guilford's general condition was good, but his mind still vague, and Aunt Abbie had decided to remain near him until this cleared. The police were in a hurry to have it clear. They had their suspicions of a certain pair of low-class, alleged mediums, and urgently desired Mr. Guilford's identification of them. They did not believe in black magic or diabolism or any other of the various bedevilments known to demonologists, nor did they believe that there had been or would be any attempt at physical molestation. Their frankly expressed opinion was that Mr. Guilford was not as steady aloft as one might wish. They were confident in being able to trace at least three of Mr. Guilford's cases of alleged deviltry to strange liquors, possibly all four, and in that of the chauffeur the insurance company had proven that he had a girl beside him when the accident occurred and that he was a very poor one-handed driver.

Nevertheless, Robert was urged to stay on until Miss Guilford's return, and weakly yielded to Mrs. Childers' pleadings.

He bought Cynthia another little dog, an Irish terrier, young and full of sincere interest in surrounding activities. Robert met Cynthia's old beau, and was forced to admit that he was not so bad, though rather goat-faced. He secretly considered him responsible for Cynthia's nightmare.

Then, forty-eight hours before the day and hour enjoined for the opening of the sealed envelope which was finally to dispose of his Uncle Jasper's big estate, Robert received a letter from the lawyers to remind him that he might shortly expect to know of his financial fate, and to suggest that he be present at the opening of the letter.

Robert said nothing about this to Cynthia. But on the fatal day at about half past one he decided to remind her of what was due to happen at three, the hour ordained for the opening of the letter, and ask her to practice a little white magic in his behalf. They had lunched at twelve-thirty, the simple meal being finished before one, and Mrs. Childers had gone out on some errand immediately afterward.

But Cynthia seemed to have disappeared. She had been silent and abstracted all the morning, and, failing now to locate her, he went into the kitchen where Fanny, restored to a happy, untroubled morale, if missing the jazz at times, was singing softly as she washed the dishes.

"I guess you'll find her up attic, Mr. de Lancray," said she, in answer to his question. "Say, Mr. de Lancray"—she giggled—"I see Joe yesterday, and his face ain't much to look at, yet."

"It never was," retorted Robert, to whom of all interests Joe's face at that moment was about the least. He hurried up to the attic.

It was a gray day, and cool, following three days of northeast weather, wind, and rain. Robert opened the door at the foot of the attic stairs, went up quietly, and there at the head of the steep flight a wild woman fell upon him and all but knocked him down it.

It was Cynthia, in a quaint, old-fashioned dress, her mother's wedding dress, Robert guessed at a glance. And Cynthia seemed to have gone suddenly mad. There was a high flush on her cheeks, which were rather Slavic in type, prominent under the eyes and flat beneath, unlike the American girl's chubby face when young, and which is so quickly lost after marriage, poor things! Her eyes seemed glowing with multicolored flame, and her breathing was sensational, and trying to the snug, straight-laced bodice.

"Oh, Robert," she cried, "I can't go through with it! I can't marry that old goat. I want to marry you—you—*you!*" She swayed toward him and Robert had to choose quickly between catching her in his arms or letting her go down the stair shaft. There was a fair chance of their both going. Holding Cynthia, he sought a wider safety zone. Cynthia clung to him, sobbing dry sobs. It was easily apparent that the combination of her mother's bridal robes and the thought of marrying the Goat or Satyr had produced a violent reaction.

"Cynthia——" Robert turned a close corner from saying "calm yourself," but had better sense. Then, at the contact of her clinging arms and a whole torrent of broken protests and endearments, he discovered that he loved her as much as ever. Before he realized what was going on he found Cynthia in danger of death from broken ribs and dislocated vertebræ and compression of the heart—if she did not first expire from asphyxiation.

"Robert," said Cynthia, "I want you to marry me at once! *At once!* And when I say at once I mean within the hour! I might not get this way again, and I intend to take advantage of it. If you don't, then I shall certainly marry that old trilobite and my life will be a horror!"

"I know," interpreted Robert. "I know—one long nightmare. Come on then. I promised your aunts, but that be hanged! A crisis in my life is rapidly approaching, so let's make a real day of it—you darling! Will you come just as you are?"

"Oh, Robert—*yes!* We mustn't lose the crest of this wave we're rushing to destruction on. I'll slip a raincoat over it. Run down and tell Fanny to telephone for a taxi, then gather me a few white roses——"

"Your aunts will never——"

"Yes, they will! They'll be glad to be spared the moral obligation to protest. They worship you, and every time I speak about my—my unintended they look ten years older. We'll manage, somehow. You can study plumbing or something. On your way and——"

Robert went down the stairs like a watchman's rattle. He dashed into the kitchen in a manner which convinced Fanny that the incision of Joe's incisors had indeed resulted in his going mad—or would have if she had stopped to think about it. She had no time. Robert seized her by her plump shoulders and propelled her to the gossip machine. "Call a taxi, quick!" he bellowed. "Then dry your hands and stand by to be a witness."

"Lordomercy, Mr. de Lancray—a witness to what?"

"To my will—I mean my wedding!" Robert's mind was rocking between the two most critical events of his life. Then he dashed out after roses and saved the time of telephoning for a taxi by yelling at an empty one that happened to be passing. He saved quite a lot of time, as from the agitated, tremulous, beseeching tone of Fanny's voice they had hitched her up to the police department. Cynthia coming down pell-mell in her raincoat and with roses in her cheeks met Robert with roses in his arms. The three of them fell into the taxi, when the astute driver gathering from the address given and general slant of things that here was an elopement that had the movies stung, exhorted to haste the god in his machine. He remembered that according to the movies the incandescent bridegroom invariably handed a bill with a yellow back to the taxi driver who served him faithfully and well.

Fortunately Robert was equipped and in the mood to do that thing. He had that morning cashed a check for a quarter's income, and he was also, in the words of the classic romancer, "neatly and becomingly dressed." All things working together for the All Good, they caught the official dispenser of The Right to Marry, and he also scenting the need of haste made quick work of the license.

"Now for the rectory of the nearest

Christian church, Presbyterian preferred," said Robert to the driver, and the heated flivver snarled with a sort of zealous exaltation. It was a quarter past two by the town clock, and Robert figured that his enrichment in love ought to beat his impoverishment in this world's goods by about fifteen minutes. They got to the rectory and held up the rector as he was leaving it to make some parochial calls. Another witness was summoned, the chauffeur, and a couple more for luck.

A few moments later, Robert listened rather dazedly to the benediction, then started his married life with no idea at all of economy, in the matter of fees; and the sight of so much money suggesting something to his mind they got into the taxi again and drove to the telephone office. Here, this being his day of days, Robert got a perfectly audible connection with his lawyer. It was five minutes past three, and he could picture the excitement in that law office over the probation and administration of the big fortune, as directed in that heavily sealed envelope.

"Hello—Mr. Judd—this is Robert de Lancray. Have you opened her up?"

"Yes, Robert—just finished reading it. My poor boy, I won't keep you in suspense. We should all have guessed it if we'd had any sense. No doubt your late uncle, my esteemed client, took it as *fait accompli*, and therefore desired merely to test your fixity of purpose and indifference to mere——"

"I say—for Heaven's sake—I'm *in* suspense. Do I lose, then?"

"I'm afraid so, Robert. You see, there's really nothing to do about it. At the time of your uncle's death he had every reason to presume that the condition imposed would be fulfilled regardless of any considerations."

"For the love o' Mike! What the blooming, blasted, blighted—what *was* the bally condition? I'm not only in suspense. I'm in pain. Now one, two, three—shoot. *What was it?*"

The answer came regretfully. "That you marry Miss Cynthia Guilford, spinster, and daughter of the only woman whom Jasper de Lancray ever loved."

"Like blazes he loved her!" Robert screamed. "If he had, he'd have married her—just as I married her daughter half an hour ago, said ceremony consummated—I mean terminated at two-forty-five. Do I win?"

"*Rob-ert*—is that true? Is that really true?"

"You bet it's true. It's getting truer every minute. Mrs. de Lancray is waiting for me outside in a flivver, so I must hurry along. See you to-morrow at ten. Good-by, ol' dear." And Robert lurched out of the booth in a manner to get him nearly arrested. But the taxi whizzed off too fast.

"Now, Mrs. Sweetheart de Lancray," Robert demanded, when they were at last alone. "How much of this madness of yours was method? Where—did—you—get—that—*hunch?*"

Cynthia hung her head. "I guessed it. I went up attic and asked my fairy godmother to whisper me the secret. White magic."

Robert looked suspicious. "That seems to get quicker action than the black variety, doesn't it?"

Cynthia nodded. "I don't believe the black gets any, Robert—that is, unless the victim asks for it—or is pretty black himself. Poor Uncle Philo asked for it."

"Well," said Robert, "his application was immediately honored, so far as he was concerned personally."

"Yes," Cynthia admitted, "but there was a back fire to it for the beasts who victimized him into exposing himself. Aunt Abbie telephoned just after Aunt Agnes went out, and you were pottering about the fliv. Uncle Philo woke up this morning quite himself again. He told the police who these wretches were. They've been arrested on his and other charges, and on being collared they admitted they were frauds."

"Good work!" Robert sighed, partly with relief, partly at thought of poor Mr. Guilford's needless suffering.

"It seems," Cynthia went on, "that they worked the same game on a lot of people at the same time, so that some of their chances won. Almost anybody is apt to have something more or less unpleasant happen pretty often. Aunt Abbie says they may get ten years prison. But there was some bad news, too. Uncle Philo told her that unless he could raise ten thousand dollars to meet the interest on a note due next month he would be ruined."

"It's raised," Robert said. "We shall lift that burden off his mind without delay. So much for black magic. Now where, darling bridie, does the white magic come in?"

Cynthia nestled closer. "Well, you see,

darlingest, Aunt Abbie said that Uncle Philo was very broken, and that she was bringing him out here to-morrow. That meant that you must leave, and that I had got to do my part——"

Robert nodded. "Espouse the shaggy Rocky Mountain——"

Cynthia laid her hand on his lips. "I had to go somewhere for a cry, so I went up attic and sat down on the floor beside the chest that mamma's trousseau has been kept in. I never knew mamma, of course, but I have always thought of her as mamma, and that chest has always been my shrine. I take all my troubles there."

Robert held her closer. "No better place," said he. "Not even here, sweetheart."

"Then," said Cynthia, "she must have whispered to me to put on her wedding dress. It was really mamma, not a fairy godmother. The wonderful part of it is that I should have wanted to put on her wedding dress—or anything else that had to do with marriage. But for some reason I did. And *this* dropped out of one of its folds." She reached in a pocket of her traveling skirt and drew out a letter. Robert, at his first glance recognized the strong, scrawling hand of Uncle Jasper.

"From my uncle?" he cried, and felt a little swimmy in the head.

Cynthia bowed her head. "From Uncle Jasper—written to mamma when I was born. A wonderful letter—a soul message she must have read in heaven, because it never reached her—here——"

TYPHOID LOSING ITS TERRORS

AMONG the diseases at one time responsible for great numbers of deaths, which, within the last ten or eleven years, have been largely shorn of their terrors, is the formerly dreaded typhoid fever. It is now reported by medical experts that the disease is vanishing, at least in the United States, largely through better sanitation, the continued improvement of the water supply of American cities and, lastly, inoculation against the disease—especially in the army and navy.

In the last annual survey of typhoid fever, made recently by the American Medical Association, the statistics of deaths from typhoid fever showed a remarkable decrease since 1910. Official figures covering sixty-eight cities, each with a population of over 100,000, throughout the United States show an unprecedented decrease. In fifty-seven of these sixty-eight cities the deaths from typhoid, which were 19.6 per 100,000 in 1910, had decreased to 3.5 in 1920.

In cities with a population of over 500,000 the decrease in deaths was even more marked. Of twelve cities of more than 500,000 population Pittsburgh showed the greatest drop in the death rate since 1910. In that city the average annual death rate in the years from 1906 to 1910 from typhoid fever was 65.0 per 100,000 and for 1920 the death rate was 2.7. In the same period the annual death rate from typhoid fever per 100,000 in Philadelphia dropped from 41.7 to 3.3; in Boston from 16.0 to 1.5; in New York from 13.5 to 2.4, and in Chicago from 15.8 to 1.1. The number of deaths in the case of men showed a greater decrease than in the case of women. The greatest decrease among the former was between the ages of twenty and thirty-five.

The open sewer in small towns and remote suburbs of cities, which was a fruitful source of the disease once, is not to be found now. There have been isolated cases a number of years ago, of people unusually susceptible to the disease, contracting it by passing over an open sewer.

The insurance organizations have been lately urging vaccination against typhoid fever, which has, it is said, already led to a greater drop in the number of deaths among those insured than among the general population. A statement made a very short time ago, on behalf of one of the largest of these companies in the United States, says, after describing the benefit of inoculation against typhoid fever:

"The history of typhoid fever is a remarkable example of what may be accomplished if all the forces of the community are concentrated upon the control of a disease, when the facts of its causation and the method of control are known. The history of typhoid fever can be repeated in relation to the other acute infections."

The Double Life of Hippo McNutt

By Raymond J. Brown

Author of "Father Sullivan's Legacy," "Orion—A Sleeper," Etc.

Perhaps he was a dub, but Hippo ended his surprising ring career by doing something that no champion ever has done

HIS name was McNutt, and it would have fitted him like a glove if he dropped the *Mc* and the last *t*. Reginald was the moniker which his loving parents had engraved on his little silver drinking cup, but the first group of American bike fans which saw him perform put the ax to that Reginald thing in a hurry and christened him Hippo, which is what he remained.

He was an Australian cyclist, a shaggy-haired, brown-skinned husky, with the general shape and approximate displacement of a coal barge. If he had not been a charter member of the Sons of Rest and if he had been willing to train some of the surplus pork off his elephantine physique, there's no telling how many records he might have hung up, for his legs had the drive of an Andes Mountain locomotive. A racing bike was little more than a toy to him. But his two hundred and thirty pounds, every ounce of it, was pure, eighteen-carat laziness and good nature.

He was born with the knack of putting a bicycle into high with one or two kicks and carrying a wonderful sprint for about a furlong; that was enough to get him by, and he let it go at that, leaving the ambitious boys to do the road work and the home-trainer torture that kept them in shape to garner the big chunks of prize money.

At the time Hippo hit the States, Lonny Adair, the "Biking Viking," was at the top of his form. Lonny, who was a giant himself, but as trim, graceful, and well-conditioned as the Australian was fat and soft, took a great shine to Hippo. The big boy from the Antipodes was just the target Lonny needed for the practical jokes and other kinds of kidding with which he made life merry around the training quarters of the bike tracks. He tumbled to the fact that Hippo, for all his good nature and laziness, was a mark for flattery in any form. And so, when he did not have Hippo dashing round like mad looking for left-handed screw drivers, one-man tandems, three-dollar bills, and such fool things, he was patting him on the back about the breadth of his shoulders, the strength of his arms, the shape of his legs and the other attributes of his burly person.

Hippo liked this sort of complimentary persiflage no more than a kitten likes milk, and in no time he was convinced that the merest idle word that dropped from Lonny's lips was truth sprung right from the fountain head. Which being so, it is not surprising that Hippo listened with ears, eyes, and mouth wide open when, about the time that the outdoor season was breathing its last, Lonny buttonholed him one day and eased him a dish of gravy to about the following effect:

"Hip, old tub, we're facin' a long, cold winter. It's the toughest time of year for the rank and file of pedal pushers, because the six-day merry-go-rounds is about all we have to look to. I know the six-day game ain't for you. No bird that won't punish himself into finishin' a five-mile dash is goin' to draw down much prize money in the Monday-to-Sunday carnivals.

"However, whether you're there with the cash money or not, you'll find the landlady with her palm out every Saturday, and I'm thinkin' that your winnin's this year ain't been so big that you'll be able to greet her with a smile much after January 1st. Have you looked the ground over to see what's around in the way of remunerative side lines?"

"Side lines?" repeated Hippo, puzzled.

"Somethin' to bring in the kale while the bike's hung up to rust," explained Lonny.

"Ah, yes," said Hippo, understanding. "In Orstrylia, while the cycle tracks were closed, I engyged at me tryde."

"Oh, you've got a trade?" said Lonny, surprised.

"I'm a shepherd," Hippo told him. "My uncle has——"

"Shepherd!" yelled Lonny. "A big, fine-lookin', husky brute like you a—shepherd! Chasin' round after little woolly lambs like—like Little Bo Peep! Hip, my boy, I'm ashamed of you! Why, you ought to be a—a—— Say! A lad with your build, and your strength, why, he could be *anything!* Shepherd! I'm surprised at you! Besides, you'll get fat on all the sheppin' there is to do round these parts!"

Hippo nodded his head, his face wearing a look that announced that he agreed with Lonny in believing that his past life had been utterly wasted.

"Shepherd!" snorted Lonny again. "A big bruiser like you, that could knock a house over!" He grabbed Hippo by the wrist. "Say!" he exclaimed. "Speakin' of knockin' houses over gives me an idear! And it ain't the secondhand buildin'-material business, either! Why don't you give the fight game a try?"

"Fight gyme?" echoed Hippo.

"This," explained Lonny, squaring off and handing the big boy a few love taps.

"But I s'y!" protested Hippo. "Y'knaow, I daon't——"

"You'd be a marvel!" decided Lonny. "Look at the size of you! And you got the strength of a lion! And—speed! Say, I'll bet you're the fastest feller of your exact weight and inches in the world! And in the pink of condition at all times from your bike ridin'! It would be a romp for you! And the dough these pugs draw down!" went on Lonny, rolling his eyes upward. "Why, third-raters pick up four and five hundred bucks a night! And how long does it take you—or me—to wrassle five hundred out of this bike pastime?"

Now, Lonny was just kidding; amusing himself. He was a thirty-third-degree fight fan himself, and, knowing the class of youths that went into knuckle pushing as a means of livelihood, he also knew that Hippo belonged in the ring no more than ham and cabbage belong on a Thanksgiving Day table in the Cape Cod district. Hippo, though, drank in all that he was told, and you could see the big dub's chest swelling and his shoulders squaring as Lonny talked. I happened to overhear the oration, and, when Hippo departed, scowling and swinging his arms like the village bully, I gave Lonny a hold.

"Lonny," I said to him, "are you ambitious to be party to a murder? I know it's just the oil you're giving that big mushmelon, but he don't. He's liable to take you serious and get himself mixed up in the ring. And, if he does, the first bird he stacks up against will knock him for an attack of hookworm."

"Oh, say, Windy!" grinned Lonny. "Can't you let a feller have a little fun? You're the most sour-dispositioned guy I know. As soon as anybody tries to pull off a joke you get sore and spoil it."

"Getting 'Hippo' McNutt into a ring with some man-eater is no joke," I insisted. "Any middleweight battler would roll him out like a rug. Big stiffs like him that don't know their right hand from their left are just the kind of marks that pugs like to make suckers of."

"Oh, behave!" laughed Lonny. "He knows I didn't mean it. Besides, even if he did give the glove game a whirl, he'd never get hurt. He's tougher than you think. He's fell all over every bike track in the world and never raised a bruise. The only harm he did was to the boards. Anyhow, if anybody *did* slam him hard, it would be only one punch. After that Hippo would quit—just like he does when the goin' gets hard on the bike tracks."

"But why put fool ideas into a head that has no room for them? If he needs dough to keep him going through the winter, let him take a job—whitewashing cellars, or something he *can* do. Wishing him into the boxing game is as sensible as taking a fish out of water."

I should have kept my feet out of it. Arguing with Lonny is a losing game at best. You may outtalk him, but he'll do just what he wants in the end. In this case, I think my interference just acted on him like a spur. Before I spoke, Lonny probably had no more intention of trying to turn Hippo into a gladiator than I had of swimming the Atlantic. My opposition, though, was just what a stubborn, hard-headed bird like Lonny needed to make the thing look possible to him.

For a week or so he talked boxing to Hippo every time they met, which was at

least once a day, and Lonny was some talker. He could sell hooch and crap dice to the people coming out of a Billy Sunday meeting, which made proving to Hippo McNutt that nature had designed him to stand in the shoes once occupied by John L., big Jeff, and other famous men no more difficult than convincing a New Yorker that the Woolworth Building is not located in Jersey City.

Hippo fell. The same week that the outdoor bike tracks called it a job for that year the newspapers carried squibs announcing that Hippo McNutt, the famous Australian sprint cyclist, was about to make a stab at the manly art of self-defense from a professional standpoint and had begun training with a view to furnishing something of a sensation at his de-butt.

It made good reading, even to people who were not interested particularly in the bike game, for there's nothing that sport fans like more than seeing a performer step out of his own game to try another.

Lonny, who was acting as manager, chief sparring partner, and principal trainer for Hip, found a box fight impresario up in New England who was willing to pay money for the privilege of scheduling a set-to between the Australian man-mountain and a fourth-rate colored mauler who battled under the name of "Black Jeffries."

While continuing to deliver mean, sarcastic remarks about the whole proceedings, nevertheless I permitted myself to be coaxed by Lonny into going up to see the slaughter.

"You'll cut out that wise talk, Windy, after you see Hippo perform with the mitts," Lonny told me. "He's no Jim Corbett for cleverness yet, but he's quicker than a snake, he's got a punch like a ferryboat rammin' a slip and you couldn't hurt him with a crowbar. I've got a bit of a wallop myself, but I swear I gave him all I had a dozen times and it didn't hurt him no more'n if I tickled him with a straw."

Which glowing send-off, of course, I took for what I thought it was worth—nothing.

Going up on the train, Hippo did not strike me as being enthusiastic exactly about coming events. He looked big enough and fierce enough to have tackled a dozen Black Jeffrieses, one after the other, but there was a kind of green tinge to his face. His eyes kept darting round like a rabbit's, and, when we went to the dining car to stoke up, his hands shook so that his knife and fork beat on his plate like sticks on a snare drum. This last and the fact that he did not eat much more than would be a square meal for three longshoremen looked like bad signs to me, for Hippo, when in form, certainly was the barbecue king.

We hit Longchester, the battleground, at eight-fifteen p. m., in time to make close connections for the fight club where Black Jeffries and Hippo were dated to go on at nine. Lonny stopped at the ticket office in the station long enough to ask about trains back to New York.

"One at nine, next at eleven-fourteen," said the agent.

At the fight club we identified ourselves satisfactorily to the manager, a red-faced, red-headed, red-neck named Dougherty, who wore a fifteen-dollar silk shirt and no collar, and we were led to the dressing room. This was a coop filled with the familiar odors of witch-hazel, liniment, and perspiration. There were, as usual, too many people in the room, including the battlers of the evening—a pair of welters, two jockey weights, a couple of lightweights, and Black Jeffries.

You'd never have mistaken this last bird. Males of the Ethiopian race cannot be expected to rate very high by Caucasian standards of beauty, but for all-around ugliness Black Jeffries stopped anything that had ever been pictured for me in fact or fable. He was big, in the long, rangy, muscular way that the black boys run to; but because his shoulders were too wide, his arms too long and his head too small he suggested deformity. At that, you forgave him his shape when you looked at his face—or what was left of his face.

Boxing gloves could have been responsible for only a few of his scars; the rest looked as though a strong-armed and determined guy had made them with a meat cleaver. Half of his upper lip had been gouged out, and there were probably a half-dozen long slashes on his cheeks, flesh-colored and standing out from his black skin as though painted there. His nose probably had never been much to look at, but what little there had been originally was now mashed down into the shape of a piece of putty hurled against a wall.

I'm not what might be called a squeamish feller, but when I saw that fellow's map I shivered. Lonny's face screwed up, too.

As for Hippo—he took one look at that

fearful phiz, turned the color of clay, let loose a groan such as might come from a bass-voiced person in the throes of a horrible nightmare, and then, before Lonny or I could stop him, he swung around, put down his head like a full back and shot for the door of the dressing room.

Seconds, bottle holders, managers, trainers, and fighters, who were trying to crowd through the doorway, scattered before that rush like snowdrifts before a railroad plow.

"Great Godfrey!" yelped Lonny. "He's runnin' out! The yeller, quittin' hound! Windy—stop him!"

We did our best, but it was not quite good enough. The thirty-second start he had on us getting across the arena to the street and the fact that the taxicab he hired in front of the fight club was a faster one than ours got him to the station just in time to shin up the rear platform of the last car of the nine-o'clock train as it moved out. When we reached the station the train was half a mile away.

"Well," said I, "Hippo McNutt's pugilistic career had its beginning and end all at once."

"I'll kill him!" promised Lonny. "He's disgraced me! I've never quit to a man yet, and here this big cow——"

"Oh, it's not as bad as that," I told him, grinning. "It's just funny. I told you Hip would never make a fighter. Well, let's see if we can find a movie or a pool parlor and kill time till that eleven-fourteen train comes."

"No," said Lonny. "I got to go back to that fight club and square myself."

I tried to argue with him, telling him that he was out of the affair with clean hands right then. But he would not listen. So we pile back into the taxicab and return to the club.

Dougherty, the manager, hit the ceiling when we broke the news to him. He'd already had to shove his program ahead one event, due to Hippo's disappearance, and he was all excited at the possibility of his capacity house getting rough and demanding its money back if he could not make good on the five-bout card he had scheduled. Lonny offered to fight Black Jeffries himself if they could not find another substitute, and, despite all the objections I raised, it looked for a time as though this plan was going through. Then the day was saved by the arrival in Dougherty's office of a heavyweight fighter who was looking for a chance to go on at the next show.

This bird announced that he was from Boston and battled as "Monk" Phillips. He was a brawny specimen, maybe twenty-three years old, and of the pure goofer type—heavy jaw, pock marks, flat nose, mean eye, and all the rest of the trimmings. Left to himself, he'd probably fight Black Jeffries, crack a safe or commit a murder for the pure love of it, but he was carrying with him a manager who had different ideas. This manager person was a hook-nosed, hollow-cheeked, squeaky-voiced young man, acknowledging the name of Abe Rosenbaum. Abe's work was immense!

It took him no more than three seconds to discover that his boy Monk was as valuable in Dougherty's fight club that night as a carburetor is to a gasoline engine. While the pair of them did not look as though they'd had a hundred dollars between them in a couple of years, Abe began talking big money immediately. Dougherty, who, although he knew he had to have Monk, was trying to get him as cheap as possible, was just wax in the hands of Abie. The little manager let Dougherty bluster and beef, but in the end nicked him for eight hundred seeds, cash money paid right into his hand. When he had the money safe, he smiled, and nodded to Monk, who went out to dig up some ring clothes.

With my own ears I heard Dougherty tell his leather-lunged announcer that Monk Phillips was fighting in place of Hippo McNutt. More than that, I saw the announcer jot the information down on a card. I'm telling you that so that there will be no reason for believing that Lonny, or Dougherty, or myself had anything to do with what happened later. It was just chance, I guess, or—but I'm getting ahead of my story.

Black Jeffries and Monk Phillips were in their corners. Abe Rosenbaum and the fat man who managed Jeffries stood beside their men. The referee was resting against the ropes. The announcer climbed into the ring and held up his hand for silence. He got it.

"Gents!" he yelled. "Gents! Next bout—star bout o' the evenin'—ten rounds——"

"You're a liar!" came a shout from the ringside.

"Who's a liar?" inquired another voice.

"You are!" responded the first voice.

And they went to it—two birds in ring-

side seats just under Black Jeffries' corner. Immediately the place was in an uproar. People in all parts of the house hopped to their chairs to see. Ushers and special cops began dashing down the aisles. The two ringside battlers were dragged out by their two necks. Three or four minutes passed before the place was quiet again. Then the announcer signaled once more for silence.

"Gents!" he roared. "Gents! Next bout—star bout o' the evenin'—ten rounds—in this corner Black Jeffries—in this corner *Hippo McNutt, famous Australian bicycle-ridin' champion!"*

The crowd started to cheer, and the announcer hopped through the ropes. Abe Rosenbaum tried to make a protest against his man being called out of his name, but he could not get to the announcer in time. He spoke to the referee, but all he got from that bird, who was tired and wanted to wind up his night's work as quickly as possible, was:

"Aw, who the hell cares what his name is? He's a bum, anyhow!"

So Abe, who was eight hundred farther ahead than he expected to be that evening, decided not to press matters further.

Lonny grabbed the announcer when he came down the aisle.

"Why didn't you make that announcement," he asked, "about Monk Phillips——"

"Aw, chees!" exclaimed iron voice. "I clean forgot it! Them two guys startin' that fight drove it right out o' my head!"

Which, I think, completes the alibi for Lonny and me and frees us of the charge of entering a ringer.

The next morning Hippo McNutt, strolling through Market Street, Newark, which, as far as bicycling goes, is the hub of the universe, bought a newspaper. In the restaurant where he usually took his breakfast he opened the paper to the sport page. The first thing that came up and hit him in the eye was this:

HIPPO McNUTT, CYCLIST, SENSATION IN PRIZE RING.

Australian Pedaler Scores One-Round Victory Over Black Jeffries.

Hippo blinked at the page in a puzzled way. He read the headlines again. He worked up courage enough to take a hack at the news article under the headlines. Reading that made him blink and scowl some more. Under a Longchester date line was the certainly startling information that, at the time when he had been speeding toward New York as fast as an express train could carry him, he had also been making "the most auspicious début of any inexperienced fighter seen in years," had been demonstrating "a bewildering collection of punches on the surprised and dazed Jeff," and had "evidenced footwork, cunning, and ring craft almost unbelievable in a novice pugilist."

More than that, the writer of the article hazarded the opinion that sporting promoters would be "quick to bid for the services of this new phenom and that Hippo, whose other name is Reginald, would in time find a career in pugilism much more attractive than his highly successful efforts on the bicycle tracks."

Right then Hippo would not have bought a nickel's worth of the short end of a one hundred to one bet that he was not awake. He pinched himself, rubbed his eyes, and looked round the restaurant. These tests satisfied him that he was not home in his bed; but they still left him bewildered. He read the article through once more. This left him more puzzled than before. Something brushed against him, and he jumped a foot. It was a waiter.

"Mornin', Hip," this bird greeted him. "Say, I read about yuh in de paper. Uh-huh. Y'oughta be a proud feller. Uh-huh. Say, he never laid a glove on yuh, did he? Lemme know next time yuh're goin' tuh box, will yuh? I'll go dere an' look yuh over. Uh-huh. Well, what'll it be, Hip?"

Hippo ordered his usual big breakfast. While waiting for the order to be delivered he proceeded to puzzle himself some more by reading the news item again. He was halfway through it when somebody came in and sat down at his table. It was Charley Hart, a sports reporter for one of the local papers.

"Well, Hip," said Charley, "you put it over last night, eh? You're going right on through the heavies, aren't you, up to the championship? You won't be doing much riding from now on because it makes your legs muscle bound and interferes with your footwork. That's right, isn't it? You thank all your local friends for their good wishes and you hope they'll all be at the ringside next time you fight. Thanks for the interview, Hip. We're giving you a 'special' to-

night, with a cartoon. Good-by. See you again."

The reporter had not so much as stood up when Tom McGee, a local heavy sport, breezed over to the table.

"Hip," complained Tom, "you ought to 'a' tipped me off. You really ought. Cripes, we could 'a' cleaned up a bundle last night —you, a maiden battler, puttin' the boots to a good boy like Black Jeffries in a round! I never heard anything like it! And not a mark on you to show for the battle! When d'you fight again?"

Hippo gurgled something. Tom did not understand. But he seemed satisfied, for he got up, shook hands, and patted Hippo's shoulder.

"It's all right, Hip, old boy," he declared. "You're nervous and so forth after last night, and I don't blame you. You want to be alone. All right, kid, I'm leavin'. So long."

Hippo finished his breakfast and wandered out to the street. They pounced on him from all sides, wringing his hand, pounding his back, telling him what a great fellow he was and how proud they all were of him. It was nice, and Hip liked it. He had always been more or less popular as a bike rider, but this "Hail, the conquering hero comes!" stuff was something new to him. He did not say much himself. He was in a daze, and, besides, he did not dare say anything. He was expecting that any moment some guy would rise up to state:

"Why, this big stiff didn't lick anybody last night! I was coming in from Boston, and I saw him on the train—sprawled out on two seats, asleep!"

But the admiring throng put words in his mouth, asking him questions and supplying their own answers when he did not reply. As I've remarked before, Hippo was very susceptible to the pleasant process of being rubbed the right way and when nobody appeared to deny that all this soft soap was coming to him, he began to swell up and beam on the hand-shakers. He even went so far as to offer a few little descriptive details of the battle he was supposed to have fought. It was in this heavy mental exercise that he was engaged, about ten a. m., when Lonny and I came sauntering through Market Street.

"There's the big yeller quitter now!" barked Lonny, when he spied Hip. "If he wasn't in a fight last night, he's goin' to be in one now! I'll knock his block off! Come on!"

Lonny approached from behind him. He paused on the fringe of the crowd that surrounded the supposed conqueror of Black Jeffries to listen, and this is what he heard:

"Well, mytes, when I espies this blackamoor, thinks I to meself, I thinks, 'Mac, it's best to 'ave it over with quickly. This blighter's a tough un. Mybe he might best ye in a long fight.' So at the bell I springs out and I 'ammers the beggar. I 'ammers 'im once; I 'ammers 'im twice—and down goes 'e. I wytes, and up gets 'e. I 'ammers 'im again, and down goes 'e. I wytes, but 'e wytes, too—right where 'e's lyin'. 'You win, me lad,' the referee says, says 'e. 'I thank ye,' says I. And I tyke me tryne 'ome, and 'ere ye see me."

Lonny let loose a guffaw. If there was one thing he liked better than anything else it was a good joke, and this was a prime one. He forgot all about his promise to slay Hippo on sight. Instead, he squirmed through the crowd and grabbed the big boy's hand. Hippo's jaw dropped a foot. His face turned the same doughy color it had been on his first sight of Black Jeffries.

Lonny fetched Hippo a wallop on the back.

"Well, boys," he grinned at the crowd, "what d'you think of our hero? Been tellin' you all about it, ain't he? But you should have been there to see it, like I was! You never seen a feller travel like Hip did last night! Speed? Say, big Jeffries never had a chance to touch him! Ain't that so, Hip?"

"I—I—I——" stuttered Hip.

"Well, come on, Hip," said Lonny, linking arms with him, "bid the boys good-by. I want to talk to you—about your future."

We got free of the crowd and turned into a side street.

"Well," said Lonny when we were away from listening ears, "it looks like you got to make good."

"Myke good?" repeated Hippo.

"You're a fighter," said Lonny. "I heard you say so yourself. I also read about it in the newspaper. What're you goin' to do about it?"

"I s'y, Lonny," stuttered poor Hip, "how did——"

Lonny explained about the substitution of Monk Phillips. That eased Hippo's bean a little. Before that he had been worried lest

the defeat of Black Jeffries had been accomplished by some supernatural means.

"Now, listen," said Lonny then. "I don't suppose it's your fault that you're yeller. It certainly ain't your fault that you got mixed up in the fight game. It was my fault. I'm admittin' it. But, as long as I was fool enough to start this thing, I'm also goin' to finish it. If I hear one peep out of you about this battle you're credited with winnin' last night, I'll show everybody just how much of a fighter you are. I'll knock you right back into your uncle's sheep fields. Understand?

"If you'd had any brains you'd have told people this mornin' that you didn't fight last night. I could have explained things for you—said you was took sick, or somethin' like that. But—no! You had to swell around and make a hero out of yourself. A hero! Now, if the people who were just pattin' your back knew what *I* know about you, they'd laugh you out of the bike game. So take a tip—shut up on this fightin' proposition. Now—beat it!"

It was rather rough on Hippo, considering that he was what you might call a victim of circumstances, but the advice Lonny gave him was sensible and it looked as though for the second time in fourteen hours the pugilistic career of Hippo McNutt had been brought to its conclusion.

Said career, though, was a hardier plant than anybody would have suspected, and its growth was helped by an element on which we did not count—Monk Phillips, or, more exactly, the manager of Monk, Mr. Abe Rosenbaum, of Boston.

Outside of the ability to fight, probably the most valuable thing a professional pug has is his name. Now, except in a few obscure clubs around Boston, where its owner had been swinging his fists in preliminary battles, the name of Monk Phillips was absolutely and entirely unknown. As far as the majority of fight fans was concerned, Monk might just as well never have been in the ring.

When Abe Rosenbaum awoke on the morning following the one-round knock-out of Black Jeffries, a glance at the newspapers informed him that Monk had suddenly acquired a name. It was not his own name, it is true, but to a shrewd, wily, and unscrupulous young crook like Abie, that was a minor matter. And so when he met Monk later in the day he announced to the battler that in his future doings in the world of fisticuffs he would be known to the public as Hippo McNutt.

Monk received this information calmly. He had laid aside his baptismal appellation of Pasquale Phillipo without regrets, and he could stand another change, especially when, as Abe was careful to point out, the new name carried with it hitherto unheard-of chances of gathering the coin.

And so, within a week after the flattening of Black Jeffries, the members of the Market Street Young Men's Loafing Club, of Newark, New Jersey, had a second opportunity to join in a hallelujah chorus while gathered round the stalwart form of Hippo McNutt. This time Hippo was accused of having slammed the gate on a lad named Micky Conroy in two rounds.

Poor Hip was caught between two fires. His natural inclination was to take all the hurrah boys had to offer him and tease them into giving him more. But always there rose before him the promise Lonny had made to beat him up and show him up if he beefed about being a fighter. So he played safe by playing dead.

Lonny, of course, was as much surprised as Hippo when he read in the papers about the new K. O. mark that had been placed on Hip's record. He was worried, too, for he knew that the time had passed when making a clean breast of things would get Hippo anything except enough ridicule to make life unbearable; probably even enough to drive him out of the bike game. He had a consultation with Hippo; then he and I worked out a stiff letter, which Lonny signed and sent to Abe Rosenbaum, demanding that Monk Phillips quit using the name of Hippo McNutt in his ring engagements.

Abe replied—immediately. Very politely, but nevertheless firmly, he informed Lonny that he and Hippo might go to blazes. The wise little shark did not miss a single weak spot in Hip's armor, calling especial attention to the fact that the big Australian certainly could not risk having his cycling reputation ruined by letting the public know he was a quitter, a faker, and a squealer. He even had the nerve to hint that Hippo ought to feel complimented to have his name used in the ring by so remarkable a fighter and said that in future he would inform Hippo of the bouts scheduled for Monk so that he could keep out of sight on the nights they took place.

Lonny almost frothed at the mouth when he read this. He called Abe Rosenbaum a crook, a blackmailer, and a lot of things that will not bear repetition. He threatened to murder him, to have him pinched, to punch his nose, to run him out of the fight game.

"Bunk!" I called his ravings. "You can't do a thing. A squeal won't hurt Rosenbaum, and it won't hurt Monk, and they know it. Monk seems to be delivering the goods in the ring, and the public won't care whether he does it under the name of McNutt or Julius Cæsar. But a squeal *will* hurt Hippo. Imagine—if the newspapers got hold of this thing!"

Lonny imagined it, and he groaned.

"The only thing you can do," I went on, "is to sit tight and see what happens. This bird Monk may run up against some battler who'll beat him into powder and——"

"Not with this clever little burglar runnin' things," contradicted Lonny, waving Abe's letter. "He'll only match Monk up with guys he can beat."

Which was a good prediction. With Abe making the matches, Monk proceeded to compile a record that was a bear! No topnotch fighters felt the weight of his fists. In fact, Abe even gave a wide berth to the second-raters, but heavies of the pork-and-bean variety began going down before Monk like bowling pins before a good curve ball. And Abe was smart enough to keep far away from any place where a racing bicycle had ever been seen. He was willing to run no risk of having some bike fan hop up to declare that he who was battling as Hippo McNutt was nothing more or less than a rank impostor and thereby put the kibosh on the graft. For there was no doubt but that Hippo McNutt, the fighting cyclist, was a much better drawing card than Monk Phillips, the Boston terror, as Monk's previous schedule of winnings well proved.

Abe kept his word about informing Hippo when the stealer of his name was to battle, which meant that Hip had to do the grand disappearing act from Newark about once a week. Sometimes he had to be gone for a couple of days. Nor was that all the stepping around that Hip had to do. He had to move fast to dodge boxing promoters from all parts of Jersey and New York. These birds, more than anxious to draw the bike fans to their arenas, made Hip some pretty sweet offers, and it almost broke the big boy's heart to decline them.

Moving out of town temporarily in order to avoid interfering with the fake, Hippo's fighting became more than irksome to the real Hippo after a few months. It became almost ruinous. To begin with, it was expensive, and, besides, after the bicycle racing season opened in the spring, it prevented Hip at times from pursuing his only means of livelihood. I do not say that Abe Rosenbaum did it on purpose, but it struck me as mighty peculiar that many of Monk's fights were scheduled for the evenings when bike meets also were on.

Hippo's disappearances on these nights put him decidedly in wrong with the bike promoters.

"Hey, what are you—a biker or a boxer?" demanded the track manager at last. "Is riding a wheel a business with you, or a pastime? Remember, young feller, we pay you by the season to ride. You've broken your contract with us, and, the next riding night you're not here, I'll tear it up!"

Hippo's double life began to wear on him in time. He became only a shadow of his former self, dropping from two hundred and thirty pounds to a mere two hundred and five. I thought he looked all the better for the lost flesh; to Lonny, though, it was the first indication of a mental and physical decline.

"I wish I could help him," Lonny confided to me one day. "I tell you, Windy, I feel like a horse thief. I started the thing and I'm responsible."

"Don't look for sympathy from me," I told him. "I said in plenty of time that Hippo wasn't meant for the ring."

"But—gosh!" exclaimed Lonny. "I didn't think that a joke would turn out like this."

"Like what?" I asked him. "Hippo's looking better than he ever did. He's riding a bike faster than he——"

"He's desperate," said Lonny. "Poor guy, he's tryin' to pick up all the coin he can before——"

"So is everybody else in the world," I told him. "If you feel sorry for him why don't you send him home and pension him off for life? You could afford it, and he'd like it."

Lonny, though, apparently did not think much of this suggestion. He just growled at me.

It was one morning in June that I was awakened by the pounding of feet outside

the door of my bedroom. Then some one rapped at the door and I heard Lonny's voice asking me: "For cripes' sake, wake up and let us in!"

I hopped out of bed and threw open the door. There was Lonny, Hippo, Jake Schultz, of the city detective force, and a fat guy whom I did not know. Lonny and Hippo were all excited, but the other two looked as though they were wondering what it was all about. They all filed into the room, and Lonny stretched out his hand to the fat man and received from him a slip of pink paper—a bank check.

"Come here," he said to me, motioning me toward the window.

He showed me the check, which was made out to "cash" and signed and indorsed "Reginald McNutt." It called for two hundred dollars from a Newark bank. It was nicely ornamented in one corner of the face with a paster on which was printed in big, black letters, "No Account."

"Pretty, isn't it?" asked Lonny.

"Some of——" I began.

"Sh-h!" cautioned Lonny. "Yes, some of his work. Mr. Burns here," he said, motioning toward the fat man, "gave two hundred for it to a bird who said he was Hippo——"

"It wasn't this man," interrupted Burns, pointing toward Hip.

"Of course, it wasn't," said Lonny. "We know who it was. It's a man who's been usin' Hippo's name."

"Better have him locked up," suggested the detective.

"No," said Lonny. "I'll make this good, if Mr. Burns will withdraw his complaint."

"Sure; that'll be all right," offered Burns eagerly.

"You'll forget all about it, won't you, Jake?" Lonny asked the detective.

"Got to if there's no complaint," grumbled Jake.

"All right," said Lonny. He borrowed eighty dollars from me, added one hundred and twenty dollars to it, and handed it to Burns. "Thank you, gentlemen," he said, leading Burns and Jake Schultz to the door. "I'll stay here, if you don't mind? I've a little business to talk over with Mr. Bush."

When they were gone, he grabbed my shoulder.

"Windy," he said, "these birds are goin' too far. I won't stand for them a minute longer!"

"You certainly can't keep on making phony checks good," I told him.

"I've got an idea," he said, "how I can wind the whole thing up."

"Shoot!" I bade him.

"I'm goin' to arrange a fight with this Monk," he said.

"Fight! Who's to fight him?"

"Me," said Lonny.

"You!" I gasped.

"If I couldn't lick any bird that would travel with a hook-nosed little yegg like that Rosenbaum," declared Lonny, "I'd hurl myself off a pier!"

"But——" I started to object.

"But—nothin'!" snapped Lonny. "I started this thing, got Hippo here into all this trouble, and I figure it's up to me to get him out. I'll give that bird the darnedest whalin' that anybody's took since Washin'ton crossed the Delaware! I'll paste him till his ears meet! No kiddin', Windy," he assured me when I grinned at his vehemence. "Then, when I've laid this Monk out on the morgue slab, Hippo can announce that, owin' to the overwhelmin' defeat he was treated to, he's decided to retire from the ring and stick to his bike for the future. And, if Monk and Abie use Hip's name when they start in business again, we can climb them like a ladder."

"It *might* work out all right," I admitted, "if——"

"If—what?" asked Lonny. "If I can lick this Monk, you mean? That's the surest thing you ever bet on!"

With the aid of his friend Dougherty in Longchester, Lonny arranged the match. It was put up to Abe Rosenbaum as a set-up for Monk, and, since the guarantee was generous—Lonny furnished it, by the way—Abie leaped at the chance. I knew Lonny had done considerable boxing in his time. I'd heard of him working out every now and then with some fair to middling heavies, and I knew he was a curly wolf at the style of battling in which biting in the clinches is not only not barred but encouraged. Still, I could not but feel nervous about him entering the ring with Monk. The memory of the way Monk had polished off Black Jeffries was still with me.

Lonny insisted that Hippo come up to Longchester with us to see the trouble. This time we took a morning train, arriving there early in the afternoon. Of the three of us Hippo seemed the most nervous. You'd

have thought it was he who was to fight Monk that night instead of Lonny. We parked our one suit case in Dougherty's camp, then Hippo announced that he wanted to take a walk with Lonny to discuss some private business.

"Go ahead," I agreed, although I was sore at them both for deserting me in a hole like Longchester. "I'll go to the movies. And I'll meet you in the dining room of the Longchester House at six."

I was prompt in keeping the date. In fact, I was in the dining room a half hour ahead of time. Six o'clock came, and Lonny and Hippo failed to show up. Six-thirty came; still no sign of them. At seven o'clock I began to get worried. By seven-thirty I was scared. At eight o'clock I was almost out of my mind. I took a taxi to Dougherty's club. He had not seen either one of the missing ones. Instead of being worried, he started to bawl me out.

"Every time that guy Adair comes up here," he said, "I'm shy a bout. First that big McNutt runs out on me, then Adair runs out——"

"Cut that out!" I growled at him. "Lonny wouldn't run out on anybody."

"Well, he ain't here, is he?" demanded Dougherty.

"There must have been an accident——" I started to say.

"Accidents like that will put me out of business," said Dougherty. "This ain't New York City where you can phone for a fighter, if you need one. Cripes, my show's started, and there's a mob in the house! They'll wreck the place if they don't see five fights."

"Lonny will wreck this place, if you tell him you thought he ran away," I informed Dougherty.

The first bout of the show was completed, and the second, and the third. The fourth pair of battlers took the ring, and Dougherty began to carry on like a madman.

"Suppose there's a knock-out?" he asked me. "Suppose somethin' happens to stop this bout before it goes the distance?"

"Let that comic announcer of yours tell some funny stories," I suggested grouchily.

The fourth bout was scheduled to go eight rounds. A pair of well-matched posers, who seemed to have an understanding with each other, were the performers, so there was not much danger of the fracas not continuing to the bitter end. Each time the bell clanged, though, Dougherty went a little farther up into the air. He passed the word to his ushers to scout the house for a heavyweight pug and to hire him at his own price. The dancing twins who were in the ring were enjoying the siesta which preceded the sixth round when an excited lad burst into Dougherty's office

"Doc," he panted, "there's a big bird at the door who says he wants to go on with McNutt. He looks like a bum, and——"

"I don't care if he looks like a Hottentot!" yelped Dougherty. "Bring him in! If he can only stand on two feet for two minutes, he's the man I want!"

The man hopped away. He was gone not more than thirty seconds when there was a sort of scuffle outside the door of the office. Then the door opened and in rushed —Hippo McNutt!

It took me a good ten seconds to decide that it really was Hip. The word "bum," used by the doorkeeper to describe him, did not come within miles of it! He looked as though he'd been run through a concrete mixer. His clothes were in ribbons. He wore no hat. From head to toes he was covered with mud and dirt. There were blood streaks on his face, which was flushed to the color of a firecracker, and his eyes were wild and staring.

"Hip!" I cried. "Where's Lonny?"

Before he could reply Dougherty had grabbed me by the shoulders.

"You know this bird!" he yelled. "Who is he?"

"The real Hippo McNutt," I answered.

"The hell he is!" barked Dougherty. "You, the bird that run out on me—you want to fight now?" he asked Hippo.

Hippo nodded, and Dougherty dived at him, swung him around and started him for the dressing room. I followed.

"Hip! Where's Lonny?" I shouted as we dashed across the arena.

" 'E'll be right 'ere," Hippo told me. " 'E's on 'is w'y now."

"But what happened?" I demanded. "How did your clothes——"

"You butt out!" Dougherty ordered, whirling round and giving me a shove that carried me ten feet away. "What do you mean—gettin' one o' my fighters all upset and excited just before a bout?"

I let him get away with it. At another time I'd have committed atrocious assault with a chair on a bird that shoved me out

of his way, but Lonny's disappearance, Hippo's appearance, and, strangest thing of all, the big Australian's evident desire for a fight had put me in a state where insults, rough speech, and violence to me personally did not make much difference.

The polite exchange of caresses which had been in progress in the ring came to a close. There was a short delay, and then out walked Hippo McNutt. When I saw him I jumped. I thought for a moment it was Lonny. It was only, though, that he was wearing Lonny's bath robe, the white wool one which had been presented to him by the Arrow Bicycle Company and which had their coat of arms embroidered on the back. He was followed by a pair of plug-uglies, who had been assigned to him by Dougherty as seconds.

A moment later Monk Phillips, attended by Abe Rosenbaum and another slicker, passed down the aisle. They were laughing and chatting; evidently they looked on the coming affair as a joke.

The announcer, the same one who had bungled things before, got his load off his chest. He introduced Monk as Hippo McNutt, the fightin' cyclist from Australia, and referred to Hippo as Kid Terry, of New York. The other preliminaries were got rid of, and Monk and Hip threw off their bath robes. Monk had put on much weight since I saw him before. It looked as though the easy money he had been gathering had been going to his head—and his stomach. In his ring clothes Hip appeared only slightly smaller than the Rock of Gibraltar. I saw Monk's eyes widen with surprise as Hip lifted himself to his full height, which was some six feet three. Then the bell sounded and they went to it.

Monk came out of his corner like a shot, head down, arms working. He was one of these slam-bang, knock-'em-dead, two-fisted sluggers, who like to get it over with in a hurry. He reached the center of the ring, and he was probably the most surprised man in the United States when he discovered that Hippo was there before him. More than that, out of nowhere, appeared a ring-weight glove incasing a fist that must have been cast in a foundry and attached to the longest left arm that Monk had ever heard of. The glove landed—smack! just on Monk's mouth, and the next thing friend Monk knew he was right back where he started—in his corner, and struggling for his footing. Moreover, above him loomed what seemed to be a five-story building from the windows of which a dozen people were pelting him with brickbats.

He squirmed out of the corner; Hip followed him, belaboring him with rights and lefts in bewildering succession. Monk put his head down and slugged back. He reached Hip's jaw, his chest. Hip never even paid him the compliment of laughing at his punches; he paid absolutely no attention to them, but continued his volley of wallops.

The crowd was on its feet, screeching loudly for a knock-out. A swing that began behind Hip's right shoulder connected with Monk's jaw, and the next instant there was a thud on the ring flooring. Monk rolled over and got to his feet at the count of five only to receive the twin brother of the wallop that had floored him, and this time he did not get up.

The spectators yelled their enthusiasm out, then they piled through the aisles on the way to the street. I worked my way through the crowd to the ringside. Hippo, wearing Lonny's bath robe and about as happy a smile as ever lighted human countenance, was delivering a lecture to two young fellows, evidently newspaper reporters.

"I 'in't 'idin' the fact I was afryde," he was saying as I came up. "I run aw'y from the blackamoor, I admit it. But when this beggar starts to usin' my nyme and the lads at 'ome start to thinkin' 'e's me, I'm ashymed, I am, an' thinks I to meself, 'Mac,' I thinks, 'it 'in't right, this 'in't. Ye must do somethin' about it.' So I trynes—boxin', y'knaow. I'm lookin' for my chawnce to meet this beggar fyce to fyce in the ring, like to-night. Then Lonny—that's Adair, y'knaow—he wants a punch at this beggar 'imself. 'E fixes this fight for to-night, but I cawn't let that be—I want this beggar for myself. So I ties Lonny up——"

"You—what?" I screech, much to the disgust of the reporters.

"I tied Lonny up," repeated Hippo. "I 'ad 'elp," he explained. "I brought a chap up 'ere on the tryne with us—Paul Botz, the wrestler——"

"Where is he now?" I roared. "Where's Lonny?' "

" 'E'll be 'ere shortly," said Hippo.

"He'll murder *you!*" I predicted, although I was quite sure he would not.

I rushed for the door of the club, leaving

Hippo to complete his "confession" to the reporters. Halfway down the aisle somebody grabbed me. It was Lonny, but I'd never have known him except for his voice.

"What do you think of him?" he exclaimed. "Old Hip! The first guy, I'll bet you, in the world that ever knocked himself out!"

"Durned if that isn't just what he did!" I grinned.

And it was his last knock-out, as far as the record books show. He might have gone on in the ring, for the newspapers made a great hero out of him and the fight club managers gave him all sorts of fancy offers. But the game was not for him, as I had maintained from the beginning. Even pushing a bike became too much like working for a living to him by the end of that season and he retired, going back to Australia to play nursemaid to the sheep. His uncle took him into partnership, and, by the last letter Lonny had from him, he's on his way to be a millionaire, but I can't help but think that with a little ambition he might have amounted to something.

Look for "The Fourth Man," by Mr. Brown in an early number.

FIGHTING NEW INSECT PESTS

THE scientists and other experts in the U. S. Federal agricultural department bureaus of entomology, plant industry, and other official activities, have lately been making a special study of new insect pests, which are liable to do incalculable damage to trees and plants, with a view to counteracting their ravages. Some of these insects have come lately from Europe, Asia, and other distant parts of the world in the cargoes of ships, on the hides of imported animals, and in some instances, it is thought, on the bodies of human beings.

It is estimated that the damage done by insects, native and imported, to our trees and crops amounts to a good deal over $1,000,000,000 annually, and it is believed by experts that this total would be at least doubled but for the vigilance of the department's bureaus and other agencies. The greatest damage done by insects to crops is in cereals, causing a loss of $430,000,000 annually. The smallest loss, amounting to $8,000,000 annually is in the sugar crop.

One of the worst of the European insect pests, the European corn borer, it is stated, was discovered a short time ago in the cornfields near Boston and it has reached parts of New York State. The satin moth, another new arrival which the bureau of entomology is trying to exterminate, if unchecked, it is said, destroys poplar and willow trees. Other new insect visitors which destroy trees and plants have been seen. The alfalfa weevil was discovered some time ago by farmers near Salt Lake City. It is said to do less damage to crops in Europe than in America.

Doctor Leland O. Howard, head of the bureau of entomology in the department of agriculture, said in a recent statement regarding insect pests and the fight directed against them that the boll weevil crossed the Rio Grande into the United States from Mexico about thirty years ago, since which time it has been a problem to every State in the cotton-belt country.

Not all of the insects in the open country, however, he said, are destructive of trees and crops. Some are useful to farmers and agriculturists.

One of the latter insects is one kind of ladybird beetle, which preys on the San José scale insect, the latter being destructive to trees. Certain very minute four-winged flies, which are true parasites, are also enemies of the scale insect, some attacking the insects and others their eggs. In California the citrus industry was for a time seriously threatened by the white scale insect. To fight the danger the Australian ladybird beetle was introduced into the infected regions, the result being that millions of dollars will be saved in the citrus grove regions.

Between thirty and forty species of insects, Doctor Howard has said, are among the enemies of the Colorado beetle, one of the most destructive insect pests.

God's Fools

By J. H. Morse

THESE days we spend race on to that far place
Where ends the trail, nor can it be retraced;
And as each day speeds onward toward the West,
Let's spend it so that each one is the best.
Let's realize we've just so long to live
And life has only so much joy to give:
So you who wish may gold accumulate,
Nor know what you are missing 'til too late,
While we will follow little roads that run
Across the world, God's Fools just wand'ring on.

You, mortgaged to one spot by house and gear,
You dare not rove, you have too much to fear,
You scorn our wandering ways, and loudly tell
How great it is to run a business well.
Yet now and then, you dream, and dreaming say,
"I wonder where God's Fools are camped to-day?"
Then when you hear from us of obscure ways,
You yearn to follow trails we've dimly blazed.
But that can't be, those faint trails are for none
But Fools of God who dare go roaming on.

The world might not progress, if all, like we,
Forever wandered, over land and sea,
And yet the world complete would ne'er been known,
Without God's Fools who could not stay at home.
For gold, for fight, for land, or just for fun,
For feet that itched to scratch on outland stone,
We hit the trail, and some are roaming still
Upon the plains, the seas, beyond the hills.
'Til when our loom of life quite full is spun,
The Great Divide we'll cross—and wander on.

Ransome's Sheila

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "Rags," "Tumbleweed," Etc.

The drama of a thoroughbred—a tale to give horse-lovers considerable to think about

YOU will meet men like Ransome, occasionally; middle-aged, slightly bald, inclined to be stout, clean-shaven, straight-lipped, keen-eyed—men who invariably suggest business; but by no license of the imagination do they suggest sentiment. The type is seldom seen in the bread line, but rather, is to be found in the present-day pulpit, the office, the exchange, or on the bridge of a liner, on the bench, or in the Senate.

Ransome came to the village of Norcross from New York—a matter of sixty odd minutes by rail—looking for a quiet place to board, and with him came his mother, a gentle, inconspicuously dressed old lady, whose faded blue eyes seemed to look out upon the world from a haven of memories so satisfying that John Wales, with whom the Ransomes finally arranged to board, remarked to his cross-lots neighbor that Mrs. Ransome was the most "complete" woman he had ever met. In his sixty years of life on the little coast farm John Wales had not met many women. For over forty years he had plowed and tilled the fields his father had plowed—a tidy fifty acres just beyond Norcross, out near the Point, from which the smoke of the distant city could be seen, save when the winter storms shut out all view of sea and land. Occasionally John Wales made a pilgrimage to the city, but he invariably hastened home again, distressed with the surge of life and noise.

John's sister, Bettina, a year his senior, kept house for him. At first she was glad to have the Ransomes board at the farm. It meant a comfortable monthly income and little extra work. Ransome left each mornign at eight. He returned each evening at six. His mother read a great deal, did a little needlework, and occasionally walked out to the road and up or down it for an hour or so. She seemed quite contented with life as she found it—in fact, her gentle reserve was proof armor against Bettina, who never quite dared ask her just what her son did in the city, nor a dozen other questions she was hungry to ask.

As for Ransome, he never mentioned his affairs. He paid his board promptly, fetched out papers and magazines, smoked a cigar after supper, sitting beside his mother, and retired early. Because of his unusual reticence, he became a sort of human mystery to Bettina and her brother. Bettina tried to make herself believe that there was something wrong about Ransome, possibly because she disliked him, and she tried to conjure up some hidden sorrow for the benefit of Mrs. Ransome; but the old lady's blue eyes were so serene, so apparently content with what they saw, that they silently belied any such idea as a peg upon which Bettina might hang the faded garments of a dead romance.

This little bucolic mystery became more involved when Ransome arranged with John Wales to pasture a mare on the farm. From that minute Bettina actually hated Ransome, maybe because he had never mentioned the fact that he owned a mare until the day he proffered John a generous monthly fee for pasturage and stable room for the animal. Bettina grew even more secretly incensed when Ransome had the two extra stalls in the stable torn down and rebuilt at his own expense; he had them made into one, fitted with enamel drinking basin and manger, the flooring relaid with corrugated cement, and the sides of the box stall padded with light, expensive canvas.

This was the last straw, so far as Bettina was concerned. "For a dumb brute!" she observed as she talked with her brother one evening. "And thousands of hungry children, up to the city!"

John Wales, wise in his generation, forbore to comment. He admitted that the improvements were rather extravagant, yet they

had cost him nothing. And he called Bettina's attention to the fact that one hundred and fifty dollars a month—to say nothing of ten dollars a month for pasturage—was not to be picked up every day. Bettina sniffed and told John that he didn't pick it up every day.

John showed superior wisdom in not arguing this technicality with his sister.

Bettina had the Wales features—the keen, brown eyes, high-bridged nose, ruddy cheeks, and the slightly pendulous lower lip, quite pronounced in her case, possibly because she had never married; less pronounced in John's case, maybe for the same reason. Bettina was kindly disposed, especially toward women. Her type was a bit masculine. She always carried herself a little straighter when there was a man about, when her lower lip would draw up, suggesting the mouth of a child on the verge of tears, yet determined not to cry. And because Bettina all but adored Ransome's mother, she tolerated Ransome and the black mare Sheila.

Sheila arrived at Norcross one morning in an express car, with an attendant, who shivered in the October breeze. The mare was warmly blanketed. The man took a receipt from John for the safe delivery of the mare. That day, when Bettina stepped to the doorway to see why John had not come in to the noon dinner, her lower lip was drawn up tight. She snatched her shawl from the feather bed in the north bedroom a few seconds later, and marched out into the raw wind. She headed straight for the stable.

As she pushed back the door of the new box stall her lower lip sagged. John, his hands in his pockets, was leaning up against a side of the stall staring at the mare. Apparently he did not see Bettina in the doorway, although he must have heard her; the sliding door was new and the wheels had creaked when she pushed it open. The mare, her blanket off and her jet-black sides as glossy as new silk, was daintily munching hay. Bettina drew a long breath, tried to speak, and then she also stared.

Such an animal! From velvet muzzle to undocked tail she stood the living statue of perfection in horseflesh. The sensitive nostrils were belled, and moved gently. The big, soft-hued, dark eyes were full set, intelligent, all but human in their expression. The thin, pointed ears, mildly inquisitive, alert, slanted forward as the mare turned her head. And such a head! So compact, slender, strong, proud—too proud to show fear at strangers; too sensitive to show indifference! Bettina forgot for the moment why she had come.

"Good Lord, Betty!" exclaimed John, realizing her presence.

"John!" reprimanded Bettina.

"I forgot about dinner," continued John, dovetailing this statement with his expletive. "Say, Betty, she cost twenty thousand dollars, in Arabia. And how much more to get her here, goodness knows."

"Ransome tell you that?"

"Yes, when he spoke to me about the pasture. Look here, Betty." And John lifted the soft plaid blanket from the rack and held it up. Embroidered in old gold and rose, on the hood, just where the cheek piece of a bridle would come was the word, "Sheila."

"Irish!" said Bettina.

"What—the stitching?"

"No! The name."

"Well, so's Ransome." John gestured toward the stall fittings. "Do you wonder!"

"A dumb brute," sniffed Bettina.

"Nope!" And John's lower lip drew up. "I've owned a few horses in the last forty years. I know something about 'em. This mare is human, so far as brain goes. Wonder what Ransome wants with such a horse?"

"He must be rich," suggested Bettina. "And dinner's cold, by this time."

"That's so. Guess I'll blanket her again."

"Did *you* take that blanket off, John?"

"Why not? I wanted to look at her. I guess you would have, too."

John glanced at his sister. Then he put his arm about her shoulders and his old, weathered face was tender with solicitude. Bettina shrugged away from him, but swayed back again and stood leaning against him and gazing out through the doorway toward the October sea. Her eyes were blurred with tears.

"What is it, Betty?"

"I don't know. I guess I'm a fool." And she wiped her eyes with the corner of her shawl. "Don't laugh, John, but anything so beautiful as that horse—I just can't help it—it's like autumn in the woods—or that dog we saw, that thoroughbred, at the show in New York. Pshaw!" And Bettina drew herself together as she thought of dinner, red eyelids—and Mrs. Ransome.

But John understood. He, too, had felt

a lump come in his throat when he had first looked at the mare. The lump had subsided as he turned a practical eye to her points. But he understood. There were some things that, almost unreasonably, affected him suddenly and strangely; the veterans marching to fife and drum and bearing the tattered old flag; and that thoroughbred sheep-dog at the New York dog show. John grinned. He could not recall ever having felt any sentiment about a cow.

The mystery which Bettina had conjured up for herself was irritating. It grew even more irritating. Ransome, of whom Bettina was secretly in awe, seldom said anything about the mare, and never why, he had purchased her, nor when, and what he intended to do with her. Bettina did not realize that all this was none of her business, and possibly if she had, it would have but aggravated her the more.

Each morning, before breakfast, Ransome stepped briskly out to the stable, fed Sheila, saw that she had water, talked to her as one would to a human companion, and then, with her soft muzzle against his cheek, he would bid her good-by, as she rubbed her nose against him, quite as though she understood all that he had said. In fact, Sheila did understand, in her way. She knew that Ransome cared for her more than for anything in the world.

Then Ransome would come in to breakfast, a glow on his cheek, and a light in his eye that transfigured him. His animation was almost boyish, until, perhaps, he caught Bettina glancing his way, when he would become at once the business man, his lips hard, his eyes unreadable, but always courteous in a formal way. Bettina guessed shrewdly that half of Mrs. Ransome's serene happiness had its source in the happiness of her son. As for the other half—perhaps Mrs. Ransome had had a good husband.

When Ransome returned from the city each evening, promptly at six, he would march briskly to the stable—even before he entered the house, feed the mare, talk to her and bid her good night. Then he would come in, greet his mother, always fetching a book or magazine for her, and after supper, would sit and smoke his cigar, read the paper, and then retire. Occasionally at the table he would mention some happening in town, but he did so quite impersonally. He never was heard to talk about the mare, even to his mother. And, if questioned about Sheila, his answer was usually curt.

All that winter Ransome came and went as regularly as the train, which maintained a prompt schedule. Among the bucolic humorists of Norcross he became known as "The Minute Man." The last to hear of the nickname were his hosts, John and Bettina Wales. Finally they also adopted this nickname between themselves. And Ransome *was* prompt. He prided himself on it. He paid his board, pasture fee, and incidental bills almost to the minute on the first of each month.

Once, John Wales suggested to Ransome that Sheila would make a first-class saddle animal. Ransome frowned. "Never had a strap on her, and she never shall." Then he turned as if to go, swung back and fronted John. "Let me see, I paid our board, and pasture and feed bill for Sheila on the first, as usual, didn't I?"

"Why, yes. You always do."

Ransome turned away and strode to the house. John did some thinking. "That's his way of telling me to mind my own business. And he's right. I wish to goodness Bettina wouldn't plague me about that mare all the time."

Then came spring with its alternate sunshine and showers. Sprouts of green showed in the dead yellow of the pasture. The haze of melting snow was swept from the air. Sheila grew restless. John asked if he had not better turn the mare out. Ransome said the air was too chill for her. Finally Sheila refused to eat, and Ransome was forced to turn her out in the spring sunshine of the meadows. When she stepped from the yard into the pasture lot, daintily, her nostrils quivering, curious, her ears tense, and when finally, after sniffing the ground, she broke into her stride—the stride of a young horse that has never known harness or saddle—and swept like the wind across the pasture lot and down toward the cliff edge of the sea, John Wales, standing beside Ransome, drew a deep breath. "Good Lord!" he whispered. "She doesn't touch the ground. Her feet are too proud to touch it."

Ransome smiled, bit the end from a cigar, turned away, and then stepped back to the gate. He whistled. From the far end of the pasture Sheila heard and came. Her mane danced in the sunlight and her arched tail floated on the breeze of her coming. She rounded up to the gate, ears pricked forward,

her flanks gently heaving, her muscles quivering with eagerness.

"All right," said Ransome.

The mare hesitated as though disappointed, then whirled and swung away toward the sea again, the sunlight glistening on her glossy sides.

Mrs. Ransome and Bettina had been watching from the veranda. Bettina glanced at Ransome's mother. A quick, furtive look of pain shot through the old lady's eyes, and was gone. She smiled. "My son thinks the world of her," she said.

Bettina said nothing until she was in the kitchen. Then: "Poor Mrs. Ransome! The brute! He loves nothing but that horse. Horse lover—woman hater. The brute!"

If Ransome had purchased the mare to use for breeding purposes, for the saddle, or to drive, Bettina could have understood. But simply to own an expensive animal as a pet——

Bettina talked about it with her brother in the kitchen, that evening. John shook his head.

"That's his business, Betty. He pays us well."

"No good will come of it," asserted Bettina. "If you read your Bible oftener you would know that. No good will come of it."

"Oh, shucks, Betty! We're getting some good out of it, ain't we?"

Bettina sniffed and dipped her fingers in the dish water. It was hot—too hot. She poured in a dipper of cold water aggressively, her manner a rebuke. John had not known his sister forty-odd years for nothing. He picked up his hat and strode out to the barnyard.

Traffic was heavy in the downtown section of the city that July afternoon. Toward five o'clock the New York streets became congested with one of those sudden, inexplicable rushes of vehicles and pedestrians that come without warning. In this tangle of private motors, taxis, traps, buses, trolleys, and drays, a "horsey" looking individual in a light, red-wheeled runabout, was trying to drive a restive black horse, a horse evidently not familiar with city streets. The animal behaved fairly well while among the vehicles in the block, but when a street-crossing was opened he bolted across as though seeking safety on the other side. A woman, leaning from a limousine, pitied the horse. A pedestrian, whose shoulder he had just grazed, called the driver a fool, with unnecessary embellishments. A traffic officer swore under his breath. But once again in the slowly moving traffic, the horse settled down to a safe pace.

Ransome, in a crowd of pedestrians waiting to cross the street, glanced at his watch. He would barely have time to catch his afternoon train. As usual, he had planned his time to the minute, but he had not foreseen the unusual conditions. As he stepped from the walk to the pavement, the black horse nickered a shrill challenge. Ransome stopped in his stride and turned his head. A motor car, swinging round the corner, smoothly, swiftly, silently, struck him, passed over him, stopped. A woman screamed. A man, who had seen the accident, shouted. The roar of movement subsided suddenly. Then a scuffle of feet, the babble of questioning and answering, the sinister clang of an ambulance gong.

The traffic officer, taking the number of the motor car, glanced at his watch. It was just half past four. "I saw it," he said, speaking in a low tone. "He stepped right in front of you—wasn't looking. He was rubbering at that black devil of a horse."

An hour later newsboys were crying the accident.

Ransome never regained consciousness. Among his personal effects were found a notebook and a card, giving his name and address, and whom to notify in case of accident. The police dispatched a wire to Mrs. Ransome, at Norcross.

That afternoon as John Wales was working in the hay field Bettina called to him. There was an imperative note in her voice that quickened his stride toward the house. As he went he looked at his old, heavy, silver watch. It was half past four. Within fifty yards of the house he saw that Bettina was gesturing toward the pasture lot. Even then he could not imagine what was the matter. When he came round the end of the house he saw Sheila rearing and striking at the yard gate.

Fearing that the mare would injure herself, John ran toward her. Out of breath, he pounded up to the gate and waved his arms and tried to shout at her. But the mare continued to batter at the gate. She reared, lunged, and struck with lightning-quick fore feet. The top board crashed down. John ran to the stable and caught up a buggy whip. As he ran back he glimpsed Mrs.

Ransome on the veranda. Her face was white and drawn. She was wringing her hands and calling out to him. Beside Mrs. Ransome stood Bettina, trying to quiet her.

John reached over the gate and struck the mare across the chest as she reared. Sheila struck back at him, squealed with rage, and, whirling, swept away as straight as a speeding bullet toward the eastern pasture fence and the sea. John dropped the whip and stood watching her, his face blank, his arms quivering. He saw the afternoon sunlight flicker across Sheila's back and flanks, he saw her toss her head, he heard her nicker shrilly. She was at the fence, and ten feet beyond it ran the abrupt edge of the cliff, and, eighty feet below, the sea. The mare reared, struck at the fence, and where she had been but a second before was a splintered gap, and no living thing from end to end of the long cliff line.

Bettina came to John and touched his arm. He gazed stupidly at her. Together they walked across the pasture lot. John turned, as though to go back. Bettina clutched his arm. Without speaking he went with her, his mind confused, his eyes blurred, the earth, the sky, the sea, unreal, a dream, a fantasy. They stepped through the gap in the fence. With Bettina still clutching his arm they crept crouching to the edge of the cliff. A black something shone awash in the far green, disappeared, rose again, disappeared——

When they reached the house, Mrs. Ransome was standing in the doorway, tense, white, speechless. The local station agent was on his way back to the road. Bettina was about to speak when Mrs. Ransome, reaching past her, gave John the telegram from New York. John read it, stammered, wiped his forehead, glanced at the telegram again, and then at the clock above the fireplace in the living room. "Sheila's gone, too," he said stupidly, and not knowing what to do with the telegram, he crowded past Mrs. Ransome and his sister and laid it on the center table.

Ransome had been killed at half past four that afternoon. At exactly half past four black Sheila had suddenly gone crazy—Sheila the gentle, the sensitive, the beautiful. Ransome's mother was weeping. Bettina Wales was trying to comfort her. But John Wales, whose ancestors had believed in witchcraft, realized the human tragedy but vaguely. He plodded out to Sheila's stall and there, on his knees, he prayed fervently. And his prayer was for the soul of black Sheila.

More stories by Mr. Knibbs soon.

PARIS AWARDED NEXT OLYMPICS

PARIS has been awarded the eighth revival of the Olympic Games, to be held in 1924. Four years later Amsterdam, Holland, will have the honor of conducting this classic of the athletic world. The first modern Olympic was held in Athens, Greece, in 1896. The French capital had the games in 1900, and in 1904 they were held in the United States, as a feature of the World's Fair at St. Louis. The fourth revival of the games was held in Athens in 1906. London had them in 1908 and Stockholm in 1912. The World War caused the abandonment of the 1916 games, which had been awarded to Berlin. Last year they were held in Belgium, Antwerp being the scene of the track and field events.

The United States has won the track and field championships at each revival, as well as a goodly proportion of the other athletic and sporting events that go to make up the Olympic program. Last year our track team piled up a total of 212 points, more than twice the number scored by Finland, winner of second place. Sweden and England gave Finland a close battle for second honors.

The Hidden Places

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "One Good Turn," "Poor Man's Rock," Etc.

Hollister knew that he was alive, but the British war office said that he had been killed in France, and when he returned from a German prison camp, he found that Myra, his wife, who had written to him confessing that she loved another man, had married again and left England. His comfortable fortune had gone to her upon the official report of his death, and now, his face so grotesquely scarred by wounds that passers-by averted their eyes, and with only a few hundred dollars capital, he went to British Columbia, where he had a timber tract that had not been sold in the hurried settlement of his affairs when he enlisted. Investigation proved that the tract, in the valley of the Toba River, did not contain nearly so much timber as had been represented when he bought it. He lived for a time in a cabin that had been built on his land, and learned that Myra was living with her new husband, Blaird, an English remittance man, in a near-by cabin, and carrying on a flirtation with Charlie Mills, a lumberman. On the steamer returning to Vancouver, he met Doris Cleveland, who had been injured in an accident while living with her brothers on Hollister's land, and was blind. He had found one person who did not turn away from his battered face, and in the spring they were married and returned to the valley. Hollister had not told her of his previous marriage. He hired men to help him cut his timber, Mills among them. Lawanne, a writer, visited the valley on a hunting trip, and when he went away promised to return for the winter. Hollister's former wife—still his legal wife—showed no sign of recognizing him, but one day Doris told him that Myra had spoken to her of having been married to a Bob Hollister who had been killed in France. But neither of the women seemed to have any suspicion that he was the same man.

(A Four-Part Story—Part III.)

CHAPTER XIV.

ALL that summer the price of cedar went creeping up. For a while this was only in keeping with the slow ascension of commodity costs which continued long after the guns ceased to thunder. But presently cedar on the stump, in the log, in the finished product, began to soar while other goods slowed or halted altogether in their mysterious climb—and cedar was not a monopoly. Shingles and dressed cedar were scarce, that was all.

For the last two years of the war most of the available man power and machinery of British Columbia loggers had been given over to aëroplane spruce. Carpenters had laid down their tools and gone to the front. House builders had ceased to build houses while the vast cloud of European uncertainty hung over the nation. All across North America the wind and weather had taken toll of roofs—and these must be repaired. Cedar shingles began to make fortunes for those who dealt in them on a large scale. By midsummer Carr's mill on the Toba worked night and day.

"Crowd your work, Hollister," Carr advised him. "I've been studying this cedar situation from every angle. There will be an unlimited demand and rising prices for about another year. By that time every logging concern will be getting out cedar. So get that stuff of yours out while the going is good. We can use it all."

But labor was scarce. All the great industries were absorbing men, striving to be first in the field of post-war production. Hollister found it difficult to enlarge his crew. It was a lonely hillside where his timber stood. Loggers preferred the big camps and the less primitive conditions under which they could live and work there. Hollister saw that he would be unable to extend his operations until deep snow shut down some of the northern camps that fall. Even so he did well enough, much better than he had expected in the beginning. He had Bill Hayes, he of the gray mustache and the ear-piercing faller's cry. Bill, though, was liable to stand the monotonous labor of the woods just so long—and then, in a reaction from the hard work, sordid living, and the indefinable cramping of the spirit that grows upon a man through months of wear-

ing exile, was apt to make for town and a brief pyrotechnic career among the white lights, leaving his employer flat for a time.

Hollister's other man was negligible—a bovine lump of flesh without personality—born to hew wood and draw water for men of enterprise.

And there was always Mills—Mills who wanted to make a stake and "get to hell out of here," and who did not go, although the sum to his credit in Hollister's account book was creeping toward a thousand dollars, so fierce and unceasing an energy did Mills expend upon the fragrant cedar.

Hollister himself accounted for no small profit. Like Mills he worked under a spur. He wrestled stoutly with opportunity. He saw beyond the cedar on that green slope. With a living assured he sought fortune, aspired to things as yet beyond his reach, leisure, an ampler way of life.

This measure of prosperity loomed not so distant. When he took stock of his resources in October he found himself with nearly three thousand dollars in hand and the bulk of his cedar still standing. Half that was directly the gain derived from a rising market. Labor was his only problem. If he could get labor, and shingles held the upper price levels, he would make a killing in the next twelve months. After that, with experience gained and working capital, the forested region of the British Columbia coast lay before him as a field of operations.

Late in October, when the first southward flight of the wild duck began to wing over the valley, old Bill Hayes and Sam Ballard downed tools and went to town. The itch of the wandering foot had laid hold of them. The pennies burned their pockets. Ballard frankly wanted a change. Hayes declared he wanted only a week's holiday, to see a show or two and buy some clothes. He would surely be back.

"Yes, he'll be back," Mills commented with ironic emphasis. "He'll be broke in a week, and the first camp that pays his fare out will get him. There's no fool like a logger. Strong in the back and weak in the head—the best of us."

But Mills himself stayed on. What kept him, Hollister wondered? Did he have some objective that centered about Myra Bland? Was Myra holding him like a pawn in some obscure game that she played to feed her vanity?

Sometimes Hollister wondered if he was not himself overfanciful, too sensitive to moods and impressions. Then he would observe some significant interchange of looks between Mills and Myra and be sure of currents of feeling, furtive and powerful, sweeping about those two. He perceived that Mills suffered. When he rested from his work, when he sat quiescent beside the fire where they ate at noon together, that cloak of melancholy brooding wrapped Mills close. He seldom talked. When he did there was in his speech a resentful inflection like that of a man who smarts under some injury, some injustice, some deep hurt which he may not divulge but which nags him to the limits of his endurance.

Hollister was Mills' sole company after the other two men left. They would work within sight of each other all day. They ate together at noon. Now and then he asked Mills down to supper out of pity for the man's complete isolation.

And while Hollister watched Mills, he became conscious that Myra was watching *him*, puzzling over him. It was a disturbing discovery. Myra could study him with impunity. Doris could not see this scrutiny of her husband by her neighbor. And Myra did not seem to care what Hollister saw. She would look frankly at him with a question in her eyes. What that question might be Hollister refused even to consider. She never again made any remarks to Doris about her first husband, about the similarity of name. But now and then she would speak of something that happened when she was a girl, some casual reference to the first days of the war, to her life in London, and her eyes would turn to Hollister. But he was always on his guard, always on the alert against these pitfalls of speech. He was never sure whether these were deliberate traps or merely the half-regretful, backward looking of a woman to whom life had not lately been kind.

Nevertheless, it kept his nerves on edge. For he valued his home that was in the making. There was a restfulness in Doris Cleveland which he dreaded to imperil because he had the feeling that he would never find its like again. He felt that Myra's mere presence was like a sword swinging over his head. There was no armor he could put on against that weapon if it were decreed it should fall.

Hollister soon perceived that if he were not to lose ground he must have labor. Men

would not come seeking work so far out of the beaten track. In addition, there were matters afoot that required attention. So he took Doris with him and went down to Vancouver. Almost the first man he met on Cordova Street when he went about in search of bolt cutters was Bill Hayes, sober and unshaven and a little crestfallen.

"Why didn't you come back?" Hollister asked.

Hayes grinned sheepishly.

"Kinda hated to," he admitted. "Pulled the same old stuff—dry town, too. Shot the roll. Dang it, I'd ought to had more sense. Well, that's the way she goes. You want men?"

"Sure I want men," Hollister said. "Look here, if you can rustle five or six men I'll make it easier for you all. I'll take up a cook for the bolt camp. And I won't shut down for anything but snow too deep to work in."

"You're on. I think I can rustle some men. Try it, anyhow."

Hayes got a crew together in twenty-four hours. Doris attended to her business, which required the help of her married cousin and a round of certain shops. Almost the last article they bought was a piano, the one luxury Doris longed for, a treat they had promised themselves as soon as the cedar got them out of the financial doldrums.

"I suppose it's extravagance," Doris said, her fingers caressing the smooth mahogany and the black and ivory of the keyboard, "but it's one of the few things one doesn't need eyes for."

She had proved that to Hollister long ago. When she could see she must have had an extraordinary faculty for memorizing music. Her memory seemed to have indelibly engraved upon it all the music she had ever played.

Hollister smiled indulgently and ordered the instrument cased for shipping. It went up on the same steamer that gave passage to them and six woodsmen and their camp cook. There were some bits of new furniture also.

This necessitated another room being built on. But this was a simple matter for able hands accustomed to rough woodwork. So in a little while their house extended visibly, took on a homelier aspect. The sweet peas and flaming poppies had wilted under the early frosts. Now a rug or two and a few pictures gave to the floors and walls a cheerful note of color that the flowers had given to their dooryard during the season of their bloom. About the time this was done, and the cedar camp working at an accelerated pace, Archie Lawanne came back to the Toba. He walked into Hollister's quite unexpectedly, one afternoon. Myra was there.

It seemed to Hollister that Lawanne's greeting was a little eager, a trifle expectant, that he held Myra's outstretched hand just a little longer than mere acquaintance justified. Hollister glanced at Mills, sitting by. Mills had come down to help Hollister on the boom, and Doris had called them both in for a cup of tea. Mills was staring at Lawanne with narrowed eyes. His face wore the expression of a man who sees impending calamity, sees it without fear or surprise, faces it only with a little dismay. He set down his cup and lighted a cigarette. His fingers, brown, muscular, the heavy fingers of a strong-handed man, shook slightly.

"You know it's good to be back in this old valley," Lawanne said. "I have half a notion to become a settler. A fellow could build up quite an estate on one of these big flats. He could grow almost anything here that will grow in this latitude. And when he wanted to experience the doubtful pleasures of civilization they would always be waiting for him outside."

"If he had the price," Mills put in shortly.

"Precisely," Lawanne returned, "and cared to pay it—for all he got."

"That's what it is to be a man and free," Myra observed. "You can go where you will and when—live as you wish."

"It all depends on what you mean by freedom," Lawanne replied. "Show me a free man. Where is there such? We're all slaves. Only some of us are too stupid to recognize our status."

"Slaves to what?" Myra asked. "You seem to have come back in a decidedly pessimistic frame of mind."

"Slaves to our own necessities; to other people's demands; to burdens we have assumed, or have had thrust upon us, which we haven't the courage to shake off. To something that keeps us pursuing this thing we call happiness. To struggle for fulfillment of ideals that can never be attained. Slaves to our environment, to social forces before which the individual is nothing. It's all rot to talk about the free man, the man whose soul is his own. Complete freedom

isn't even desirable, because to attain it you would have to withdraw yourself altogether from your fellows and become a law unto yourself in some remote solitude—and no sane person wants to do that, even to secure this mythical freedom which people prattle about and would recoil from if it were offered them. Yes, I'll have another cup, if you please, Mrs. Hollister."

Lawanne munched cake and drank tea, and talked as if he had been denied the boon of conversation for a long time. But that could hardly be, for he had been across the continent since he left there. He had been in New York and Washington and swung back to British Columbia by way of San Francisco.

"I read those two books of yours—or, rather, Bob read them to me," Doris said presently. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself for writing such a preposterous yarn as 'The Worm.' "

"Ah, my dear woman!"—Lawanne's face lit up with a sardonic smile—"I wish my publishers could hear you say that. 'The Worm' is good, sound trade-union goods, turned out in the very best manner of a thriving school of fiction smiths. It sold thirty thousand copies in the regular edition, and tons in the reprint."

"But there never were such invincible men and such a perfect creature of a woman," Doris persisted. "And the things they did—the strings you pulled. Life isn't like that. You know it isn't."

"Granted," Lawanne returned dryly. "But what did you think of 'The Man Who Couldn't Die?' "

"It didn't seem to me," Doris said slowly, "that the man who wrote the last book could possibly have written the first. That *was* life. Your man there was a real man and you made his hopes and fears, his love and sufferings very vivid. Your woman was real enough, too, but I didn't like her. It didn't seem to me she was worth the pain she caused."

"Neither did she seem so to Phillips, if you remember," Lawanne said. "That was his tragedy—to know his folly and still be urged blindly on because of her, because of his own illusions, which he knew he must cling to or perish. But wait till I finish the book I'm going to write this winter. I'm going to cut loose. I'm going to smite the Philistines—and the chances are," he smiled cynically, "they won't even be aware of the blow. Did you read those books?" He turned abruptly to Myra.

She nodded.

"Yes, but I refuse to commit myself," she said lightly. "There is no such thing as a modest author, and Mrs. Hollister has given you all the praise that's good for you."

Hollister and Mills went back to their work on the boom. When they finished their day's work Lawanne had gone down to Bland's with Myra. After supper, as Mills rose to leave for the upper camp, he said to Doris: "Have you got that book of his—about the fellow that couldn't die? I'd like to read it."

Doris gave him the book. He went away with it in his hand.

Hollister looked after him curiously. There was strong meat in Lawanne's book. He wondered if Mills would digest it. And he wondered a little if Mills regarded Lawanne as a rival, if he were trying to test the other man's strength by his work.

Away down the river, now that dark had fallen, the light in Bland's house shone yellow. There was a red, glowing spot on the river bank. That would be Lawanne's camp. Hollister shut the door on the chill October night and turned back to his easy-chair by the stove. Doris had finished her work. She sat at the piano, her fingers picking out some slow, languorous movement that he did not know, but which soothed him like a lullaby.

Vigorously he dissented from Lawanne's philosophy of enslavement. He, Hollister, was a free man. Yes, he was free—but only when he could shut the door on the past, only when he could shut away all the world just as he had but now shut out the valley, the cold, frosty night, his neighbors and his men, by the simple closing of a door. But he could not shut away the consciousness that they were there, that he must meet Myra and her vague questioning, Mills with his brooding air—he must see them again, be perplexed by them, perhaps find his own life, his own happiness, tangled in the web of their affairs. No man stood alone. No man could ever completely achieve mastery of his relations to his fellows. Until life became extinct men and women would be swayed and conditioned by blind human forces, governed by relations casual or intimate, imposed upon them by the very law of their being. Who was he to escape?

No, Hollister reflected, he could not insulate himself and Doris against this en-

vironment, against these people. They would have to take things as they came and be thankful they were no worse.

Doris left the piano. She sat on a low stool beside him, and leaned her brown head against him.

"It won't be so long before I have to go to town, Bob," she said dreamily. "I hope the winter is open so that the work goes on well. And sometimes I hope that the snow shuts everything down, so that you'll be there with me. I'm not very consistent, am I?"

"You suit *me,*" he murmured. "And I'll be there whether the work goes on or not."

"What an element of the unexpected is at work all the time," she said. "A year ago you and I didn't even know of each other's existence. I used to sit and wonder what would become of me. It was horrible sometimes to go about in the dark, existing like a plant in a cellar, longing for all that a woman longs for. And you were in pretty much the same boat."

"Worse," Hollister muttered, "because I sulked and brooded and raged against what had overtaken me. Yet if I hadn't reacted so violently I should never have come here to hide away from what hurts me. So I wouldn't have met you. That would almost make one think there is something in the destiny that you and Lawanne smile at."

"Destiny and chance—two names for the same thing, and that thing wholly unaccountable, beyond the scope of human foresight," Doris replied. "Things happen; that is all we can generally say. We don't know why. Speaking of Lawanne, I wonder if he really does intend to stay here this winter and write a book?"

"He says so."

"He'll be company for us," she reflected. "He's clever, and a little bit cynical, but I like him. He'll help to keep us from getting bored with each other."

"Do you think there is any danger of that?" Hollister inquired.

She tweaked his ear playfully.

"People do, you know. But I hardly think we shall. Not for a year or two, anyway. Not till the house gets full of the uneventful routine of domestic life. Then *you* may."

"Huh," he grunted derisively, "catch me. I know what I want and what contents me. We'll beat the game handily—and we'll beat it together. Why, good Lord, what would be the good of all this effort, only for you? Where would be the fun of working and planning and anticipating things? Nearly every man, I believe," he concluded thoughtfully, "keeps his gait because of some woman. There is always the shadow of a woman over him, the picture of some woman past, present, or future to egg him on to this or that."

"To keep him"—Doris laughed—"in the condition a poet once described as:

"'This fevered flesh that goes on groping, wailing
Toward the gloom.'"

They both laughed. They felt no gloom.

When Hollister went up to the works in the morning he found Mills humped on a box beside the fireplace in the old cabin, reading "The Man Who Couldn't Die." At noon he was gone somewhere. Over the noon meal in the split-cedar mess house the other bolt cutters spoke derisively of the man who laid off work for half a day to read a book. That was beyond their comprehension.

But Hollister thought he understood.

Later in the afternoon, as he came down the hill, he looked from the vantage of height and saw Lawanne's winter quarters already taking form on the river bank, midway between his own place and Bland's. It grew to completion rapidly in the next few days, taking on at last a shake roof of hand-dressed cedar to keep out the cold rains that now began to beat down, the forerunner of that interminable downpour which deluges the British Columbia coast from November to April.

For a month after that a lull seemed to come upon the slow march of events toward some unknown destiny of which Hollister nursed a strange prescience, that now rose strong in him and again grew so tenuous that he would smile at it for a fancy. Yet in that month there was no slack in the routine of affairs. The machinery of Carr's mill revolved through each twenty-four hours. Up on the hill Hollister's men felled trees with warning shouts and tumultuous crashings. They attacked the prone trunks with ax and saw and iron wedges, Lilliputians rending the body of a fallen giant. The bolt piles grew, they were hurled swiftly down the chute into the dwindling river, rafted to the mill.

All this time the price of shingles in the open market rose and rose like a tide

strongly on the flood, of which no man could prophesy the high-water mark. Money flowed to Hollister's pockets, to the pockets of his men. The value of his standing timber grew by leaps and bounds. And always Sam Carr, who had no economic illusions, urged Hollister on, predicting before long the inevitable reaction.

The days shortened. Through the long evenings Hollister's house became a sort of social center. Lawanne would come in after supper, sometimes inert, dumb, to sit in a corner smoking a pipe; again, filled with a curious exhilaration, to talk unceasingly of everything that came into his mind, to thump ragtime on the piano and sing a variety of inconsequential songs in a velvety baritone. Myra came often. So did Bland. So did Charlie Mills. Many evenings they were all there together. As the weeks went winging by, Doris, at the approach of the great blessing that was coming to them, grew prone to spend her time sitting back in a deep armchair, and Myra began to play for them, to sing for them—to come to the house in the day and help Doris with her work.

The snow began at last, drifting down out of a windless sky. Upon that, with a sudden fear lest a great depth should fall, lest the river should freeze and make exit difficult, Hollister took his wife to town. This was about the middle of November. Some three weeks later a son was born to them.

CHAPTER XV.

When they came back to the Toba, Hollister brought in a woman to relieve Doris of housework and help her take care of the baby—although Doris was jealous of that privilege. She was a typical mother in so far as she held the conviction that no one could so well as herself attend the needs of that small, red-faced, lusty-lunged morsel of humanity.

And as if some definite mark had been turned the winter season closed upon the valley in a gentle mood. The driving rains of the fall gave way to January snows. But the frost took no more than a tentative nibble now and then. Far up on the mountains the drifts piled deep, and winter mists blew in clammy wraiths across the shoulders of the hills. From those high, cold levels the warmth of day and the frosts that gnawed in chill darkness started intermittent slides, growling as they slipped swiftly down steep slopes, to end with a crash at the bottom of the hill or in the depths of a gorge. But the valley itself suffered no extremes of weather.

The river did not freeze. It fell to a low level, but not so low that Hollister ever failed to shift his cedar bolts from chute mouth to mill. There was seldom so much snow that his crew could not work. There was growing an appreciable hole in the heart of his timber limit. In another year there would be nothing left of those great cedars that were ancient when the first white man crossed the Rockies, nothing but a few hundred stumps.

With the coming of midwinter, one day succeeded another in placid routine. The work went on with clocklike precision. It had passed beyond a one-man struggle for economic foothold; it no longer held for him the feeling of a forlorn hope which he led against the forces of the wilderness. It was like a ball which he had started rolling downhill. It kept on whether he tended it or not. If he chose to take his rifle and go seeking venison, if he elected to sit by his fire reading a book, the cedars fell, their brown trunks were sawn and split, the bolts came sliding down the chute in reckonable, profitable quantities, to the gain of himself and his men.

Mills remained moody, working with that strange dynamic energy, sparing of words except that now and then he would talk to Hollister in brief, jerky sentences, in a manner which implied much and revealed nothing. Mills always seemed on the point of crying out some deep woe that burned within him, of seeking relief in some outpouring of speech—but he never did. At the most he would fling out some cryptic hint, bestow some malediction upon life in general. Hollister observed that he no longer had much traffic with the Blands. For weeks at a time he did not leave the bolt camp except to come down to Hollister's house.

Lawanne seemed to be a favored guest now at Bland's. Lawanne, too, worked upon his book—but by fits and starts, working, when he did work, with a feverish concentration. He had a Chinese boy for a house servant. He might be found at noon or at midnight sprawled in a chair beside a potbellied stove, scrawling in an ungainly hand across sheets of yellow paper. He had no set hours for work. When he had the vision and the fit was on and words came easily,

chance callers met with scant courtesy. But he had great stores of time to spare for all that. Some of it he spent at Bland's, waging an interminable contest at cribbage with Bland, coming up now and then with the Blands to spend an evening at Hollister's.

"It's about a man who wrecked his life by systematically undermining his own illusions about life," he made answer one day to Hollister's curious inquiry as to what the new book was about, "and of how finally a very assiduously cultivated illusion made him quite happy at last. Sound interesting?"

"How could he deliberately cultivate an illusion?" Doris asked. "If one's intelligence ever classifies a thing as an illusion no conscious effort will ever turn it into a reality."

"Oh, I didn't say *he* cultivated the illusion," Lawanne laughed.

"Besides, do you really think that illusions are necessary to happiness?" Doris persisted.

"To some people," Lawanne declared. "But let's not follow up that philosophy. We're getting into deep water. Let's wade ashore. We'll say whatever is right, and let it go at that. It will be quite all right for you to offer me a cup of tea, if your kitchen mechanic will condescend. That chink of mine is having a holiday with my shotgun, trying to bag a brace of grouse for dinner.

"This man Bland is the dizzy limit," Lawanne observed tartly when the tea and some excellent sandwiches presently appeared. "He bought another rifle the other day—paid forty-five bones for it. That makes four he has now. And they have to manage like the deuce to keep themselves in grub from one remittance day to the next. He's a study. You seldom run across such a combination of physical perfection and childlike irresponsibility. He was complaining about his limited income the other day.

"I suggested that right here in this valley he could earn a considerable number of shekels if he cared to work. He merely smiled amiably and said he didn't think he cared to take on a laborer's job. It left a chap no time for himself, you know. I suppose he'll vegetate here till he comes into that money he's waiting for. He refers to that as if it were something which pertained to him by divine right, something which freed him from any obligation to make any effort to overcome the sordid way in which they live at present."

"He doesn't consider it sordid," Hollister said. "Work is what he considers sordid. He enjoys himself tramping around with a gun, spending an afternoon to catch half a dozen six-inch trout."

"But it *is* sordid," Lawanne persisted. "Were you ever in their house?"

Hollister shook his head.

"It isn't as comfortable as your men's bunk house. They have boxes for chairs, a rickety table, a stove about ready to fall to pieces. There are cracks in the walls and the roof that a rat could crawl through—or there would be if Mrs. Bland didn't go about stuffing them up with moss and old newspapers. Why can't a gentleman, an athlete and a sportsman, make his quarters something a little better than a Siwash would be contented with? Especially if he has prevailed on a very charming woman to share his joys and sorrows. Some of these days Mr. Bland will wake up and find his wife has gone off with some enterprising chap who is less cocksure and more ambitious."

"Would you blame her?" Doris asked casually.

"Bless your soul, no," Lawanne laughed. "If I were a little more romantic I might run away with her myself. What a tremendous jar that would give Bland's exasperating complacency. I believe he's a hangover from that prehistoric time when men didn't believe that any woman had a soul—that a woman was something in which a man acquired a definite property right, merely by marrying her."

Doris chuckled.

"I can imagine how Mr. Bland would look if he heard you," she said.

"He'd only smile in a superior manner," Lawanne declared. "You couldn't get Bland fussed up by any mere assertion. The only thing that would stir him deeply would be a direct assault on that vague abstraction which he calls his honor—or on his property. Then he would very likely smite the wrongdoer with all the efficiency of outraged virtue."

Hollister continued to muse on this after Lawanne went away. He thought Lawanne's summing up a trifle severe. Nevertheless, it was a pretty clear statement of fact. Bland certainly seemed above working either for money or to secure a reasonable

degree of comfort for himself and his wife. He sat waiting for a windfall to restore his past splendor of existence, which he sometimes indirectly admitted meant cricket, a country home, horses and dogs, and a whirl among the right sort of people in London now and then. That sort of thing and that sort of man was what Myra had fallen in love with. Hollister felt a mild touch of contempt for them both.

His wife had also let her thoughts focus on the Blands.

"I wonder," she said, "if they are so very poor? Why don't you offer Bland a job? Maybe he is too proud to ask."

Bland was not too proud to ask for certain things, it seemed. About a week later he came to Hollister and in a most casual manner said: "I say, old man, can you let me have a hundred dollars? My quarterly funds are delayed a bit."

Hollister gave him the money without question. As he watched Bland stride away through the light blanket of snow, and a little later noticed him disappear among the thickets and stumps going toward the Carr camp, where supplies were sold as a matter of accommodation rather than for profit, Hollister reflected that there was a mild sort of irony in the transaction. He wondered if Myra knew of her husband's borrowing. If she had any inkling of the truth how would she feel? For he knew that Myra was proud, sensitive, independent in spirit far beyond her capacity for actual independence. If she even suspected his identity, the borrowing of that money would surely sting her.

For a long time Myra had ceased to trouble him with the irritating uncertainty of their first meetings. She apparently accepted him and his mutilated face as part of Doris Hollister's background and gave him no more thought or attention. Always in the little gatherings at his house, Hollister contrived to keep in the shadow, to be an onlooker rather than a participant—just as Charlie Mills did. Hollister was still sensitive about his face, particularly because he dreaded any comment upon his disfigurement reaching his wife's ears. He had succeeded so well in thus effacing himself that Myra seemed to regard him as if he were no more than a grotesque bit of furniture to which she had become accustomed. All the sense of sinister possibilities in her presence, all that uneasy dread of her nearness, that consciousness of her as an impending threat, had finally come to seem nothing more than mere figments of his imagination. Especially since their son was born. That seemed to establish the final bond between himself and Doris.

He could look at Myra and wonder if this *was* the same woman to whom he had been married. He had got so far beyond Myra that their past life together seemed unreal. And lately there had settled upon him a surety that to Myra it must all be as unreal—that she could not possibly harbor any suspicion that he was her legal husband, hiding behind a mask of scars—and that even if she did suspect, that suspicion could never be translated into action which could deflect ever so slightly the current of his present existence.

He was working at the chute mouth when Bland came to ask for that loan. He continued to work there. Not long after he noticed Bland leave his own house and go down the flat he saw Myra coming along the bank. That was nothing. There was a well-beaten path there that she traveled nearly every afternoon. He felt his first tentative misgiving when he saw that Myra did not stop at the house, that she walked past and straight toward where he worked. And this slight misgiving grew to a certainty of impending trouble when she came up, when she faced him.

Something besides the winter air had kindled an almost unnatural glow in her eyes. They were like dusky pansies. She was, he thought, with curious self-detachment, a strikingly beautiful woman. And he recalled that anger or excitement, any emotion that stirred her, always made her seem more alluring, always made her glow and sparkle as if in such moments she was a perfect human jewel flashing in the sun of life.

She nodded to Hollister, looked down on the cedar blocks floating in the cold river, stood a moment to watch the swift descent of other bolts hurtling down the chute and joining their fellows with successive splashes.

"You let Jim have some money this morning?" she said then.

"Yes," Hollister replied.

"Don't let him have any more," she said bluntly. "You may never get it back. Why should you supply him with money that you've worked for when he won't make any effort to get it for himself? You're altogether too free-handed, Robin."

Hollister stood speechless. She looked at

him with a curious, half-amused expectancy. She knew him. No one but Myra had ever called him that. It had been her pet name for him in the old days. She knew him. He leaned on his pike pole waiting for what was to follow. This revelation was only a preliminary. Something like a dumb fury came over Hollister. Why did she reveal this knowledge of him? For what purpose? He felt his secure foundations crumbling.

"So you recognize me?"

"Did you think I woudn't?" she said slowly. "Did you think your only distinguishing characteristic was the shape of your face? I've been sure of you for months."

"Ah!" he said. "What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing. Nothing. What is there to do?"

"Then why reveal this knowledge?" he demanded harshly. "Why drag out the old skeleton and rattle it for no purpose? Or have you some purpose?"

Myra sat down on a fallen tree. She drew the folds of a heavy brown coat closer about her and looked at him steadily.

"No," she replied. "I can't say that I have any definite purpose except—that I want to talk to you. And it seemed that I could talk to you better if we stopped pretending. We can't alter facts by pretending they don't exist, can we?"

"I don't attempt to alter them," he said. "I accept them and let it go at that. Why don't you?"

"I do," she assured him; "but when I find myself compelled to accept your money to pay for the ordinary necessaries of living I feel myself being put in an intolerable position. It galls me to have Jim borrow from you. He may intend to pay it back. But he won't; it will somehow never be quite convenient. And I've squandered enough of your money. I feel like a thief sometimes when I watch you work. You must hate me. Do you, Robin?"

Hollister stirred the snow absently with the pike-pole point. He tried to analyze his feelings, and he found it difficult.

"I don't think so," he said at last. "I'm rather indifferent. If you meddled with things, I'd not only hate you, I think I would want to destroy you. But you needn't worry about the money. If Bland doesn't repay the hundred dollars it won't break me. I won't lend him any more, if it disturbs you. But that doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is whether you are going to upset everything in some rash mood that you may some time have."

"Do you think I might do that?"

"How do I know what you may do?" he returned. "You threw me into the discard when your fancy turned to some one else. You followed your own bent with a certain haste as soon as I was reported dead. I had ceased to be man enough for you, but my money was still good enough for you. When I recall those things I think I can safely say that I haven't the least idea what you may do next. You aren't faring any too well. That's plain enough. I have seen men raise Cain out of sheer devilishness, out of a desperate notion to smash everything because they were going smash themselves. Some people seem able to amuse themselves by watching other people squirm. Maybe you are like that. You had complete power over me once. I surrendered to that gladly, then. You appear to have a faculty for making men dance to any tune you care to play. But all the power you have now, so far as I'm concerned, is to make me suffer a little more by giving the whole ugly show away. No, I haven't the least idea what you may do. I don't know you at all."

"My God, no, you don't," she flung out. "You don't! If you ever had, we wouldn't be where we are now."

"Probably it's as well," Hollister returned. "Even if you had been true, you'd have faltered when I came back looking like this."

"And that would have been worse than what I did do," she said, "wouldn't it?"

"Are you justifying it as an act of mercy to me?" he asked.

Myra shook her head.

"No. I don't feel any great necessity for justifying my actions. No more than you should feel compelled to justify yours. The war and your idea of duty, of service, pried us apart. After that, we both wanted happiness. We both grabbed at it when it came within reach. We will probably continue doing that."

"I have it," Hollister said defiantly. "That is why I don't want any ghosts of the old days haunting me now."

"If you have happiness, you are very fortunate," she murmured. "As for the old days—during the war—you don't know how I longed for you then, Robin. Then I began to resent your complete absorption by

the war machine. Then you got dim, like the figure of a man walking away down a long road. And then—another man obscured you altogether. We want so to be happy. We try so hard. And mostly we fail."

Her eyes filled with tears, round drops that gathered slowly in the corners of her puckered lids, and spilled over the soft curves of her cheeks. She did not look at Hollister. She stared at the gray river. She made a little gesture, as if she dumbly answered some futile question, and her hands dropped idly into her lap.

"I feel guilty," she continued after a little, "not because I failed to play up to the rôle of the faithful wife. I couldn't help that. But I shouldn't have kept that money, I suppose. Still, you were dead. Money meant nothing to you. It was in my hands and I needed it, or thought I did. You must have had a hard time, Robin, coming back to civil life a beggar."

"Yes, but not for lack of money," Hollister replied. "I didn't need much and I had enough. It was the horror of being alone, of finding men and women always uneasy in my presence, always glad to get away from me. People who must be around me seem to get used to me, whether they like it or not. But at first I nearly went mad. However, that's past. I have got a start. Unless this skeleton is dragged out of the closet I shall get on well enough."

"I shall not drag him out, Robin," Myra assured him, with a faint smile. "Some day I hope I'll be able to give you back that money."

"What became of it?" He voiced a question which had been recurring in his mind for a year. "You must have had over forty thousand dollars when I was reported dead in 'seventeen."

Myra shrugged her shoulders.

"We were married six months after that. Jim has some rather well-to-do people over there. They were all very nice to me. I imagine they thought he was marrying money. Perhaps he thought so himself. He had nothing except a quarterly pittance. He has no sense of values, and I was not much better. There is always this estate which he will come into, to discount the present. He had seen service the first year of the war. He was wounded and invalided home. Then he served as a military instructor. Finally when the Americans came in he was allowed to resign. So we came across to the States.

"We went here and there, spending as we went. We cut a pretty wide swath, too, most of the time. There were several disastrous speculations. Presently it was all gone. Then we came up here where we can live on next to nothing. We shall have to stay here another eighteen months. The fool and his money—you know. And it wasn't our money. That hurts me now. That's why when Jim calmly told me that he had borrowed a hundred dollars from you I felt that was a little more than I could stand. Don't lend him any more. He really doesn't need it.

"Borrowing money with Jim, is just like asking for a smoke. He's queer. If he made a bet with you and lost, he'd pay up promptly, if he had to pawn his clothes and mine, too. Borrowed money, however, seems to come in a different category. When this estate comes into his hands perhaps I shall be able to return some of this money that we wasted. I think that—and the fact that I'm just a little afraid to break away and face the world alone—is chiefly what makes me remain with him now."

"Is it as bad as that?" Hollister asked.

"Don't misunderstand me, Robin," she protested. "I'm not an abused wife or anything like that. But he doesn't love me any more than I love him. Maybe I'm what Archie Lawanne calls a romantic sentimentalist, but I'm not just a woman to be petted when the fit is on and then told in effect to run along and play. There must be men who understand that. Meanwhile—I mark time, that's all."

"You appear," Hollister said a little grimly, "to have acquired certain definite ideas. It's a pity they didn't develop sooner."

"Ideas only develop out of experience," she said. She rose, shaking free the snow that clung to her coat. "I feel better for getting all that steam off," she added. "It's better, since we must live here, that you and I should not keep up this game of pretense between ourselves. Isn't it, Robin?"

"Perhaps. I don't know." The old doubts troubled Hollister. He was jealous of what he had attained, a little uncertain of this new turn.

"At any rate you don't hold a grudge against me, do you?" Myra asked. "You

can afford to be indifferent now. You've found a mate, you're playing a man's part here. You're beating the game and getting some real satisfaction out of living. You can afford to be above a grudge against me."

"I don't hold any grudge," Hollister answered truthfully.

"I'm going down to the house now," Myra said. "I wanted to talk to you openly, and I'm glad I did. I think and think sometimes until I feel like a rat in a trap. And you are the only one here I can really talk to. You've been through the mill, and you won't misunderstand."

"Ah!" he said. "Is Charlie Mills devoid of understanding, or Lawanne?"

She looked at him fixedly for a second.

"You are very acute," she observed. "Some time I may tell you about Charlie Mills. Certainly I'd never reveal my soul to Archie Lawanne. He'd dissect it and gloat over it and analyze it in his next book. And neither of them will ever be quite able to abandon the idea that a creature like me is something to be pursued and captured."

She turned away. Hollister saw her go into the house. He could picture the two of them there together—Doris and Myra bending over young Robert, who was now beginning to lie with wide-open blue eyes, in which the light of innocent wonder, of curiosity, began to show and was starting to wave his arms and grope with tiny, uncertain hands. Those two women together hovering over his child—one who was still legally his wife, the other his wife in reality.

He went about his work mechanically, deep in thought. His mind persisted in measuring, weighing, turning over all that Myra had said, while his arms pushed and heaved and twisted the pike pole, thrusting the blocks of cedar into an orderly arrangement within the boom sticks.

CHAPTER XVI.

Hollister had gone down to Lawanne's with a haunch of venison, a neighborly custom which prevails in the Northern woods of sharing meat when it is to be had for the killing. Officially there were game seasons to be observed. But the close season for deer sat lightly on men in a region three days' journey from a butcher shop. They shot deer when they needed meat. The law of necessity overrode the legal pronouncement in this matter of food, as it often did in other ways.

While Hollister, having duly pleased Lawanne's China boy by a heavy quarter of venison, sat talking to Lawanne, Charlie Mills came in to return a book.

"Did you get anything out of that?" Lawanne asked.

"I got a bad taste in my mouth," Mills replied. "It reads like things that happen. It's too blamed true to be pleasant. A man shouldn't be like that, he shouldn't think too much—especially about other people. He ought to be like a wild animal—go around snorting and pawing up the earth till he gets his belly full, and then lie down and chew his cud."

Lawanne smiled.

"You've hit on something, Mills," he said. "The man who thinks the least and acts the most is the happy man, the contented man, because he's nearly always pleased with himself. If he fails at anything he can usually excuse himself on the grounds of somebody else's foolishness. If he succeeds he complacently assumes that he did it out of his own greatness. Action—that's the thing. The contemplative, analytical mind is the mind that suffers. Man was a happy animal until he began to indulge in abstract thinking. And now that the burden of thought is laid on him he frequently uses it to his own disadvantage."

"I'll say he does," Mills agreed. "But what can he do? I've read what some pretty good thinkers say. It don't seem to me a man's got much choice. He thinks or he don't think according to the way he's made. If he could just grin and say, 'It doesn't matter,' he'd be all right. But he can't unless he's made that way. And since he isn't responsible for the way he's made, what the hell can he do?"

"You're on the highroad to wisdom when you can look an abstraction like that in the face," Lawanne laughed. "What you say is true. But there's one item you overlook. A man is born with, say, certain predispositions. Once he recognizes and classifies them, he can begin to exercise his will, his individual determination. If our existence was ordered in advance by destiny, dictated by some all-conscious, omnipotent intelligence, we might as well sit down and fold our hands. But we still have a chance. Free will is an exploded theory, in so far as it purposes to explain human action in a gen-

eral sense. Men are different. In some weakness is inherent, in others determination. The weak man succumbs when he is beset. The strong man struggles desperately.

Incidentally, a man who consciously grasps and understands his own weaknesses can save himself from what will destroy a man of lesser perception; because the intelligent man will avoid what he can't master. He won't butt his head against a stone wall. If the thing is beyond him and he knows it is beyond him, he will not waste himself in vain effort. He will adapt himself to what he can't change. The man who can't do that must suffer. He may even perish. And to cling to life is the prime law. That's why it is a fundamental instinct that makes a man want to run when he can no longer fight."

Hollister said nothing. He was always a good listener. He preferred to hear what other men said, to weigh their words, rather than pour out his own ideas. Lawanne sometimes liked to talk at great length, to assume the oracular vein, to analyze actions and situations, to put his finger on a particular motive and trace its origin, its most remote causation. Mills seldom talked. It was strange to hear him speak as he did now to Lawanne.

Mills walked back across the flat with Hollister. They trudged silently through the soft, new snow, the fresh fall which had enabled Hollister to track and kill the big deer early that morning. The sun was setting. Its last beam struck flashing on the white hills. The back of the winter was broken, the March storms nearly at an end. In a little while now, Hollister thought, the buds would be bursting, there would be a new feel in the air, new fragrant smells rising in the forest, spring freshets in the rivers, the wild duck flying north. Time was on the wing, in ceaseless flight.

Mills broke into his reflections.

"Come up in the morning, will you, and check in what cedar I have piled. I'm going to pull out."

"All right." Hollister looked his surprise at the abrupt decision. "I'm sorry you're going."

Mills walked a few paces.

"Maybe it won't do me any good," he said. "I wonder if Lawanne is right? It just struck me that he is. Anyway, I'm going to try his recipe. Maybe I can kid myself into thinking everything's jake, that the world's a fine sort of place and everything is always lovely. If I could just think that—— Maybe a change of scenery will do the trick. Lawanne's clever, isn't he? Nothing would fool him very long."

"I don't know," Hollister said. "Lawanne's a man with a pretty keen mind and a lively imagination. He's more interested in why people do things than in what they do. But I dare say he might fool himself as well as the rest of us. For we all do, now and then."

"I guess it's the way a man's made," Mills reflected. "But it's rather a new idea that a man can sort of make himself over if he puts his mind to it. Still it sounds reasonable. I'm going to give it a try. I've got to."

But he did not say why he must. Nor did Hollister ask him. He thought he knew—and he wondered at the strange tenacity of this emotion which Mills could not shake off. A deep-rooted love for some particular woman was no mystery to Hollister. He only wondered that it should be so vital a force in the life of a man.

Mills came down from the hill camp to settle his account with Hollister in the morning. He carried his blankets and his clothes in a bulky pack on his sturdy shoulders. When he had his money he rose to go, to catch the coastwise steamer which touched the inlet's head that afternoon. Hollister helped him sling the pack, opened the door for him—and they met Myra Bland setting foot on the porch step.

They looked at each other, those two. Hollister knew that for a second neither was conscious of him. Their eyes met in a lingering fixity, each with a question that did not find utterance.

"I'm going out," Mills said at last. A curious huskiness seemed to thicken his tongue. "This time for good, I hope. So-long."

"Good-by, Charlie," Myra said.

She put out her hand. But either Mills did not see it or he shrank from contact, for he passed her and strode away, bent a little forward under his pack. Myra turned to watch him. When she faced about again there was a mistiness in her eyes, a curious, pathetic expression of pity on her face. She went on into the house with scarcely a glance at Hollister.

In another week spring had ousted winter from his seasonal supremacy. The snow

on the lower levels vanished under a burst of warm rain. The rain ceased and the clouds parted to let through a sun fast growing to full strength. Buds swelled and burst on willow and alder. The soil, warmed by the sun, sent up the first shoots of fern and grasses, a myriad fragile green tufts that would presently burst into flowers. The Toba rose day by day, pouring down a swollen flood of snow water to the sea.

And life went on as it always did. Hollister's crew, working on a bonus for work performed, kept the bolts of cedar pouring down the chute. The mill on the river below swallowed up the blocks and spewed them out in bound bundles of roof covering. Lawanne kept close to his cabin, deep in the throes of writing. Bland haunted the creeks where the trout lurked, tramped the woods gun in hand, a dog at his heels, oblivious to everything but his own primitive, purposeless pleasures.

"I shouldn't care to settle here for good," he once said to Hollister. "But really, you know, it's not half bad. If money only wasn't so dashed scarce. It's positively cruel for an estate to be so tied up that a man can't get enough to live decently on."

Bland irritated Hollister sometimes, but often amused him by his calm assurance that everything was always well in the world of J. Carrington Bland. Hollister could imagine him in Norfolk jacket and gaiters, striding down an English lane, concerned only with his stable, his kennels, the land whose rentals made up his income. There were no problems on Bland's horizon. He would sit on Hollister's porch with a pipe sagging one corner of his mouth, and gaze placidly at the river, the hills, the far stretch of the forest—and Hollister knew that to Bland it was so much water, so much uppiled rock and earth, so much growing wood.

He would say to Myra: "My dear, it's time we were going home," or, "I think I shall have a go at that big pool in Graveyard Creek to-morrow," or "I say, Hollister, if this warm weather keeps on, the bears will be coming out soon, eh?" And betweenwhiles he would sit silently puffing at his pipe, a big, heavy, handsome man, wearing soiled overalls and a shabby coat with a curious dignity. He spoke of "family" and "breeding" as if those were sacred possessions which conferred upon those who had them complete immunity from the sort of effort that common men must make.

"He really believes that," Myra said to Hollister once. "No Bland ever had to work. They have always had property—they have always been superior people. Jim's an anachronism, really. He belongs in the Middle Ages when the barons did the fighting and the commoners did the work. Generations of riding in the band wagon have made it almost impossible for a man like that to plan intelligently and work hard merely for the satisfaction of his needs."

"I wonder what he'd do, if there was no inheritance to fall back on?" Hollister asked.

"I don't know—and I really don't care much," Myra said indifferently. "I shouldn't be concerned probably if that were the case."

Hollister frowned.

"Why do you go on living with him if that's the way you feel?"

"You seem to forget," she replied, "that there are very material reasons! And you must remember that I don't dislike Jim. I have got so that I regard him as a big, good-natured child of whom one expects very little."

"How in Heaven's name did a man like that catch your fancy in the first place?" Hollister asked. He had never ceased to wonder about that. Myra looked at him with a queer lowering of her eyes.

"What was it drove you to marry Doris Cleveland, a month after you met her? You couldn't know her—nor she you. You were lonely and moody and something about her appealed to you. You took a chance—and drew a prize in the lottery. Well, I took a chance also—and drew a blank. He's a man, a very good sort of a man for any woman who wants nothing more of a man than that he shall be a handsome, agreeable, well-mannered one. That's about what Jim is. I may also be good looking, agreeable, well-mannered—but I'm something besides, which Jim doesn't suspect and couldn't understand if he did. But I didn't learn that soon enough."

"When did you learn it?" Hollister asked. He felt that he should not broach these personal matters with Myra, but there was a fascination in listening to her reveal complexes of character which he had never even suspected.

"I've been learning for some time; but I think Charlie Mills gave me the most striking lesson," Myra answered thoughtfully. "You can imagine I was blue and dissatis-

fied when we came here, to bury ourselves alive because we could live cheaply, and he could hunt and fish to his heart's content while he waited to step into a dead man's shoes. I was quite conscious by that time that I didn't love Jim Bland. But he was a gentleman. I was simply indifferent. I used to sit wondering how I could have ever imagined myself going on year after year contented and happy with a man like Jim. Yet I had been quite sure of that—just as once I had been quite sure you were the only man who could ever be much of a figure on my horizon."

"I ran across Mills first in London. He was convalescing from a wound. That was shortly after I was married, and I was helping entertain these stray dogs from the front. People took them out motoring and so on. I remembered Mills out of all the others because he was different from the average Tommy, quiet without being self-conscious. When we came here Charlie was working down at the settlement. Somehow I was awfully glad to see him—any friendly face would have been welcome those first months, before I grew used to these terrible silences, this complete isolation which I had never before known.

"Well, the upshot was that he fell in love with me, and for a while—for a little while—I thought I was experiencing a real affection at last, rising fine and true out of the ashes of old ones.

"And it frightened me. It made me stop and think. When he would stare at me with those sad eyes I wanted to go away with him to some distant place where no one knew me and begin life all over again. But I saw that it would only be about the same thing as with Jim, all over again, because I'm made the way I am. Charlie's a nice boy. I'm sure he would be kind and good to any woman. Still, I could never convince myself that it would do. At last I became very certain that it would not. That is why I say Charlie Mills taught me something about myself."

"I think it was a dear lesson for him," Hollister said, remembering the man's moods and melancholy, the bitterness of frustration which must have torn Mills. "You hurt him."

"I know it and I'm sorry, but I couldn't help it," she said. "There was a time just about a year ago when I very nearly went away with him. I think he felt that I was yielding. But I was trying to be honest with myself and with him. He wanted me body and soul, and I recoiled from that finally, because—I was afraid, afraid of what our life would become when he learned that truth which I had already grasped."

She stopped and looked at Hollister.

"I wonder if you think I'm a little mad?" she asked.

"No. I was just wondering what it is about you that makes men want you," he returned.

"You should know," she answered.

"I never knew. I was like Mills."

"There is nothing unnatural in a man loving me," said Myra, "any more than it was unnatural for you to love Doris. You seem to forget that the object of each individual's existence, man or woman, is not to bestow happiness on some one else, but to seek it for themselves."

"If you really believe that, you are certainly a fool to go on living with a man like Jim Bland," Hollister declared.

"I've told you why and I do not see any reason for changing my idea," she said coolly. "When it no longer suits me to be a chattel I shall cease to be one. Meantime—*pax—pax*." She changed the subject abruptly. "Where is Doris and the adorable infant? I don't hear or see one or the other."

"They were all out in the kitchen a minute ago, bathing the kid," he told her; and Myra went on in.

Holister's work lay almost altogether in the flat now. The cut cedar accumulating under the busy hands of six men came pouring down the chute in a daily stream. To salvage those that spilled, to arrange the booms for rafting downstream, kept Hollister on the move. At noon that day Myra and Doris brought the baby and lunch in a basket and spread it on the ground on the sunny side of an alder near the chute mouth, just beyond the zone of danger from flying bolts. The day was warm enough for comfortable lounging. The boy, now grown to be a round-faced, clear-skinned mite with blue eyes like his father, lay on an outspread quilt waving his chubby arms, staring at the mystery of the shadows cast upon him by leaf and branch above.

Hollister finished his meal in silence, that reflective silence which always overtook him when he found himself one corner of this strange triangle. He could talk to Myra

alone. He was never at a loss for words with his wife. Together, they struck him dumb.

And this day Doris seemed likewise dumb. There was a growing strangeness about her which had been puzzling Hollister for some time. During the busy day she would grow distrait, as if she had retreated into communion with herself, and her look was that of one striving to see something afar, a straining for vision. Hollister had said nothing about this. There were times when Doris liked to take refuge in her own thought world. He was aware of that and understood it and let her alone, in such moods.

Now she sat with both hands clasped over one knee. Her face turned toward Myra for a time. Then her eyes sought her husband's face with a look which gave Hollister the uneasy conviction that she saw him quite clearly, that she was looking and appraising. Then she looked away toward the river, and as her gaze seemed to focus upon something there an expression of strain, of effort, gathered on her face. It lasted until Hollister, watching her closely, felt his mouth grow dry. It hurt him as if some pain, some terrible effort of hers, was being communicated to him. Yet he did not understand, and he could not reach her intimately with Myra sitting by.

Doris spoke at last.

"What is that, Bob?" she asked. She pointed with her finger.

"A big cedar stump," he replied. It stood about thirty feet away.

"Is it dark on one side and light on the other?"

"It's blackened by fire, and the raw wood shows on one side where a piece is split off."

He felt his voice cracked and harsh.

"Ah!" she breathed. Her eyes turned to the baby sprawling on his quilt.

Myra rose to her feet. She picked up the baby, moved swiftly and noiselessly three steps aside, stood holding the boy in her arms.

"You have picked up baby. You have on a dress with light and dark stripes. I can see—I can *see!*"

Her voice rose exultantly on the last word.

Hollister looked at Myra; she held the boy pressed close to her. Her lips were parted, her pansy-purple eyes were wide and full of alarm as she looked at Hollister.

He felt his scarred face grow white. And when Doris turned toward him to bend forward and look at him with that strange peering gaze, he covered his face with his hands.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Everything is indistinct, just blurred outlines. I can't see colors—except as light and dark," Doris went on, looking at Hollister with that straining effort to see. "I can only see you now as a vague form, without any detail."

Hollister pulled himself together. After all it was no catastrophe, no thunderbolt of fate striking him a fatal blow. If, with growing clarity of vision, catastrophe ensued, that was time enough to shrink and cower.

"It seems almost too good to be true," he forced himself to say, and the irony of his words twisted his lips into what with him passed for a smile.

"It's been coming on for weeks," Doris continued. "And I haven't been able to persuade myself it was real. I have always been able to distinguish dark from daylight. But I never knew whether that was pure instinct or because some faint bit of sight was left me. I have looked and looked at things lately, wondering if imagination could play such tricks. I couldn't believe I was seeing even a little, because I've always been able to see things in my mind, sometimes clearly, sometimes in a fog—as I see now—so I couldn't tell whether the things I have seen lately were realities or mental images. I have wanted so to see, and it didn't seem possible."

Asking about the stump had been a test, she told Hollister. She did not know till then whether she saw or only thought she saw. And she continued to make these tests happily, exulting like a child when it first walks alone. She made them leave her and she followed them among a clump of alders, avoiding the trunks when she came within a few feet, instead of by touch. She had Hollister lead her a short distance away from Myra and the baby. She groped her way back peering at the ground until at close range she saw the broad blue-and-white stripes of Myra's dress.

"I wonder if I shall continue to see more and more?" she sighed at last, "or if I shall go on peering and groping in this uncertain, fantastic way? I wish I knew."

"I know one thing," Myra put in quickly,

"and that is you won't do your eyes any good by trying so hard to see. You mustn't get excited about this and overdo it. If it's a natural recovery, you won't help it any by trying so hard to see."

"Do I seem excited?" Doris smiled. "Perhaps I am. If you had been shut up for three years in a room without windows, I fancy you'd be excited at even the barest chance of finding yourself free to walk in the sun. My God, no one with sight knows the despair that the blind sometimes feel! And the promise of seeing—you can't possibly imagine what a glorious thing it is. Every one has always been good to me. But there have been times—you know, don't you, Bob?—when I've struggled in a black abyss, afraid to die and yet full of bitter protest because——"

The tears stood in her eyes, and she reached for Hollister's hand, squeezed it tightly between her own.

"What a lot of good times we shall have when I get so that I can see just a little better," she said softly. "Your blind woman may not prove such a bad bargain after all, Bob."

"Have I ever thought that?" he demanded.

"Oh, no," she said, smiling. "But *I* know. Give me the baby, Myra."

She cuddled young Robert in her arms.

"Little, fat soft thing," she murmured. "By and by his mother will be able to see the color of his dear eyes. Bless its little heart—him and his daddy are the bestest things in this old world—this old world that was black for so long."

Myra turned her back on them, and walked away and stood on the river bank. Hollister stared at his wife. He struggled with an old sensation, one that he had thought long put by—a sense of the intolerable burden of existence in which nothing was sure but sorrow. And he was aware that he must dissemble all such feelings. He must not let Doris know how he dreaded that hour in which she should first see clearly his mutilated face.

"You must see an oculist," he said at last.

"An oculist? Eye specialists? I saw a dozen of them," she replied. "They were never able to do anything—except to tell me I would never see again. A fig for the doctors. They were wrong when they said my sight was wholly destroyed. They'd probably be wrong again in the diagnosis and treatment. Nature seems to be doing the job. Let her have her way."

They discussed that after Myra was gone, sitting on a log together in the warm sun, with the baby kicking his heels on the spread quilt. They continued the discussion after they went back to the house. Hollister dreaded uncertainty. He wanted to know how great a measure of her sight would return, and in what time. He did not belittle the oculists because they had once been mistaken. Neither did Doris when she recovered from the excitement engendered by the definite assurance that her eyes were ever so slightly resuming their normal function. She did believe that her sight was being restored naturally, as torn flesh heals or a broken bone knits, and she was doubtful if any eye specialist could help that process. But she agreed in the end that it would be as well to know if anything could be done and what would aid instead of retard her recovery.

"But not for a while," she said. "It's just a glimmer. Wait a few days. If this fog keeps clearing away, then we'll go."

They were sitting on their porch steps. Doris put her arms around him.

"When I can see, I'll be a real partner," she said happily. "There are so many things I can do that can't be done without eyes. And half the fun of living is in sharing the discoveries one makes about things with some one else. Sight will give me back all the books I want to read, all the beautiful things I want to see. I'll be able to climb hills and paddle a canoe, to go with you wherever you want to take me. Won't it be splendid?"

And Hollister could only pat her cheek and tell her that he loved her, that her eyes made no difference. He could not voice the fear he had that her recovered sight would make the greatest difference, that the reality of him, the distorted visage which peered at him from a mirror, would make her loathe him. He was not a fool. He knew that people, and women especially, shrank from the crippled, the disfigured, the horrible. He had no illusions about the men who worked for him, about his neighbors. They found him endurable, and that was about all. If Doris Cleveland had seen him clearly that day on the steamer, she might have pitied him. But would she have found pleasure

in the sound of his voice, the touch of his hand? Hollister's intelligence answered "no."

Doris made light of his disfigurement. She could comprehend clearly many things unseen—but not that. Hollister knew she must have created some definite image of him in her mind; something, he suspected, which must correspond closely to her ideal of a man, something that was dear to her. If that ideal did not—and his intelligence insisted that it could not—survive the reality, then his house was built on sand and must topple.

And he must dig and pry at the foundations. He must do all that could be done for her eyes. That was her right—to see, to be free of her prison of darkness, to be restored to the sight of beauty, to unclouded vision of the world and all it contained, no matter what the consequence to him. He must play the game, although he felt that he would lose.

A cloud seemed to settle on him when he considered that he might lose everything that made life worth while. And it would be an irrevocable loss. He would never again have courage to weave the threads of his existence into another such goodly pattern. Even if he had the courage he would never have the chance.

Hollister looked at her beside him, and his heart ached to think that presently she might not sit so with her hand on his knee looking up at him with lips parted in a happy smile, gray eyes eager with anticipation under the long, curving brown lashes. She was so very dear to him. There was a charm about her to which he responded without knowing clearly what it was, something that made the mere knowledge of her presence in his house a comfort, no matter whether he was beside her or miles away.

Lawanne once said to him that a man must worship a God, love a woman, or find a real friendship, to make life endurable. The woman Hollister loved so greatly loved him because she could not see him. When she could see she would cease to love! And then, he felt, there would be nothing left for him—nothing. He would live on, obedient to the law of his being, a sentient organism, eating and sleeping, thinking starkly, as before he had met her, without joy in the reluctant company of his fellows, his footsteps echoing hollowly down the long corridor of the years, emptied of hope and all those pleasant illusions by which man's spirit is sustained. But would he? Would it be worth while?

"I must go back to work," he said at last.

Doris rose with him, holding him a moment.

"Presently I shall be able to come and *watch* you work. I might help. I know how to walk boom sticks, to handle timber with a pike pole. I'm as strong as an ox. See?"

She put her arms around him and heaved, lifting the hundred and eighty pounds of his weight clear of the ground. Then she laughed, a low, pleased chuckle, her face flushed with the effort, and turned into the house.

Hollister heard her at the piano as he walked away, thundering out the rollicking air of the "Soldiers' Chorus," its naïve exultance of victory, it seemed to Hollister, expressing well her mood—a victory that might mean for him an abyss of sorrow and loneliness out of which he might never lift himself.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

SUPERFICIAL REASONING

SENATOR ASHURST of Arizona, while on a campaign tour of his State, once paid a country school-teacher the compliment of dropping in for a half hour and listening to the pupils recite. The teacher, a young and rather diffident woman, wanted to make a good showing before her august visitor, and, in order to do so, called on only the clever children.

"Now, Johnny," she asked her star exhibit, a kid of twelve years, "why do they call the English language the mother tongue?"

"Dunno," said Johnny, himself overcome by the senatorial presence, "less'n it's because women use it so much more'n men do."

Off Sudden Island

By J. H. Greene

Author of "Aces Up," "The Cyclone and the Rope," Etc.

This is not a fantastic tale. Crabs of the size of those in this chronicle of Cap'n Hackbutt are on exhibition in San Francisco to-day, and the records of the Royal Geographical Society itself, regarding the Krakatoa eruption, relate an incident of a "hot lead" being brought up in sounding these Indian Ocean waters

THE crabs were coming in with the tide, some with little egglike bodies and invisibly rapid legs, some with houses on their backs like snails drifting leisurely. Out in the sea grass I could catch claws lifting, and in the deepening pools the clumsy horseshoes were shoving their ugly, brown carapaces. A paddling boy caught one of these and flung it on its back on the beach, all its legs wiggling as the armor-plated crustacean tried to right himself.

I had been sitting on the stern of a stranded dory watching Cap'n Jeremiah Hackbutt scrape the barnacles off his schooner. The shells whitened the sand, and the beached schooner was beginning to lift by the stern. Far out on the bay the flats were covering—their yellow sands disappearing under shining levels. Acres of weed I had swum over at high water were erect and floating, a dark, deep water forest I had dreaded to bottom for fear of nipped toes. In the pool under the schooner's stern post straddled the bandy and hairy legs of the most horrible of sea tarantulas, a foot across.

"I wonder what the bottom of the sea is really like?" I remarked. "It's about the only part of the globe we can't get to. But we will some day."

"You won't want to," grunted the cap'n, stepping ashore as the schooner turned on her bilge and work was over till next low water.

"Maybe," I answered as I trod on a centipedal worm as long as a snake, and little fishlike sea mosquitoes tickled my bare ankles.

"No maybe—I know," said Cap'n Jerry decidedly.

It was useless trying to make him talk unless he wanted to. The oldest, toughest skipper on the Cape, a former "Banker" and whaler, his eighty years had not slackened his jaw and his lips set like the shells of a quahaug under his walrus mustache. He still rose at daybreak to go clamming, and spent most of his time painting and pottering over his schooner or sitting in his net house silently listening to the younger liars of fifty. He was like a clam, never opening his mouth till you started the spring tides of his memories.

He took his old chair in the net house, and I sat on a nail keg. His hand did not tremble as he lit his corncob, and he was watching his schooner swing inshore on her moorings.

His grandson, Silas, blew in breezily from the shore end of the shed; he was studying navigation for his mate's certificate, but now wanted to read to his grandfather a newspaper account of the new device for steering ships by wireless. The cap'n grabbed his pipe from his mouth as he took in the story and sat up rigidly, looking what rumor said he used to be—a quarter-deck terror. When Silas expounded how ships could now be steered from miles away and from on shore, Cap'n Jerry rose wrathfully.

"Lies!" he bellowed in a voice that still had volume. "You'll never get your gold braid with that stuff. Do you think the board will give you a ship if you believe that? If you were my mate and came to me with a fo'c's'le yarn like that, do you think I'd let you stand a watch?"

"It's in the paper, granddad."

"Reason it's a yarn. Get back to your Bowditch. L'arn your sights. Fust aloft on the weather earing is your job, sonny. L'arn how to claw off a lee shore. L'arn how——"

"That's all old stuff," smiled the brown, bright last of the Hackbutts. "We're under steam to-day. There aren't any weather earings; there aren't any lee shores engines can't pull away from."

"Engines break away, don't they? You

can't splice engines, can you? Who ever heard of a jury b'iler?"

"Grandfather can't see that the old seamanship is gone. I tell him it's 'steamanship' to-day. And that's going, too. Ships will soon be navigated from an office on shore."

But Cap'n Jerry, invigorated by the ghosts of his old angers, ordered the young man back to his studies. Silas winked at me and stowed his arguments, for the cap'n was too old to irritate, and returned to the cottage, while his grandfather paced the net house as if it were a deck and mutiny were brewing forward.

"In the papers!" he growled as he finally anchored in his chair. "Do you know what the papers said when I came back from my last voyage? Called me a fine old sea-sarpint mariner, they did. And I had the ships log made up regular by the mate and supervised by me to prove it; had our position, too, with a sketch of Sudden Island—what we saw of it. And didn't I have to call on Manson's widow to tell her she was a widow? Yet the papers made a joke out of me, and now they ask me to swallow that shell-back yarn for a green apprentice. The only papers I believe are ships' papers. Maybe they'll try and run a ship without *them.*"

The cap'n's keen, distance-searching eyes, still able to recognize a schooner's forepeak lifting out of a fog bank, were straining into his past, and I sat still expecting strange dredgings.

"I ain't spoken of this for thirty years. Gave up 'cos I don't want to anchor to my headstone upon the hill yonder with sea-sarpint mariner painted in it. None of my old crew are left except my second mate, Bob Derrick. Hires out dories in Gloucester, he does, and he has one of the claws and the Chinee's laundry tickets still. But he don't show them no more. Says he will leave them to the Salem Museum where my log is going, too. They can put them in a glass case when we are gone, and folks can read what seamen went through when there *was* seamen."

The tide had now covered the flats and was breaking at our feet. I saw a stray squid leap suicidally on the sand, his prismatic colors gleaming in the sun as he died gasping. The boys on the pier head were shouting as the incoming hungry flounders bit three at a time at their hooks.

"I know what's at the bottom of the sea. I've seen it, and so did my crew, and we were not drunk, nuther. We did not broach a rum cask, 'cos we were scared and thought we were going to worse than Davy Jones. Don't them fellows that write papers know the difference atween what a man sees when he is in liquor and hard seagoing fact? I've had yaller fever and a touch of the horrors in my time. I could stand it, be jinks! more than these inshore trap fishermen round here can, and there ain't no liquor nor no fever could make you see what we saw.

" 'Twas in August, eighty-three. I was out on an eighteen months' cruise in my old *Jennie H.* from New Bedford. We were filling up our complement in the China Sea, and only needed a few more barrels to have a full ship and then haul for home.

"The boats were out one fine day, regular whaling weather, just a topsail breeze and a light sea and a school of sperms blowing south. All hands were eager, for they hoped to fill and do our last try-out for the voyage. There was just me and a bare few hands aboard to work the ship. I had sent the cook to the crow's nest, a Chinee answering to Hop Lee I had picked up on one of the islands. I traded a spare hawser for him to a lime-juice skipper, for our regular cook, poor Joe Snow, had been killed by the fluke of a fighting whale, and none of the other hands could even make sea pie and wasted vittles awful.

"The lime-juicer said Hop Lee could cook American, and me and Mr. Manson had dinner aboard to prove it. So I ships Hop Lee.

"Big and fat he was, and talking a lingo none of us could understand, though Mr. Derrick—him as I told you hires out boats in Gloucester—pretended to make him out. But the Chinee always understood orders and obeyed them. He could stand a watch, pull an oar, and was something of a seaman in his own way. He had a funny habit of singing and grunting when he worked; the harder he had to pull the more he grunted. The men used to laugh at him till they got the habit, too, and sometimes we'd make sail all hands grunting in Chinese.

" 'Turning the *Jennie* into a junk,' growled Mr. Manson, the mate.

"But I didn't stop them, for Hop Lee was a good-humored chap even when the mate was flinging belaying pins and cussing bloody murder. A better whaler than Man-

son never lived, and strong on discipline. A mate has to be ready to let loose hell in all weathers—though sometimes Manson needed a round turn.

"The men didn't take kindly to Hop Lee at first. There were complaints over his cooking till we watched him get a meal. He could cook American, made pies better than a Cape fishwife, out of a lot of coconuts we shipped in the Friendlys. And he didn't do it Chinee fashion, as the second mate suspected, by squirting the water with his mouth. Then one day off Japan Hop Lee lays out on the martingale with a sack which he hooks full of fish in some way of his own, and that night he makes a dish of fish that loaded all our timbers with good humor, and, after that, Mr. Derrick, who thought he knew all about Chinese, was satisfied, and all hands lined up with him.

"Well, this afternoon Hop was in the fore crow's nest, and I heard him trying to hail the deck. Funny kind of hail he had, too—like a parrot's squeak. I didn't know what he meant, so I climbed to the mizzen and sees the boats returning, and not a fish hooked. There wasn't a whale in sight, either, and then I felt the *Jennie* bump just as if we had run on a sandy bottom, and the Chinee lets out another squawk, drops on deck, and comes aft jabbering to me. I pays no attention, for I wanted to know why the boats had not harpooned into our last oil.

"When the mate came alongside he said the school had sounded at once as if they were scared. He had tried to figure where they would blow again but didn't sight a spout and, as it was getting dark, he thought he had better make for the ship. He was right, but I had to cuss him a bit for my end of the discipline. You have to hold your mate where he belongs and show him your brand of hell is hotter than his.

"But all the time we were hauling in the boats that Chinee was jabbering his head off and kept pointing to the sea and very excited like as if he could make out whales where we couldn't.

" 'Boo Yow Boo How,' was all I could make out of it, and Mr. Derrick, who had been in more Chinese ports than any of us, said Hop was trying to say something was very bad.

"Then there came another bump on the ship's bottom, and all hands rushed to the side. I was certain that school had doubled back on the mate and was going to blow all round us, when we would be able to stick one or two afore dark. But nary a fish came up, when Hop Lee ran to the wheel and started pulling the spokes out of the helmsman's hands. The ship came up into the wind and her foresail went aback. When the mate heard the canvas flap, and saw who had done it, he knocked the Chinee into the lee scuppers.

"He was right, mind you. Hop Lee had no right to touch the wheel and send the yards aback. But I didn't want my cook killed, so I called off Mr. Manson and sent Hop Lee forward. But he doesn't go at once and comes up to the mate.

" 'Going to knife, eh?' says the mate, reaching for a belaying pin, but the Chinee didn't lift a finger or reach for a pocket. He just pointed to the sky, talking his gibberish and grinning. He didn't seem a bit afraid of the mate or mind being knocked down. The mate reached back to ship the belaying pin, and he missed the hole and it fell on the deck. Hop Lee bends down, picks it up, and hands it to the mate, top side forward. Then he turns and goes forward. He was so darned polite about it that the mate was flabbergasted.

" 'I think he was trying to tell us that a blow is coming,' said Mr. Derrick.

" 'Glass is steady,' barked the mate back at him, for he was sore. Somehow that Chinee had got the weather gauge of him.

" 'I know,' answered Mr. Derrick, 'but I have seen Chinese fishermen lay up their junks three days afore Honkkong knew enough to hoist storm signals. They have ways of knowing.'

" 'This ain't no junk,' says the mate to him. 'And if he tries any knifing on me I'll——'

" 'He wasn't thinking about knifing,' says Mr. Derrick. 'I don't know much about these fellows, but he's no river pirate. He speaks Mandarin—I can tell by the tune of it.'

"I didn't join in this argument, for I was watching the water. Those bumps had me at sea.

"That night at dinner, as me and the mate were leaning back unbuckling our belts, Hop Lee appeared in the doorway. I remember the mate, who was as good-humored as any mate ever allows himself to be, had been joking about Hop Lee pizening all hands. I asked Mr. Manson where the Chinee could

get the pizen as we had none aboard. He answered in Mr. Derrick's words that those junk fellows had ways of their own, when Hop came in. Hop said nothing and didn't ask leave, but comes forward and put a bit of paper by my plate and then goes out quiet as a shadow.

" 'Laundry ticket, by gravy!' said the mate looking at the paper, for it was covered with Chinese writing. We couldn't make it out or guess what Hop Lee meant, so I took it up to Mr. Derrick, who was on watch. But Mr. Derrick couldn't get the bearings of it, either.

" 'Each of them smudges is a picture. I know that much,' he said. "That's what Chinese writing is—pictures.'

" 'Pictures of what?' said Mr. Manson, who had come on deck, too.

" 'Don't know,' said Mr. Derrick. 'Don't know even which is right side up. But that there does look something like a ship.'

" 'Queerest-looking craft I ever seed,' said Mr. Manson, and we had to give it up. So me and the mate went below again, after I gave Mr. Derrick the laundry ticket which he had asked for.

"Well, we never sighted another whale on those grounds, which was peculiar in my experience, so I decided to make back into the Indian Ocean, feeling pretty sure we would pick up our complement of oil on the way home. The day our course was changed, and we were set to the sunset, Hop Lee come grinning aft and sings a speech in his lingo. All hands were on deck 'bouting ship and taking in reefs, for I didn't like the weather. The glass was falling and there was a heavy cloud bank around the sun.

"But the men went to the braces spry and cheery as yachtsmen, for they knew we were homeward bound, and when Mr. Manson called 'Mainsail haul!' and we shipped a splash as the canvas drew, they cheered, and the Chinee cheered with them in his funny little chicken squeak.

" 'He wants to make a near port and desert,' said the mate.

"We drew into the straits, and there was the same ugly cloud bank in the southeast. We passed all those little islands at the head of the straits, and the third-point light was on our lee bow by sunset. Seemed to be another light on our starboard that shouldn't have been there till I realized what it was. It wasn't a lighthouse, but one of those pesky volcanoes that are always shooting off in those parts—and it was shooting more than usual, too. Something unnatural is always going on in those latitudes: volcanoes, hot springs on the beaches, typhoons, current running opposite to the charts. Never will be right till we take hold and civilize it.

"There was the usual shipping. A steamer crossed our bows—looked like the Dutch packet from Batavia; and a couple of Britishers, a square rig and a bark, carrying more sail than we did, passed up north. A few fishing proas were inshore, scurrying along in that sneaky way of theirs.

"I stayed on deck and ordered out all reefs, even if the wind was freshening, for I wanted to get out of those straits. I wasn't afraid of any wind or sea in the old *Jennie.* I could trust every spar, rope, and timber in her, but she had to have sea room.

"That volcano kept creeping up on our beam, and she was smoking tremendous. With my glasses I could make out streaks of fire running down her sides, and there was steam coming out of her, too. She burned in flashes just like a lighthouse, and the flashes came over the waves in red streaks. All hands were on deck, grumblinglike. They didn't take to that volcano any more than I did. Every time we shipped a sea—and we shipped a lot with our press of sail—I could see the water come aboard all red sparks as the volcano lit us up.

"There was a shift of wind about five p'ints to the north about seven bells, and the mate ordered the yards trimmed to meet it, and with the shift that long tail of smoke came over our heads and a shower of white dust fell on the deck. The men had obeyed the order to stand by.

" 'How about reefing?' says the mate. 'Afraid the fore-topmast is sprung.'

" 'Crack on,' says I, for I wasn't afraid of the *Jennie's* sticks.

"Then I saw Hop Lee kick off his boots, and one of the hands just caught him as he was about to jump overboard. Strong chap was Hop Lee and as slippery as an eel, and it took three men to bring him aft. Then the ship gave the same blasted bump she made in the China Sea. It scared the men into letting the Chinee go, and he hopped to the bulwarks. All hands were looking over the side and, as the waves rose to catch the red light of the volcano, we saw they were covered with dead fish. They were not lying exactly on the top, but seemed to be spouted up from below, rolling over and

over, their bellies on the crests of the waves looking like goldfish.

"But as soon as Hop Lee saw the fish he grabbed the rigging and lets fly a squawk. Then he back-stepped down on deck and went to his galley.

" 'Told you he wanted to desert. He wanted to swim to that proa,' says the mate.

" 'Why didn't he?' I asked.

"But I was more bothered about my ship. I didn't like the outlook. That volcano was blazing as if all hell were stoking her. Wind and sea were rising. If I went about I would have to beat up the straits on short tacks; but by keeping on I would soon make open water unless the wind shifted right ahead, which was liable in them unreasonable latitudes. So I took my chance, ordered the royals set, determined to crack on and get out of those seas.

"The old *Jennie* lifted under my boots like a clipper, deep as she was with oil. The lee was almost awash, main yard dipping, and the sea came over the bows, racing aft along the scuppers, white with the mud of that dust still falling out of the smoke. The second-point light come up on our beam, and I could make out the Java Head light ahead, thick as the weather was with dust, smoke and spoondrift. Kinder pretty it was, the old *Jennie* plugging ahead, her sails every second lit up by that volcano. With her decks all shining red she looked like a ship afire.

"The crew were all out of their bunks, hanging on everywhere, cussing the water that was muddy with dust and stinging their eyes. A bit out of hand they were. I heard the mate had trouble with one or two. Discipline always slacks a bit on the home voyage, but Mr. Manson knew how to hold them taut.

"Him and me was on the quarter-deck, me hanging on the weather-mizzen stay and him to leeward, for he was always strong on quarter-deck etiquette. The second mate was in the waist when in the flashes of that volcano I saw the Chinee coming aft, still in his bare feet, feelin' his way from rope to pin as she lurched, and his right hand in his shirt.

"The mate sees him, too, and was suspicious that Hop Lee was running amuck as some of these natives do. But Hop Lee just reaches up, hands me a sheet of paper out of his shirt, and then goes forward. It was another laundry ticket, as the mate called it, and we both held it up to the binnacle light, but, of course, could make nothing of it. Then I went below; we had a fair wind, a clear course, and would soon be out of those infernal straits.

"It was about two bells in the morning watch. I had turned in all standing in case I was wanted, when I was wakened by another of those bumps under our keel. I could feel the ship shaking, and it wasn't the bump of her bows into the seas, but something different that a shipmaster would know at once and tumble out for. Then, cocking my eye aloft, I saw the needle of the telltale compass swing round a whole quadrant, and I ran on deck to know why the mate had changed course without my orders.

"The mate yelled back at me that there was land ahead. I yelled back that the only land ahead on this course was the coast of Africa. Then I see under the beam a line of breakers. The mate had done right, he had saved the ship, we had been heading nose-on for them.

"I ordered soundings, and word comes back twenty fathoms. The crew were certain we had struck, but there was no water in the wells.

" 'We didn't strike,' I says to Mr. Derrick aft with me. 'That bump and the others we have felt was earthquakes. These seas are full of them.'

"It was the land we had nearly piled upon that bothered me, for there was no land on the chart and no current had taken us out of our course, for by the way the volcano bore with the first-point light I saw we were where we should have been.

"Then a cry came from the fo'c's'le that I could not make out, and I sent the second mate to pass me the word. He came back and said the men were in a panic, and Mr. Manson didn't know whether to anchor, for the lead had come up hot. Mr. Derrick brought the lead aft, and it *was* hot. I felt it, and sure enough the tallow was running out of the bottom.

"But I ordered the anchor to be dropped. I couldn't go sailing round an uncharted island with no more light than a volcano, no matter how hot the bottom was. Of course, I had heard of islands coming out of the sea in these parts, and that's what I reckoned this was. Sudden Island I called it, and it had been near sudden death for the *Jennie,* for every time the pink glare spread over the smoke I made out a low line of rocks

with an ugly surf where we would have gone to pieces and lost ship, oil, and all hands.

"The wind was rising, too, and the sea looked like the advance swell of some typhoon. You never can tell whether you're going or coming with those storms, they double back so. But we were fairly snug, for a reef ran out giving us a little lee and the holding was good.

"I went below to have another look at my chart, and I was right. There wasn't the flyspeck of an island in our position, and the soundings should have been forty fathoms instead of twenty, and the bottom olive mud. All I could get from what our lead brought up on its melted tallow was a glassy kind of sand.

"I dotted the spot on the chart and wrote Sudden Island on it and turned in.

"I was awakened about seven bells by the sound of big guns and came on deck. We were riding nicely, all furled and snug aloft; but there was guns to the north of us at regular intervals. Some ship in distress, of course; on the island probably, not having our luck or a mate as good as Mr. Manson.

"It was now morning, but still very dark with that heavy black smoke pouring from the volcano and hanging over the sea, though some light came from the horizon—enough for me to get a better look at Sudden Island. Mr. Derrick went aloft to the crosstrees but couldn't make out any sign of a wreck. So I ordered a boat ashore. Would have sent one, anyway, for I wanted a report on Sudden Island, diskivered and named by Cap'n Jeremiah Hackbutt, of the whaler *Jennie H.*, New Bedford, U. S. A. And then there might be a wreck ashore.

"I was sizing up the island as the men were getting out the boat under the second mate, and carrying lines and a little rum in case those poor wrecked devils needed it.

"But the more I looked ashore the more I was puzzled. For those rocks were covered with grass. I couldn't make out any trees, but there were patches of grass. So it couldn't be a new island. Grass don't grow in a minute even on South Sea coral. The wind and the birds have to carry the seeds. So I comes to the conclusion that the island had been there for some time, and all I could do was to damn the chart makers and the navy surveyors that had missed it or the skippers that had failed to report it.

"And all the time the guns were going off and the volcano was throwing up balls of fire that exploded under the bottom of the clouds near the mouth and went flashing all over the sky against every twist of the smoke.

"Then Hop Lee ran foul of Mr. Manson again. He was trying to give the mate one of his laundry tickets now, jabbering and pointing to them as if his singsong could make us read them. Then he tries to give the ticket to the men, and they does their best to keep him out of the way of the mate's fists.

"Next thing I knows he comes aft and throws himself flat on the quarter-deck and comes crawling to me on his hands and knees. We all thought he had gone crazy and the mate wanted to give him a shoe-leather hoist over the side, for he was balancing himself on his hands and the points of his toes till the ship rolled and he turns tail over tip into the scuppers.

"But I got a slant from watching that volcano.

"'In boat,' I ordered. 'That ain't gun fire, it's the volcano. Those shots are timed with her flashes. There ain't no wreck ashore.'

"The moment the Chinee sees the boat hauled in he gets up from his ridiculous antics, jabbers, and grins and goes forward.

"I didn't go below, and considered it best not to explore that island till that volcano let up some, for it was getting worse, and with my glasses I could see the lava pouring down her sides and shoots of steam bursting out of her. The smoke was now all over the sky, just like a big tree. We were under the branches and the roots—the red streaks of lava.

"I heard the mate cussing forward. All hands stood by, for we were anchored to a Lord-knows-how of an island, over a hot bottom, and close by to a volcano that seemed to be piling on for a hell-fire finish. The men were jumpy.

"Mr. Derrick—it was his watch—says the men would like to speak to me, and I allowed it. As they came aft their faces were respectful, and Bill Jarvis stepped forward with his jaw bleeding. I guessed by the way he side-glimmed the mate that it was Mr. Manson's handiwork.

"'What is it?' I asked.

"'Mutiny,' said the mate. 'Asking me questions—about how long we are going to keep our flukes in the side of that volcano.

Want to put to sea, they do, and it is that chink has put them up to it.'

" 'Axing your pardon, cap'n, and officers all,' said Bill, 'it ain't that, but there's something wrong with this yer ship.'

" 'Why, you white-gutted, white-livered sea lawyer——' says I, beginning to boil at his abusing my *Jennie*.

" 'It's the chink,' went on Bill, and I listened when he said this, for seamen are children when they don't get the lay of things, and none of us understood Hop Lee, and we were in a queer anchorage, in queer weather.

" 'He has been inciting the crew to mutiny,' said Mr. Manson. 'I said he wanted to turn this ship into a junk.'

"Bill was just below me and behind him were the men swaying as she rolled on her cable; and behind them, hanging to the main rigging, was Hop Lee looking very pale every time the light came.

" 'We ain't had no luck since he came aboard,' said Bill. 'The fish leave the ground, we run into earthquakes, and this unnateral island. We'll never make a Christian port with him aboard. Some of us, sir, think this yer blazing volcano is his fault. It ain't unreasonable when you come to think of it.'

"You never can figure what sailormen will think, but this was new to me. So I just gave them a tongue-lashing and sent them forward. I wasn't going to maroon the best cook I ever shipped for a lot of superstitious fo'c's'le hands, for that was what they wanted me to do—maroon Hop Lee on Sudden Island.

" 'Besides, there ain't any mutiny in that Chinee,' said Mr. Derrick. 'He's as frightened as any of them. I've seen Chinese pirates executed in Hankkow, each man looking up for the blow of the sword as the executioner walked down the line. I know how a Chinee looks when he is frightened."

" 'Mr. Derrick,' says I, 'if you know so much, will you tell me why Hop Lee grabbed the wheel that day in the China Sea—what he means by those laundry tickets—and why did he crawl to me? Does he think I am a joss?'

" 'He ain't such a fool,' answers he, short.

" 'Mr. Derrick!' says I just as short, for on second thought I considered a skipper ought to be treated like a joss, and the second mate wasn't respectful.

" 'I mean, sir,' says he, hauling his slack, 'I know enough to be certain these Chinese know things we don't. China is old enough and big enough to take the conceit out of a white man. I believe Hop Lee knew we were running up against this volcano. He thought we would have sense enough to make a port instead of trying to sail through an eruption.'

" 'Mr. Derrick,' says I, 'I don't allow my sailing directions to be questioned by mate or cook. If you know so much about Chinese, it's a pity you didn't learn their lingo.'

" 'They have a thousand lingos,' he answered, 'all different, and it takes a missionary three years to learn one.'

" 'No arguing, now!' says I.

" 'Aye, aye, sir,' says he, going over to his side of the deck.

"Daylight came up a bit more, but not much of it, for the smoke made a thick fog. Not the clean fog we get round here. More like that dirty pea soup that drops on the Thames in November. I took my glass to the main crow's nest to get a better sight of the island. Making out some kind of a lake, I ordered Mr. Derrick ashore with some barrels, as we needed water. It might be fresh, and, if so, would save us putting in somewhere on the home trip.

"The moment the boat swung out on the falls Hop Lee comes out jabbering again, and I didn't interfere when the mate gives him a back-hander into his galley.

"I came on deck watching the boat make the shore in shipshape fashion, backing in and then pulling out to meet the surf, and then letting the rush carry her. 'Tain't every seaman knows how to handle boats in a rough landing, but Mr. Derrick did. They jumped out in the shallow and hauled her up on the beach.

"The weather was getting worse, and I was considering dropping another anchor when I saw the men rush to leeward to see the boat put off. Didn't seem to be long enough to get any water, I thought. It's always easier to row into surf if you pull hard enough, and those men were surely breaking their backs. Then I saw they were short-handed, there was a man missing. But when the boat came nearer I saw him lying on the bottom.

" 'What's the matter?' I hailed as the boat came alongside. 'No water?'

" 'Water—yes, sir,' said Mr. Derrick as he climbed aboard. 'But it was salt. And

we were attacked by crabs, sir. They nearly took off Cludd's hand. Enormous crabs, with claws twelve foot across. That lake is full of them.'

"Mr. Derrick and the men were as brave a bunch as ever I shipped; but now they were scared. They could hardly tumble aboard—they were sick in the vitals with it, and it spread right through the crew. I saw the ugly nip on Cludd's wrist, and Mr. Derrick hung on a halyard trying to pull himself together as an officer. But he was shivering as if he had fever, and all he could say was that the claws were twelve feet across.

"'That green'—he managed to get out, pointing to Sudden Island—'that green ain't grass. It's seaweed. That island has just been shot up from the bottom of the sea. It's a damned, squirming, crawling, snapping aquarium of deep-water horrors.'

"Hop Lee comes up and throws himself on the deck as he did before, kicking his legs as if he was swimming and scratching his nails in the deck.

"'By jinks!' says Mr. Derrick, 'that's what the Chinee was trying to tell us. He knew! He is imitating a crab!'

"I looked ashore through the glasses, and I saw that the beach was alive. Big, yellow patches were moving over the rocks at the back. I had seen big crabs fished up in these seas before this, and queer bits of claws sometimes come out of whales' bellies, and Mr. Derrick and the men would not go to pieces without reason. And, besides, there was Cludd's hand nearly cut off at the wrist.

"'Weigh the anchor, set courses and jib,' I ordered, determined to get clear of Sudden Island.

"Now, mind you, that reef I gave you the lay of was about two cables away just north of us, giving us a little shelter from the heavy sea that came chopping down the straits. The wind was about nor'east and the island came astarn and east, so our only chance was to weather the reef and the north of the island. I was afraid to go east for fear of running onto the Java shore or maybe more Sudden Islands. I wanted to get away from that coast and get away quick and sure.

"I could hear the pawls clanking on the windlass even if that volcano was shooting off volleys, and I could see Hop Lee on the fo'c's'le when he should have been on the steward's rope.

"'Anchor's aweigh!' calls the mate, and I ordered the helmsman to shove down so as to let her headsails fill so as to get weigh on her to weather the reef. I was expecting the jib to run up and the foresail to fall when a wild yell came from the fo'c's'le and I saw a claw, a big, yaller claw like a crocodile jaw, reach over the cathead and grab the mate by the gullet. Then a crab with horrible popping eyes and more claws, and more crabs after, till the hands dropped the marlinespikes they had tried to fight with and took to the rigging.

"The fo'c's'le was full of them in a second, piling over the mate's body, and when the bows rose they fell into the waist till the second mate and his men had to take to the rigging, too. Of course the jib was not set and she had no headsails, and the wind on her stern sails brought her head into the wind. We went into stays, and were drifting right onto the reef. I could see the foam of it coming nearer under our beam as we lifted. The helmsman stood steady, but it was enough to put the day of judgment on you to see that menagerie of claws in possession of our decks. Cluttering and scuttling, banging on and hooking to ropes and hatches, they kept piling aboard up the cable and the unfished anchor. They were hungry, I guessed, from the way they clawed at the hatches, smelling our oil.

"But unless our headsails filled and we got way on we were going to pieces on that reef.

"Every sea carried us nearer, and then I saw something in the surf. It was more than surf that was splashing on that long line running out from Sudden Island. It was the splashing of crabs, millions of them pouring out of that lake inshore, racing out over the reef, waiting to board us when we struck. Their claws looked red in that volcano light as they reached out to grapple us.

"'We're gone, Jim!' I says to the man at the wheel. Then I heard a cry that I knew was from Hop Lee forward and a cheer from the crew. Hop Lee was running up the fore crosstrees and hauling the jib halyards from aloft, laying on them all he was worth. The canvas bellying a bit nearly tore him in two, but he held till some of the hands reached him. They actually set that jib from aloft. Then that chink cuts loose the leeward gear of the fore-topsail and begins hauling on the starboard braces. The men helping, he brings the yard abaft

to starboard till it is aback and the topsail lays nearly fore and aft, same as the jib, pulling the same way, pressing against the mast—and, by golly, her head comes round, falls off to the wind, and she gets way on! I cheered the chink, too, as the *Jennie* ducked to leeward, and we cleared that reef and its pirate crew of crabs.

"Mr. Derrick was right, those Chinese did know something!

"Then the helmsman and me had to jump into the mizzen rigging, for a long claw that had a row of white teeth reached up at us and the crabs took the quarter-deck. But we were out of their clutches for a while, for they did not try to come aloft.

"'Twasn't the first time I had sailed a ship without a rudder. But I had never tried to trim sails from aloft before. The courses that had been loose, ready for hauling, we could do nothing with, as the crabs were hooked round the belaying pins on deck. So they just flapped loose, and soon they tore and slatted themselves to ribbons. But we did what we could with the topsails, me in the mizzen, Mr. Derrick on the main, and Hop Lee on the fore. The main thing was we were getting away from the island, and I was most worried over the unfished anchor, for I could hear her cable clank and was certain the flukes would knock a hole in her bows.

"More white dust came out of the clouds till we were choking with it, and the sea was covered with it till it looked like suds. I didn't know whether we were heading for the Java coast or the Indian Ocean, but we were away from Sudden Island; and foundering in mid-ocean was better than that. But I knew the *Jennie* would not founder even if she turned turtle, not with all that oil in her. And every time she heeled over almost on her beam ends—for we were sailing almost as wild as a boy's toy yacht on a pond—and I looked down and saw those crabs slopping to leeward, I wondered if it wouldn't be the right notion to clap on the royals and capsize the ship and spill the crabs out of her. But, then, once our masts and yards were in the water the crabs could get us. I gave up the idea, trusting to the seas breaking over the decks below to clean out the crabs.

"The fo'c's'le was clear now and no sign of poor Manson, but a gang of the beasts were still spreading their claws over the quarter-deck.

"And I never saw such a queer sight. 'Twas like a bubbling broth than anything I ever ever met. Pointed waves coming everywhere, cross seas that broke over the decks with the wind the same, till you couldn't tell which was lee and weather. There wasn't any lee. It was all weather. And it was hot, too, for we had come closer to that volcano or it had grown bigger, for the blast of it was like an oven and the wind blew with steam in it.

"I looked down and saw the quarter-deck had been cleaned of the crabs by a sea, so me and the helmsman tried to get at the wheel. We might at least lash it. But another sea broke over, pooping us, and Jim and me hopped back. For that sea was hot. Yes, sir, we were sailing over a hot sea—maybe one of those hot springs spouting from the bottom of the sea. Or maybe a volcano was going off below. That was where the steam come from, and that water was hot enough to make you jump.

"Then the volcano lets go one big explosion that made every line, block, and tackle, every crab's claw and white tooth and popping eye below stand out like a picture drawn in fire. And the seas were like bucking horses, and all we could do was to hang on. I remember three big waves, the *Jennie* below lifting her nose almost vertical. The hollow of the wave yawned below me, and I thought that ugly white mountain of water was going to capsize us, end for end, like a boat caught in the flukes of a whale. But no, she held up, though you couldn't see nothing below but water. Everything was under, and I thought this would clear us of the crabs altogether, till the waves passed. Then I saw that our boats and railing were gone, but the crabs were still there, hooked on to the rigging and around the masts. They could hang on like we could.

"But after the last big waves the sea quieted. There were no more explosions, no more smoke—only clouds of steam from the volcano. And when we got down on the deck, the sea was cool.

"We got control of the wheel, but did not venture to the main deck, for the crabs were still there—enough to make a man watch out for those sudden hooks of theirs. Some of them were on their backs showing their ugly striped bellies, and their long claws in the air were like a giant skeleton's arms, long, bonelike things with joint hooked on to joint and reddish jaws at the end

just like a crocodile's. Their teeth were large and regular, and the quick way that the fellow had nipped the mate's throat was enough to make me and Jim stand by ready to hop into the rigging if any of them made a reach for the quarter-deck.

"But as I was watching them I got an idea. So I cut a piece of line, made a running bowline, and dropped it over one of those claws. It came with me as I yanked the line.

" 'All hands on deck, Mr. Derrick!' I called. 'These crabs are biled—biled dead.'

"We soon had the decks cleared, but I made for Batavia to refit, and I noticed there were no lights. All the lighthouses had been washed away, and no wonder.

"But we nearly had a second mutiny at dinner. And for the first time in my life I was with the mutineers when Hop Lee tried to give us crab meat.

"In Batavia we heard all about that eruption and about the lives lost and villages washed away. But none of the Dutch officials would believe our story—especially when other ships came in and said there was no Sudden Island and that they had sailed over its position. That made us greater liars than ever, even if we argued that tidal waves that had wiped out a coast line could have washed away an island.

"Then Mr. Derrick goes ashore and finds a chap who could read Hop Lee's laundry tickets, and, sure enough, they were drawings of ships and earthquakes, and one was a picture of a crab which I made out quite plain when Mr. Derrick showed it to me.

" 'And I'll tell you something peculiar,' said Mr. Derrick. 'The native name for that there volcano is—The Crab.'

"It was peculiar, but we got no more out of Hop Lee, for he deserted.

"That interpreter friend of Mr. Derrick was the only man who treated us like truthful, God-fearing seamen. Everybody else in Java and home ports called us sea-sarpint mariners. Everybody believed the papers that painted that name on us—the same papers that say you can navigate a ship from ashore without a crew.

"All I can say to such yarns is, May the Lord deliver me from a liar!"

An unusual story, "High Tension," by Mr. Greene, will appear in the following issue.

THE FAIR RETURN

JOHN K. MENNER, a shrewd old farmer whose place is fifty miles south of Indianapolis, had a visit one evening from a salesman who was "introducing" a wonderful brand of fertilizer. Aside from its trick of making any old desert blossom like a rose, he said, its greatest recommendation was that so little of it went so far.

"Half a bushel of it," he explained, "is enough for any two acres you've got. Think of the saving in hauling. Think of the economy in handling. Think——"

"No, sirree!" interrupted Menner. "I don't want any of it. It's too small. Fertilizer like that ain't——"

"Why, my friend," put in the salesman loftily, "that's no objection. The time's coming, with all our progress in things of this sort, when you'll be able to carry out in your coat pocket all the fertilizer your whole farm will need."

"Yes," said Menner dryly. "That will be about the time when I'll be able to bring the whole crop back in my vest pocket."

each copy. Winter is coming on, however, and it is one comfort to know that THE POPULAR folded once will go nicely into an overcoat pocket. No one who has not read this will ever dream of looking for it there.

WE have always tried our best, but there are some things we have never quite succeeded in doing. One of them was to do what no other magazine has done yet—to print an autobiographical account of actual facts which would have all the charm of fiction and all the validity of concrete truth. We would like, for instance, to have published serially, before they appeared in book form, either one of those two classics of the sea—Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast," or Bullen's "Cruise of the Cachalot." We have always been hoping to run across something new that would afterward become famous in the same way. All the while it was nearer at hand than we thought.

It is not often that an author has led a life fully as exciting as that of any of his characters. It is seldom that any one in modern days has fallen in with as many interesting and memorable adventures as has Ralph D. Paine, with whose work you are already familiar.

Paine rowed on a losing and on a winning crew at Yale. He became a filibuster. He was under indictment as a pirate. He fought with Captain "Dynamite Johnny" O'Brien against the Spanish navy. He was in the war with Spain. He went to Peking with the Allies in their invasion of China. He went West when the West was still new. He was in the last war, sent over on a special mission by the U. S. A. He has met more interesting people and seen more interesting events than any one we know. In the next issue he will begin to tell you some of his own personal adventures. They are as good as any adventure stories you ever read and they all happened to a man now living. Also, in the next issue, H. C. Witwer will start a new series of funny stories. Also, Mr. Grantland Rice, America's foremost authority on sport will begin to write for THE POPULAR.

IT is a pity that people will borrow or steal umbrellas, matches, and cigarettes and think no shame of it. It is an indication of the increasing laxity of the age when they begin to appropriate magazines in the same fashion. It is too bad that it has started, for the next issue of THE POPULAR will be especially hard to keep. Don't show it to other people, don't let them know that you have it till you are ready to part with it. There is no use throwing temptation in the way of a man who would never yield to it unless he had a chance. Also, it might be just as well to order your number in advance at the news stands.