COMPLETE NOVEL By THEODORE SEIXAS SOLOMONS

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The Popular Magazine

FEB. 20
1922

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STACPOOLE starts a two-part story, "Vanderdecken," in the next issue. There also will be a novelette by Henry Herbert Knibbs, and fine work from the pens of Witwer, Paine, McMorrow and others.

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February 20, 1922

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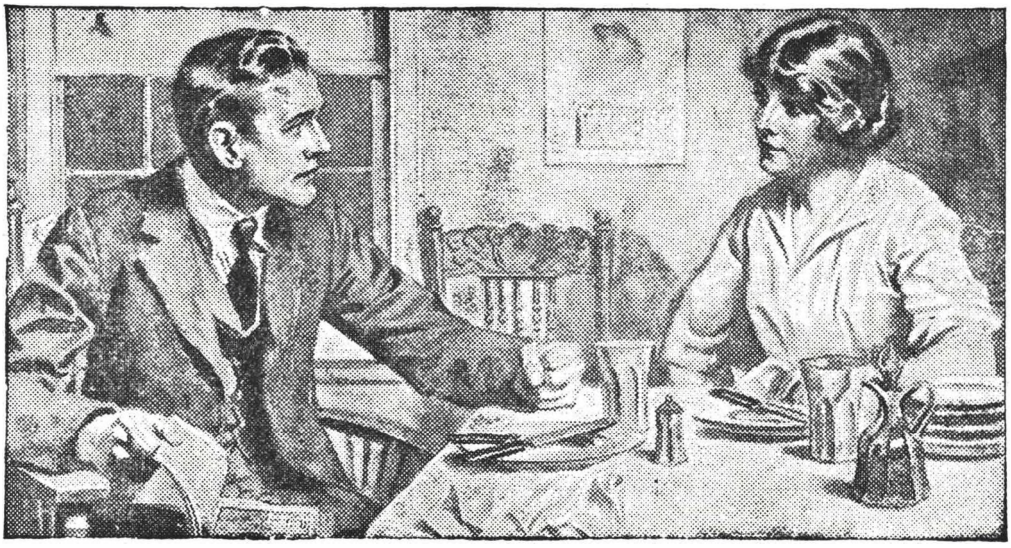

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LXIII. FEBRUARY 20, 1922. No 3

Vassals of the Ice

By Theodore Seixas Solomons

Author of "The Implacable Friend," "The Extra Warm Cabin," Etc.

There is more than one way of gleaning a fortune in the gold fields of Alaska and in the days of this tale Ed Holter's seemed one of the surest of all—if only they could win their race with that grim monarch of the North, King Ice. A strange company it was which set out on that Arctic venture towards Kotzebue Sound on the *New Whatcomb* that cold October day! Holter himself, pathetic Albert Stanley, wily "Patty" Patterson, mysterious David Hewlitt, Rosie Bloom, Edith Stanley—it would be hard to find a more widely assorted band than this! Nor would it be easy to find a man better qualified to write of Alaska than is the author.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

WHERE TRANSPORT WAS KING.

THE old town looks good again, don't it?" remarked the man standing next to Ed Holter at the low rail.

"It does to me," agreed Holter. "My gosh, what's that?"

His round, alert face blenched nervously at the harsh, grating sound of the rusty anchor chain as it pounded across the bow from the rusty winch to the rusty bitts. When he saw what it was that assaulted his ears he recovered his poise but not his good nature.

"Is this as near as we're goin' to go?" he demanded morosely.

It was as near to the beach as the captain of *The Seven Sisters* cared to lay in the open roadstead at Nome, for a sea was running under a stiff on-shore breeze. Holter might have noticed that other vessels were equally conservative in proportion to their draft. But he was in no state of mind to observe anything that did not bear directly upon his—state of mind?

As the little schooner just in from the Arctic dropped her mudhook she veered to its pull and turned her stern to that bold, bare coast of the Bering Sea. From her deck, canting rhythmically to the surge, the land seemed to rise and fall ten thousand feet. Four miles away it was—the strange miraculously built City of the Golden Beach. And not far from four miles it stretched along that beach from the first straggling tents on the west to the last sprawled-out shacks on the east.

Holter found the captain, a frowzy, unkempt, thickset man in a greasy cap that once had been navy blue.

"When are you going to put us ashore, captain?" he asked anxiously.

The master of the schooner pointed an irascible finger shoreward.

"See that line of white? Got to wait till the surf goes down, haven't I? There'll be a dory or two comin' out pretty soon, I expect. You can get ashore in one of them if you want to chance it!"

His surmise proved correct. In a few minutes one of the passengers discerned through a pair of binoculars two boats alternately lost in the trenches of the sea and perched momentarily on its ridges. In less than an hour these dorymen who plied a hazardous trade for substantial gains were riding the heave in the vessel's lee, holding

off from the schooner's side with their oars while they bargained with the passengers to take them ashore.

As Holter bantered the Scandinavian boatmen—who assured him with imperfect veracity that there was no danger—he scanned the distant line of white. He was no sailor and he was afraid of it. But he was more afraid that certain passengers might beat him to shore. He did not know the business of these passengers, notwithstanding he had assiduously pumped them. But if their purposes were anything like his own then it certainly behooved him to beat them to shore and to Nome's main business street, even though that involved taking a chance. Taking a chance was, in fact, the one best thing Holter did. Nor was there any time to be lost. Several keen, determined-looking men were eying the rope ladder.

"All right," agreed Holter; and dropping his small hand bag into the upraised hands of the boatman he descended awkwardly to the dory and seated himself near the stern. Four others followed him and the five were very wet when the dory, skillfully held stern first, hurtled through the last breaker and was dragged to safety up the beach.

Without a moment's loss of time Holter joined the throng that completely filled First Avenue, entered the transportation office of the Northern Trading and Commercial Company and waited patiently until he gained the attention of its manager.

"My name is Ed Holter, formerly of Dawson——"

"Oh, yes, of course. I was in Dawson," replied Bulwer noncommittally.

"With the N. A. T. & T. Company then, weren't you?" Holter's manner was ingratiatingly pleasant. His eye was gray-blue and twinklingly keen. His business had made him not only a rememberer of faces but, for certain purposes, a judge of them.

"Yes, I was. Eh—what can I do for you?"

Holter leaned closer over the counter. "I want the best dope you can give me on the boats that are going to make another trip to the Arctic."

Bulwer smiled. "Well, this company is going to send the *Saidie* again in about five days. That'll be her last trip of course. I understand there's a very small gasoline schooner, *The Pole Star,* going up in a few days. That's all except perhaps the schooner *Seven Sisters.* I don't suppose she'd dare to try to sail up again—unless she wants to winter up there."

"Which she doesn't," supplied Holter. "She's going outside to bring in a cargo in the spring. I've just come down on her."

"Oh, have you?" Bulwer seemed interested. "How did things look to you up there?"

"We-e-ll, it looks as if they *might* have quite a little camp, I should say," replied Holter with affected conservatism. "How is space on the *Saidie?*"

"Very little left—in the hold."

"Oh, that so? Well, I'd like an option on what you have left until——"

"*All* we have left? Why you know the *Saidie* takes a good deal on deck."

Again Holter leaned closer. "I can't be certain just yet. But I'll probably want all you've got in a day or two."

"A day or two! Why, man, we'll be filled up by then. You'll have to make a very substantial deposit."

"Hold it for a few hours, can't you, Mr. Bulwer?"

"Oh, I *think* so," was the cautious reply, "unless we're absolutely obliged to sell space. Better let me know just as quick as you can."

"You can buy a pool on that!" Holter assured him earnestly. He left as briskly as he had entered.

Taking first the upper and then the lower side of First Avenue he looked attentively at each saloon, sometimes pausing and considering, sometimes entering and engaging the bartender or proprietor in seemingly casual converse. Unsuccessful in his quest he walked up a side street to Second Avenue which he canvassed in the same fashion. Only a few saloons were to be found on this undesirable street and they were invariably near to some center of business or industry —The Golden Gate Hotel, The North Star Lodging House, the old post office or the headquarters and bunk house of the Wild Duck Mining Company. He entered each of these saloons. Then as he neared the point at which he had entered the street he saw another saloon whose location was easily less favorable to trade than any of the others. Its site seemed to have been selected with a view to retirement and peace. It was called The Tundra Saloon. There was a small warehouse at its rear.

As he approached the place Holter was

immediately interested in a small placard tacked to one of its double swinging doors, which stated that the place was for sale. He entered the saloon and saw a man in the regulation garb of a bartender seated at a small card table in the corner, reading. He accosted this person pleasantly and was in turn pleasantly greeted, though somewhat indifferently.

"It's rather warm," observed the late passenger of *The Seven Sisters*. "Let's have something."

The bartender carefully put down his pamphlet and rose. He was a fairly tall and somewhat spare man apparently in his late twenties, with a plain and rather unreadable face. He wore spectacles. As he walked toward the bar Holter's eye, which in such matters was a practiced one, roved over the furnishings and fixtures of the place. They were sumptuous. The long bar was of heavily veneered and ornately embellished mahogany. The glassware in great profusion and variety was ranged with mathematical precision upon the carved shelves of the lofty mahogany back bar, the lower compartments and cupboards of which disclosed through their plate-glass doors a complete stock of the best wines, liquors and cordials. After taking in these details Holter's eye made a rapid appraisal of the other appurtenances of the establishment and then returned to the barkeeper who was placidly regarding him, waiting evidently for this chance customer to state his pleasure.

"I'll take a little Scotch, partner. And—have something yourself."

"Thank you," said the bartender. He set a bottle of liquor and a glass before Holter and for himself filled a whisky glass with ginger ale.

"On the wagon?" politely inquired Holter.

"Usually," was the reply.

Holter poured a couple of fingers of the pale beverage into his glass, drank it and looked—still pleasantly—at the pleasant-faced man across the wide, solid bar. He elevated one foot upon its handsome brass rail.

"Place is for sale, I see. Is the proprietor about?"

"I'm the proprietor."

Holter raised his eyebrows and murmured, "I see." Then: "Does that mean the lot and building, or the fixtures and stock, or what?"

"All of them."

"Eh—on what basis of valuation, may I inquire?"

"The fixtures and stock at outside cost. The building and lot"—the young man smiled sunnily—"will be thrown in."

"Well, I should think they ought to be," declared Holter. "The way things have been slumping this summer. That is, outside of the main part of the town."

"Quite right," agreed the proprietor amiably. "It's too far from the crowd."

"Have you got much stock?"

"The warehouse is full." The young man made a gesture toward the rear of the saloon.

"Think you might entertain some other proposition than a straight sale for cash? Say, on time, or—some other deal?"

The barkeeper thought a moment. "Oh, I *might*."

"It all depends, hey?" suggested Holter, his blue eyes humorously shrewd.

"That's it," replied the other with a very engaging smile.

Holter threw down a coin and said: "Well, I'll see you again. Eh—what name?"

"Hewlitt."

Holter returned to First Avenue, alias Main Street, quietly whistling—his invariable habit when excited. He went directly to The Second Class Saloon, a really first-class saloon which had chosen this name to distinguish it from the numerous second-class resorts that invariably referred to themselves as "first class." The Second Class was the favorite hang-out of Holter and his friends. He walked through the bar to the spacious rear portion of the resort which was set with gambling tables, card tables, leather chairs and lounges.

Interestedly watching a faro game sat a handsome, middle-aged man with a grizzled Vandyke beard and mustache and very dark, luminous eyes. At Holter's touch upon his shoulder he turned quickly.

"Why, hullo, Holter. Back again! Well?" The last word was very eager.

"Let's get away." Holter led him to a remote part of the room before he answered that "Well?"

"The Imnachuck is nothin'—yet. But Candle! Say! They're taking it out from just under the water in the creek bed—snipers and jumpers that are working for a grubstake—a hundred dollars a day, some of them. Not a hole down yet on the banks—too much water. Say, what'll they do when they get into the real pay streak!

I want to tell *you* that personally I haven't seen anything like it since my first mush up El Dorado the first Klondike year. When the truth gets out in Nome next spring there's going to be the hell-roarin'est mob hittin' for that Arctic country that Alaska has ever known. We've got to get action quick."

"Right—fine—quick action, as you say!" agreed Stanley explosively. His eyes fairly glowed. His hand holding a half-smoked cigar trembled on the table in front of him. "I told you McGillivray was no bull peddler. He had no interest in deceiving us. Go on!"

"I'll tell you all the details later. As I say, we've got to get quick action. I've done the important things already. I didn't dare wait to find you. I've got a kind of option on all the freight space on the *Saidie* and I've been over the hooch trail from end to end. Just *one* chance and it's a bird—if he'll listen to reason. Name's Hewlitt. He's got an outfit that's *class*—stock, fixtures, everything A 1. And he's doing *nothing!* Now for the money part. What have you heard?"

A shade crossed Stanley's face. "Well, I sent the letter as I told you I would. But there has hardly been time for any complete action or for a letter. However, I received a telegraphic reply stating that the parties would set about procuring the sum I asked for, and unless something unforeseen occurred a draft would be sent on the next boat." He spoke with a hesitation and embarrassment foreign to his wonted manner.

Holter had followed his words with concentrated attention. "Good, as far as it goes. Fine." His smooth fingers drummed mufflledly on the green cloth of the table. His blond brows frowned. "Time, though! That's the hell of it. When's the next mail steamer due?"

"To-day or to-morrow—the *Northwestern.*"

"That's not so bad. We'll have about three or four days to buy everything and get it packed and shipped." Holter's forehead showed sudden perspiration. "Quick work—if we make it. We better see this fellow Hewlitt this evening."

"What else are we going to take?" asked Stanley with sudden perturbation. "We've *got* to have more than a saloon outfit!"

Holter looked at him—amazed at his almost stern manner.

"Why, we've got to have supplies of *all* kinds; got to be prepared for anything. No idea what's going to be available there for ourselves or our people. I couldn't tell about the stocks already landed there, let alone what's going up on this last *Saidie*—ordered by the people up there or to be shipped by dark horses like us. Why we may have to keep a cutting and hauling and building crew going. Of course we'll take complete supplies—as far as our money goes."

Stanley's face expressed relief. "Yes, of course—complete supplies!"

"But the first thing to do, now that we're tolerably certain we can swing the whole deal, is to secure that space. You'd better attend to that, Stanley, while I make an appointment with this feller Hewlitt. Give 'em whatever deposit Bulwer requires. Here, take a thousand."

As Stanley pocketed the money a fear assailed him.

"Are you sure nobody recognized you up there in the Arctic?"

"Don't believe it. Some Dawson men there perhaps, but I went unshaved—rough clothes—wore dark glasses. I'm pretty sure I got by O. K. We'll work all night on lists of outfit and I'll get Rosie out after some people. I partly arranged with some dealers before I left—reliable men I could trust to keep mum. But we want a few good rustlers, too. See you here at six o'clock sharp."

They parted hurriedly on the sidewalk, Stanley turning toward the N. T. & C. Company, while Holter, his rotund face radiating energy and determination, hurried in the direction of Second Avenue.

CHAPTER II.

ANOTHER COURTIER.

In supposing that he had "got by" in the Arctic, Edward Holter erred.

He was recognized by one "Patty" Patterson, a man under middle age, though an old sour dough. But knowledge of that recognition came almost too late to do any good to the only two men to whom his identity possessed more than a mere passing interest. For when Patterson told them, it was in these words:

"Did you notice that unshaved guy with the snow glasses who went downriver this afternoon with the bunch leaving on the

schooner? Why, that was old Ed Holter who ran The Monaco in Dawson City."

There followed some rapid conversation—and thinking—between the three men which resulted in the precipitate departure overland on horseback of Patrick Patterson, bound for Nome. One of his instructions, an unnecessary one probably—for Patterson loved intrigue for its own sake—was that he was to ride all the time he was able to, day and night. He led a second horse for changing off. The distance was, as the crow flies, one hundred and twenty miles. The course by sea of *The Seven Sisters* was something like three times that distance and she had stops to make at Deering and Teller. Also winds were uncertain and the schooner's lines were not those of speed. Patterson thought his chances were good.

The event corroborated his surmise. Haggard, drowsy, nodding in stretches of firm trail, roused only when his remaining horse floundered in "niggerhead" bogs, when Patterson topped the Glacier Creek divide within twelve miles of Nome the first object he saw on the flat expanse of Bering Sea was a schooner under full sail approaching Nome from the vicinity of Sledge Island. There were a dozen steamers in the roadstead but these like the town itself were concealed by lower intervening hills. The sight of the windjammer was enough.

"That'll be *The Seven Sisters* as sure as shootin'," he muttered drowsily to his jaded mount; and the trail being now continuously good he promptly fell asleep. He woke up when the horse reached town an hour after the first passengers from the schooner ran the gantlet of the surf.

Patterson put up his horse at a stable, got a "ham and" at a near-by restaurant, took an extra cup of strong coffee and followed this with a large bracer of raw rye at the first saloon he encountered on his way to the office of the *Saidie*. That sea vessel—if a remodeled river boat could be so called—being the only one that the hurry-scurry of Nome traffic had spared for the new ports on the other side of Bering Strait, was the main thing that Patterson had to "cover."

He got Bulwer's eye directly. This was not difficult, as Bulwer disliked drunks and Patterson had every appearance of being a drunk. There had been times in Patterson's career when that appearance had neither belied his actual condition nor been of the slightest advantage to him!

"What can we do for *you?*" demanded Bulwer irritably. "We're very busy here."

"Thank you kindly," responded Patterson appreciatively. "I'd like some freight space on the *Saidie.*"

"All engaged," snapped Bulwer. Every "broke" prospector and hobo in Nome seemed to have heard of strikes in the Arctic. They were very annoying.

"And all paid for?" queried Patterson innocently. Patterson had been in Alaska for a term of years.

Bulwer looked at the man more critically—and a shade more respectfully.

"N-o," he admitted cautiously.

Patterson drew out of a poke a fat and greasy roll of yellow-backed bills. "I'd like to reserve all you have—if money is any object to you."

"We can use money in the steamship business—with longshoremen at one-fifty an hour," admitted Bulwer sententiously. He considered a moment. After all, business was business. "I'll see what space we have left. Just a moment." He conferred with a clerk who presided over an enormous flat book. "About seventy-five tons seems to be clear. Most of it deck space though."

"No objections at all to deck space," acceded Patterson cheerfully. "How much you want for a deposit?"

Bulwer sized him up again. He decided that a deposit was good enough, provided it were a substantial one. "Oh, about ten dollars a ton will hold it, I guess."

Patterson thumbed out seven hundred and fifty dollars, took a receipt and departed. On the sidewalk he lit his pipe and ruminated. There were a number of things yet to be done but they could wait. Indeed he could probably do them better by waiting. Meanwhile in spite of the coffee he felt that he could use a bunk to advantage for about forty-eight hours. So he found a lodging place and there compromised with duty by instructing the "clerk" to awaken him by fair means or foul after the lapse of twenty-four hours.

There was another person nearing Nome at the time Holter and Stanley parted at the swinging doors of The Second Class Saloon whose approach, had they known of it, would have been of equal interest to them—certainly to Stanley.

She was at that moment standing at the butt of the stubby bowsprit of the *Northwestern* as that vessel forged northward

through the gray-green waters of Bering Sea. There was land in sight. It was only an island—a great, barren, hulking hill thrust up from the shallow sea. But to Edith Stanley it was Alaska and the beginning of an adventure which she contemplated with sentiments and purposes so various that she was unable to tell the very young man at her side whether she was glad or sorry to spend a winter in Nome. The young man was from Oregon. She was from California.

She had graduated from the University the previous May; but being a studious, ambitious girl and being obliged moreover to consider the possibility of having to make her own living she had entered for a post-graduate course when, on the eve of the opening of college, a letter came from her father.

For a whole day it had worried her mother who had been virtually a widow since the earliest days of the Klondike. In fact such as she were called "Klondike widows" in the nearest State to Alaska where so many of them lived—these women who year after year awaited the return of men who were seeking to better themselves in the Far North.

Albert Stanley was one of those brilliant men who somehow never make good. Why is it? What is it? Their amiable friends call it one thing. Their indifferent acquaintances call it quite another. A violent optimist, everything Stanley touched turned to ashes in his hand. They were ashes of money usually that lay forlornly there for the brief space before he dashed them away and turned his nervous hand to something else. At first it was his own money—his by inheritance—that had been consumed. At last—even before he went to Alaska to retrieve his fortunes—it was his wife's!

It is superfluous to say that he was always on the eve of striking it rich in his mining ventures. Some "interest," some lease, some wild grubstaking venture into a district that was "a sure winner" had repeated for the Stanleys the history of his enterprises in California, till in dispair, facing penury for herself and Edith then just entering college, she had called a halt and Stanley had bowed to the justice of his wife's decision. Nevertheless, her pride in him, her hope of his final success had survived everything and she had assured him that if he should ever care to renounce his pursuit of the treacherous pay streak and embark upon a safe and sane commercial enterprise he might have whatever could still be spared of the little that was left. Yet she did not think that Albert Stanley would ever dream of plain business where profits are moderate and normal. It had so invariably been millions or nothing with this inveterate speculator.

Stanley would long ago have left the country but for his own indomitable pride. Indeed he had sworn to himself—how sincerely it would be hard to say—that he would never leave the country alive and a failure! He had stayed with Dawson until the bitter end and then with many other Klondikers both successful and unsuccessful had floated down the Yukon to the great new mining camps of Bering Sea. Here luck as usual was against him in every mining enterprise until at the strategic moment Holter, his old gambling associate of the hectic days of Dawson, met him on a Nome street and sought to interest him in the Arctic.

"No. No more gambling for me, Ed," he had replied before Holter had gone far enough with his proposition to disclose its character. "I've got no money to speak of and I won't borrow any more for speculation!"

"'Gambling?' 'Speculation?' Wait. Lemme tell you!"

Holter buttonholed him. More, he literally dragged him to the secluded corner of The Second Class Saloon and hastened him with his round, small basilisk eyes. Holter at his best was absolutely irresistible.

Of the conversation that followed, epoch-marking in the lives of many others besides the Stanleys, all that Edith's mother knew was the little that was implied in the letter. He reminded her that he had asked her for no funds for several years. He understood too well the necessity of conserving the remainder of her property for herself and Edith. But he felt that the opportunity which would immediately be open to him on the return of a certain friend with a favorable report from the new gold fields in the Arctic was one which ought not, in common sense—in fact in justice to his past struggles—to be ignored. It was a legitimate business and commercial enterprise in a new and flourishing camp in which they would be among the first. He would have the benefit of partnership with the most successful man in that line of business in all Alaska. It was the one and only chance to retrieve his

lost fortunes, his bitter years of unsuccessful effort.

To do him justice, if Albert Stanley had known how little was left of the handsome competence his wife had once possessed it is doubtful whether he would have written her that letter. But she had said little on that subject, generous woman that she was. The letter ended with a request for a last loan of thirty-five thousand dollars—in drafts on any bank in Nome to be mailed to him at once.

At the end of her twenty-four hours of cogitation she called her lawyer on the telephone and arranged for an immediate interview. He did the rest.

In another twenty-four hours she had a very difficult interview with her only child—difficult because it was as hard to realize as it was necessary to do so that Edith was now a woman. It was harder still to tell her what she *must* tell her about her father—to put into words that which Edith had only vaguely guessed before.

"Now that you are grown and educated I am doing what I do not think I would have done a few years ago," she told her after her discreet sketch of the lonely years. "I'm giving him about all that is left and mortgaging the house besides—this beautiful old house and grounds that were my father's wedding present to us. There is a rental left. On that I can manage, myself. All else is represented in these drafts I am going to give you for him."

"Me!" exclaimed Edith.

"Yes. It is all you have, practically. I want you to follow it and help him in every way you can to keep it. Your presence there will be a kind of restraining hand, perhaps an inspiration. You are a conservative girl. You get that from your mother's side of the family. But you are adventurous, too—that's your father all over again, poor fellow. I have thought it all out. It is a kind of compromise—and the only solution. The next steamer to Nome leaves Seattle on Saturday. You will have thirty-six hours to prepare."

Of course Edith could tell little of this to her new-found friend. But of the heights of joy and the depths of despair of those thirty-six hours of preparation—there she was humorously eloquent.

"I had to phone the recorder canceling my courses. He owes me my fees yet—unless he sent them to mother. I phoned all my girl friends to see me off on the Shasta Limited next evening. I phoned for this and that. Clothes? Imagine it—in one day! I phoned for them too—styles, sizes, colors, textures. Fortunately the textures were much the same—khaki and denim and flannel. I shudder to think of mother's phone bill—long distances across the bay, you know. Then there was a boy——"

"Yes?" said this one.

Edith chuckled. "He asked me if I was leaving to get rid of him. I knew it would please him, so I said, 'Yes,' and told him I couldn't trust myself to resist his arts and wiles any longer. My chum was the heart-broken one. She utterly refused to take any post-grad without me and insists she's coming up in the spring if I can get her a job in the Nome high school."

"High school! Why, are there *schools* up there?"

"It's a city of twenty or thirty thousand!"

"But are there children?"

"There will be *two* at least," replied Edith laughingly.

"Not for long—this one," threatened the boy vehemently. "I'll be off pretty quick into the mountains somewhere. I'm—I'm no good in a city!"

She wondered why. Aloud she asked, "When do we get to Nome?"

"We stop at St. Michael first where the Yukon River passengers get off. We're due there to-morrow and Nome next day."

"Can one telephone to Nome from St. Michael, do you suppose?"

He laughed. "You *are* an inveterate telephoner, aren't you? What's the idea?"

"Oh, I was just thinking that I might talk to father if I only knew where to get him. You see he doesn't know yet. I'm *bringing* the letter telling him I'm coming! By the way," she added irrelevantly, regarding the youth with great amiability, "you're rather a nice boy. What's your name?"

He flushed—pleased. "Gerald Leveridge, gentleman adventurer—at your service. Or are you supposed to be a gentleman in Alaska?"

"Once a gentleman, always a gentleman, you know." She paused expectantly. Then: "You *are* a gentleman, aren't you, not to ask my name in return. It was nerve of me. But you see there's been nobody to

properly present us, so—it's Edith Stanley, lady adventurer, at *your* service!"

Their gleeful laughter was interrupted by the dinner gong. "Let's run. I'm famished," she exclaimed.

They both sat at the first officer's table.

CHAPTER III.

A THIRD PARTNER.

At the office of the *Saidie* Stanley laid his thousand dollars upon the counter in front of Bulwer. It was like him to put down the entire amount Holter had given him without learning whether a smaller sum would suffice.

"This is to engage that space on the *Saidie* that Mr. Holter spoke for this morning."

"I'm very sorry," replied Bulwer, "but that space has been bought since Mr. Holter was in."

"All of it?"

"All of it."

Crestfallen, Stanley pocketed his bills and left. He would have tried to find Holter, but until six o'clock that would be like looking for a needle in a haystack. Besides it would be crying over spilled milk. The obvious thing to do was to canvass every other chance of transport. So he set himself to that task by continuing along First Avenue toward the Snake River whose lagoonlike mouth furnished what port there was at Nome—a shallow haven in which only such small craft as tugs, lighters and gasoline boats could lie at anchor or be moored to the buildings on its banks.

As for Holter he had found Mr. Hewlitt seated as before at the card table, reading a pamphlet.

"We've got a little proposition to make to you, Mr. Hewlitt," he confided, tapping the young man lightly on the shoulder. "It's something that I think will solve your problem nicely. I know exactly what you're up against."

"Yes?" said Hewlitt, with a mild interest.

"You can bet I do. Now, my partner and I would like to have a little talk with you this evening—a little quiet talk right here where it's sure to be quiet!" Holter's eyes twinkled at the *mot*. "*Sure* to be quiet, hey?"

"Oh, I don't know," objected Hewlitt reflectively. "There are evenings once or twice a week when I have as high as two customers. This might be one of the nights. But I can lock the door if you say so. They never buy more than one drink, so all I'd lose would be twenty-five cents."

Holter laughed uproariously. "We'll be here at seven-thirty sharp," he promised, and the bartender bowed his acquiescence.

The Golden Gate Hotel was Holter's next objective, for he needed to get into town clothes for his next interview. Also he wanted to see "Rosie." He found that chic and pretty young woman in her room, which was not so far from his own. She admitted him at once on his low-spoken word that it was "Ed." She greeted him with an affectionate kiss and immediately resumed her occupation of mending a rip in a handsome skirt—which needed to be on her to really complete her attire!

"What luck?" she inquired interestedly.

"Best on earth," replied Holter exuberantly. He indulged in hyperbole from settled policy. With those with whom he commonly dealt it was, on the whole, the very best of policies and its use had become a habit. He sat on the edge of her bed after throwing back the pink sateen and lace coverlet—a precaution she had taught him, not without difficulty—and immediately entered upon a glowing description of the Arctic and of the fecund marvels of Candle Creek.

"Well, it's sure time you was strikin' something worth while again," observed Miss Bloom, as she deftly lassoed herself with the skirt. "You're gonna get busy right away, I suppose?"

"*Been* busy," replied Holter indignantly. "Got in this morning."

"Naughty boy!" she reproved.

"Couldn't help it. Had to do one or two things the minute I landed. And we're goin' ter *be* busy. You too."

"Yes? That's nice. What can poor Rosie do?" she asked with arched brows. Her hair, her eyes, her eyebrows were a vivid sunny brown and her face a warm cream. In Dawson two years before Holter had thought her a strikingly sweet and handsome girl. And he had been very, very blasé in the matter of handsome girls. He still thought her—handsome.

He looked at the partly open transom before replying in a lower tone: "I want you to look up Larry de Buhr and ask him if Evelyn is still in town or if she's gone outside yet. And go upstairs over the Aurora and mix in with the dance-hall skirts and see

who you think might go—just a few, you know. Find out all you can about the live ones. Tell 'em they'll have to more or less lay low and rustle for themselves this winter, though the chances ought to be good from the start."

"Why, there won't be nothing much doing till spring, will there?"

"There's talk of winter drifting, Rosie, as I told you. But even if they don't the gold in the creek is so close to the top that they'll be burrowing under the ice and thawing and panning and rocking it out all winter long. I tell you it's El Dorado dirt nearly. And them fellers will have their grubstakes. They've got 'em now. And they'll have dust to throw to the birds—if the birds are there. I expect to do a good business all winter if we can corral the trade. Trust Ed Holter for that, hey? *With* the help of a few good-lookin', refined girls like——"

"Rosie!"—this demurely, her jeweled hands on her breast, her head modestly inclined.

"Now cut that, girlie. Evelyn and Connie and Billy Wooldridge's blonde. That's the type. Just a few. See what you can do. Get busy."

"All right, old man. As soon as I have a fitting."

"A *fitting*, hey? Say, look here, sweet lambkin, don't you think you got dog enough for any baby doll in a place like Candle? Say, Rosie," he chuckled, "you ought to see the squaws up there. Some of 'em's got a hundred dollars' worth of plunder on their backs. If a squaw can get it when the place is only just starting and the ground not scratched yet, think of the business a few white live wires can do. Cut out the fittin' and get goin'!"

She lifted his chin for a kiss. After which: "The fitting will only take a few minutes. When do we eat?"

"Better eat with your girl friends to-night, honey. I got a date with my new partners. It's make or break to-night."

"Oh, *very* well," she replied with droll histrionic resignation. She had once essayed the legitimate in an emotional rôle. But she was only a clever mimic and had fallen rapidly to the illegitimate.

In his town clothes, looking a personable, forceful business man of about forty, Holter sallied forth once more, his objective now the trading companies whose warehouses bulked large on the seaward sky line of the long, narrow city. He got prices quoted for cash and immediate delivery on many thousand dollars' worth of many sorts of merchandise. The quantities were merely approximate, nor did he bind himself to purchase. It all depended on "a deal goin' through."

The merchants of Nome, large and small, were accustomed to that reservation. A large part of their time was spent in figuring on "outfits" which were never subsequently purchased. Holter, however, to those who knew the Dawson man at all, was known as one who did not waste his time on projects largely composed of "hot air." In his way and in his line he had been one of the most substantial business men of the Far North. He was comparatively a newcomer in Nome and had lain low. This was the first thrusting up of his head in the business world. But the big commercial men of Nome knew of him.

At six sharp he met Stanley, and they repaired at once to the Royal Café, the premier restaurant of the town.

"Well, what luck?" began Holter who had found it wise to ask that question before the other fellow propounded the same inquiry to him.

"Bad and good, I should say," replied Stanley cryptically. "You lost your space on the *Saidie*."

"Damn it!" Holter's eyes glinted a savage instant. Many men—and not a few women—knew that glint too well.

"Said it was all sold."

"I was afraid of it. Yet I didn't dare risk a deposit of a thousand dollars till I learned if you had got the money and whether I could pick up a saloon outfit. We gotta look for something else."

"I have already. There's a gasoline boat—fifty tons."

"Too small!"

"Another clumsy one that holds seventy-five. But he's not sure he can go. He's got a trip to Golovin Bay to make first."

"That cuts him out!"

"Then there are two good tugs——"

"Tugs don't hold anything."

"They could tow a barge. I couldn't definitely locate a big enough barge but we might get hold of one."

"Risky."

"It is, I suppose. But—I don't know whether you'll approve—but I *did* pay a

deposit of three hundred dollars on the best of the two tugs, the *Sea King*."

"Fine. Better forfeit three hundred dollars than lose our chance of getting up there. Now for Hewlitt."

They found him at the card table, reading a book this time, under a large, well-shaded lamp. He had removed his white apron.

Holter introduced Stanley as his partner and produced three long, medium-colored cigars with heavy gold bands. He looked nervously over the table for a stack of chips. When he had anything to put over, anything which required persuasion, he invariably bisected or trisected a stack of chips, his once practiced fingers feeling down to the exact half or third of the stack. His brain worked better when his hand was thus employed. There were no chips. He was hardly aware he had looked for them or that he had failed to find them. Only his fingers knew. As a substitute he immediately lit his cigar and drew the harder upon it and "started the ball a-rollin'," thus:

"Now, Mr. Hewlitt, as I told you this afternoon, we've got a little proposition to make to you. But first I want to ask you if you've heard about the strike up in the Arctic?"

"Why, I believe I *have* heard or read something about it in the Nome papers. Around on the north side of the peninsula, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's on Kotzebue Sound. There was a little mining camp called Deering on the Imnachuck River as early as last spring—before the break-up. Some fellows stampeded over there in the winter. But this place Candle which is thirty miles farther up the Sound was only discovered a couple of months ago. I got the whole story. It's the damnedest ghost story you ever heard, gentlemen. But we'll leave that be.

"It's a creek that runs into the Keewalik River right near the coast at a good landing point. It's ten or fifteen miles long, not as long as Bonanza in the Klondike but bigger than any of these little Nome creeks that carry the gold. And there's worlds of creeks that look just as good all around it. Candle City, the town or the town site—there's only a few framed tents there as yet—is right at the mouth of this Candle Creek; and so help me gosh, there's men every hundred yards for ten miles rockin' out money from the water! Say——"

Unconsciously he had been looking again for the chips. Finally—likewise unconsciously—he drew from his pocket a number of silver dollars and stacked them with his nimble fingers.

"Say, they just reach down in the shaller water and scoop up a shovel or half a shovel of muck and gravel and throw it into a pan or a rocker of a Long Tom and shake it down and wash it with water dipped up out of the creek. They don't move—except to eat. They stick there, them fellers, from daylight to dark, hardly moving their rockers. And they're rocking and panning out, according to their own stories, fifty to two hundred and fifty dollars a day."

Nervously his fingers were playing with the coins. "Now, I'll leave it to you, gentlemen, whether men that are making it that way, men that are most of them snipers and jumpers that might be held to account for their doings in the courts later on, are going to exaggerate any! God only knows what they are *really* rocking out. And think of it! Right in the running stream. Just imagine what bed rock will be! Well, then, if Nome here, where they used to take out a few ounces a day from the ruby sand, was the wonder of the world, then this Candle Creek is by long odds the biggest thing yet found in Alaska—and you can take the word of a man that knows. I'll get to that."

Hewlitt seemed politely interested. He certainly was amused at Holter's enthusiasm—to judge from the play of the corners of his mouth.

"Now they've got up there a few little tent saloons, one of them with a little bunch of hooch stacked in the back—a few barrels and some case goods and such. And there was some stuff that *The Seven Sisters* dumped on the beach at Keewalik, for that one—Raker and Horn was the name on the shipment. There's a couple of grocery tents, too. And Raker and Horn's place is also selling groceries, y'understand. And the fellers hanging around the town is scrappin' over lots and holding each other off with sawed-off shotguns and all that stuff. *They* know what they've got on that creek!

"Well, the point is that the goods that's up there now is nothin'—simply nothin'—not a hundredth part of what those fellers are going to consume—and the crowd that's going to stampede in there all winter and

spring. *Now is the time.* The ground floor is open wide. There's going to be more loose money in that camp this winter and more *barrels* of loose money after the spring clean-up than was ever known in the palmiest days of Virginia City, Nevada, Coolgardie, Australia, or the Klondike in ninety-seven and ninety-eight. They'll be wild for hooch, wild for a card game—any kind of a game—wild for dancin', wild for anything and everything they can spend money for. Boys, it's the chance of a lifetime!"

"You seem to understand conditions in these new mining camps," observed Hewlitt with respect. It was what Holter was waiting for.

"I suppose I ought to," he replied with a sudden affectation of modesty. He could afford to be modest. "Did you ever hear of the Monaco in Dawson City?"

"Why, I don't know that I ever did. What was it?"

"It was an all-around resort and the leading one. A show—dancin' afterward, of course, and the tables and bar goin' twenty-four hours every day, winter and summer. I drove the first nail into the Monaco and stayed with it till Dawson went dry, you might say. Canadian government got tighter and tighter. Made it a Sunday-school town. A man couldn't live!" Holter looked as he felt—"out and injured."

His eye lit up with a reminiscent fire. "There were summer months in ninety-eight and ninety-nine when I was clearing thirty and forty thousand a month—and spending most of it, I'm sorry to say. Of course, y'understand, a man in my position had to spend. I had to go in on this deal and that deal—financing expeditions over the line in American territory and over on Scroggie Creek; and backing a coal-mine scheme up the Klondike River where there was a little black mud somebody swore was lignite. And everything you can think of. And of course, y'understand, there were the girls——"

A humorous, hangdog look was on his ruddy face. "They were around me and clingin' onto me and callin' me handsome and wicked and winnin'. Boys, the pick of the world in vamps lit into that Dawson camp, one time or another. And the Monaco was their harvest field. I had to be liberal and open-handed, of course. And another thing—you had to be neighborly and play the other feller's game sometimes—take a poke or two of dust and a wad of chechahco money and cut loose in your neighbor's joint—The Opera House or Tom Chisholm's or the Aurora—and play the bank or the wheel.

"Well, no use crying over spilled milk. I could of salted down a barrel of money if I'd had the sense. Men I trusted did me, the specs didn't amount to nothin', and the long and short of it was that when they closed me down in Dawson I didn't pull out with a whole hell of a lot. But you ask me about having the experience. I *am* wise to the game, I'll admit. They'll tell you—any Dawson man—that Ed Holter knows how to operate a successful resort in the North. And my reputation's good with the business men and the dealers and the girls, besides. You can bank one hundred per cent on what I say. Ask any of them. Ask Stanley, here, though of course he's my friend and might be prejudiced."

"No, I don't think I am, Ed," said Stanley soberly. "It's not the best business in the world but I think any old-timer will concede that you played it squarely. Unfortunately, I know something about it as an outsider. I mean I've played some of the games—enough to know the square ones from the crooked. However, I should like to keep this thing more in the nature of a merchandising proposition."

He was remembering his letter; he was remembering many things, this luckless soldier of fortune, outcast among his inferiors in birth and breeding. Holter's reminiscences were disagreeable to him. He steered the conversation back to the present.

"The long and the short of it, Mr. Hewlitt, is that neither of us separately has means enough at present, even with our credit, to swing an enterprise of the caliber which the common sense of the situation at Candle demands. We need some one who can put in a first-class saloon outfit, the equivalent of what Holter and I are each about to put in, and who will take for it a third interest in the venture."

"That's it exactly," corroborated Holter. "Now, what do you think?"

It was not easy to tell what Hewlitt's thoughts were. He was evidently upon unfamiliar ground and he did not answer the question at once.

"I'm a complete stranger to you gentlemen," he reminded them. "An offer of partnership is a compliment, of course. But it

carries a considerable obligation, and considerable risks, I should judge."

"Oh, of course, we'd have to go into all that," assured Holter; "but there's no use talking you over or your talking us over unless you think you'd like to hit the proposition."

"Are you disposed to go into the venture, assuming that the conditions are mutually satisfactory?" was Stanley's way of putting it.

"Well, at least that would be one way of selling my saloon, wouldn't it?"

"And selling it at a profit," added Holter. "They're getting two bits a drink up there instead of a bit, and beverages is the least of the profit." He expatiated upon the many lucrative ramifications of an all-round resort. Suddenly he asked: "Where are you from, partner?"

"California."

"Understand the saloon business?"

"Why, no, or I wouldn't be in this back street. However, that's hardly a frank reply, because I didn't establish the business here. I got it from another man, who took it over from the fellows who brought in the stock and materials and built the place."

"Look good to you?" Holter was thus testing his acumen, finding out whether he really was or was not a good saloon man, for he wanted no fool partners.

"I can't say it did. The man I took it over from owed me something."

Holter and Stanley looked at each other with mutual relief. It was not deliberate folly, evidently. They liked the young fellow. He was quiet and thoughtful, spoke with decision when he did speak and there was a certain pith and point in his remarks. They felt he was a reasonable person, capable of guidance.

"What's the outfit worth?" asked Holter.

"The invoices of all the stock and fixtures, with the freight bills, come to nearly thirty thousand dollars, after deducting what little has been used. I don't know exactly what the building and lot cost. Several thousand dollars, at least. I could find out, only I told you I'd throw them in."

Again the other two looked at each other. Fate was playing into their hands.

"We don't want you to throw them in. We'll take the bitter with the sweet and call the whole outfit thirty-five thousand dollars. That's just about right. Stanley and I are putting up about seventy thousand dollars."

"All right," agreed Hewlitt, "I'll go in with you."

Upon which Holter immediately sought the cementing of the bargain with "Fine! Let's have a drink."

Hewlitt carefully tied about his waist his bartender's apron and served his patrons and new partners. He took mineral water.

"We've got to work all night on our outfit schedules. Want to give us the benefit of your suggestions?"

The young man made an eloquent gesture. It signified: "Perish the thought of suggesting 'outfit' to the ex-proprietor of the famous Monaco!"

"We'll see you in the morning then—some time." There was a waving of hands and the two men walked out into silent and deserted Second Avenue.

CHAPTER IV.

A CHARMING ENCUMBRANCE.

In sending their daughter to him without advising him of the fact by telegraph Mrs. Stanley had practiced upon her husband a piece of strategy. It was perhaps pardonable. She was afraid he would wire her at once to keep the girl at home, an injunction hardly to be disregarded.

Edith decided not to send a message to her father from St. Michael but to surprise him instead. Of his absolute surprise—indeed, of his complete stupefaction—there could be no doubt. At nine in the morning she knocked on the door of his room in that humble hostlery, The Penny River Hotel, awaking him from sleep that had begun only six hours before. Drowsily he called out, "Who is it?"

"A lady," replied Edith, who knew that after so many years he would not recognize her voice.

Stanley dressed hastily, opened the door, gazed one speechless moment at the young and beautiful replica of his tall wife—and folded her in hungry arms.

The delight of its anticipation had emboldened her to the ruse. But now she became timid, self-conscious, unaccountably moved at the meeting. Something froze in her at sight of the half-strange, half-familiar figure of the man in the cheap environment. At once, too, a great wave of filial sympathy, of a sense of oneness with him, swept her. She had been, she knew, the dear delight of her father's heart. She cried a little as she

withdrew from his arms, and advancing into the room sat down in its only chair.

Stanley was slowly recovering or trying to.

She handed him her mother's letter. As he read it his hands shook. Yet relief was plainly mingled with many other emotions. It was a very confidential letter no doubt, for he did not read it to Edith, at which she did not wonder, remembering that her mother had apprised her of its general contents only in the briefest terms.

"It's all right, dad, isn't it?" she asked presently.

"Er—yes, I think so, my dear," he replied. "The money is certainly a great relief. If it had *not* come we should have been exceedingly embarrassed. My dear, you must excuse my appearance. We are lax here in the North. And I worked very hard and long last night—until three this morning in fact." He looked about him. "I must get you a room in The Golden Gate. Go downstairs now, little daughter, and when I'm shaved I'll join you and we shall have some breakfast—or I shall."

"I, too, daddy—or luncheon. I was so anxious to get to shore I had my breakfast at six o'clock. And then we waited and waited for the lighter. What funny things those lighters are!"

He procured adjoining rooms for himself and Edith at The Golden Gate and while she busied herself unpacking her suit cases he went in search of Holter whom he found dressing. He told him the news in a breath, expecting him to be completely taken aback.

But Holter's interests in Stanley comprehended little of the purely social. Stanley's brief recital had revealed, with Edith's coming, the coming also of the money, and that fact for the time being completely usurped his receptivities.

"Fine!" he murmured. Then through a kind of echo of Stanley's reference to his daughter reaching his mind he asked: "What are you going to do with her?"

Stanley looked his annoyance—the cause of which the other naturally misunderstood. "She has come up to be with me," he replied.

Holter paused in his hair brushing, a quizzical humor in his eyes. "Kinder mixed company, hey?"

Stanley bit his lip. His feeling, though repressed, was intense. Yet he knew not how to reply to the man who was to contribute himself and "Rosie" to the mixture.

"Why don't you send her ahead on the *Saidie* and fix up a place for her and you quite a ways apart from where we locate the resort?"

Stanley did not reply at once. The immediate embarrassment of Edith's presence was the simplest of his quandaries. What perturbed him was the whole situation created by his letter—a situation erected upon that euphemism of his—"a legitimate business enterprise." He had used that vague expression purposely, not, however, in the belief that the venture on which he proposed to embark was *not* a regular business enterprise, but because he knew that if he were to describe it precisely his wife would be so prejudiced against it as to refuse, perhaps, to assist him. He himself, while not exactly relishing the idea of personal connection with a Northern "resort"—though he was by no means averse to patronizing the gambling end of it—saw nothing illegitimate about it or in the least dishonorable.

It was a matter of taste only; and he felt that in view of his past and his desperate need of retrieving it he had no right to consult his personal tastes. He had believed that the legitimacy of the project as an investment, from a purely business point of view, ought to be his wife's only consideration and he had used the nice phrases merely to save her from making a mistake of judgment, the mistake of permitting *her* tastes—which were fanatical prejudices—to stand in the way of his long-deferred success, the first results of which would, of course, be the return to her of the funds he had borrowed. And now here was Edith, steeped, he presumed, in her mother's prejudices as well as her own.

He knew his wife. He knew it was in no spirit of distrust or of spying that she had made Edith's joining him an implied condition of the loan, but entirely a wish to help him—by cheer, by the stimulation of the presence of their only child, their only real future! No, he could not justly cavil at her sending the girl. But it disturbed and perplexed him utterly. And Holter? Holter aggravated his vexation!

He turned to his partner suddenly. "Would you call our proposition a legitimate business enterprise?"

"Would I? Say, you can buy a pool on

it. Run as I run my business it's a thunderin' sight more legitimate than nine businesses out of ten—the way they're run in Alaska. Take your petty-larceny merchants and your half-interest mining swindlers. Take——"

"Yes, I get your point, Ed," Stanley admitted humbly.

There was a swagger about Holter, a bullying defensiveness that implied, if not his own sense of the illegitimacy of the business, at least a painful consciousness of the view held by the better classes of the public. Stanley did not care to have him enlarge upon the subject—it sounded too much like his own arguments with himself before he consented. Instead he reverted to Edith.

"My daughter—eh, Miss Stanley—is going to look about her to-day. And I'll decide—later on. She'll be all right."

His last words which were ruminative rather than conversational were followed by the offhand question from Holter: "What's her name?"

Stanley gave a start—an effect lost upon Holter, so purely innocent and natural had seemed his query.

"Miss Stanley's name is—Edith," he replied painfully.

"Pretty name," observed Holter lightly. "Always been a favorite of mine."

"I'll meet you in the lobby," promised Stanley hurriedly and went out.

Half an hour later, a clean, sunburned boy of twenty, dressed in khaki, with canvas puttees and flannel shirt, was walking the lobby of The Golden Gate and looking impatiently at the broad stairs. In a few moments, a tall, clear-faced, gray-eyed, fair-haired girl, exactly similarly dressed, except for her short skirt, came briskly down those stairs, her eyes bright with recognition.

"Hullo, twin," she greeted him as she gave him her hand. They were glancing humorously at each other's costume. They both laughed.

"They're corking boots," he observed admiringly. "You'll need 'em. The mud just outside of the main streets is a fright. Com'on," he urged. The comradeship of the boy and the proprietorship of the man were so quaintly merged that Edith laughed again.

"Are you going to protect me from gunmen and Indians and too impetuously admiring miners?" she asked roguishly. He was such a nice boy. She couldn't have picked a better companion for a first hilarious adventuring in a real mining camp of the Far North.

She was never to forget it. Many and many a time in later days of cold, in the solitude and silence of vast Arctic wastes, she remembered that flushed and joyous day of a thousand novelties of sight and sound and movement.

At last, in the waning day, their bodies thoroughly tired but their minds eager and alert still, they returned to the hotel and separated to change their clothes for dinner. And in the lobby, shortly before six, Stanley met them—Edith looking less like a boy and altogether like the lovely young woman she was, and young Leveridge scrubbed and clean and in a town suit. She introduced him.

"I've asked him to take dinner with us, father, so you could tell him all about Nome and the mines. He's seeking his fortune, you see."

"I'm not very well acquainted with this part of Alaska myself, Edith," Stanley warned them. "But what little I know I'll gladly share with him. Come along, young people. We've got to pick up Mr. Hewlitt, one of my partners, and Mr. Holter, the other one, will probably join us. We dine at the Royal Café, which is the nearest thing to a real restaurant the town possesses."

He was silent as they walked up Second Avenue toward The Tundra Saloon. All afternoon, between tasks that called for concentration and decision he had worried over the problem of how best to acquaint his daughter with the real nature of his enterprise. Concealment being both difficult and undesirable he had decided that instead of making a formal disclosure to her, which would seem like a confession, she ought to be permitted to learn of it naturally and gradually. This dinner would be a first step.

He was glad that neither Hewlitt nor Holter were unpersonable men nor devoid of a certain superficial breeding. With Holter this was a thin veneer or, since he was not a man of assumption, it was rather a natural coating of manners picked up in his frictions with all sorts and conditions of men in the Yukon. Hewlitt, on the other hand, was a simple fellow. There was no coating. He was glad of that. What he was seemed

plain—a young man of no special thought beyond any sort of business for a living.

"He's a light sort of fellow and has little to say," Stanley told Edith by way of preparation. "And his vocation is not particularly—interesting. But he seems fairly educated. That is, he speaks good English—when he speaks at all. He may not entertain you, yet he won't bore you."

As they neared The Tundra Saloon Stanley slowed his pace. "He's in here. We're making it a kind of office. It's just a quiet place for our preparations—which must be done quietly."

"A saloon!" gasped Edith.

"There's no business being done in it."

"But Mr. Hewlitt? Why is he here?"

"He is, or was, the proprietor of the—saloon."

She flashed a furtive, indignant glance at her father who fortunately was looking away.

"Daddy," she whispered tremulously, "we're going to interfere with your business talks. I'm *sure* we'll only be a nuisance. I'll not go in. I'll—Mr. Leveridge and I had better dine by ourselves. We'll be all right."

She had drawn away with the wondering, frowning youth. Her father sought weakly to restrain her. He had murmured "No, no, it's all right." But already their backs were turned. Edith almost fled.

Stanley stared at the retreating figures, his dark eyes somber. He sighed. Then bitterness assailed him in a tumult of confused thought Provincialism! The narrowness of the sheltered life! He should have expected it. Edith! Why *must* her mother have sent her?

He set his jaw—what jaw he had—and entered the saloon.

CHAPTER V.

SEEKING THE KING.

While Edith and her nice boy had been exploring the town and its picturesque environs Holter and Stanley had been battering at the gates of Nome's shipping for some feasible means of transport.

But Stanley had been correctly informed—cargo room on any power vessel was not to be had. Their option on the *Sea King* had yet twenty-four hours to run and it became a case of obtaining a barge for her to tow or giving up the whole project.

The barge situation was not encouraging. The few craft in sight were virtually lighters with rails or bulkheads. "Perishables" such as beer and wines would certainly perish, and there would be no accommodations for the people. In despair Holter went to the N. T. & C. Company in the faint hope of repurchasing the space he had lost. He felt that Bulwer had not given him a square deal.

Dissembling his vexation, he asked: "By the way, who bought that space I reserved on the *Saidie* the other day?"

"Allow me to correct you," replied Bulwer suavely. "The space you *wanted* to reserve, but did not."

"We'll let it go at that, if you like," conceded Holter for policy's sake. "Anyhow, who was the party?"

"Mr. Holter, if you *had* secured that space for your mysterious purpose, would you have cared to have me advertise that fact to the general public?"

The neatness of the rejoinder rather captivated Holter's sporting fancy. He laughed. "Oh, I just wanted to see if I couldn't buy it back from him—at a good, liberal premium. What's he shipping?"

It was Bulwer's turn to laugh. "That's the sort of roundabout question a man asks a woman in the hope of finding out her age. We'll begin loading the lighters to-morrow. Then you can stand on the dock and start a guessing contest with yourself as to what commodities are being shipped by the holder of the space you wanted." His pleasantries so pleased him that he began to feel a slight interest in Holter's obvious predicament. "Can't find a bottom, eh?"

"I suppose that's the nautical for a boat? Well, neither bottom, back, front nor sides that could take a quarter of what I want to send up there and my people besides, though some of them could probably ride up on the *Saidie*."

"Not unless they can smuggle themselves on board and stow away," contradicted Bulwer "We've been booked to capacity for forty-eight hours and inspectors watching us to prevent overloading. Say, has anybody mentioned the *New Whatcomb* to you in your travels along the river bank?"

"No, what is it?"

"It's a barge, you might call it now. Simply an old schooner of the shallow draft, square-end sort—lumber schooner, you know, with the masts cut off. We towed coal up on her for that new railway scheme

at Dixon, and she's in the lagoon there yet. Some quartz-crazy galoot took an option on her to load her with ore for the smelter at Tacoma. He evidently thought better of it later."

"What will she hold?"

"Oh, at capacity, two hundred tons perhaps. Much more with a deck load. Stanch enough old hull I believe."

"Could we get her?"

"I think you could."

The next day they began to negotiate with Parrott, captain of the tug *Sea King*—and a very essential third party. For the N. T. & C. Company with a skepticism born of some years' operating in the Bering Sea declined to enter into any agreement to deliver the barge at Nome, to load her or tow her. Moreover, the price Bulwer asked for the use of her for the one tow to Candle—practically the full value of the barge—was a virtual admission that he did not believe she would ever see Nome again.

Parrott was another hard-headed person, but he possessed a frankness that Bulwer lacked. Parrott freely conceded that the sum he wanted to tow the *New Whatcomb* was nearly equal to the value of the tug, plus his estimate of the operating cost of towing her.

These terms put a temporary damper on the spirits of Holter and Stanley, not merely because the acceptance of them would seriously deplete their cash balance but because they spelled the extreme pessimism of both shipping manager and tug master. October was upon them and scum ice was already forming in the Snake River lagoon. But the die was cast. The bulk of the supplies had been ordered, paid for, and were nearly ready for shipment. Hewlitt was putting in fourteen hours a day boxing and crating drinkables and sheathing his handsome bar with excelsior and burlap. So they signed with the big trading and transportation company for the *New Whatcomb;* they signed for the charter of the *Sea King;* and the next hour Parrott and his hastily picked up crew of three chugged across the bar of Snake River and down the coast toward Dixon.

The evening meal of the partners that next day was differently arranged, Stanley having convinced himself that his method of inducting Edith into the life she must share on the trip to Candle had been indiscreet. She must meet his partners before they sailed but he hoped to avoid so obvious a suggestion of their calling as that from which the girl had shrunk the evening before. They met therefore in the restaurant itself—Stanley, Edith, Hewlitt, Holter, and last but by no means least—Rosie!

Stanley had been dubious about Rosie. Personally he would have liked to toss Rosie into the Bering Sea where her brilliant brown head would have illumined the water for a considerable depth before it sank. No doubt Holter was accurate enough in his delineation of her virtues as an aid and auxiliary in the more festive features of their enterprise. But from this aspect of their business Stanley had resolutely turned his face and closed his eyes. Not that he objected. He could not object; for the northern resort of the Monaco type is a beautiful whole. To lop off one organ was to impair the harmonious functioning of the whole. But Rosie and Edith! That was quite another matter.

Consideration of it had impaired his usefulness in no inconsiderable degree that day. He had forgotten things, made mistakes. But he decided that Alaska was Alaska and, since Edith was in it and for the time being *of* it, and since she was twenty-one and moreover under his immediate eye and guidance, it would do no harm to permit her to meet Rosie. On the vessel she *must* meet Rosie—and others less adroit in their simulation of the manner and converse of "nice" women. So why not now? To cease his usual dining with Holter and Miss Bloom, now that Edith had come, would have been a pointed and dangerous snub of Holter. He had confidently expected with the optimism and trustfulness that had been the bane of his manhood that Holter, whom he knew to be by no means a bad fellow and entirely worldly-wise, would himself suggest a way out. But that hope had gone glimmering when toward evening the presiding genius of the enterprise remarked on leaving him: "Well, I suppose we'll all meet for dinner at the Royal. Rosie and I are anxious to see that girl of yours!"

He assented to the meeting, his back being turned at the time. He had the feeling of a man who is wringing his hands!

If Edith entertained suspicions of her dinner companions she was clever enough to hide them. Her father thought he sensed constraint but he did not know Edith, the woman, and he could not be sure. He was

aware that there was sufficient strangeness in the whole situation of the girl to amply account for imperfect ease. Nevertheless the meal as a whole was a decorously innocent affair, Miss Bloom being particularly "refined" in her deportment. That was easy for Rosie—unless she sensed in her observer more experience and acumen than she believed young Edith Stanley possessed, and then she was wont to go quite to pieces. The iridescent young woman was not altogether happy, however. Something in Holter's manner disquieted her. It was when he talked to Edith. Only Miss Bloom knew what it was. As for Stanley, he decided that Rosie was safe and he thanked her from the depths of his heart.

There was a distinct constraint in Edith's manner toward Hewlitt, whom she knew to be a bartender. It was not a conscious restraint. In her heart Edith was willing to take Alaska as she found it. Moreover she trusted her father. That he was in a financial sense a failure, a kind of ne'er-do-well, in no way implied that he was less the gentleman, less the man of character that her pride desired in her own father, and she expected nothing objectionable in the personalities of his associates. Her constraint was merely the unconscious expression of the traditions of her birth and breeding, between which and the tending of bars no greater social gulf could well be imagined. In what little Hewlitt said she observed he was direct and natural. He was not a bad-looking fellow and Edith was quick to note that his speech was grammatical and his words not ill chosen. It made her the more contemptuous of him that he had chosen the calling of saloon keeper.

Two days later there was further illumination for Edith. In her trottings about town with young Leveridge they chanced upon the wharf of the Northern Trading and Commercial Company, which they found a very busy and a very interesting place.

There seemed to be merchandise and mining equipment coming and going. The *Northwestern* was taking her supplies and passengers for the return voyage and at the same time putting ashore the last of her bumper cargo. But on one side of the dock, sprawling beyond its center—to the annoyance of many profane longshoremen—was another lot of merchandise and an array of peculiar objects destined evidently to be loaded upon some other vessel. Groceries, sacks of coal, a little horse feed, bits of building materials. These were familiar. But that great, long thing there! What was that? The boy peeped under the burlap and announced that it was a highly polished saloon bar. Another equally long and considerably higher structure, upon similar investigation, disclosed an expanse of brilliant plate glass between ornamental standards of mahogany—vaselike spindles, Doric columns, all capped with a projecting roof stretching the length of the edifice.

"That's the back bar, I think they call it," reported Gerald. "You see yourself in it when you raise your glass or wipe the foam from your lips."

"Ugh!" went fastidious Edith. "*You* don't!"

"Don't I?" He was not quite sure whether to be pleased or displeased by Edith's trustful assertion.

"But what are those things, do you suppose?" she asked as they stood in front of a number of pieces that seemed too large to be mere furniture.

Again he examined the crated and burlaped objects.

"Well, that's a pool table. That's easy. And that"—pointing at a smaller object—"I couldn't have told you what that was if I hadn't rambled among the resorts the other evening. It's a faro table where they stake the big stacks of chips, each one representing a twenty-dollar bill, you know. That's when the game is blooded and the sky's the limit. You've heard of that."

"I think I have," replied Edith doubtfully. "I've read of it I'm sure."

"Well, here's another." It was peculiarly rounded on one side. "That's a crap table. The negroes are supposed to like that game. Maybe the Eskimos will take the place of negroes up here. And this long thing with the big round hole in the middle—look! See the numbers all round. Same numbers on the table on either side, only the sacking covers them. That's a double roulette table. A big wheel sets in the hole. I suppose they've taken it off. It runs around in one direction and a little marble spins around the rim above these numbers in the other direction. Where it drops—that's the winning number. Gee, look at 'em! All gambling tables. I wonder where they're going and whom they belong to?"

But Edith already knew! She had seen

the inscription upon a tag attached to the bar. It read "Holter, Stanley & Hewlitt."

"Let's go away. I've seen enough of this wharf," she said a little sharply.

In silence she walked with him toward the street and entered the throng that filled it —preoccupied, hardly listening to the chatter of the boy. She was tired, she told him. She thought she would return to the hotel. He took her there, his puzzled, sympathetic eyes never leaving her face—and left her.

She went to her room, seated herself in the rocking-chair and stared at the wall for a long time.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAN IN THE SHADOWS.

Mr. Patrick Patterson, whose intimate connection with the two men who had sent him from Candle was known to few and who decreased the chance of recognition by keeping off the streets as much as possible and adopting with a humor that only he enjoyed the effective disguise of goggles and a ten-days' growth of beard—Mr. Patterson was by no means idle.

He was a thrifty soul—for his principals hardly less than for himself. Not that he was especially considerate of their pocketbook but because his arrangement with them, hurriedly framed in the hour of his precipitate departure from Candle, insured him a compensation inversely proportional to the amount in which he "blew" them in the transactions with which he was intrusted.

The day before the departure of the *Saidie* he entered the transportation office and drew Mr. Bulwer aside.

"I own that seventy-five tons of space, I believe."

"You certainly do."

"And it's mostly on deck. There ain't gonna be much room on the *Saidie's* deck for a prom-e-nade, is there?"

"There's a full deck load, if that's what you mean."

"I like to walk up and down in the fresh air when I'm on the water," elucidated Patterson. "And I hate to be stumblin' over freight. It's usually under canvas and it's all ups and downs, some soft, some hard—mix'able mushin'! I think I'll leave my space the way it is."

"Mean you won't ship? No refund—if that's what you're driving at."

"No refund expected. As I say, I like to prom-e-nade and——"

"Hold on, there!" Bulwer cocked his eyes which at best were imperfectly mated. His business associates and especially his clientele in the shipping game invariably recognized as an ill omen any increased divergence of focus of the pale orbs. "Can't do it, my dear Mr. Patterson. It's against our policy."

"Say, don't I own that space? Can't I do as I please with what's mine?"

"You bought the right to stack it with merchandise, ship's option, and—other common-sense rules. We don't sell promenading space on our boats. We give it free—when we've got it. You'll have to make another contract if you want a level speedway on the *Saidie*. It will cost you about five times as much, if the company will let it go at all."

Patterson snickered. "A joke's a joke, but—what the hell!"

Bulwer grew impatient. He would bandy about so many words with a facetious person, and no more. "Look here, Patterson. Do you suppose we could ever prove to those passengers that would give the clothes off their backs to send outfits to that country that we *had sold* that space? Or that even if we had sold it it's a square deal to the public? I'll give you six hours to begin hauling freight to the wharf or cancel the contract and declare a forfeiture of your freight money!"

"Oh, very well," agreed Patterson philosophically. He had rather expected such a result. The conservative business man would have frozen with horror at the idea of abandoning that space. He would much have preferred to use it for merchandise which he would have to sell for "cost and carriage" in order to save his freight money. But Patterson knew that cash was king—when the greater monarch, transport, was not wanted. His principals already possessed what merchandise they thought they wanted. So he filled the space at the least expense with what could be obtained at the least cost per pound—which happened to be hay and oats!

In the next few days he used his goggled eyes among the stores and discovered that Holter, or rather "Holter, Stanley & Hewlitt" had become large buyers of merchandise. He wondered if these purchasers had antedated his scoop of all the remaining

space on the one remaining boat for the Arctic. He rather fancied so. He certainly hoped so. Yet he began sauntering among the docks to determine whether there was to be any shipping of it and thus he discovered to his profound disappointment that this combination of Holter, Stanley & Hewlitt had procured some sort of craft wherewith to transport goods to Candle, Alaska. He was very busy for several days among the shipping and the shipping men, but his efforts came to naught. Then he did the next best thing. He was that sort of person.

As the freight began to arrive at the dock he made regular morning and afternoon visits there, took note of the character and number of the different commodities and, retiring modestly behind the donkey-engine house for the purpose, jotted down this information in a little red memorandum book.

He was also among the first and most interested spectators of the arrival, under tow, of the barge *New Whatcomb,* seventy-two hours later than the original estimate of Captain Parrott—though of course he did not know that. He observed with satisfaction that she was not quite able to lie within boom-swinging distance of the dock. There was anything but satisfaction to Holter, Stanley & Hewlitt in that tantalizing proximity. A miss was as good as a mile—or as bad, rather. They would have to use lighters to load the barge—an extra handling that was costly enough and an extra delay that threatened even greater costliness!

Patterson had no liking either for the *New Whatcomb* or the *Sea King*. But particularly he disliked the monster outfit that now occupied fully half of the dock. Its tons upon tons of costly merchandise and quite as costly equipment that were ready for loading on the *New Whatcomb* were a forbidding spectacle to him. Not so, however, the clear weather that for the last four days had locked down every stream that flowed into Bering Sea and promised skating soon on Snake River. Already there was a slight seethe in the surf and if you had scooped up a double handful of the salt water, as Hewlitt did—he seemed interested in this scum—you would have perceived therein minute particles of ice. Billions of these were forming every moment, germinating, as it were, on the surface of the water. Ere long they would set themselves solidly and flank the coasts of Alaska and Siberia—an ice zone miles wide between land and open sea. In warmer, stormy weather the scum would thicken slowly. In calm, clear weather like this it would gather fast.

"It's a fine day," Patterson observed to himself with satisfaction. "No wonder they look worried."

And worried they were—not only the would-be voyagers to the Arctic but many others as desperately toiling to get away—in dories and gasoline launches, in sloops and small power schooners. The water front of Nome seethed like the waves. Night and day they worked—the late ones. New strikes had such a habit of being made in the wane of the summer, when drier ground enabled the prospector to "get down to bed rock." Before a fellow could make up his mind whether it was all a fake or had something in it winter was upon them, things began to "tighten up," and there was "hell to pay" all round—you'd lose your chance in the new diggings or risk your property and your life in a struggle against the grim monster Frost!

Had the barge abutted the wharf she would have loaded in six hours. In her present position it was calculated that twenty-four hours would be required. Actually it took fifty-three. The lighters were in each other's way. The carpenters and handy men hastily employed to knock up frame and canvas partitions on the barge were in each other's way and in the way of the longshoremen receiving and stowing the cargo. Holter had the shore end, Stanley the barge end of the strenuous line. Young Leveridge, who after several talks with Holter and Stanley had decided to go North, was checking. He was a well-educated, handy youth, up to his ears in bliss between this great adventure and his "crush" on queenly Edith—as he inwardly called her.

Hewlitt, being considered a "chechahco" —a tenderfoot, was given the lightest of tasks—messages and errands here and there and watching out for his presumptively precious "fixtures." In between these sporadic tasks, however, he seemed little better than an idle observer with rather a penchant for the seething sea. He had considerable impedimenta of his own in some trunks and boxes. He saw to it that these were handled carefully. He had them stowed in his "stateroom," a certain small parallelogram of partitioned-off space in the after hold of

the barge. The low house on deck was limited in space. Except for a small gathering place, which was to be used also as a dining room, it had all been partitioned off for the ladies and those males who accompanied them. Hewlitt had seen them gayly loitering about. There seemed to be about half a dozen women, each with an escort—friend, husband or whatever the relationship happened to be. He presumed he would know later on. He was not particularly interested.

Edith had observed them too. They were undoubtedly of the genus of Miss Bloom, however markedly they differed in the individual. And the men who were going on the barge—such types, such differences! She marveled at it. She had seen men before who varied as the poles from the men she knew, but she had seen them aloofly—across the gaps of separated interests. Now these utterly dissimilar sorts were to be gathered closely, were to be her shipmates, if you please, in an almost open barge on a chanceful voyage to the Arctic Ocean.

Since that afternoon of stunning revelation at the dock she had had one short talk with her father, a hurried, unsatisfactory interview. Timidly she had questioned his discretion, his wisdom—she would have said his *right,* but she had neither the temerity nor the heart to say it—to embark upon a "business" of the character of this. Was it not bizarre—utterly out of his line, of his inclination?

"Needs must!" he had replied with grim sententiousness and reminded her of their struggle to get away, of the endless, sleepless task of it. Later, on the barge, he would tell her many things.

That was some days before. Now at the end of the maddening wait, with departure at last in sight—the seethe of the waves audible above the noise of the freight handling, the roadstead grown dull with the scum-ice-charged water—now he encountered her suddenly in one of his flying trips ashore to confer with Holter.

"Edith, my dear, this protracted delay has brought new problems. We don't know what it may mean. No one seems to know much about navigating these waters at this time of year—the Bering Strait and beyond it in the Arctic Ocean. It's the first year miners have been up there, you see. We are taking chances. Hadn't you better stay here in Nome for the winter? Or at least until the overland route is passable for dog sleds?"

"Oh, I'd die, father, alone here. And—I must not. I promised mother to stay with you." Her tones pleaded. Her eyes threatened tears.

He thought of many things in the few minutes of their talk. Nome, but a year or two removed from its days of utter wildness and lawlessness, was not yet a place of safety for even an experienced woman—of safety in the most important sense. Staying or going—it was a chance of evils. For the twentieth time he asked himself the futile question: Why had her mother thrust her upon him at this most crucial time of his career in the North? And as before, he could only meet it futilely. A choice of evils! Yet he could look after her on the barge; in Nome or on the trail he could not. It was the deciding factor. Yes, she had better come. The adventurous spirit of the girl not less than her implicit respect for her mother's wishes leaped at the decision.

One episode of hundreds of that last twenty-four hours of feverish haste of many men, each with his own interest to serve, was charged with a weight that dwarfed the rest to trivialities. Yet of them all it was the least observed. Patterson was responsible for the episode and it was not Patterson's purpose to permit it to be observed.

His interest had centered of late in the *Sea King* and in the frantic efforts of her master to get a crew that would not desert him at the last. The eligibles at this late date were few—and they disliked the lateness and "the look o' the weather," either from a caution born of experience of the North or a timidity due to ignorance of it. Also they were of the sort that spent their idle time, of which they usually possessed an abundance, in the resorts on the lower side of Nome's main street.

During the last two days the tug, unable longer to berth in Snake River lagoon, lay at anchor near the barge, bobbing with the swell, the captain and chief engineer going ashore occasionally to keep track of their men.

Patterson knew these men. That is, he learned by cautious, patient observation and inquiry who they were. And he focused his attention upon a fellow named Jonas who was to go as assistant engineer. As one Matthew Phillips he made Jonas' acquaint-

ance twenty-four hours before the towing away of the *New Whatcomb* and proved himself, if a new friend, at least a very cordial one. With Jonas, Phillips imbibed many cocktails of a composition to which Jonas seemed partial and Phillips not, seemingly, averse. Jonas was to be aboard at five o'clock. He assured Phillips that he *would* be aboard at five o'clock, for he had passed his word and the word of William B. Jonas was as good as his bond.

He descanted fulsomely upon the peculiarly sacred nature of the Jonas word during the imbibing of a number of these so-called cocktails until, about four o'clock, he yielded to the hospitable suggestion that the two of them should retire to Phillips' room where there was a little bottle of something choice to sample and, if his friend liked it, another to present to him as a parting token of his, Phillips', esteem.

Still expatiating incoherently upon the utterly irrefragible nature of the Jonas word and looking carefully at the saloon clock to see that he had plenty of time he followed Phillips to the latter's lodging place some blocks away. Once there, Phillips proceeded to give his friend a harrowing account of the dangers of the voyage at this time of year. The room looked out upon the beach. The window was open. And Mr. Phillips bade his friend hearken to the hiss, the sneering, sinister hiss of the scum ice, and to imagine, if he could, how much more sinister that hiss must sound in the strange, dread waters of the Arctic—now—right now—while they were talking.

He went on to explain to the frightened Jonas—very late of Tacoma, Washington, and a stranger "north of fifty-three"—that he, Phillips, was an engineer of repute who was obliged to go to the Arctic and had been denied passage on the barge—which was for gentlemen gamblers and their lady friends exclusively. Proffering the engineer a large, sealed, gaudily labeled bottle and two crisp fifty-dollar bills, he announced to him magnificently:

"I'll take your place, m'boy, and do m' duty. Here's more than what you'll make and the ice can't get you. Just lay low till the barge has gone."

"Fer Gaw' sake, Misser Phillips, don' b' late!" pleaded Jonas, his hand clutching the bills, feeling about for a pocket. "I promished be out five o'cock, and m' wordsh goodsh m' bond!"

Five o'clock came and went on the tug, which was gently under way, tautening the double hawsers that connected her with the barge. Parrott was almost tearing his hair. The rest of his crew of four were stowing their dunnage. Where, in seven dashes was that hell hound of a blankety Jonas!

"Comin' I guess," said Piper, the engineer, puffing at his pipe and pointing to a skiff that was rounding the blunt, dark bow of the *New Whatcomb*. When it drew alongside of the *Sea King* it proved to contain not Jonas but a well set-up, intellgent-looking man in seaman's rig who climbed aboard, touched his cap to Parrott and stated amiably:

"My old friend Jonas, poor devil, is spifflicated! Somehow he remembered five o'clock. He hung to my neck and begged me with tears in his eyes to go out and make the trip for him. Said you couldn't start without him and it was worth a million dollars to you or the fellows on the barge to get goin'—something like that. So—here I am!"

Parrott looked him over growlingly. "You a tugboat engineer?"

"Worked for years out of Tacoma with Bill Jonas."

"Tacoma! Yes, that's the place he said he hailed from. Gosh, I'm lucky. Honorable old swine. Well, go down into the engine room with Mr. Piper. He's your chief. Hope you know something. All right, Piper. Full speed ahead. I'll take the wheel."

And so at last the dismantled hulk of the old schooner *New Whatcomb* was towed away from Nome, bound for Candle Creek on Kotzebue Sound in the Arctic Ocean, on the nineteenth day of October, 19—, the weather clear, the wind offshore and cold enough for mittens. The scum ice hissed at the cutwater of the tug as she churned out of the roadstead.

CHAPTER VII.

AT CLOSE QUARTERS.

"Thank God we're off!" exclaimed Holter as the lights on the dock moved past the narrow window of the cabin.

He was in a chair, his head hanging over the back of it, his arms limp, his almost portly figure expressing the extreme of accumulated fatigue. Nothing but a necktie in which glinted his large solitaire pin re-

mained of his town costume. He had not known a starched linen shirt for days. Stanley, in like attire minus the diamond, lay upon the single couch of the cabin in a state almost of collapse.

"So much for that," he weakly responded. "What next?"

"It's up to the weather now, I suppose," said Holter, sitting upright for a moment. "We've done our damnedest. I'm gonna go to bed. A drink and a cigarette to quiet my nerves is all the supper *I* want."

Wearily he lifted himself from the new upholstered chair that was to grace his future "office" in the Candle resort and staggered through a makeshift door into the rear portion of the house on deck. Stanley followed directly, seeking Edith, who accompanied him to his canvas pigeonhole of a room and did what she could to make him comfortable.

She liked her father. It was not consanguinity nor even sentiment. He was a likable man. Few had ever disliked him. And her liking for him, the instinctive sympathy which drew her to him, made her lot the harder. For inwardly she raged.

By using her eyes and ears in the streets, hotels, and stores of Nome, she had gradually gained a fair conception of the saloon and gambling and dance-hall life of the town. As her knowledge grew so grew her shame —and her rebellion. For now she knew precisely the character of the enterprise in which had been invested the last sum that could be wrung from her mother's diminished resources. She was ready to defend her angry emotions, to show him that he had deceived her, deceived her mother. But she felt she must hear him out. He had promised to tell her all about it, to talk it over. Until then she must suffer in silence.

For two days, during which the old hulk at the end of her tether wallowed about in a smoothly rolling sea, Edith kept to her little cubby-hole, being in fact slightly seasick, as were the other women.

Hewlitt seemed to be a good sailor and so was Gerald Leveridge. They struck up quite a fellowship. But when Holter came to, after a virtual eclipse of some thirty-six hours, he put both of them to work. Hewlitt, as no doubt he expected, was relegated to a vacant corner of the hold where a small, impromptu bar was devised—a wide plank on top of two stout liquor barrels, backed by a board or two for bottles and glasses. There was no reason, Holter told him, why they should not do a little business on the voyage. There were nearly thirty souls aboard, including the four seamen who tended the lines and lights and the cook, the dishwasher and the waiter, who, between meals was a kind of general "flunky." "And," said Holter, "they all have gullets!"

The six helpers were no less furiously anxious than the members of Holter's company to make Candle. The sailors were not sailors, nor was the cook a cook—as was soon discovered! They had accepted the servitude greedily in order to get north and were willing to perform their tasks as best they could. That was the Alaska of it!

When Edith decided to come out of retirement, having in the interim seen no one but her father, whose cloth cubby-hole adjoined hers, she took a cautious survey of her surroundings. But her caution was unsuccessful. She came upon him in the corner where was established the rude little bar on whisky barrels. He was leaning upon that bar, conversing with Hewlitt, who was polishing some small glasses. She caught a glimpse of Rosie's retreating back. It was very probable, thought Edith, that the three had been having a drink. Just as she caught the eyes of the two men she wheeled about and walked away again more rapidly than she had approached and returned to her room, where she threw herself upon her cot and tried to keep back the tears.

Stanley's sensitive face was full of an embarrassed concern at Edith's precipitate retreat.

"I'm afraid my daughter is a little narrow-minded. She's just from the States, you know."

He might have said more had not a troop of thirsty ones descended upon them from somewhere in the vicinity of that partitioned-off, cabinlike space which had at once been dubbed "the social hall," after the fashion of the coastwise steamships. Evelyn and Connie and Billy Wooldridge's blonde and the rest had practically recovered from their seasickness and were bent on solacing themselves for the discomforts of the barge by any diversions that offered.

Stanley waved aside the invitation to "join us in a little drink," for there still lingered on his retinal nerve the fleeing figure of his girl, and the time had come to talk to her.

He knocked lightly on the frame of

Edith's canvas door and in a moment she opened it. She knew he would come. She had almost regretted her flight. It was so—so eloquent to that bartender of how she felt about her own father that it must have embarrassed him. That is, her father. The bartender, she assumed, could feel no embarrassment. She did not understand that bartenders possessed a sufficiently organized emotional apparatus to be capable of that sort of feeling.

"Let's come on deck, my dear," he suggested. She saw solicitude in his dark eyes.

A leaden sky and a leaden sea, the duller for the scum ice that everywhere covered it, lifted and fell as the barge lumbered spirally to the steady pull of the tug. In the bow, where they seated themselves, the seethe of the ice crystals made a continuous sound interrupted only by the hawsers as they dipped and rose from the scum.

"Oh, how beautiful," breathed Edith. She was looking at the land before them, the lofty, bold, flinty headlands of Cape Prince of Wales. To the right of the cape the York Mountains plunged sheerly into the sea. Clouds obscured their summits levelly, like another sea line invertedly precipitous. It was miragelike, and yet stark with reality, very cold and gray and lethal.

Time was when the stupendous landscapes of the North had usurped the field of *his* thought, driving out for long moments home and friends, even the schemes of the present. But, as with many another hyperborean, Alaska had long become for him only a place of bed rock or business prospects. Its surface features were grasped by the senses only as easy or rough going for mining or mercantile transport. In these York Mountains there was talk of tin. Only tin, therefore, rose to his mind in response to Edith's exclamation.

"Is it Bering Strait that we are approaching, father?" she asked. For the moment her woe was forgotten.

"It must be," replied Stanley; and the fact gave him text for his talk. For Bering Strait was the gateway of the Arctic—the new and last frontier of mining and business venture, and the end of the rainbow for Albert Stanley as even the optimist in him had to concede. And once through that gateway, let Edith forget the narrow prejudices of the world she had left behind her.

In this other world to which she had come artificial standards, he told her, had been largely swept away in the very newness of things. Natural standards remained, of course. Dirt was dirt, a lie a lie; violence was deprecated. Of the latter, however, there was little in Alaska, now that the first years had passed. People were impatient of restraint, of laws, yet they were not lawless. Natural law was respected, in its application to property and to the person, just as character, honor and the other natural virtues were respected. But conventions—the artificial rules and customs and manners of polite living, the definite class stratifications of society—these meant nothing; though there were people, principally those who are slow to change, the newer dwellers of the towns like Nome, who held stubbornly to the smug distinctions of genteel occupations, who looked down on the horny-handed miner not less than on the soft-handed faro dealer, the proprietor of the resort, no matter how well he conducted his business nor how necessary that business might be to the mining camps of the frontier.

"'How necessary!' What do you mean, daddy?" asked Edith.

This was Stanley's particular text—to which he had tended from the beginning.

"Why, simply that there are no homes or home ties, no social organizations. The future of the camps is too uncertain, the stay of these men in a given place too brief and life too rough and strenuous to permit such institutions to grow up. Yet men must have relaxation, recreation. They must have their hours of change, of play. Moreover they must have rendezvous where they may meet and discuss their affairs and transact their business. You have no idea how, almost exclusively, one might say, the resort is the business office of even the big men, how many deals and schemes and enterprises are hatched in them and carried along for months—the legitimate business of the camps, understand. The well-conducted resort is the club, the office, the place of sociability, of amusement for most of the men when they are away from their claims or from their workshops."

"But the gambling, and the—dancing. What kind of women must they be to dance in places like that with strange men?"

"There is a great deal that is unsightly and indeed very unseemly, one must admit. For the average men and women up here are—well, naturally, very plain, humble

folks among whom are mixed men of all descriptions. But it is simply life open and unafraid, while in the settled communities, outside, exactly the same things exist, but *sub rosa*—cleverly veiled. One learns up here to be tolerant and yet to keep his own habits of life. He may be as clean and circumspect as he pleases. One can mingle *with* them and yet not be *of* them."

"But these men and women on the barge here, daddy, I don't like them. Look at them! They seem to have seen so much and been through so much of—*ugly* things. I don't want to question their morals if it is none of my business, nor put on airs because I belong to a different world. Yet how *can* I be friendly with them?"

"You need not be friendly with them in the sense of adopting their ways or mingling intimately with them. Though, understand, they are outwardly and in many instances even privately respectable enough—except that they do not always respect the marriage relation. But the dance-hall woman cannot be flagrantly immoral. It is not the purpose of the resort to have such women about. For one thing, it is not good business. I need not go into details, my dear. It is sufficient to say they are nice enough, clever enough, in their way, not to be outwardly objectionable, and it is very much to be desired that you should be outwardly friendly and kind. Simply act naturally—you are all passengers together. And the men, knowing perfectly the sort of girl you are, will give you no concern, I'm sure. They will treat you just as you wish to be treated. We'll see to it that they do—Holter and I. He understands perfectly well."

Edith looked away. She might have told her father that if she were to fear any one it would probably be Holter himself. Yet, founded as it was upon mere glances, mere intuition on her part, the feeling was too intangible to justify expression. A different thought oppressed her as she gazed in silence at the slowly changing panorama of steel-cut mountains.

"Daddy," she ventured finally, "I'm sure that mother had no idea of your going into such a business. Your words were 'a legitimate business and commercial enterprise.' Please don't think me disrespectful, father, but—wouldn't it have been fairer to mother to have told her what it was?"

Stanley bit his lip. Only the words were new, not the sense of the question. It had been implicit between them since the evening that Edith had refused to enter Hewlitt's saloon. Stanley sighed—and met the issue.

"Your mother might have refused to give me the best and perhaps the only chance remaining to me to recoup our lost fortunes. Yet I felt that if she knew what an established and necessary institution in the frontier world this business is—how perfectly legitimate in that sense—she would have been much less averse to it than you suppose. However, what I principally had in mind in describing it that way was the soundness of it financially. It is not at all like the speculative mining enterprises in which our money has gone. It's solid. Good management, gold in the camp, and a reasonable freedom from competition are all that are needed to insure success. All three elements existed in this case.

"I used to be fairly successful in non-speculative enterprises, and Holter who represents the experience in this business is a master hand. I am free to say I would prefer some other business. But in the desperate straits in which I felt myself I simply could not afford to cavil at the character of the venture. It will be run in a thoroughly respectable way, rest assured of that. And you and your mother shall have the benefit of a success which will be perhaps all the more welcome and enjoyable because it has been so long deferred. The thing I rather regret—though it gives me your company, my dear—is your mother's insistence on your staying up here to help me. The character of the business makes this awkward, as you have discovered. However, when we get to Candle your contact with it need not be close, as at present. And we'll send you out again with barrels of money!"

It was hard to resist him. He was too trustful, so sincere, so genuinely enthusiastic. The pot of gold at the end of the rainbow was always just beyond that clump of shrubbery yonder. Edith sighed but not unhappily. She looked at him with lenity, almost with fondness, for she sensed the boyishness that remained in him for all his hard years of vicissitudes and bitter disappointments. She was by no means convinced, yet she saw and somewhat sympathized with his point of view.

"Oh, well, daddy, we'll do the best we can," she decided philosophically. "I promised mother I'd stay with it and I will if it

kills me. When do you think we'll get to Candle?"

"About a week, I should judge, at our present speed. I don't suppose this scum ice helps us any. I understand that if the wind blows offshore and clears it away we shall be able to make considerably better time."

"But suppose it gets colder and the ice scum thickens?"

Stanley frowned. "It will slow us down even more I suppose, but it *can't* stop us. It *shan't* stop us!"

CHAPTER VIII.

STRUGGLES OF A VASSAL MONARCH.

The *Sea King* was having difficulty in maintaining her sovereignty, for she was in the Arctic, forty-eight hours run northeastward from the little Eskimo village at Cape Prince of Wales. The day before, the mountains cloud bathed had disappeared in the south, giving place to a dull level of tundra, white-lined in the far, hilly east, bleakly dun on the low, northward horizon—a typical Arctic landscape.

The five miles of water which Parrott kept between him and the land had brightened under the scouring of an offshore breeze. In other words, the scum ice had been drifting away, restoring to the sea its normal look of fluidity and enabling the tug to double her speed. Shismareef Inlet had been raised and its satinlike lagoons had sunk again to the southward, when the wind changed and the mush ice returned. The tug labored uncertainly through it, sometimes gaining, sometimes losing her northing. The beginning of the third day from the cape found her groping under full steam against a bank of wet, wind-driven snow which the freezing spray cemented to the decks, the deck house, the rails and the stubs of the masts—a coating of ice pearl that thickened like a true pearl—and with disconcerting rapidity.

An airman, could he have pierced the lower air, would have seen the *Sea King*, her hawsers and the wallowing tub they drew pointed straight away from the coast into the wind, chugging blindly for the open sea, yet expecting little more than to avoid drifting into the shallows of the low coast. It was nip and tuck. A swearing crew, whom Parrott kept out on the slippery, canting deck with axes and shovels, broke loose the pearl-shell coating as fast as it gained a hammerable thickness and let it slide overboard with the rolling of the tug.

On the barge the four deck hands and half the other males aboard were similarly employed at the bow. But it was not until the seaman in charge had convinced them that the craft was actually in danger of sinking from the weight of the incrusting ice that Holter was able to drive his passengers out upon the deck in caps and mittens to awkwardly wield implements quite unfamiliar to most of them. From an ignorant indifference they sprang to a fearful zeal.

Fall had given instant place to winter with the coming of the snow. In the intermissions of the storm the clouds lifted and revealed a gray-white coastal plain now infinitely forbidding, chilling the spirits far more than the storm itself.

Nevertheless there were several light of heart, of whom Stanley and young Gerald Leveridge were two; the lad because he had a pair of spiked shoes with which he stalked the slanting deck of the barge or hammered away at the ice with as much assurance as a cinder path would have given him; Stanley, because nothing material or immaterial could damp the inveterate optimism of him. Holter, who was an enthusiast only in the strict line of his business, carried a black face in his nervous pacings of the cabin. He did not like the situation, though in reality there was nothing of immediate peril in it. Nevertheless he forced from himself a stream of humorous anecdotes of Dawson and the Monaco. There was some shrewdness in this—he wanted no talk of turning back and he knew that the past glories of the Monaco would be sure to suggest its future glories when it should be reëstablished in Candle.

One other passenger seemed thoroughly at ease, if not, indeed, elate. He was the quiet one who in fair weather waited on the devotees of that little Bacchian temple which spanned the liquor barrels in the rear hold. Now, his customers being few and far between, he spent his time on deck in tennis shoes which were less efficient nonskids than Gerald's footgear, yet tenacious enough for safety of movement.

Edith, whose chief occupation for hours was looking out of the cabin window, observed him on the wet and slippery deck foraging about—for amusement evidently, though he plied a pick and spade occasionally with his young chum Leveridge. Fre-

quently she noticed him at the rail chipping, picking, peering, out of mere curiosity it seemed. Once he made a clean cut of the ice crust at the bow and called Gerald's attention to it. For a few moments she saw them bending over it. Then swirls of snow and spray blotted them into vagueness.

On the tug the business was grimmer. It took all the power the *Sea King* could generate to maintain her margin of safety off the coast. And to the work of ice breaking on her decks and bow was now added the hazardous necessity of keeping her one small boat and two men maneuvering nearly under the towlines and belaboring them with a long, heavy shovel to knock free the ice that steadily thickened round the dipping part of the hawsers. The oarsman was both strong and clever, else he would have been run into by the barge, or spanked by the heavy, swollen line and smashed or capsized.

The tug men took turn about on this nasty job, Patterson with the rest. This was much to his disgust until his swatting of the towlines gave him an idea which his mind, more willingly active than his body, took hold of and developed in the hours following. He polished off his conception before the time was ripe to give it concrete form. He wanted first to round Cape Espenberg. He was not perfectly inhuman. There was that flaw in his character of relentlessness that suggested the inside of the cape for the execution of his little idea. Besides, preparation was necessary; and there, in the bobbing boat he marked with his eye a central spot on each of the hawsers and during his hour or two of strenuous whacking devoted a disproportionate attention to those spots. He more than kept them free of ice! The oarsman with his back to Patterson noticed nothing.

The snow ceased, the low sun came out and in the clear air the freeze of the sea augmented. But the wind changed to offshore so that the tug turned her nose partly landward to keep the barge from drifting into the open Arctic. And in the veering of the wind the mush ice, though making faster than before, was swept continually seaward until a clear brine glinted once more in the sunlight, giving a false impression of a danger past.

An intelligent eye was not deceived, however, for what light spray was nipped by the breeze and flung against the bows stayed there; and, more graphic still of the sharpening air, the towlines coated faster than in the storm. The little boat from the tug knew no respite. It worked at night in the path of flash lights. Patterson, who now showed a marked preference for what he had before despised, nobly volunteered for two shifts during the dark hours—which enabled him to be the more free from chance observation while he belabored those certain spots on the towlines against which he seemed to nurse a grudge.

Espenberg, the western post of the gateway of Kotzebue Sound, in the deepest bight of which lay Candle, was rounded slowly, the only knowledge of it coming to the seawise in the fact that the craft now faced the wind—which promptly threatened to keep them out of the Sound! It was not a strong wind but it had an ally in the scum ice, a thickish, granular mass by this time, which was drifting with the wind across the eighty-mile expanse and piling up on the shore of the cape—which the tug and barge had now all but triumphantly doubled.

Patterson, dog weary, had turned in at the rounding of the cape, but he set himself the task of waking before his watch was due. He couldn't afford to miss anything just now —not with the ache of his arms to remind him of his conscientious toil at the pounding of the towlines. He stepped out on deck, rubbing his bleary, baby-blue eyes.

Sighting along the front of the deck house he watched a distant point of the south shore of the Sound, starkly clear in the late afternoon light. The point moved a bit westward—they were gaining. Then it stood still. Then it moved eastward—they were losing. Back and forth it moved, very slowly. But the deck house finally nosed it out of sight, proving that on the whole, they were gaining. The baby-blue eyes hardened.

His shift in the engine room was imminent. He was not much of an engineer. Piper had discovered that. But he managed to relieve Piper who therefore took his delinquencies amiably. During the last day or two, however, in their painful approach to the cape, Patterson had been a more attentive student of the tug's enginery—especially its controls. He had made little experiments—*very* little ones. But they satisfied him.

With their entry of Kotzebue Sound, a more cheerful feeling was manifest among the people on the barge. Dinner a few hours later was almost a convivial affair. Holter's

anecdotes of his Klondike days became almost a monologue, which ended in a kind of toast to their enterprise:

"Ever since I hit Nome old friends kept asking me why I didn't open up there. What's the answer? Why, it's too close to Seattle. You hop on a steamer at the foot of Yesler way and step off at Nome. The eight or nine days don't bother. Competition is too easy. Look at all those saloons in Nome! Why, the town is just a suburb of Seattle. Now up here it's different. We're in another ocean. The big boats don't run up here. Maybe they *will,* but by that time we'll have the cream skimmed. The gold is certainly there, and we've got a strangle hold on it. Ladies and gentlemen, let's have a little drink."

Edith had eaten hurriedly. She had not liked the full table, nor Holter's overpoliteness to her. She had been kind and friendly with the chance occupants of the cabin during the many days of storm and stress. They had drawn a little closer then, insensibly. But with the relief that had come, with the boat steadier and the shore friendlier, Holter, with his covert admiration, Rosie, with her spurious "refinement," the crap dealer and his frank "girl," the faro man and his alleged wife, Evelyn the song queen, Billy Wooldridge's blonde, and the rest—all had once more oppressed her with her former misgivings, her sense of utter incompatibility. They were jolly. To the inexperienced girl of twenty-one they were decidedly interesting. But their presence and converse lay like a weight of guilt upon her spirit and many times during the day she had turned from them with relief to the chilly air and the harshly beautiful seascapes, with their distant fringe of snow-enameled shore. Then night had come and with it dinner and Holter's jubilant discourse. Just before his toast she quietly withdrew and walked out upon the frozen deck.

Gerald Leveridge followed her. He regarded the trip as nearly ended, and he wanted to know something.

"I'm going up the creek, of course. I suppose—I suppose I won't see you till I get settled somewhere and come into town."

There was a little jerk but neither of them noticed it.

"I suppose you'll be settled somewhere—and——"

Edith laughed sympathetically. He was making such a task of it—of the very simple matter of seeing her again. They had a little talk, Edith helping him—and controlling him nicely when his voice choked and he timidly felt out for her hand. She was a bit relieved when Hewlitt strolled up and away again, smoking his pipe and *looking.* What an inveterate "looker" he was! Just now it seemed to be the water beyond the bow.

"An awfully decent chap for a saloon man," remarked Gerald. It was gracious of him, for he had not relished the interruption. "I can't help liking him."

Edith frowned. "I'm afraid we get the cart before the horse. Does his quiet, modest, courteous manner show he's a decent fellow in spite of his being a saloon keeper? Or is it that *choosing* to be a saloon keeper shows what he *really* is, in spite of a superficial manner of politeness and modesty?"

"You'll probably find out!"

"What do you mean?" asked Edith a little sharply.

He was embarrassed. He should not have said it of course. "Why, simply that his being your father's partner in a little place like Candle—why of course you'll get to know each other rather intimately."

Edith was about to admit it with none too good a grace. But she was saved the words by two incidents—a sharper jerk of the barge, and the nearing presence of Hewlitt who had made the round of the deck. It seemed natural to Edith to ask this observant person the meaning of the jerk. Hewlitt had stopped and was facing the tug, whose stern light gave her location.

"It *is* queer," admitted the bartender. "It has occurred two or three times before."

As he spoke there came another jerk, whereupon Hewlitt, followed by Gerald and Edith, walked quickly to the bow and leaned over. His eyes fastened upon the barely discernible towlines in precisely the way a cat fixes its gaze on a small round cavity in the lawn. Again a jerk! Hewlitt wheeled about.

"What were you looking at?" asked Edith curiously.

"Didn't you notice?" he evaded.

Before they could question him further he had vanished down the deck. But they forgot him in a new phenomenon. After several more jerks they ceased. And, some-

how, other things ceased—just what, they did not know until they thought a little.

"There's no noise," Edith noticed.

"You mean the murmur——"

"That's it. There's no longer the sound of the ice as the boat pushes through it!"

"Why, see the ropes!"

They were no longer parallel, nor taut—they extended straight down.

"Look at the tug!" cried Edith in alarm. "It's leaving us!"

"We're adrift," exclaimed Gerald. "We'll have to tell them at once." As they almost ran to give the alarm they met the three partners and Anderson, one of the seamen, coming rapidly forward, led by Hewlitt.

"The tug is leaving us. They've cast the ropes off!" Leveridge told them breathlessly.

"What for?" demanded Holter thunderously.

"Tug ahoy!" the sailor bawled, leaning upon the stump of the bowsprit. But the *Sea King* was far beyond earshot.

"What's happened?" asked Stanley anxiously.

"What I told you I feared, evidently," Hewlitt answered. "The lines couldn't stand the strain of those jerks."

"Holler, damn it, holler!" cried Holter, and he did his best. But Anderson did not repeat his call. He muttered it was no use and advised a flare of some sort. He started away to call his mates.

"Get a gun and fire it! Get some powder and burn it!" Holter yelled after him. Then they stood like statues, fascinatedly watching the dwindling light of the tug until it became a speck and disappeared in the thickening night.

On the tug, at about the same time, Henry Thorsen, the wheelman, stumbled down the steps into the little engine room and found the assistant engineer reading.

"Hey, mate," he called to him, "dem lines is parted."

Patterson went on reading.

"I tell yer dem lines is parted," repeated Thorsen irritably. "Can't yer hear? Hawsers' bust somewheres—both o' dem."

Patterson carefully inserted a finger in his book as he closed it and looked up placidly.

"What's that you're saying, Mr. Thorsen?"

"Lines is parted!" bawled the man. "Can't yer *feel* it?"

The assistant engineer studied him curiously while he reached for his pipe which lay on a little shelf at his right hand. "Aw, watcher talkin' about? Trying to josh me?"

"Yosh nothin'. Damn it, I tell yer they're adrift." Usually an exceptionally plegmatic person, he was now thoroughly exasperated. "Come out and see for yourself."

Patterson remained perfectly amiable. "Why, how do you know?" he asked curiously.

Thorsen snorted and turned away.

"Hey, there, mate, where you goin'?" demanded Patterson.

"I'm gonna call de cap'n!"

"Oh, now I wouldn't do that. He's probably sleeping by now."

"You're damn right he's sleepin'," sneered the wheelman. "And Piper too. You kin bet you life! You come, or I——"

"My job's here, my friend, as you probably know. I don't leave this engine, even if *you do* leave your wheel——"

He could detain him no longer. So he let him go, and went on reading—or pretending to read. But in a few moments he decided that this was too much of a pose. So he laid the book aside and when Parrott and Piper burst in on him, he appeared to be stupefied with excitement.

"Stop her!" yelled Parrott at him. Piper edged swiftly around the captain and thrusting Patterson contemptuously aside seized the levers. In a few seconds the engine was still.

"I tole him——" began Thorsen.

"Nem-mind *what* you told him," jerked Parrott. "He's a damn fool, that's all. Stay here Piper." He took the stairs to the deck in one jump and peered astern, trying to discern the lights of the barge. Darkness reigned.

"Been on the course?" he demanded of the mate, who answered in the affirmative. Entering the wheelhouse Parrott signaled "Full speed ahead" and brought the tug around.

In the heavy slush of the water and a heavy air above it the *Sea King* nosed about, now east, now south—trying to catch the direction of detonations faintly heard at intervals. Finally northwest and southwest—but in the latter direction at quarter speed—which was almost no speed at all—fearing to beach his vessel in the shallows of the cape.

It was one of the longest nights he had ever known at sea.

CHAPTER IX.

FAST.

Not less long seemed that night to the frightened denizens of the *New Whatcomb.* In a clear air it would have been bad enough. But with the stars blotted out by the murk, their drifting, which they felt rather than saw, filled them with all the terrors of the helpless blind. Having made little progress since they entered the Sound they knew that if there were the slightest current setting outward around the cape they would now, toward morning of their sleepless night, be out in the open Arctic, borne northward toward its perpetual ice fields or drifting westward toward the distant shores of Siberia, sparsely peopled with a few very primitive savage natives, part Eskimo, part Tatar.

When anxiety as to this drifting out to sea had reached its height Hewlitt, the perversely cheerful, made a little experiment that vastly reassured his fellow adventurers against the worst of their fears. He tied a heavy weight to the end of a long, stout line, and sank it through the mush ice on that side of the barge which a compass showed to be the eastern side. It reached the bottom quickly, for the water was very shoal. With Leveridge timing him, he paid out one hundred and twenty feet of line in three and a half minutes.

"Only about half a mile an hour," he announced to the huddled group, swathed in parkeys and Mackinaws. "At this rate we can't have drifted more than three or four miles all night."

In another hour, just before dawn, they tried it again. But after the weight reached bottom it was not necessary to pay out the line. The drifting had ceased. The *New Whatcomb* was aground! With dawn the watchers discerned on the west the faint white outline of the low land of the cape; and on the east, not two miles away, the tug slowly approaching.

Red-eyed from their all-night vigils, the barge folk watched the tug narrowly. They saw her grow larger, her smoke column higher. At her bow was no swirl of white —evidence enough of the thickness of the stratum of mush ice through which she labored. When she had approached to within about half a mile she ceased to grow larger, the smoke paled and she broached broadside.

"What's the matter with them," demanded Holter irascibly. His mood of thankfulness over their solid attachment to the coast of Alaska was yielding to a return of the sullen anger he had felt when the parted towlines set them drifting. Hewlitt was looking through a first-rate pair of binoculars.

"They've reached their depth limit, I suppose—or the limit of present safety perhaps. I can see a man with a line in his hand. I presume it's a lead line. He's standing idle now but I dare say he's been sounding ever since they started for us at dawn. Hullo! They're putting the dory into the water."

"Coming to see us, are they?" answered Holter. "Well, they'd better. Ten thousand five hundred dollars!"

The approach of the boat was tortoise-like—maddening. But it was not due to lack of exertion on the part of those who manned her. Their blades rose and fell rhythmically; the tension of their strokes could be inferred from the slowness of their motion in the water and the rapidity of the rise and dip. It took over an hour to make that half mile. The instant the boat drew alongside, her crew sprang aboard and a spirited colloquy ensued between Parrott on one side and Holter and Stanley on the other, with Hewlitt an interested listener. The rest grouped themselves at a respectful distance and hung upon the conversation, making what they could of it.

"What happened?" was the burden of the first eager questionings. And in reply Parrott told them that he could not say with certainty but he believed that the stiffened, ice-coated ropes broke at the center of the lines, due to the cracking of their fibers with the continued lifting and dipping of the lines. "They did well, perhaps, to hold out as long as they did. It was good, new rope and as heavy as the tug could stand. But you can't put that sort of thing on Manila day after day and expect it to hold forever. I believe a steel cable would have parted sooner—can't say."

The effects of the all-night search were plainly visible upon him. His bronzed face was haggard.

"There were jerks before the ropes broke, captain," ventured Hewlitt. "I wondered what it meant."

"While they were breaking, I suppose," returned Parrott. "I was asleep and so was Piper. Some strands were tauter than others; evidently—froze up or something.

When the tighter gave, there'd be a jerk, of course. And another when another gave. It's too bad, gentlemen."

"What are you going to do?" asked Stanley, and Holter nervously repeated the question.

"There's only one thing I *can* do," replied Parrott decisively. He had worked it out with Piper before he left the tug. "I can come a little closer, but not within a towline's length. That's out of the question. We draw a good two feet more than you do. You've got an extra line and we've got two. You've got to launch your boat and pay out your line and hold it there. I'll go back and bring the tug up as close as I can come without burying my propeller in the mud when I take hold of you and get the back pull. If that happens to be close enough to bend our lines to yours I may be able to pull you off. The tide will be at half ebb when I get here—if the dope on this ridic'lous nautical chart means anything. And if I can't get you off then we'll have to wait till flood again. Get a move on. Get the line up. Got any coffee?"

There was relief in action. In twenty minutes the boat was shoved overboard—there were no davits—and struck the mush with a dull spattering of flinty crystals. The three-inch line was made fast to one of the towing bitts. The seamen of the barge, under the direction of Anderson, sprang into the boat and received and coiled the great line, the weight of which put the boat down nearly to her rail streak. Parrott and his men brought their boat forward, took the barge's skiff in tow with a short line and all bent stoutly to their oars.

Then Holter had another spell of fuming at the slow progress they made away from the barge, till Hewlitt, acting on some vague disciplinary impulse—the thought, perhaps, that Holter's way was not the way of morale—told him plainly that those men were not rowing through water but through very thick mush!

"Get in and try it yourself," he recommended; and Holter gave him a piercing, murderous look and walked away muttering.

When the new line was payed out Parrott's boat parted from the skiff, and in time gained the tug. And soon black smoke again poured from her funnel and she came on slowly, feeling her way with a sounding rod.

Belated breakfasters on the barge were now all at the rail with those who had kept vigil since dawn; and if fervid hopes could deepen water the *Sea King* would have gained the barge's side. But the tide was working against her, and when she anchored—it was Patterson who dropped the hook overboard and he did it with celerity—a practiced eye would have backed an even wager on the cables connecting or on their not connecting!

Piper, Parrott and two others were next seen dragging new Manila hawsers out of the shallow hatch of the tug and coiling them in the dory. Presently they made off with them, the end of one secured to the towing bitts of the *Sea King*. The line was paid out, and the second and last cable bent to it. When this was stretched its length the two boats were still some fifty feet apart!

It looked black for a moment, until some one on the barge suggested piecing out with one of the parted lines. It took every man on the barge to draw in the old line until, as it came in, it grew easier. When the lines were securely tied, there was a great waving of hands and shouting to the men in the skiff who, observing what was under way, had waited patiently. The trick was turned. In a few minutes the two vessels were once more united, and the boats started to return.

Half an hour later Parrott stepped wearily to the deck of the tug and confronted his assistant engineer. During the hard pull back he had gritted his teeth at the blank look of the funnel.

"Where's your steam?" he demanded sternly.

"Why waste coal?" answered Patterson blandly. "How was I to know when you'd need steam?"

"I wish I knew whether you're as big a lunkhead as you look—and certainly act!" rejoined Parrott bitterly. To Piper, at his side, he added: "Get a move on, Bob. I'm afraid they're stuck fast by now. But this delay in gettin' power may make the difference between pullin' them off or letting them lay till devil knows when."

From the pilot house, when steam was up, he told Piper through the tube to "just turn her over till we take up the slack. Easy, now!"

Slowly the tug pulled at the long line and straightened it. So deep was the ice and

so heavy already the incrusted rope that at least two thirds of its length still lay beneath the surface when the tug, at full speed, failed to budge her tow. Parrott ordered Piper to back up and give a slight jerk. But it was of no use; they must wait for the rising tide. He blew some sharp blasts by way of notifying the barge that he could do nothing further, and then he coaxed an almost mutinous crew to volunteer three men to help him back to the *New Whatcomb*.

"I'll go for one," offered Patterson. "I don't seem to be much of a success in the engine room." He affected a tone of bitter melancholy. "Perhaps I can handle an oar to suit you."

"All right—thanks," returned the tug master dryly. And two more offering, he passed his flask to them, got out extra mittens from the slop chest, and once more shoved away from the tug. Four weary seamen—calling Patterson one—climbed onto the barge forty-five minutes later and asked for a hot meal. As Parrott stepped from the cabin, Hewlitt approached him.

"Think we're going to make it?" he asked.

"No doubt whatever you're going to be afloat in a few hours," replied Parrott. "That ain't what's bothering me."

"I suppose you mean the ice," inferred the bartender. "A westerly wind would be a godsend to us now, wouldn't it? Though any wind would be welcome I suppose."

"You said it!" agreed the other fervently as he went forward to confer with Holter and Stanley.

Edith, who had been standing near, promptly took Parrott's place at Hewlitt's side. Without preface she said: "I can understand that a *west* wind would help us over toward Candle Creek, which is east, isn't it? But why would *any* wind help us?"

Hewlitt looked at her thoughtfully—a little commiseratingly, she feared; and the implied impertinence of pity made her flush. But she changed her mind a little later.

"You notice, don't you, that the swell has subsided? Look at the water—how little it heaves. Wind would make it heave more."

"But why do you want it to heave?" pursued the girl a little impatiently. It seemed so silly to want the water to heave.

Again Hewlitt was slow in replying. "If it stops heaving and becomes motionless, I suppose all that mush ice will freeze solid. The thermometer outside the cabin says it's fifteen degrees below freezing."

"But it has been nearly as cold for some time and the mush ice hasn't frozen!"

"Well, you see, while there is a swell the little particles of ice are kept moving around each other by the heaving motion of the water. But if the particles lie still the water between them will freeze and soon the whole mass will be frozen."

The real, the full, import of the idea surged upon Edith, flooding her imagination. Fearing she was going to cry—she was very young and not inured to strains like these—she ran from the bartender into the deck house and straightway to her room—her only present refuge from the ugly terrors of the Arctic.

CHAPTER X.

THE LESSER KING DEPARTS.

The unhurried tide forced an interlude that was nerve racking to the few who understood its peril—to which few was now added Holter, who had fretted before at the vaguer dangers of delay but who knew now specifically what was worrying Parrott, Hewlitt and the seamen used to the North.

Occasionally Parrott jerked the painter of his dory, fearing to find the ice set about it. The boat moved hard, slowly; but it moved *somewhat* to the slightest pull. Cohesion was not yet! It was during one of these periodic trips to the rail that Patterson approached him and said in a contrite and placatory manner:

"Captain, I judge from some of your remarks that you don't value my services very high. Well, I'm more than willing to relieve you of them, if you like. I'll stay on the barge and do what I can. I'd just as leave winter up here as not."

"Suits me," returned Parrott without punishing himself by looking at the man, "That is, provided you can get a substitute."

"I suppose any man can take my place," Patterson modestly opined.

"You're damn right—any *man* at all—or any *one* at all!"

Whereupon Patterson set about exchanging himself. He had already sounded out one or two men, rather unsuccessfully. But he had that about him which is a potent persuader of exchange, in fact the greatest medium of exchange ever devised by man.

There was just one thing about it that he did not like. In spite of the tension in the air, the absorption of every one in the plight of the vessel, he did not seem able to move about with that entire freedom from observation that he had expected. The younger of the three partners—Hewlitt he had heard him called—seemed to notice him, to rest a casual eye upon him occasionally. In fact he spoke to him affably once when Patterson was talking to Gerald Leveridge, whom he wrongly judged to be a young fellow who would be glad to return to Nome on the tug with a cash bonus in his pocket. And again when he talked—more successfully this time—to one of the sailors. It was just chance, Patterson supposed—or perhaps a natural liking for him. But Patterson did not care for sociability just then and he maneuvered to avoid that casual notice of Hewlitt. He finally succeeded. It was when Parrott called the three partners together. That gave him his opportunity and, as it proved, it was none too soon.

"I'm going to get back," said Parrott decisively, speaking to Holter whom he looked upon as the executive head of the "outfit." "I'm not going to get stuck here while I've still got a chance to get to the tug and keep her free to break out to the open sea."

Holter's face reddened with rising anger. "You mean to say you're going to leave us here!"

"Hold on, now," warned Parrott. "Just get me right. I'm going to pull or paddle or fight back, some way, to the *Sea King* while I can. I came at a big risk to make things clear to you and have an understanding. I've done all I can now—got the last line to you, and strong enough. One is as strong as two, for they never pull even and can't. Two was just an emergency for the open sea. When you're well off the bottom I'll put the strength of the tug against you and tow you through this mush if it isn't set too hard to budge you. That's all I *can* do, and if I can't move you or the towline breaks I'll have to beat it back to Nome and save my boat."

Holter looked at him, his blinking eyes seeing only that direful picture. Stanley, half smiling, saw only the barge floating and moving grandly to the pull of the tug. Hewlitt's serious face showed nothing—except perhaps a respect for Parrott.

"Don't you think you're responsible for this?" asked Holter in a low voice. His anger was repressed, for in a pinch he was game, the truest of gamblers.

"Look at your contract," replied Parrott gruffly. "No man who understood his business would make a guarantee to a tow like this in July, let alone October, and you know it. Parting a towline is a hazard of the business; and in ice like this—oh thunderation, what's the use! We've done our best and that's all there is to it." He turned to the dory, and began dragging it around to the ladder on the other side of the barge.

It was Anderson who jumped in, in place of Patterson. The captain knew him. He was one of the men shipped by him at Nome for service on the barge. From the dory Parrott looked up at Holter who with folded arms was leaning on the rail.

"I'm leaving you Patterson instead of Anderson. Makes no difference to you, I suppose."

"I suppose not," was the indifferent reply.

It was a solid hour before the dory gained the tug—an hour of grueling labor with oars and shovels in the heavy mass of grayish mush. To Holter, Stanley and Hewlitt it was an hour of fate!

At the first chug of the *Sea King's* engines those three men—and a dozen others—ran to the bow. The ice crumpled slightly to the strain of the hawser, thickening and rising about the ice-gnawed planking, marking thus a few inches, perhaps a foot, in all, of advance. Then there was no further motion. Hewlitt thrust an oar into the mass and on its withdrawal a little water rose. He reversed the oar, thrust in the round shank and withdrew it. *It left a puncture.* The mush ice had congealed. The barge was fast!

Holter saw it. "Almighty!" he muttered, and walked quickly away.

They watched the tug—a few hoping still. She was at full engine speed. Five minutes of this and then the line slacked. She had backed up five feet. The line rose—rose tautly, flinging crystals into the cold, clear afternoon sunshine. There was no answering motion in the barge. Again she backed, ten feet this time, and jerked the line. Still no motion in the barge. Once more the line drooped—deeply this time—and the tug, charging ahead at all the speed she could make in the loosened ice ahead of her, snapped up the line in the air. There was a loud report, echoed by the surface of the sea, now a sheet solid enough to act as a sound-

ing board, and the parted line sagged wriggling upon the ice and lay there.

For a futile half hour the tug, like a pitying mother of a hulking, helpless offspring, churned about, trying to get closer without grounding; and then, whistling sharply half a dozen times—it was her "Good-by and God help you!"—turned broadside to the barge and made steadily northward, bound for the cape and the open sea.

There followed strange days of an adventure having little in common with the depictions of the cinema. For what movement there was was unspectacular. Men were there and women also, to whom the cinema type of adventure had grown familiar, trite, boring, almost, who found Cape Espenberg a thing of lasting nightmare, an Old-man-of-the-sea, riding their memory!

For thirty-seven hours after the tug smoke vanished on the horizon happenings on the *New Whatcomb* were purely inner—psychologic. Outwardly there was order at first. This was before imagination took hold completely. After that the resurging energies of self-preservation grappled with imagination and made it somewhat their servant—they fell to a resuming of their situation, each in his own way occupied—almost preoccupied—with a synthesis of his surroundings and of what he possessed wherewith to grapple with them.

The icy sea and the low land of Espenberg had been before but temporary environment, ephemeral menaces to be passed, just as Wales or Shismareef had been passed when the tug bore them onward. But now Espenberg and its encompassments was their prison world to which they were chained by fetters of ice.

Out of the cabin window, seemingly only a stone's throw away, there lay before these worse than marooned men the desolate shores of the northwestern Seward Peninsula, from the Arctic Circle stretching backward a hundred bleak and barren miles to Bering Strait. And, very far to the eastward, some sixty miles across Kotzebue Sound, the new little settlements of Candle and Deering huddled near each other like specks on the roof of the world. Nature seemed not yet to know of their existence. Except in clear weather those far, easterly shores were not discernible; and being indiscernible entered not at all into the mental picture of a plight unrelieved by one ray of cheerful augury. Not a sign of a human being in all that sea, on all that land. Smoke from a round, sod-built igloo would have been a welcome, friendly sight. Eskimos must be near; but how near?

The fact was that natives' eyes were even then upon the barge. But the white men did not know it. Not even that slight solace was theirs. A hostile sea that had spewed a treacherous mantle of ice froth and disappeared beneath it, a land seemingly inimical to any life, the wind, the weather, the tides—these were their all—out of which to build whatever fortune they could conceive as befalling them. And of all of these they knew nothing more than their eyes knew!

The pall of stillness—no sound, no motion—deceived them nearly to their destruction. Had they known of the incessant energy of the Arctic, they would have bent their human powers defensively. Instead, they brooded and talked, sometimes almost in whispers, again in loud, nerve-broken wranglings—a question, an answer, and a quick, heated, snarling outbreak. Mutterings against fate, cursings sometimes of the *Sea King,* sometimes of themselves; occasionally a silly jest—these filled the cabin on that first bewildered night and day.

One man was often absent from these dolorous conferences—busily idle, or idly busy. That would be Hewlitt of course. Hewlitt the leisurely observer who amused himself with the little things about him. Bright and early—as early goes in an Arctic November—he was in the boat, having slid down the rope that held it to the old hulk's rail, and was chipping the ice—measuring, it might be, its rate of making. Leveridge, restless, passing his time between the cabin and converse with Edith on the deck—an Edith too miserable before to be greatly cast down by any mere physical misfortunes—Leveridge came often to the rail and talked to Hewlitt, venturing what lore of the North he remembered from his college courses.

After a few minutes of this innocent, half-patronizing talk of weather and ice Hewlitt interrupted the lad to ask him to pass down an oar and a boat hook.

"How you like to putter around!" observed Gerald.

"I'd like to row ashore," returned Hewlitt, "if such a thing were possible. I think if we could break out a way for the boat the panes of ice would slide under or ride up on the surface and then we could work through."

"But what would you do on shore? It looks pretty cold and snowy to me."

"No use, I suppose—unless we could *all* get ashore."

"I don't see how *all* being uncomfortable would help!"

"It might be safer," suggested Hewlitt.

Edith sauntered up. She often did. "Why don't you put on something warmer, Mr. Hewlitt?" He wore a light cloth cap and mittens, but no overcoat or parkey.

"I'm poking around and keeping my blood in circulation," he answered, smiling at her in his timid way. "Still, I *am* a little cool. I wonder how cold it is. I think I'll climb aboard." He clambered the short distance to the deck with unexpected agility and went to the door of the cabin to look at the thermometer.

"No fear in that direction," was his comment, half to himself.

"How do you mean?" queried Edith.

Hewlitt was surprised to find that the two younger folks had followed him.

"I mean it looks as if we'll go right on freezing here, solid. Unless——" A thought had struck him—and in a mandatory way.

"Where's your father and Mr. Holter, do you know, Miss Stanley?"

"I believe they are confabing together somewhere," she answered, wondering.

She was right. Stanley, the unquenchable optimist, the dreamer always of success, had taken Holter to the latter's room and talked to him of a scheme on which his fancy had fattened from the moment abandonment by the tug had forced upon both men the conviction that for eight months their property, of proud and regal promise was to be but part of a bastile of ice in a remote corner of the Arctic Ocean. In the brain of the dreamer this scheme had danced for hours and now Holter had perforce to hear and consider it.

Though Fate had sobered and grimmed him, Holter was as yet in no mood for confident planning. He was setting his teeth and determinedly putting aside anger and futile resentment. Like Stanley, he did not acknowledge defeat. Unlike Stanley, though, he had first to taste the torments of reason-proved helplessness before he could pass to the elation of a conjured way out. He was quite sure there was no way out. He was content for the present to see to their lives, leaving to the future—to the open water of next summer—whatever chance of costly salvage might offer.

Not so Stanley. He had but one thought, one word—*horses!* He was an old horseman. In his palmy days they had been a ruinous diversion; but always they had been a passion. He turned to the idea of them now as one turns to the memory of a love long renounced but never discarded.

"Horses!" snorted Holter with contempt.

It was the only time he broke in upon Stanley's tense-voiced maunderings. He made no effort to leave, however, being more than content with the refuge his room afforded him with Stanley's presence as an excuse to deny himself to those nervous, dejected, importunate ones who had deviled him almost to distraction with their blattings—their "What'll we do?" "Where'll we go?" "How'll we get ashore?" "What you gonna do, Ed?"

When Hewlitt found them, Stanley, still talking horses, turned to him at once with an explanation of the scheme, but Hewlitt politely checked him to ask: "Don't you think it would be a good plan to cut out a way to shore? It's not easy, but it might add to our safety."

They did *not* think it a good plan. In the minds of both men the hulk was fast in the ice offshore and the only immediate silver lining in their clouded situation was the living quarters of the barge—not a hotel by any means, but relatively comfortable by comparison with the prospect of wolfing it on that bleak, wind-swept tundra of the cape.

"There are the tides," reminded Hewlitt, but the suggestion meant nothing to them, Holter even asking himself if one lunatic partner was not a heavy enough cross to bear! He seemed to regard Hewlitt's recent demonstrations of practical sense as purely accidental. In his view the young saloon proprietor remained, as before, a necessary encumbrance of the saloon property.

Unsure himself, Hewlitt did not urge them. He resolved, however, to bring the matter up again next day, after he had done a little reading. He went to his room immediately after their late supper, and was not seen again *until he was summoned* in the gray of early morning. He knew what the summons meant. He went white—and knew that he had gone white.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GREATER KING IS SPORTIVE.

It was Stanley who made the discovery.

The horses in his mind having driven sleep out of it he rose just before dawn and pacing the deck watched the moon set behind the dim, flat silhouette of the cape. Suddenly he saw a second moon below the first—a reflection. This was very strange, for he knew that neither moon or sun reflect a clear image from ice—and none at all from ice like this. There was water there—unfrozen water! How could it be?

He called Holter who, as he sat up in bed, sleepily inquired what was the matter.

"I don't know. Come on deck. There's water next to the shore!"

"What do you expect—milk?" inquired Holter irascibly as he drew on his trousers. Then his clearing brain grasped the possible significance of Stanley's words, and he said: "Call Hewlitt."

From the shoreward side of the barge the three partners stared at a widening zone of water where once was a mud flat!

"It's why I was so anxious to smash out a lane to the shore, yesterday," explained Hewlitt. "It's the tide. I thought I remembered something about very high fall tides up here. Last night I refreshed my recollection. This is it, I guess."

"What's going to happen?" Holter asked him nervously.

"With this offshore wind? Why, naturally, it will blow us out," replied Hewlitt in his matter-of-fact way.

"Good heavens and earth, man, what can we do?"

His young partner smiled—a little mournfully. "Nothing, of course. Yesterday we might have got ashore with some provisions and a tent or two. Now, all we can do, I suppose, is to amuse ourselves betting on the wind."

At broad daylight the belt of shimmering water had greatly widened. It continued to widen. Slowly the low lands of Cape Espenberg receded as the newly formed ice field, miles and miles in area, moved slowly northeastward at the urge of the ever-freshening breeze.

The meaning of Hewlitt's trenchant suggestion about betting was evident. In this direction, the wind would waft them toward the long, uncharted coast of Alaska northward of the Sound. If it should veer to the south, southeast, or east, and remain for long in either quarter, the *New Whatcomb* would bid farewell to all land and drift in the merciless wastes of the Arctic.

The old schooner became a woeful place, a helpless hulk in the grip of the ice field, blindly, impotently drifting at the whim of winds and unknown currents. The women knew it. They huddled in the cabin, dry-eyed or sobbing or quietly weeping. It was a time of real acquaintanceship for Edith. The sense of caste was effaced from her mind and heart. Only Rosie held aloof from her. She had quarreled with Holter for his failure to properly comfort her—for which apparently she held Edith responsible—and devoted herself to weeping on the neck of her favorite sister in misery, Evelyn, who reciprocated in kind.

Dinner was passed in moody silence. Little was eaten. At supper time hunger drove them to the table. They drank tea and ate hot rolls under the smoky kerosene lights of the cabin and the only word of cheer of that day and the next was uttered at the conclusion of this meal. Some one asked Holter if he would be sure to station a watchman at the bow!

"What for?" inquired that harassed person. "To guard against attack?" A weak snicker was Holter's reward for the effort this witticism cost him.

Next morning, from pure restlessness, the more adventurous got overboard upon the ice. The crust was now about four inches thick and underlaid with at least a foot of uncongealed ice granules. Hewlitt carried an oar, and recommended this precaution to the others. They might fall through some weak part, he said, and an oar laid flat on the ice on either side would probably sustain them. The others spoke of him as a "sour dough," though this was at variance with his statement to his partners, as Edith knew.

She meditated upon this when she thought of Hewlitt. She thought of him as little as she could. But it was not easy *not* to think of him—he was of such a singular, contradictory sort. How, she asked herself, could a man who until last summer had never been farther north than Seattle know the things that he seemed to know? He was either an omnivorous reader, an exceedingly intelligent man or a most excellent guesser!

The men went off and came back aim-

lessly, sporadically, as men go sulking from a hated home. But, worse, they took to drinking till Holter called a halt. He himself drank regularly, though he was usually a temperate man. But he did not show it, because the strain he was under offset the effects of the brandy.

Lacking stimulants, the men and many of the women developed an irritable, quarrelsome spirit which stopped short only of actual bloodshed. Holter came within an ace of killing Wooldridge who accused him of juggling with their lives against the wisdom and advice of many Nomeites who knew the Arctic seas. He had grown abusive and Holter essayed to slap him in the face with his open palm, whereat Wooldridge drew a little jeweled automatic, but was disarmed before he could use it. He claimed he intended only to defend himself against a grosser assault.

The night of the second day the wind, having steadily increased and veered to the south, reached its greatest velocity. Those who could understand the meaning of these changes gave themselves up for lost—except Stanley, who did not lie to himself, but *knew* the wind would change!

Before Holter turned in he asked Patterson to stand a watch, bitter cold though it was. It had been a joke the night before, but Holter bethought him of a possible change in the wind and did not wish, for his mind's sake, to sleep on through so favorable a turn of the cards. Patterson assented. He did not care. Self-cursings for the ill luck that had turned his machinations against his own life having proved futile he was glad for a little real mortification of the flesh—a lonely night in a freezing wind.

The early part of the night was not lonely, however, for Hewlitt engaged him in conversation, briskly walking with him up and down the deck. It seemed pure friendliness. Certainly Patterson so judged it.

"Piper's going to have a time of it, I expect," conjectured Hewlitt, when he had maneuvered their talk to the subject of the tug. "Can't either of the men relieve him?"

Patterson did not know that Hewlitt knew that he had been acting as assistant engineer. In fact Hewlitt did *not* know it.

"The captain knows as much about that engine as Piper does," replied the ex-assistant. "It'll do him good to stew in that engine room for a few shifts!"

It was as much as Hewlitt wanted—this virtual admission by Patterson that he had taken turn about with Piper. He would greatly have liked to ask him a few more questions about the parting of the cables, but in case they made the land again this was quite conversation enough. If they did *not*—there would be *more conversation,* Hewlitt resolved—and something more than conversation! He stayed with Patterson till the wind died. Then he went to his little cabin very hopeful; for he knew something of the nature of a suddenly lulling wind—and he was right.

As soon as Hewlitt's head disappeared down the ladder of the after hatch Patterson ensconced himself on what had been the lee side of the deck house, expecting the wind to start up again. It did—but from the opposite quarter, driving him to the other side of the deck house. Sleepy though he was, the import of this fact finally reached his consciousness. He waited for the wind to become a gale and then woke Holter.

"Get 'em *all* up, damn it," cried Holter in coarse merriment. "It'll help a lot. Blowing like hell, huh?"

They came out in dishabille—even Edith, for a merry moment. Then at once she went to her father, waked him and told him what they were all saying. She knelt at his bedside and kissed his gray hair.

At dawn they appeared on deck, one after another, well swathed in clothes and bedding, and took the gale on their backs as they gazed south and westward. It was a foolish sureness of escape, for in their backward drift they might easily have passed northward of the cape and out into the open ocean. As it was, they were saved only by a gnat's eyebrow, as Stanley phrased it. When they ceased drifting and became once more part of the coastal ice field Cape Espenberg lay southwest of them, less than a mile away, and not much more than a mile northwest lay the shimmering open sea, with small bergs slowly drifting westward in the set of some deep current. The hyperborean god had been kind. He had taken them in his teeth and shaken their hold on life until they were humbled and repentant of their folly. Then he had vouchsafed them the temporary safety of the land. And Old King Transport, meanwhile, had wreaked his sardonic humor upon them!

"The land! The land!" was all they could say—or think of. Naked, rocky, low, dreary, brown and gray—but land, solid,

immovable, traversible. They blessed the land and ached for the feel of it underfoot.

"Come on," invited Holter, after a talk with Stanley and Hewlitt. "Let's a few of us see what the chances are. Let's take an oar, and—and——"

"The boat," prompted Hewlitt. "We can chop it out of the ice in a few minutes."

Five of them, dragging the boat, moved cautiously shoreward, but when they had traversed perhaps half of the distance they came suddenly to the end of the ice sheet which formerly had broken away from the land. In the onset of the returning field the mush ice of later formation had been pushed and squeezed up into a low, rounded parapet. Beyond it, stretching shoreward to the very rocks, lay a slightly moving, unheaving mass of the familiar mush ice.

"Let's go through it to the land," proposed Patterson who had his own special reasons for haste in landing. "We can keep it open, maybe, and get some things ashore."

"A darn good scheme, I'll say," agreed Holter cordially. "I'm leery of that big ice cake we're settin' on. It's liable to move out again, first turn of the wind. We've been pressing our luck hard enough already."

"Quite right," murmured Hewlitt, and Stanley added his consent. He had already made out a list of supplies and equipment with which to make a trip to Nome after horses!

Patterson and a deck hand, shoving the boat over the barrier, thrust it out into the jellylike mass and jumped in. They made fair headway for a while, but the mass, losing its slight motion in the subsiding of the wind, began stiffening about them and they stuck. After some minutes of futile battling with the thickening sheet, they drew in their oars and shouted to the men upon the ice field.

There was little purpose or meaning in their shouting. It was just the instinct of appeal thrusting reason aside. The others shouted back to them to wait—again a futile thing, waiting being so obviously the only course open to either party. Disgustedly the men returned to the barge, leaving Patterson to reëngage in his former recreation of cursing himself for an imbecile.

He knew more of that coast than the others; not of its topography, but the indubitable fact that natives were near, somewhere in the deep southern bight of the Sound. In his pockets were some articles of concentrated food and he was more warmly dressed than appeared. Thus he was equipped for what was little else than a purposed escape, though he would of course have called it a heroic run for help for his hapless fellows. The time proved unripe for his get-away.

On the barge a free-for-all discussion went on interminably over the question of going ashore when they could or staying on the barge. The whole crew of them were well at the end of their tether of self-control. The high spirits with which they had greeted the land with its promise of speedy deliverance had swung over to the extreme of irritability. They spoke their minds brutally. They were through with that armless, legless, eyeless hulk—that death trap in which they had embarked with but a few strands of Manila rope to hold them to life and safety! The shore for them. As soon as ever they could they would run the whole way. What if there *were* no sleds, no snowshoes, aboard? They would brave starvation, freezing—anything, provided it was *on shore!*

In the late evening, while still the surly talk went on—sometimes waning wearily only to suddenly flare up again, abruptly appeared Patterson and the deck hand, half frozen, and told them of the miracle of solid ice to shore.

At once there was pandemonium. Those who had gone to bed came out of their bunks in disarray and returned at once to completely clothe themselves. Holter and his associates, having long before yielded to the virtual demand of the wretched ones, had got out supplies and stores from the hold. And now nothing would satisfy them but an immediate abandonment of the barge. The black night and a journey shoreward over new-formed ice held no terrors comparable to the terrors of the tide and the open polar sea. Huddled in their parkeys, with bedding spread on their backs and carrying several lanterns, they groped their cautious way ashore, each striving to be behind some other, ears strained for the first explosive breath from the one ahead that would signify *going through.* At the slightest untoward sound these shrank back with a cry of fear. Then onward again, turning their heads constantly to see the light on the barge and the lantern posted on the ice a hundred feet shoreward of it

that Hewlitt had rigged up to give them the direction toward land.

A rude toboggan was hastily put together which served to transport to the shore the most necessary supplies for the fear-crazed settlers on Espenberg. But a few, including the barge owners—except Holter who was obliged to join the almost hysterical Rosie—slept on the *New Whatcomb,* confident they were safe unless a strong offshore wind should blow up. That was Hewlitt's view and they adopted it.

CHAPTER XII.

VASSALS OF THE ICE.

Of the days immediately succeeding, the Edith Stanley that *was* retained only a confused and wholly painful memory, as of a kind of day nightmare.

The adventure theretofore, though thoroughly unpleasant and fraught with many perils, had at least been a struggle with the natural world in aspects of an austere grandeur. Nature, taking the stage, bearing them on, harassing them with its harsh sportings, had towered titanically above the mere human drama with its sordid frettings. But now there was stillness, immobility in the vast spaces of land and water, and man took the stage—small, ignoble, wriggling.

Sustained no longer by a sense of propulsion through the seas to a destination where she could free herself from her obnoxious human environment, Edith became prey to the phantasmagoria of ugliness and strife which was now to pass before her eyes. The first hours were not so bad.

Night had only interrupted the confusion of the exodus. Few on shore had slept and with the first light they began their pilgrimages between the barge and the shore, carrying, dragging, sliding blankets, canvas, lumber, foodstuffs, utensils to a camp on the edge of the tundra, fifty feet across the frozen mud and sand of the shallow beach. They also dragged flashy suit cases and bags, bottles and a card table—upside down, its baize torn and frayed by the ice. These latter angered Edith irrationally. On the barge they were ugly enough—things to be turned away from. Here, in the cold, clean, silent air, they were like a crimson slash on the forehead of dead beauty. She herself, somewhat loath to become too much a part of this entourage, brought only a few necessaries ashore—just what she could cram into her rattan suit case which Gerald carried ashore with a larger suit case of his own.

There was little system or order in the camping. For as they came to realize the inadequacy of the small, light tents, the impossibility of keeping comfortably warm without stoves and the hopelessness of succor on that far, uninhabited shore, surliness and anger broke out afresh and a resistance and defiance of every effort made by Holter and Stanley toward coöperation for the benefit of all.

Most of this score of people had always been very comfortable, indeed luxurious, in a bodily way. Even during those times of relative famine in their lives when luck was against them their way of living was far more easy than that of toilers in other fields. But their lives had given them little philosophy. They were not less intelligent, but more so, than those others; not even less unselfish, perhaps, nor less brotherly at heart. But the roots of self-indulgence had struck too deeply into their natures to make so sudden a reversal of fortune assimilable, and social chaos was the result. It was the beginning of Edith's nightmare. The stamina which was hers by nature and rearing drew itself up, nostrils distended silently but implacably aloof and disdainful.

Early in the afternoon, in a lull in the debarking and camp building, the partners met in the now deserted cabin and held a conference to which, toward its end, Stanley called Edith and Gerald Leveridge and made this announcement to them.

"Edith, I'm going to Nome after horses. We're calling you in because I don't want to leave you unless you thoroughly understand the situation; and when you do I am sure you will see the absolute necessity of my going. As for you, Gerald, I need a stout, willing fellow to help me and I want you to come along, if you don't feel you will be sacrificing anything by not getting to Candle right away. We will pay you regular wages and make it in other ways well worth your while.

"Mr. Holter, who is going to Candle for help, is not oversanguine of the utility of horses, but I *know* it is our only chance. You see we're virtually wrecked here. It's bad enough to be so far from Candle—probably nearly a hundred miles around the shore. But it would have been worse at Wales or Shismareef. We are within a

practicable hauling distance of Candle. Our wrecked outfit is virtually a total loss here, except for what little we might get for the transportable goods from some saloon man whom we might persuade to come here and buy it. As for the large equipment, especially the costly bar and back bar, pool and —other tables, furniture and outfit generally, nobody would dream of buying it here.

"I contend, however, that whatever part of our property we can move to Candle we can either use as we intended—though in a less pretentious way of course—or sell to others this winter or next spring for a good profit, and so get back, perhaps, a very large part of what we have invested in this unfortunate venture. I know what horses have done in the Yukon; and though the conditions here on this windy coast without large rivers are different, still, I *know* horses. I can handle them, as Holter is aware." He smiled. "Your mother, Edith, might have told you something of my acknowledged skill as a horseman."

"Why not dogs?" asked Leveridge.

All three men smiled and Stanley answered in his kindly way. "We have not far from one hundred and fifty tons to transport—if we can!"

"The feed!" muttered Holter as one obstinately reverting to an old objection. "Horses eat and eat in winter in Alaska. "We've only got a ton or two of grain—nothing."

"There's feed in Candle, I know," said Stanley in the same dogged tone. "Some way we've got to get it." He turned again to the girl. "With all these people, all friends of ours in spite of their feeling disturbed and angry at the moment, and with Mr. Hewlitt here to particularly look after you, I'm sure that my personal presence will not add a bit to your safety, Edith. But of course I will not leave you if you feel unsafe or——"

"I can take care of myself, I think," replied the girl determinedly.

It was her impulsive, instinctive reaction to this surprise. She had known only vaguely of the talk of horses and had little suspected that her father had meant, against Holter's opposition, to make a long and arduous journey to procure them. But though angry and disgusted with the whole horrid dénouement she felt a thrill of pride in her father's sturdy energy and enterprise. And she knew she had no right, in her trusteeship for her mother, to oppose any plan which offered hope of salvage.

"Spoken like the brave girl you are, my dear," commended Stanley warmly. Then, his eyes shining with zeal, he turned to Leveridge. "Will you go, Gerald?"

That young man looked a fleeting moment at Edith. "You bet! We'll have a real mush—break trail and all that, won't we?"

Stanley smiled wanly. Years of trail breaking were in that smile.

"Yes, all that sort of thing, without doubt," he replied dryly. "Holter and two of the barge hands will go with us until our routes diverge. We'll start to-morrow dragging what grub we'll need and our blankets to the nearest Eskimo igloos we can find. And there we'll beg, borrow or buy dogs enough to get us overland and Holter to Candle."

There was further hurried planning, through which Edith sat silent, afflicted with foreboding that whispered to her that the crude rigors and hardships of this desperate overland journey would be less repugnant than a long exile ashore with the miserable quarrelers whose presence had been hateful enough when all went smoothly. But she did not speak, conscious that in that derelict barge was all that remained of her mother's fortune and that she must watch it, particularly now that her father was about to turn his back upon it.

The last twilight hours of the short day were given to preparations for the journey and Edith slept that night crowded in one of the tents with Rosie and Evelyn. Until a late hour that night Holter and the "friend" of Evelyn lounged about the tent, much to Edith's perturbation. In the morning, before daybreak Stanley raised the corner of the tent at Edith's head and whispered to her his good-by, adding perfunctorily a message from Gerald. Something prompted Edith to cry at the parting from her father. She was hardly awake, and it was the girl child not yet outgrown that held sway in her somnolent consciousness. Holter too had stooped down and added his good-by, though Edith scarcely heard it. But Rosie heard it and her full lips shaped themselves to an unuttered profanity.

Of the two "hands" who set out with Holter, Stanley and Leveridge to help them drag the clumsy sled along the ice of the shore one was Patterson—of course. He

spoke a few words of the Eskimo dialect prevailing among the Kotzebue natives and he thought his chance excellent of procuring for Stanley just the *right* sort of dogs—which naturally would be the worst possible, though they might seem the best.

When Hewlitt, helping the party off, saw that Patterson's generous offer to accompany the party had been accepted, he took Stanley aside and with as little explanation as possible requested him to make certain specific inquiries in Nome. Stanley, without comment, jotted them down in his notebook. There was a shaking of hands all round and then the men departed.

Immediately Hewlitt made for the *New Whatcomb,* of which he was to be watchman, a title that implied, besides the function of preventing human molestation, the rather dubious one of resister of the elements, a kind of Canutelike forbidder of tides that might essay to lift the ice and bear it off with the precious barge. Both his partners had been much relieved when Hewlitt gave his word to live upon the vessel.

Now followed days and nights that tried the soul of Edith Stanley. Apathetic, sluggardly, casting off every restraint, every convention, her fellows were abetted by the consciousness that all save this one alien girl were of like ilk. There were squabbles, jealousy, rough talk. There were drinking and gaming, and interludes of merriment, with its coarse jests. It was a transition from a pose of surface decency to a frank disclosure of their real relationships, a transition hurried on by the miseries and despairs of these people strong mainly in wit and guile, weak in the resistances which the untainted spirit of normal men and women oppose to the vicissitudes of life.

Holter, if present, would have done his part to at least veil to the eyes of his partner's daughter the sordidness of which she was a witness. Though greatly incensed at Stanley for his quitting them on this wild, quixotic horse scheme of his, there was that in the man of loyalty to his partner that would have made him at least a perfunctory representative of the absent father.

But Miss Rosamond Bloom, who, in Holter's absence stood clothed, in a sense, with his social influence and authority, possessed no such scruples. On the contrary she rather encouraged the laxness—especially when Edith was present. And Edith knew of no escape but an occasional walk in the freezing air. In the long evenings and nights even this respite was denied her and she became sick with fury, desperate to her heart's core.

At the end of the third night—the third of those hideous, huddled, maudlin nights, when the leaden weight of the day's cold and gloom and silence was lifted in hectic liquor—stimulated gayeties that were but shields to fend them from greater, nocturnal despair—at the end of the third night she tied her bag in her robe and dragged it a few hundred feet at a time across the ice to the barge looming black against the faint gray of the dawn and climbed the ladder to its deck. She knew by the smoke issuing from the cabin stovepipe that Hewlitt, the bartender, who was now watchman and custodian of the barge, was up and about. Brazenly she knocked at the door.

Hewlitt, shaved and clean and mildly astonished, answered the imperious summons. He angered her—if aught could anger her now—by his characteristic coolness and good nature. Before he could greet her she spoke to him—and the harshness of her voice grated on the ears of both.

"I'm going to *stay* on this barge. My father and mother own a third of all the things on it and I'm going to stay with our third and watch it."

She had little breath and she paused for more, of which he took advantage to say quietly—and with a smile which further angered her:

"I am watching the barge for all three interests. I—I—really don't *need* any help, if you will excuse me for saying so. Of course I should be glad of your—your company, if——"

"I didn't *come* for your company. I don't need any—company. I won't *have* any company. I——"

"I merely meant that I would be personally glad if it weren't so—so unusual for a girl to——"

She did not note his slight flush. The thought—the bare thought he was trying to express was all she could perceive. She blazed out at him:

"I can't help how unusual it is; I have a right to stay here and you cannot stop me. I've got an automatic pistol. I think you know that. And I know how to use it."

"Why, Miss Stanley, I don't quite understand what you——"

"As for its being unusual, it's no more un-

usual than for a girl to live with—with those creatures on the beach there. You know there are no other tents, just those four, and if I don't stay crowded with them and hear everything they say and be asked to drink and see their eyes on me—ugh! God!" She shuddered, and turned away. But directly she stared at him again and went on fiercely: "If I go away from them I'd freeze to death at night without the fire in the little stoves. I'm cold as it is. This robe is so thin——"

"Poor girl!" exclaimed Hewlitt, almost under his breath.

It was a very simple, very sincere exclamation, but it drew anger still from the blazing eyes.

"I don't *need* any sympathy and I won't have it! I'm going to take care of myself. It's the first law of nature. You can forget I'm here. I insist on it. I demand it. You hear? I know there are two stoves left on the barge, the big cookstove downstairs where that big mulatto cooked the meals, and this heating stove in the cabin here. I'll—I'll take either one. And I intend to get some things out of the place where the provisions are kept. And if you are a gentleman, or have the least idea of what a gentleman would do under the circumstances, you will please to *forget my existence*. You understand?"

Hewlitt had lost his usual healthy color. He was quite pale.

"Yes, I quite understand," he replied very soberly. "You may rest assured that I will not intrude upon your privacy. I only hope you will feel free to let me help you in any way you may need it—in finding the food and opening the cases and—bringing up coal, you know."

They looked at each other, he with a recovered amiability, through which twinkled, she thought, a half-humorous appreciation which did not lessen the hostility with which she continued to regard him.

"I may *have* to call on you, perhaps. But please understand that I do so in a purely business way. You shall be compensated for any such services."

"There is no provision in our partnership agreement for anything of that sort," he replied, with the very faintest shade of asperity. "But I know what you mean. You will accept nothing I could consider a personal service, nothing that would give me the slightest excuse to consider you under obligations to me. You wish to give me no pretext to presume upon it."

"Put it in that brutal way, if you choose."

She entered and sank into a chair. And presently the warmth of the little cabin mitigated her harsh mood.

"Will you take the big stove below or this one?" she asked. It was her first approach to a conversational tone. If she could have criticized herself she would have owned it as her first approach to politeness

"You may choose," he replied. "Take whichever will be the more convenient to you."

She chose the cabin where they were. It was nearer the outer world, to which she could fly, if need be, preferring the open, ice-bound sea to the things her overwrought fancy visioned. Yet, if from the ice there should come the leering, smooth-handed, half-drunken creatures, she could run back through the deserted canvas cabins and down to the galley below where Hewlitt would be and throw herself on his protection. He was a bartender and hence one of them, but he was different—outwardly at least. Yet outwardly was enough.

Meanwhile she hugged to her bosom a little protector. As money is said to be one's best friend in the heartless city, so here in a world whose only human denizens were detestably alien to her this bit of metal of another fashioning would yield her the best and last service of a friend—death to an aggressor or death to herself. Three days had not made Edith into this. They were but the levers of the outward change, slow-wrought inwardly for many weeks.

Hewlitt's first task was to fill the coal box for the cabin stove, and this done he asked her civilly if she would not let him bring her a cup of coffee and some cereal and toast. But she refused, telling him she had "eaten something." It was a piece of sea biscuit which she had gnawed while dragging her suit case and robe to the barge.

A little later she marched boldly into the hold, passing the open door of the galley, and began a search among the disordered boxes and crates stowed in the far end of the old hulk. Hewlitt gave her sufficient time to perceive that she was rather helpless there, whereupon he approached her cautiously, intending to proffer his assistance. But to his astonishment he found her engaged in dragging down cases and smashing their covers. She felt that this partial suc-

cess, signifying her virtual independence of him, was sufficiently salutary for the present, so she permitted him to open refractory cases for her, though her mood was still distrait and aloof and he discreetly avoided all unnecessary conversation. A half hour later he left her in her cabin surrounded by a varied assortment of eatables. He brought her a bucket of water and showed her the nearest supply of that useful liquid. She thanked him grimly and stood till he had closed the door and she heard his retreating footsteps.

There was a couch in the cabin which was to serve her as a bed. Upon it she flung herself immediately in a misery of shame and fear and loneliness and stared, dry-eyed and rebellious at the low, whitewashed ceiling. Hunger finally roused her. She looked about her at the scattered boxes and packages of food, sighed, rose, brought some degree of order out of the chaos and then prepared a meal which was to be both her breakfast and her luncheon. She ate it ravenously.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CORMORANTS.

At the mouth of a considerable river which the explorers of a century before had called the Good Hope the toiling men found human beings, broadly smiling Eskimos, and, better still, dogs and sleds.

Holter himself, having only the short coast line of the Sound to negotiate, was willing to yield the best animals they could procure to his partner for his long and difficult journey to Nome, and he so instructed Patterson who did the bargaining—and who promptly assigned to himself and Holter all dogs to which the natives applied the commendatory epithet *"Noguruk!"*

When Stanley and Leveridge turned their backs to the Sound and glided off up the Good Hope Holter and his men set out eastward along the shores of Good Hope Bay whose ice, now smooth, now incredibly rough, augured ill for the success of any extensive hauling of saloon supplies. At Deering, the first and only white settlement on the Sound other than Candle, Holter had the wholly unexpected good luck of finding a large native village, besides a few white men who were holding the place for an expected summer boom. He quickly arranged with one of the latter to convoy several Eskimo teams to fetch the people from the barge and take them on to Candle. Then he hurried away on the last leg of his journey to that booming and hopeful little "city"—eighteen miles to the Keewalik River and ten miles up the lagoon to Candle.

In the ex-engineer of the *Sea King* Holter found an intelligent and sociable fellow of not a little experience in the North, a good traveling companion and a man moreover who was able to furnish him with quite a little information concerning Candle and its people. Having been one of the first stampeders to the Arctic he had arrived in Candle the second week after its discovery. He was too late for a main-creek claim, but he had spent all of the previous summer in the camp and knew it as well as any man.

On that last ten miles to Candle Holter interrogated Patterson closely as to what he knew of the saloons. And Patterson's information concerning the saloons was remarkably complete. There were several "outfits," but only one, it seemed—that of Raker and Horn—which "amounted to much."

Holter knew this of course. But he had not told Patterson that he had paid a flying visit to the camp late in the summer. In affairs of business, especially in so important and delicate a matter as this, Holter's habit was to tell nobody anything that he was not absolutely obliged to tell—a fact that was patent to his traveling companion, who was considerate enough not to put to Holter any question which might compel the latter either to admit his visit to the camp or futilely to lie about it.

Holter did not know whether he would be recognized in Candle as one who had been briefly seen upon its single straggling street and in its one lodging tent. But relying on the difference in his summer and winter costume and in his clean-shaven face, he rather counted on *not* being recognized—though he did not know that it would make any particular difference. Still, it might.

"What kind of people are this team, Raker and Horn? Do you know them?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," replied Patterson. "I'm pretty well acquainted with them—like most people in the camp. Take a drink in there by preference, they being good fellers and square as a die."

"Any money?" asked Holter casually.

"Some, I guess," was the vague reply. "Got a pretty good stock, anyhow, and preparing they was, when I left, to put up

a big log saloon and dance-hall building. Give a contract to a bunch of axmen to go up the river where the spruce timber is and get out logs all winter and raft them down when the river breaks. Going to have them all cut to size and notched. Shouldn't be surprised if the foundation logs and such like was to be hauled down on bob sleighs in the spring when the trail gets good. Probably whipsawin' lumber, too, up in the woods, for floors and pa'titions."

When the little party of three drove their mongrel team into Candle on that raw, windy afternoon, just before dark, Patterson conducted them to the nearest road house, which fronted the river. Holter, hungry and tired, looked for a washbasin while his two bargemen attended to the dogs. One of the men rejoining him in the main room, where supper was being set out on a long, oilcloth-covered table, Holter inquired for Patterson.

"Oh, he's gone—joined his friends, I suppose," the man replied. He was very hungry and wasted no thought on his late companion.

Patterson had indeed joined his friends, chief of whom were Raker and Horn.

Immediately upon his appearance in the Candle Saloon both those gentlemen, leaving the bar to their bartender, disappeared —not together but with an interval between of several discreet minutes—into a rear room that served both as office and storage place for their stock of cigars and sundry other valuable merchandise. They shook hands most cordially with Patterson and offered him not one but a handful of the nearest things to Havanas of which their stock boasted. They locked the door, settled themselves, and without spoken invitation Patterson entered upon a narrative which began in Nome upon the day of his arrival there and ended at the Eskimo village on the Good Hope River. His last words were:

"And the old guy, Stanley, with the young passenger, Leveridge, started out for Nome a few minutes before we mushed on up the coast. They had four rotten dogs and a heavy sleigh."

It had not been a complete narrative. It had included a mere allusion to the securing of that last seventy-five tons of space on the *Saidie,* for Patterson had told all that in the letter he had sent his principals on that vessel. Much more fully he detailed his attempts to balk Holter's efforts to obtain other transport, and, that failing, the successful ruse whereby he had substituted himself for the assistant engineer who had signed for the voyage on the *Sea King.* Very careful was his account of the voyage and very graphic his description of the parting of the cables in the nick of time. He did not explain his part in that catastrophe. But he said enough to be sure—he knew it by their faces—that his auditors had correctly used their powers of inference. He told of the means by which he transferred himself to the barge in order to avoid being carried back to Nome. And very dramatically he pictured the breaking away of the ice and the drifting out to sea of the *New Whatcomb* and its miraculous return to Cape Espenberg. Finally, he humorously retailed the conversation he had had with Holter on the way up the river.

"And he's in Jim Farraday's road house this minute, scheming, I expect, to meet you fellers and feel you out on some kind of a proposition that's in his nut."

"Did you get a chance to learn just what they've got on the barge?" asked Raker, after appropriate congratulations had been duly bestowed on the narrator and they had all indulged in a little drink.

"*Did* I?" echoed Patterson elatedly. "Well, gentlemen, what do you suppose I was doin' all them days in Nome after the *Saidie* sailed? You see I didn't know that I'd ever get a chance to see the stuff on the barge. In fact I didn't know for sure whether I'd get a chance to go up on the tug. So I began right there in Nome to keep tabs on what come down to the wharf where they loaded from. I got a list of everything that went aboard that was labeled or could be told by its looks. Then I see it all again on the old tub, of course. When I left, it was all stowed neat and dry —the beer and wines and all the other perishables is in a big warm storage compartment that uses up very little kerosene to keep it above freezin'."

"All good brands?" asked Horn, contentedly puffing the vilest cigar his firm possessed.

"Mostly all good stuff—the best. Yet there's enough rotgut for cheap trade and siwashes and there's tradin' goods and such. Holter bought that on the side, I guess. Oh, he's wise to the game—don't miss a trick."

"Except one," corrected Raker, signifi-

cantly pointing his finger at Patterson himself who took the compliment with a modest blush.

"Ed Holter!" chuckled Horn from the center of a rancid blue cloud—which was a roseate one to him. "He's sure got this for butting into our game!"

"What do you think of Stanley's idea?" asked Raker. He knew what *he* thought of it.

"Oh, he *might* get through with a few old skates, I suppose, if he can get 'em on tick and get started before the snow's too heavy. But how can he get any stuff to speak of over here *without horse feed?*"

"He'll do well to haul enough feed to flog his stock through on from Nome, won't he?"

"Sure."

"Got no feed on the barge?"

"Just a little grain and a few gunnies of mush—rolled oats and such." Patterson laughed. Then he asked, more seriously. "Can he pick up any horse feed here?"

"Practically none. There's a ton or two to spare, belonging to Jimmy Head. But we've got that tied up."

"Say, George," put in Horn, "if he had all the feed in Nome how's he goin' to haul heavy-barreled goods, let alone fixtures, clear over here from Cape Espenberg? They say the ice is like broken rocks—and high walls and cracks besides."

"Not a chance! Not enough to count," replied Raker. "No, he's pretty well sewed up till the ice is out of the Sound, and by the time he could boat the stuff over the steamers will be in next summer. I suppose he can get his stock ashore—for us! But his mahogany bar and all the rest of it in the old hulk will just naturally drift out with the ice—if it don't smash to pieces first when the crush comes. That outfit of Holter's has got about the chance of a cat in hell without claws—thanks to you, Patty. You've sure done a good job and we'll stand by our agreement."

Patterson grinned his acknowledgments. "Shall I introduce him to you to-morrow?" he suggested with a proprietary air.

"Nit!" forbade Raker. "He can come to *us* when he gets ready. But even if we wanted somebody to steer him here, you're sure not the guy to do it. After what happened you'd better lay low for a while till you're sure no one is on to you."

The innocent subject of this interesting conference was taking a survey of the early winter town. He hardly knew it for the place he had left but little over two months before. It was not only the snow which, though light as yet, had fully performed its transformation, aided by a high and brilliant moon. But tents had been sheathed and cabins of all species knocked together. Substantial log and lumber buildings were in all stages of growth. It was now far less a tented "city," far more a place of promised permanence. It made Holter curse to think of the most expensive resort outfit ever assembled in Alaska wasting its spirituous sweetness on the barren air of far Cape Espenberg!

He strolled into each of the several saloons and his experienced eye made a more than satisfactory appraisal of the business they were doing. Raker and Horn got their first view of him ere long, the identification being accomplished by a protracted droop of one of Patterson's eyelids when Holter entered.

The visit at the Candle Saloon was purposely short; and the visitor, dog-tired, returned to the road house and slept until nearly noon next day. Then he went about securing quarters for himself, Miss Bloom, and those others of the expected party for whom wisdom as well as obligation compelled him to provide.

That bedraggled cohort were well on their way when Holter at length secured sufficient accommodations for them in Candle. He had got hold of a trusty native with a good dog team and, what was still more rare, a white man's light, hickory basket sled. He secured this man's services at once for the entire season and thus equipped set off immediately for Deering and the Good Hope.

Exactly betwixt those two only places of local name and habitation in the long semicircle of Kotzebue Sound he came upon Rosie and Wooldridge and Evelyn and De Buhr and the rest, half frozen, some whimpering, one laughing at nothing—and all deliriously ecstatic in the encounter. Instantly assuring them that a comfortable—a *fairly* comfortable—home at Candle awaited them and that they'd forget all about it when they got there, he faced about with them and took Rosie into his own sled.

The grind of the runners was steady, the bumps over ice windrows numerous, before Holter framed his question.

"What's become of Miss Stanley?"

Rosie had been waiting for the inquiry, but she replied to it as to an offhand question.

"Dearest Edith? Oh, what do you think? She *skipped!* We were having a pretty good time ashore but the men went on treating her with *great respect* just as they did on the voyage and it got on her nerves, I guess. All the rest were having fun and I guess she wanted hers. So off she trots to the barge—and Hewlitt. Can you feature it! These innocent college kids when their dear mammas and papas are elsewhere!"

Holter, stabbed, gnawed his lip and tried to "feature it."

"Wouldn't come away when the rest of you did, hey?"

"Well," shrugged Rosie, "she *didn't!*"

At Deering Holter wrote a letter to Hewlitt and dispatched it by one of the native teams, which could be spared because of better trails and the addition of Holter's crack team. He told him briefly of his arrival in Candle and of the safety of the larger party up to the writing of the letter. He had made no plan as yet on behalf of the firm. He would feel his way cautiously. He admonished Hewlitt to be very careful in his regular tending of the lamps in the warm-storage room. He suggested, should the ice show the slightest signs of weakness to the action of the tides, to get the more valuable of the liquors and merchandise ashore. And finally—he would have liked to dip his pen in vitriol for this—should Miss Stanley tire of the novelty of life on the barge, if she or he would let him know he would come or send for her—whichever she might prefer.

"Give them my love and wish them joy," requested Rosie from the old road-house man's bed—which that hale old fellow had turned over to her.

'I'm writing a *business* letter!" said Holter gruffly. He could have choked her.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ADAMANTINE MAID.

Judged by his conduct Hewlitt was unperturbed by the singular situation in which he found himself. Twice a day he knocked at the cabin door and inquired whether he could be of service to Miss Stanley. Twice a day the inquiry elicited a frigidly polite negative.

The cold was not yet intense but the weather was snowy, in squalls. Nevertheless he was out and away during the greater part of the diminishing daylight of each of the three succeeding days—at what employment Edith was at a loss to conjecture. Whatever it was, it took him both out to sea and along the beaches of the Sound and into the lagoons of the cape.

He purposed visiting the camp of the castaways but they seemed to seclude themselves in their tents out of the driving snow, and he deferred the pleasure. But late in the morning of the fourth day, after his return from his seaward errand, he discovered upon climbing to the deck of the barge that three of the four original tents were missing. Some distance off, however, there was a new, or rather a very old and dirty-looking tent, of a distinctly different form. He wondered what this could mean; so after eating some luncheon he strode ashore, making straight for the remaining tent of his former fellow passengers.

He found only four members of the ship's company. From one of them, Lester by name, who had been a barge hand, Hewlitt learned, much to his surprise, that the rest had left early in the morning with two Eskimo teams, convoyed by a white man. It was Lester's understanding that Holter had engaged these natives and the white squaw man and had dispatched them at once to rescue the ill-starred party.

Who were in that dirty tent? Why, the third "siwash outfit," said Lester. The "old papa" mushing that team had complained that his dogs were tired, and pleaded for delay in returning with the remaining four white men assigned him. They would start next morning.

"Did no one leave word for us—for either Miss Stanley or myself?"

Lester, for a hard enough customer, looked distinctly uncomfortable. "Well, no," he admitted, "but I heerd some talk between this Rosie woman of Holter's and Wooldridge the scrawny faro man. He was sayin' that even if the gal did run out there like a darn fool she ought to be told we was goin'."

Hewlitt looked at the man with a peculiar intentness.

"And what did she reply to that?"

"Oh, I guess it's none o' my business—one fool woman talkin' about another," answered Lester deprecatingly. But he grinned in spite of himself. "She says somethin'

like the gal had told her she'd ruther stay out there with you."

Hewlitt, flushing angrily, was about to reply angrily. But he checked himself and merely said:

"Miss Stanley is simply looking out for her father's interests in this expedition. I'm looking after mine. That's all there is to it. I've scarcely seen her since she went out there and we've not spoken a dozen words in three days."

He knew this fellow would soon rejoin the rest of the party and he hoped he would be loquacious.

"I guess I'll see the natives," Hewlitt told the man rather abruptly. And he trudged over the dirty, trampled snow to the dirty tent on the outside of which some mangy-looking dogs were tethered by long thongs. Inside he found a very contented family of brown-skinned folk who hailed him with the same hospitable *"Hu-loh"* with which he was familiar from the Eskimos of the Nome country.

He knew little or nothing of their language, though during the previous summer he had acquired a little of the argot of trade. Fortunately, however, "old papa" talked a little pidgin English, the rudiments of which he had learned from the Stoney Expedition many years before. A not unpleasing-looking Eskimo woman, who might have been thirty and who her father—or uncle—stated had no children, was the principal object of Hewlitt's attempts at converse. At the end of it the old man accepted some money of Hewlitt, the buxom native woman put some sewing materials and a few simple garments into a hair-seal bag, which when thus stuffed was exactly the shape of the original animal, and followed the white man out of the tent and along the beach. He led her directly to the barge, mounted to the deck, caught her bag when she swung it up to him, and waited until she had clambered nimbly to his side.

He thought a moment, whistling dubiously as he looked at the cabin chimney. It was delivering no slightest trace of vapor, a sure sign that Miss Stanley was off for a walk on the sea ice. With more assurance he led the girl into one of the lately vacated partitioned-off staterooms back of Edith's cabin and by signs bade her deposit her belongings and be comfortable. Also he opened the rear door of the cabin and showed her the clothes of the white lady hanging from hooks in the corner. The Eskimo woman nodded understandingly, whereupon he left her in possession of her stateroom and went off again about his business on the ice.

When he returned in the late afternoon he saw two figures awaiting him above the barge's ladder. The ample one, that of the native woman, leaned placidly against the rail. The other, slender, clad in her spotted reindeer parkey, paced nervously a few feet each way from the ladder. At Hewlitt's approach this figure, confronting him squarely, turned upon him a face in which misery and anger found equal expression. Her voice, if cooler, was higher, harsher, even, than it had been three days before.

"Mr. Hewlitt, I left the shore to avoid this sort of thing and I do not propose to endure it here. I am your partner's daughter and entitled to respect. You have no right to—to bring this woman here. You can take her ashore immediately, please." Edith's voice changed—faltered. "I knew you were a bartender, but—but you seemed —I hoped you were—different from those creatures." She stamped her foot. "Take her away *instantly,* please!"

Hewlitt had stared at her amazed. At the end of her tirade his face, almost obscured to her in the gathering dusk, darkened with its own resentment—a resentment intense enough to choke back the words of explanation which had almost risen to his tongue.

"Oh, very well," he said metallically, and turning to the Eskimo woman made signs to her to leave the barge with him.

Evidently Edith Stanley had already found means to communicate this message, for Oobloochuck's pudgily stuffed seal bag lay ready at her feet. At once she threw this overboard and descended to the ice, followed by Hewlitt who took her ashore and explained to her father—or uncle—as best he could that her services would not be required. The old Eskimo would have returned the money he had received, but Hewlitt waved it aside, telling him he could bring fish or meat to the barge when he might have it to spare. Then, heavy of heart, yet deeply hurt and angry withal, he retraced his way to the *New Whatcomb* and descended to his quarters.

With the employment of his hands in the cooking of his supper in the dimly lit cubby-hole of the galley his mind calmed to reflection. He would have liked to hate her,

yet he knew he never could. He decided he owed her, or at least her father, one last service, beyond which he was resolved to give to Edith Stanley no further opportunity to humiliate him. When he had eaten his supper he ascended to the deck house, walked through it and knocked on the door of the cabin.

Edith who, to say truth, was not a little surprised—in fact disgusted—by the ease with which she had accomplished her purpose, immediately opened the door and said: "What is it?"

"Just this. The women and most of the men left early to-day with Eskimo teams sent by Mr. Holter. Only four men are left and they are starting away to-morrow with the remaining Eskimos. It will be your only chance to leave here, for some time, at least. I thought it my duty to tell you this."

"Thank you," she said coldly—yet not so coldly as before. "I *had* had no intention of leaving here any more than you."

"And now?"

She surveyed him thoughtfully, almost pensively. "I still have no *wish* to leave if—if—oh, a promise means nothing, I suppose. And yet——" She stepped quite close to him. "Will you promise on your word of honor that you will leave me quite alone? That you will not molest me?"

The red blood surged to the face of the quiet man. Never, perhaps, since his school days had he felt as he felt now. There was no coolness left in him when he replied—though he raised his voice but little:

"*No!* I'll make no such shameful promise as that to you, young lady, nor to any woman."

It was Edith's turn to flush. She seemed undecided between penitence and alarm.

"What *will* you promise?" she asked almost in a whisper.

"To take your belongings to the Eskimos or to the white men. The way ashore is open to you."

"Nothing more?"

"Nothing!"

They looked each other in the eyes. For a full minute they stood statuelike, searching, peering through those little round portholes of the soul. Finally Edith said ruminatively:

"Somehow—I'm glad you won't promise. For I took an oath to God last night and every night that I would trust to Him—and to that little pistol I showed you—and to nothing else."

"Very well, then, we quite understand each other." Hewlitt did not smile. He said "Good evening," and abruptly turned on his heel and walked away. He heard her murmured "Good evening, sir," and the gentle closing of the door by the gentle girl, tigress grown.

He trimmed his lamp, took out several memorandum books, neatly ruled, and went to work upon them and on other books and papers, his forehead drawn—trying to banish anger and concentrate upon his tasks. It was as yet a smooth forehead, for youth and youth's protective vanities had scarcely left him.

Edith sat in her very comfortable rocking-chair, weeping quietly. A very queer little combination she was of girlhood and iron womanhood. She had not foreseen this virtual desertion of her. She vaguely supposed that *some* would be left, at least until her father's return. She could not understand it, but the *fact* she realized. She was alone, completely alone with this stranger in this strange way, in the most desolate, forbidding place in all the world—her father, her only earthly dependence, gone on a quest the hazards of which were great, the perils deadly.

When her eyes dried—of themselves—she resolved upon courage and employment. She had resources. Of what avail had been her mother's training and that of her books and her college courses if she could not utilize that training now? In the morning she would begin a new life. Yes—in the morning she would——

She fell asleep in her chair till the chilling of the cabin roused her, shivering, and she crawled beneath her robe.

Hewlitt was out early—this time with a camera and tripod in his hands and a little black case slung from his shoulder. His course was a peculiar one. Though seeming irregular it was quite exact—from point to point on the ice, sometimes near the barge, sometimes far out. Finally, upon the ocean side of the cape he approached the land and walked along shore, stopping frequently at certain points to photograph and make notes. An hour after broad daylight he passed not far from Edith who was standing near the shore watching the departure of the Eskimos and the four white men.

She saw Hewlitt but she did not look di-

rectly at him until he had passed and his back was turned to her. Then she observed him—saw him use his camera, pointing it downward; saw him sink down on one knee and do she knew not what. When he passed from sight around a low promontory that jutted from the farther side of the lagoon she went upon her own chosen employment.

Some days before, in a brooding walk upon the land wind-swept of what little snow had fallen, she had made a kind of discovery of the plant life of the tundra plain. She had before viewed this bleak, almost level stretch of earth only as a kind of tide flat such as she was familiar with on the eastern shore of San Francisco bay, but this close inspection had revealed the dull, dun earth to be a kind of magic carpet, its vegetation small, modest, yet teemingly rich and varied.

Botany had been one of her main courses at college, and botanizing her dearest outdoor pleasure. And so, on this morning of her resolution to be busy and if possible useful, it suddenly occurred to her that here was the very thing she sought—a field for plant study which she rightly judged to be almost virgin.

She soon found that winter was no destroyer of this profuse vegetation—else it had never sprung into being. But were they perennials or annuals or what—these marvelous creatures of vegetable life which, in the grip of the Arctic cold, ice at their very roots, still held up their heads through the snow in undiminished beauty—the delicacy of grays, the warmth of browns, the regal splendor of purple and gold and bronze? For only in the mass, at not less than the distance of the careless eye of the standing observer, were they dull or dun. Upon a closer look they magically became gardens of minute grasses, herbs and flowers, parterres of an almost tropic profusion of species and varieties, riotous of form and color.

Did they still grow in the frigid air and earth, she wondered? She would find out. And she would draw them, perhaps color them in the evenings in her little lonely cabin. She would do more, she would obtain specimens and preserve them, every slender carex, every shape of filament of moss and tiny shrub, every starlike flower of this wondrous garden which extended beyond her for scores and scores of miles, sloping level to the south and there rising to the hills of the Arctic divide.

This discovery of the herbal treasures of the despised tundra plain was the beginning of a marvelous change that was wrought in the mind and spirit of this castaway girl holding to her isolation out of loyalty to her mother and father. Without the purpose it gave her, without the enthusiasm with which she set herself to accomplish it, her days and nights would have been fraught with peril—health and sanity might equally have fled.

For a week she threw herself into the work with ardor. She ransacked the hold—in Hewlitt's absence, for there was no access to it except through his quarters—for materials with which to prepare and press her treasures. Paints and paper she had, but no works on botany. She scarcely regretted this, however, for she was quite sure that the larger part of the specimens—certainly the varieties, if not the species—would be new to botanical classification, and if so no text works could be much more than suggestive. She was thoroughly grounded in the science and it would be more fun and probably more creditable to her to be fully the pioneer.

This fascinating employment taking her on each unstormy day four times from the barge to the margins of the tundra, she frequently saw Hewlitt at a distance, and more and more she wondered what it was that her fellow hermit was doing to amuse himself with his camera, his black bag, his tools and implements. She remembered he had been a kind of prowler always—had been for days before they sailed a solitary gazer at the shore and sea; and since then he had been not only an observer of every curious thing about them, but a doer of curious things. She recalled his noting every behavior of the barge and tug at critical times and the shrewd accuracy of his prophecies.

All this added to his superior, almost cultivated speech had made her decide many days before that he was a very queer sort of bartender, quite a new type of the calling. But now, his new employments or amusements capping the climax of his mystery, he became to Edith an object of interest almost equal to that of her botanical gardens. She had disliked him before the catastrophe for that very superiority, feeling that a fellow as likable and as well reared as he seemed to be had no moral right to be a bartender. But she had been prepared to overlook this fault in that desperate hour when

she bolted for the barge and Hewlitt; and doubtless they would have got on together—in a purely formal way, of course—had he not shown at last, in the episode of the Eskimo woman, the coarseness which was undoubtedly the explanation of his choice of occupations. Yes, that was it, undoubtedly. Murder will out! Education was impotent against instincts naturally low and groveling. It was too bad—for both of them. Fate, she felt, was unnecessarily hard. It had done nothing to mitigate the rigor of her trial. Unless—unless Fate had seen to it that David Hewlitt did not molest her.

Since the affair of the Eskimo woman Hewlitt had positively shunned her. He regularly replenished her coal box and the little water tank—usually in her absence! Molest her? Truly, he was very, very *far* from molesting her! When, oh, *when* would her father return to banish Hewlitt, as he richly deserved, and as he had undoubtedly banished her. But Edith had not reckoned on her curiosity which had grown too strong to down.

She had noticed that he followed with more or less regularity a certain route which she fixed in her mind. And she was weak enough, one day, to follow that course, an hour after he had started. She knew that with such a distance between them if he saw her she would seem to him to be merely taking a stroll.

What she saw perplexed her greatly at first. She found that the bartender had chopped or sawn little cross sections of ice, or of ice and snow, or pure snow. Near them, in the bare ice he had cut little notches for the legs of his camera tripod, apparently careful that his photographing, if repeated—and she thought it must have been frequently repeated—should be from exactly the same points. At his points of observation he had set little flags and she found that the ice conditions differed in some marked way at each of his stations. Especially was this true at the shore points, and here, seemingly, his tamperings were more extensive and intricate. Wherever ice was crushed up in windrows, or blocks had been thrust high upon the shore or drifts had gathered in the angle between the sharp-cut banks of the tundra and the shelving beach, here always the marks of his enigmatic industry were the more frequent and the more puzzling. She came to the conclusion that the bartender was either a crank of some kind with a most eccentric avocation or else actually crazy—which was exceedingly perturbing. There was a third possibility, but this was too wildly improbable for consideration!

In any case she felt that it was necessary to know a little more of this most perplexing person with whom her welfare was so vitally concerned. And the solution of the enigma of what he was doing, and why, seemed to Edith to promise the key of the whole baffling mystery of him. She resolved to know and was plotting means when the blizzard broke.

CHAPTER XV.

"WHAT ARE YOU?"

Though the early winter had not been without its cloudy days and its occasional short snowstorms, it had been a calm and comparatively open winter so far, considering the locality. But the first of the blizzards broke with a fury that seemed a kind of malign atonement for the season's mildness.

From the northwest new snow, driving horizontally in a thick, opaque blast, painted the windward side of the barge with a cementlike plaster and piled a drift on the lee side that in three days had built a furrowed slope of snow whose ridges, level with the deck, extended far out on the bare, glaring surface of the ice-dulled sea. According to Edith's little diary, the thermometer dropped from seventeen degrees below zero to thirty and finally to forty below zero, a temperature which in a storm of the fury of this meant death to all warm-blooded creatures unprotected.

Edith in her cabin would have been comfortable enough by plying the stove with fuel but for one circumstance. Her cabin, the deck house of the old schooner, exposed for years to the warping heat of summers, was riven by many cracks which now admitted a fine spray of snow that sifted into little piles—upon her bed, her shelves, under the door and out upon the floor. She did not worry much over this; it seemed innocent enough—a little snow; though she felt some distaste for the wetness that resulted from its slow melting. But Hewlitt, who came toward dark, seemed to take a more serious view of it.

With a formal "Good afternoon," he surveyed very deliberately these effects of the

blizzard and, departing, returned very soon with some old rags and newspapers with which he began to calk each crack and cranny of the cabin and to stuff a strip of blanket in the wide aperture under the door, the place of chief offending. To do this he moved her bed and table, lifting down numerous articles of apparel and generally disarranging her personal belongings. And Edith, somewhat from sheer nerves, somewhat from her old anger, upbraided him for these liberties with a trembling imitation of her former hauteur.

"Couldn't you ask permission?" she demanded. "What right have you to throw my things about this way?"

Hewlitt rose from his knees. "Miss Stanley," he said very distinctly, "I'm going to give you a little talking to, if you don't mind. To begin with, your being here is not a matter of my choosing. You have a right to be here, undoubtedly, as you have already carefully explained to me. But I don't think you have any right to make it so infernally hard for me to protect you in emergencies. The conversations I have already had with you since you came here do not encourage any needless repetition of them, and if you think I'm going to humiliate myself every time I may have to do things to insure your health and safety—your life, perhaps—by risking little niceties of speech and getting virtually insulted for my pains, why you have another guess coming, that's all! I'm going to keep this place warm and tight during blizzards like this. And I'm going to do whatever else may be necessary to keep you alive and well until your father returns, in my own time and in my own way, if I have to tie you up to do it."

And very deliberately he went on with his task of chinking up the crannies of the cabin.

The girl, now silent, suffered an inexplicable revulsion of feeling. When he was finished and was about to replace the articles of clothing he had taken from the walls she suddenly rose and took them from him.

"You needn't put them back, Mr. Hewlitt. That is the least I can do. I'm sorry, sorry more than I can—I've been a beast. I can't explain it except—except that I've *felt* like a beast, like an animal at bay." She looked into his face—cool, grave, kind—and a sudden determination came to her.

"I've been worse just lately because—because it seemed so detestable for you to bring that Eskimo woman here. Such an—oh, worse than an affront—worse than an insult! You seemed always, in spite of your being a bartender, to be—well, like my own friends. And then *that!* Please, please tell me why you did it."

He looked with commiseration at her clasped hands, her quivering lips, the frank gray of her dewy eyes, and said gently:

"I should have known, I suppose, how natural your error was, after what you probably fled from on shore. And I should have explained what I thought at first would require no explanation. But your interpretation of it made me angry, I must confess; so angry that I—preferred to make no explanation."

"You mean you didn't bring her for—for yourself?"

"Certainly *not!* I brought her for you, to help you cook and take care of yourself—and for her company. Also—I knew how you must feel about the enforced isolation with a—man. So I thought of her also as a kind of——"

"*Chaperon!*" exclaimed Edith.

Her revulsion of feeling was complete. She threw back her head and laughed—a peculiarly spasmodic, half-sobbing laughter that was a great relief to her.

"A chaperon—the queer—fat, brown, innocent, good-natured thing? *Oh,* if *mother* could only have seen her!" She turned to the man, tears in her eyes at the thought of how she had wronged him.

"It was *most* delicate and considerate and thoughtful. How *could* I have been so horrid, so obtuse? For you have *always* been different, far different from the others. And always considerate. Forgive me. *Please* forgive me!"

His diffident, wistful, boyish smile returned.

"It's all right," he assured her hurriedly. "We'll say no more about it—except that when I found the others had gone—deserted you, one might say—it seemed the only chance for companionship for you. We'll have to make the best of it. Eh—good night!"

In a moment he was gone, leaving Edith with a forlorn sense of folly and misery and quite utter loneliness!

The blizzard was spent only in the sense of its maximum force. It dragged on day after day with no new snow falling from

the sky but the old constantly in the air in a continuous, blinding, day-and-night drive, the temperature low enough to make the facing of the wind even for a few minutes impossible except to the most hardy and well-equipped. Again and again Edith dressed herself in her warmest clothing, stepped down upon the ice and sought to force herself to take short walks around the barge.

But she could not walk. The hurrying, never-ending drift of pallid gray so wrought upon her exhausted spirit that her resolution died—she shrank back, terrorized by the blind white world that knew no time, no being. Imprisoned, she became a prey alternately to listlessness tinctured with shame and contrition and to a kind of melancholia of foreboding that was perilously near a hysteric terror.

Once, twice, three times, in that eternity of a fortnight, she glimpsed Hewlitt, distant and shadowy in his thick reindeer parka, swallowed in the drift or emerging from its lethal gray to cross the deck and disappear. Distant and shadowy was the man, this one other living thing in her world of drifting gray. Yet he had become a new and vital being. To ponder him became her one mental occupation—a kind of obsession it was, yet perhaps it saved her mind.

Concentrating thus upon the one subject, its every detail was brought to light in her memory and conned over and over again until in the end—while yet the diminished blizzard held—she came one day into a prescience that upon this man, upon what he was and what he could be to her, her sanity, her very life depended. For she knew she was slipping, slipping into an abode of dread spirits.

It was at the close of the darkest day in that dark midwinter. The wind had all but gone and an almost-silence, more horrid to bear, more whisperingly sinister than the lessened seethe of the blizzard, hurried her to her determination. *She must know!*

Flinging open the door of the entryway she hurried along the cold, dark passage to the steps and descended to Hewlitt's quarters. Without knocking—so complete was her absorption in her self-impelled quest—she opened the door and confronted him, sitting at his littered table, a rosy, healthy picture of amiable astonishment and concern. Mechanically, her eyes never leaving his, she closed the door and came and stood near him, her two little white fists clenched in her earnestness and determination.

"David Hewlitt," she began in a husky voice, "I want to know who you are and what you are. I've been a fool to think you what you seemed to be, an ignorant, coarse-minded bartender, a seller of liquor to gamblers and painted women and riffraff. You—you are a gentleman disguised in the apron of that calling, *disguised*—with your bottles and glasses and bar towels."

His surprise had turned to amusement which with his wonted courtesy he hid behind a manner of polite interrogation.

"How do you know, Miss Stanley?"

"Your speech is educated, refined. And more—far more—you are kind and considerate to others; and—yes, I will say it—to *me*. *Most* kind and considerate, letting me be and do what I would—silly, childish fool that I am. And isn't that what a gentleman does for a woman?—except when she is in danger of freezing to death; and then of course he—he disregards her for her own sake and *makes* her safe!"

"May not a bartender do this?"

"Yes, but I do not think they do. Such men as you—why they cannot *choose* to be bartenders—to serve, to pander to such as these drunken, depaved people with whom poor father has made his last cast of fortune. But there is more proof than that—you know things that no bartender knows. In every emergency and peril you gave of that knowledge. And you *do* things that no bartender does. You are interested in the ice and water and winds and snow and you are *doing* things with them, mysterious things that I have seen—in your absence. Whether it is amusement or fancy or work or what I do not seem able to fathom, for it is all so dull and lifeless and terrible to me, this eternal ice and snow and wind. Tell me, tell me at once, or see me die—yes, die: *What are you? Who are you?*"

CHAPTER XVI.

HEWLITT'S STORY.

"Sh-h," said Hewlitt very soothingly, "it's not so bad as that. There is no secret in my real calling. I didn't suppose you were interested. I've found, at least, that few people up here, or indeed few anywhere outside of academic circles, are interested. I'm a student of these things."

Unconsciously he gestured almost lovingly toward the wide sea, visible through the darkening eye of the porthole. "Physics is my work, physics and its allied studies—a little geology and of course physiography. I'm especially interested in the behavior of water."

"In the *behavior* of water?" murmured Edith bewilderedly. "Why, it's *people* that *behave*—or misbehave." A twinkle came to eyes but lately tragic and threatening tears. "One would have thought you interested, perhaps, in the behavior of *people* when they drank—anything but water!"

To Hewlitt's face came its diffident, sunny smile. "I *was* much interested in those people's behavior too. But by the behavior of water we—I mean its action and what happens to it under different conditions. I'm getting data on the forms of water, to put it in another way. It was my thesis and I've always wanted to follow it up."

"*Thesis!*" echoed Edith with a glad little cry. "That sounds like home to me—college. I had a thesis."

"Did you? What was it?"

"A—eh—botanical subject."

"Life! Life is interesting too, *most* interesting. But I've always specialized in the inorganic."

"Then what are you?" With a fleeting return to her old imperiousness she asked it.

"At home I have a chair in physics," he replied. "As assistant professor."

Edith stared at him, illumination in her eyes. "A college professor!" She laughed and all morbidness and fear fled. She laughed in complete ease and comfort. But presently her face sobered a little.

"But how did you *ever* come to be a bartender?"

It was Hewlitt's turn to laugh—reminiscently. "My case was something like yours, if I took your father correctly. I wanted to protect some money foolishly invested."

"Like father's?"

"Yes, only *I* didn't invest it. I gave it to a friend, grubstaked him. It was about twenty thousand dollars, and a kind of patrimony I suppose it would be called. He was a very bright fellow, a college chum with a turn toward mining engineering. He—he did all sorts of things. I won't bore you with the history of the adventures of that twenty thousand dollars. But it certainly did take many forms while poor Canby was struggling to turn it into a fortune. The last thing he did before committing suicide, poor devil, was to sell a claim which promised well for fifteen thousand dollars, of which five thousand dollars was paid in cash. With that cash he bought another claim that "promised" better, but which turned out to be worthless. For the other ten thousand dollars of the purchase price he took the note of the purchaser and his partner, a man with a saloon and stock of liquors. You saw it—on Second Avenue!

"The purchaser couldn't make good on the claim, sold it, and vamosed. Canby went after the saloon man who had indorsed the note for ten thousand dollars and that gentleman threw up his hands and said: 'Take the saloon!' That was the last straw for poor Canby. By the same mail they brought me word of his death I received a letter from his attorney informing me that the saloon man had executed a bill of sale of the saloon in Canby's favor in the very hour he drowned himself. In Canby's effects was found a hastily scrawled will, leaving our joint interests to me. And the lawyer requested immediate instructions as to the disposition of the Tundra Saloon which, he added, was a sort of property which had become rather a drug on the market, now that Nome had shrunk from a booming, riproaring camp of forty thousand to a less thirsty place of about a third of that size.

"I had rather counted on that little patrimony. I had hoped to see it increase to dimensions respectable enough to enable me to go into research work. And there it was, transmogrified into a saloon property.

"I didn't know much about saloons—as little, I dare say, as any man living. Yet there seemed nothing to be done except to go up there and conserve it until I could sell it. You see I had to consider poor Canby's heirs too. He has a mother to whom a few thousand dollars would mean a great deal. Besides, I was anxious to go north for a while into freezing country. You may imagine a man as fond as I am of all the forms of water must have been rather handicapped on the Pacific coast. I used to go up into the glacial region of the High Sierra on my vacations and watch things. But it was a poor substitute for the real thing. So I got a year's leave and the promise of another if my work warranted it and came to Nome on one of the first boats.

"I had a lot of technical literature with me, of course, besides my instruments and

paraphernalia. But I resolutely put all reading matter aside—except one compendious volume which became my constant companion, a two-hundred-and-fifty-page work entitled——"

Maliciously ending that last word with a rising inflection—in quite the interrogative way of the college instructor—he paused expectantly.

"Oh, I *couldn't* guess," replied Edith impatiently.

"Not the precise work, of course, but the subject of it. You'd divine it in a moment if——"

"Surely not about *saloons?*"

"Precisely. It was entitled 'The Complete Mixologist.' Before we reached Nome I had a complete theoretical knowledge of the bartender's art—though the book reverentially called it a science. A thousand and one beverages, from simple wines and liquors served in their appropriate glasses to the most intricately compounded concoctions known to the profession generally and locally, from the cocktail of Manhattan to the mint julep of the Sunny South—the flavors and fumes of all of them were in my head until I verily believe I was as nearly intoxicated as it was possible for me to become when I stepped off the lighter at Nome.

"As soon as I was in possession of my ornate mahogany bar and its up-to-the-minute accessories I went on a three days' mixing debauch."

"Oh, how *could* you?" exclaimed Edith, almost with alarm. "At least you locked yourself in, so nobody could see you in that condition!"

Hewlitt chuckled. "It was just a *mixing* debauch. I didn't drink any of the experiments. I shouldn't have known whether or not I was getting the proper results. I loafed around the big resorts until I spotted a rather classy-looking drinker who seemed both intelligent and experienced—and none too prosperous. I explained my dilemma to him and offered to provide him with all the drinks he wanted if in exchange he would give me the benefit of his skill as a drinker of my mixtures. A sampler, I rated him. You know it's a vocation—tea, coffee, tobacco—lots of things. Well, this chap, who had seen better days, accepted my offer almost with tears in his eyes and he never swerved from the path of duty. He worked for me long hours with never a complaint or a sigh—was as genial and patient as could be.

"Each of those three nights I put him to bed as tenderly as possible; and in the morning, after an 'eye opener'—of his own selection—we would go to work again. He took a great interest in my education, offering many corrections, emendations and footnotes to the text of 'The Complete Mixologist'—which I'm afraid he held rather in contempt although he admitted the versatility of the author. He showed me something of the way of handling glassware, carrying and using the bar towel, conversing with customers and many other things pertaining to the technique of an artistic bartender.

"My idea, you see, was to get the business going if possible, so as to be able to sell the place as an actual business. But I soon found there were excellent reasons for the willingness of the original owner to use his property as security for the note, and much provocation for the despair of poor Canby. Nome was too small for its host of thirst allayers. Only the saloons in the populous part of the town could survive. I served very few people in the three months I ran the place, I regret to say."

"You *regret* to say?" repeated Edith, sternly.

"I rather regretted it, yes. You see I got up quite an enthusiasm. I found myself ruing my lack of knowledge of organic chemistry, physiology, neurology and cognate subjects. It was quite exciting. I dare say I should have lost my ardor in actual business. In fact, I got quite enough of it on this old boat, catering to the thirsts of these dear friends of ours of the future Candle Monaco—*perhaps!* But while poor old Beaseley and I were going it alone, with twenty thousand dollars' worth of every drinkable under the sun in our laboratory to experiment with, I must confess I was brazenly, shamelessly happy.

"Holter and your father dawned in the nick of time. I was on the verge of selling out for a song. Fall was upon us, water was soon going to freeze and do all kinds of things I wanted to watch, and my feet itched. You know the rest."

So! The haunting mystery of the man was cleared. Still smiling at his narrative, she boldly asked:

"Do you like this venture?"

"Not altogether, Miss Stanley," he replied gravely. "I made up my mind that every-

where, and particularly up here in this raw part of the world, men are entitled to be considered purely as individuals, with as little prejudice as possible against their employments. I couldn't see why, necessarily, a resort of this kind might not be conducted honestly and respectably. I liked both your father—whom I saw at once was as little used to it, perhaps, as I was—and Holter who, in spite of certain weaknesses, seems a virile, serious-minded, fair and square sort of man. Of course, I still hoped to get out of it as soon as I could, though I could foresee that if we really did well I should probably be tempted to stay on and take the gain. But I intended to do my research work and employ somebody to represent me—and Canby's heirs—in the resort enterprise. I suppose all we can expect now is to salvage what we can from this wreck!"

A pause came for the first time in their conversation. Insensibly, they had been brought from the past to the present and the dark future it presaged.

"What do you think of father's scheme?" she asked, bent on sounding Hewlitt's shrewd, practical judgment.

He filled his pipe. "How is the air here?" he inquired.

"It's lovely," she returned. "Please smoke."

He struck a match—and held it until it expired. He struck another and slowly lit his pipe.

"The fact is I don't know enough of the country here to form an opinion that would be worth anything. Besides, I do not know exactly what is in their minds. They tell me only what they must. I don't blame them. The curse of the college man is upon me."

"Why, what do you mean by that?"

"They do not know that I am connected with a college, of course. But they do know, or rather think, I'm just a saloon man from the outside whose opinion about the country and the life up here is valueless. And if I were to tell them that I am a professor of the physical sciences they would think even less of my opinion and judgment."

"How absurd," said the recent graduate of a great university.

"Well, I don't know that it is. Every man you meet who is at all interested in mining will tell you to beware of the mining engineer. Technical education is the one thing at a constant, invariable discount among the so-called practical men of the frontier. I've heard that always. And I've seen it abundantly demonstrated during my few months in the North. As you may have noticed, on this trip I have often been somewhat upon my own ground. I did what I could. But I felt that it behooved me to make a suggestion baldly—on its own merits—without attempting to back it with my past as a student of physiography or meteorology or anything of that sort. I am sure that I can be of most use by continuing to conceal the fact that I ever saw the inside of a college. Just now I'm forgetting I ever saw the inside of a saloon."

"You mean you are studying the forms of water?"

"Indeed I am," replied Hewlitt, brightening immensely. "Even in these blizzard days—all but the worst of them."

"They've kept me in," said Edith ruefully, "away from *my* studies, the tundra flora."

"Flora—on the tundra!" exclaimed the physicist incredulously.

Edith raised her hands. "You should *see* it. You couldn't *begin* to *realize* what it contains unless you really *look closely!*"

"Water and plants," murmured Professor Hewlitt thoughtfully. "After all, they are natural allies." His face wreathed sociably. "Suppose we look 'em over together?"

"I snall be *dee*-lighted!" cried Edith.

CHAPTER XVII.

HORSES—AT A DOUBLE PRICE.

With cruelly hard work, attended with many misadventures, the "four rotten dogs and a heavy sled" were urged over the rough niggerheads across the mountains to the interior of the peninsula, where Stanley soon picked up trails, of a sort, that led ultimately to Nome.

There he lost no time. For like most unpractical, visionary men of intense enthusiasms Stanley when deep in enterprise was an indefatigable worker. His task now was one of inspiring confidence and obtaining credit. Good horses—and he would have none other—were scarce and dear, feed was high and heavy sleds expensive. To obtain all these upon the security of a wrecked saloon outfit was a problem indeed.

After many discouraging refusals he found a friend in Captain Parrott who helped him not only from sympathy but because he

knew that the chance of salvage of the security was excellent. Despite the catastrophe or indeed somewhat because of it he had done rather well out of the contract. He had returned safely to Nome in shorter time than he had counted on when he made his rather stiff terms with Holter, Stanley & Hewlitt.

Heaving a sigh of relief Stanley went about buying his horses, ordering the sleds and securing his feed and canvas. While waiting for the sleds to be built he employed his time in securing answers to Hewlitt's strange questions concerning the man Patterson. Though adroit in his inquiries it is doubtful if he would have learned of the Jonas episode but for Parrott who, in the meantime, had heard the story from Jonas himself. Stanley also learned that the space on the *Saidie* had been bought by a Mr. Patterson, who had devoted it exclusively to a shipment of horse feed—a fact that naturally afforded Stanley intense satisfaction, verifying, as it did, his expressed conviction that there was "horse feed in the country."

Stanley noted the results of his investigation in his memorandum book, little dreaming that this methodic act was the most important thing, in a worldly sense, that he had ever done in his life.

In two weeks they made their start with four span of large, mettled yet seasoned horses, each drawing two heavy bobsleds loaded mostly with their own feed. Stanley led, with a second team tied to his trail sled. Leveridge followed similarly equipped with the other four horses.

Of the incidents of their return journey across the Seward Peninsula in the dark, sightless days and the intense cold of December and January, through deepening snows, in the teeth of blizzards, without adequate shelter for man or beast—of that heroic struggle a volume might be written. It was a Homeric exploit of true pioneers.

Though they were forced by the necessity of holding to courses of the shallowest drift and of the best wind protection to ignore the more direct ways in their northward faring, nevertheless they came out upon Kotzebue Sound not far from where they had left it. Their horses were gaunt and badly cut about the fetlocks from the incessant breaking through of the crust. A sack of grain and a few flakes of their last bale of double-compressed hay was the only remaining feed.

Stanley looked down the shore—a forbidding sight! In the numerous lagoons the snow lay deep, while on the narrow shore and the shoreward zone of the Sound itself for many hundred yards ice had been ruggedly piled by the tide that had all but dragged the old barge to her doom in the uncharted Arctic seas.

"No help for it, Gerald, my boy," he had burst out. "We've *got* to strike out over the sea ice to the cape. That's the valley of the Good Hope over there. That low haze to the right must mark the land's end at Espenberg. It's a week's fight around that shore, with feed for one meal! Straight across we ought to make it in a day."

"But is the ice safe?" asked Leveridge anxiously. He was bronzed, bearded and as gaunt as the horses, but in the pink of condition.

"Lord love you, it must be six feet thick by now. Of course it's safe."

"Well, I suppose it's the only way to keep the horses alive."

They camped in the protection of a headland, stretching their shelter of stiff, snow-incrusted canvas from a cliff face. At the first light they hooked up and started, making out angularly from land toward a group of ice pinnacles which Stanley had sighted the afternoon before for the very purpose.

They trotted part of the time, so shallow was the snow and so smooth and solid the ice between the long hedgerows of floe crushings. Noon came and went and at two o'clock they ate their lunch of bread and canned milk which they drew unfrozen out of their sleeping bags. They fed their last nibble of grain to the famished horses, who ate it from their hands. Then taking a compass bearing of the cape while it was still discernible they pushed on in the fast gathering gloom of the Arctic twilight.

At five o'clock it was dark. Their dependence for direction being the compass, Gerald, traveling as usual behind Stanley, guided the latter by occasionally pausing, turning a flash light upon the instrument, and calling "Right!" or "A little to the left!"

Steadily, unknowingly, they approached at a long angle one of the marvels of the frozen sea—a contraction crack that made out from the westernmost of the two promontories between which they had come out upon the Sound.

The gigantic ice cake, eighty miles long, twenty to thirty miles wide, that filled Kotzebue Sound, shrieking in the great midwinter cold, had parted along its lines of greatest weakness, marked by the promontories that were thrust out from the land like enormous ice picks. Ten feet wide, straight as a surveyor's line, these partings appeared each November or December as if by magic across the colossal ice roof of the Sound, giving play during the remainder of the winter to the forces of contraction and expansion of the crystal sheet.

Now, after the first great cold spell of winter, the Good Hope crack had opened wide; a thin coating of new ice—not more than a couple of inches—had formed across it; upon this sunk surface of the crack snow had drifted level. Even in the daytime it was as perfect a trap for the unwary or inexperienced as if it were cunningly contrived by the sinister hand of some Brobdingnagian giant of the North, intent on killing his crawling prey, alien man!

Inevitably the little line of sleds and horses approached it. For three hundred yards they were less than twenty feet from it, fifteen—ten—seven—five—three—then Stanley's near horse thrust out his left forefoot, his shoulder lunged down and in he went, dragging the struggling off horse with him. From the forward sled—itself upon the brink, so nearly parallel to the crack had been the approach—sprang Stanley, and plunged into the great hole made by the horses. He clutched at the heaving blackness of their flanks, held himself by the harness of one, and cried "Gerald! Gerald!"

The younger man sprang from his sled—his horses, halted and frightened, snorting steam—and bounded ahead.

"Look out!" yelled the struggling man, "water!"

Leveridge was obliged to return to his sled for his flash, for in the Stygian murk he could see nothing, do nothing. Returning, he nearly fell into the hole, stretching now its full ten feet across the crack. From the brink he flashed down the disk of light; his heart pounded; a sudden nausea seized him.

They were sunk four feet below him—two maddened horses churning the dark brine, and Stanley gallantly striving to avoid being pawed under.

"Wait!" cried Gerald in agony, spraying them with the light. "Wait—I'll——"

"Don't jump—don't dare!" came Stanley's stifled voice. He was drowning—forced down with the horse whose back he was trying to climb.

"A sled—I'll push out a sled."

"No—a rope!" came chokingly from Stanley.

The other horse was now all but riding the one to which Stanley clung, and when Gerald, after what seemed hours, flung the lash line into the abyss and turned his light upon it, the neck and head of the horse that had climbed the other was just disappearing. The boy flung himself down on the hard, wind-swept edge of the ice and lay still, paralyzed in the blackness of his grief and despair. He had come to love that gallant man.

It was many minutes before he became conscious of sound and rose to the pitiful, shivery whinny of the other horses, going to them in the sobbing misery of his heart. He got out their blankets and covered them, looking about him at the night as he did so. The air had greatly cleared and as his eyes swept the region beyond the hideous ice crack, a light shone flickeringly—at a great distance it seemed. Quickly he got out the compass and verified his surmise that it was a light upon the barge or the shore in the vicinity of the barge; and at once he was filled with a zeal to cross the crack and bring succor to the living horses. Perhaps, too, the body of his poor friend might be recovered.

He reached a shovel handle down from the brink, tested the new ice upon its trench—that thin ice through which the horses had crashed. He found it nearly but not quite solid enough to sustain his weight. So he cleared the camp gear from one of the platforms or beds that spanned the front and rear runners of a sled, stood it on edge near the brink and let it crash down on the other brink. It barely spanned.

Taking his sleeping bag on his back, he crossed the crack and started for the light.

CHAPTER XVIII.

COMPANIONS.

A new vessel in a new setting had taken the place of the old after that night of imperious demand and sudden explanation. To Edith Stanley, if not to David Hewlitt, an old hulk had become a home; the drear sea and more drear land, in which space was

naught and time dragged, was changed to a winter world sparkling with infinitely varied wonders.

The very next day they "looked 'em over together," going first to visit Edith's thousand-acre herbarium, as she called it.

"You see," she explained as they wound among the ice hummocks to the shore, "they are preserved by the cold much better than plants are preserved by any other means, until they grow again, dear little things."

They walked out upon the tundra, stepping carefully in the trenches by which each tuft or niggerhead was circled.

"Now then!"

She drew a whisk broom and a little implement like a small feather duster from the canvas bag slung over her shoulder, and kneeling on her parkey skirt proceeded very skillfully to brush out the dry, fine snow that lay at the base of a large tuft. Deeper and deeper she delved, farther and farther around, until the niggerhead stood revealed like a giant pincushion overgrown with vegetation.

"See them!" she exclaimed. "Frozen dry from the roots deep down in the black soil to the airy tops of them—clean and dry and beautiful."

Hewlitt stooped down. "Why, I hadn't any idea there were so many kinds of plants. Wonderfully different, aren't they—and different species evidently. And how many colors and shades and textures. All dead, I suppose."

"Of course not," denied Edith indignantly. "Just dormant—sleeping. And some I verily believe are growing. I think they must in some way secrete heat enough from the tissues to keep a little sap moving and functioning. I've detected, or thought I detected, slight changes in specimens I watched before this *most* interesting blizzard. I tied yarn to them, the other ends fastened to little flags, like yours.

"Just imagine it!" she went on, flushed and happy. "If it's true—that they are really growing in spite of the intense cold, the killing winds that drive stinging snow crystals against their delicate stalks and petals—turning their beautiful faces to the sky." The poetry of her thought was in *her* face and she seemed to him very, very beautiful.

"Come, sir, you're not looking at them. Down on your knees, now for the real feast. Only in this way can we see what the despised niggerhead really is." She was already kneeling at its edge.

Following her example he bent his head among the taller carices, until he was face to face with a hundred tiny plants.

"See the beauty of these lichenlike starry things that grow close! And notice these flowers. Yes, they are!—real flowers; only there are so many more of them than there could possibly be in the same space in a garden that one simply doesn't believe it."

"Gee-mimah! It's a regular jungle, isn't it—actual tropic profusion!" It was not a good-naturedly simulated astonishment. The thing was a revelation to him.

They tarried long on the wind-bared tundra, finding variation in its flora wherever surface and soil conditions varied. Even the rocks were painted with a starlike growth, while they concealed in their dry, clean crevices a plant life quite distinct from the species on the tundra.

There at the meeting place of the land and the water Hewlitt told her his domain began.

"I'm wildly curious," she said, "to learn how you can study the forms of water here. It seems to me, just looking at the things as a 'musher' and not as a student, that all there is is ice and snow—just the same and everywhere."

"'Just ice and snow!' Ye gods, listen to her!" he exclaimed in horror. Then, almost reverentially: "My dear young botanist, I'll match my ice and snow against your plant life for varieties of form and structure and genesis—particularly genesis. Let's go to one of my outdoor laboratories. It's just around that low reef of rocks."

"Yes, I know where it is," she answered unthinkingly.

"Oh, you do, do you? Chanced upon it in one of your rambles, no doubt. But let me give you the key. Here," he continued, when they reached the little cuts and sections and windbreaks. "Now I can answer your question by illustration. What makes the Arctic a mine for the physicist, especially if he is interested in crystalography, is the fact that he may study frozen water at his leisure. It stays put. But more than that he may study the effects upon it of a great range of temperature—a range of nearly one hundred degrees from freezing at thirty-two above to sixty or seventy below zero.

"But pshaw! That's the least of it! For

one also has those effects complicated by the effects on the snow and on both the fresh and the sea ice of winds, waves, tides and currents. Talk about history. Why, my dear young woman, the physicist, once having mastered these phenomena, as I hope to do, could be set down on this coast in February or March—any time before the higher temperatures of spring began to modify or obliterate the record—and by studying the coastal areas could reconstruct the entire physical history of the fall and winter.

"Look at this cross section of the snow-drift against the bank here. It is stratified as perfectly as any formation of rocks. Instead of years we have months. Here—here is the first windstorm—east it was—depositing these coarse layers of the coarse wet snow. One half of it was eroded by a contrary wind. You can see it was half, by the uneroded portion protected by this steep part of the bank here. After that came another east wind. See how fine and compact the strata are?"

"Why?" she asked.

"Simply because the weather was colder, 'fining' the snow, and the wind stronger, compacting it. And so upward through the drift we can read the history of these two months of weather—my microscope shows it in even greater detail—written in this daily diary of its work more accurately than any record in your little book or mine."

"How do you know I've got a little diary?"

"Because, Miss Stanley, you couldn't be Miss Stanley, if you could neglect so obvious a means of profiting in the future by your great adventure. Now you know"—he raised a playful finger—"that you're thinking right now of dedicating that diary to your grandchildren!"

She blushed—if her frost-ripened cheeks could be dyed a deeper red—and owned it. But it was too intimate a subject to dwell on with so new a friend. "Go on," she urged. "I'm really, really interested."

"History!" he exclaimed again. "Just step around this farther point. A great mud flat is just beyond. Here—look—see these great, funny-looking toadstools?"

Indeed they looked like nothing so much as giant cryptogams turned to ice. "What can they be? I noticed them before from a distance," said Edith.

"*Very* simple. The stem of each is a rock—odd bits of lava drift, I expect. During that high tide the ice sheet flooded this little shallow lagoon. When the tide lowered, never to rise so high again, the ice sheet was gently lowered with it to the mud—except where these myriad projecting rocks broke through, each retaining on its summit an ice cap—a little cake of ice irregularly disk-shaped but naturally always larger than the rock. Then with the flooding tide, in an air more and more frigid, the rocks themselves were coated with ice and made the stem of the mushroom. Also, snow accumulated on the ice caps, rounding them nicely into the mushroom heads. See here!"

He struck one of the stems with the light hand ax he carried. And behold, its shell of ice cracked away and the naked, black, upstanding lava rock was disclosed!

"How *wonderful!*" she breathed.

Then he took her to one of his offshore stations and would have shown her some marvels of the sea-ice strata, including the complete annals of its scum and mush-ice stages, with the numerous vicissitudes through which these had passed. But a biting wind had sprung up, and hunger, besides, urged them back to their home on the snugly drifted-over barge, a looming object on that flat earth and sea, a landmark indeed.

"What kind of a cook are you?" she ventured intimately, as they ascended a snowy turnpike to the vessel's rail. She intended it as a hint, but in reverse of what it seemed.

"Not very good, I'm afraid, or I'd invite you to answer that question yourself."

"I was thinking," explained Edith, still deeply contrite for the way she had misjudged him, "that if you are even less of a cook than I am—you see mother spoiled me in that respect—it would be economical of our time, if we want to make the most of these short winter days, for me to do the cooking for both of us."

He thought of the splendid range in the galley. "You have been rather at a disadvantage, haven't you, making that heating stove of yours serve for cooking?"

"I was thinking of that, too," she owned with a laugh. "If you don't mind I'll come and play cook and perhaps housemaid for you. On that range of yours I might turn out some fairly good dishes, in spite of the food being canned, canned, *canned!*"

"It's not going to be exclusively canned from now on," he assured her. "There are

tomcod under my sea laboratories—and hooks on this tub somewhere. Also I found a perfectly goot shotgun with ten times its weight in shells, which I purpose using on some of those gabbling ptarmigan you may have seen down the coast."

"I never have," she replied ruefully. "I didn't suppose there was a living thing!"

"Besides plants?"

"And ice! Truly I *mean* it."

"Evidently your ramble did not extend as far as the thickets of stunted willows. There are both ptarmigan and arctic hares—or one, at least—a big, innocent-looking fellow."

"It seems a shame to——"

"To let them laugh at us in their sleeves while we eat tinned cow in at least thirteen different forms. They shall laugh no more!"

Poor little Edith—*she* laughed no more for many days after that first happy day and evening.

The grim visitation was preceded by a crisp crunching of feet on one of the turnpikes that waked Edith instantly from her first sleep. She froze in her bed, her hand under her pillow where lay the little automatic, and listened to the feet crossing the wind-swept deck to the after quarters where, perhaps, was yet a light, if Hewlitt had continued to work—to make up for his day as showman. She strained her ears but could catch only a faint murmur of voices.

Her courage returned. It was cowardly in her to let him contend with one who might, perhaps, be an enemy. She often had feared trespassers who might be attracted by the rich loot obtainable from the barge. Partly dressing she slipped her feet into low mukluks, and concealing her pistol in her sleeve stole noiselessly through the passageway and descended to the galley. Then she heard the voices plainly and gave a little scream of delight—for one was that of Gerald Leveridge. Instantly she opened the door of Hewlitt's workroom and confronted them.

Gaunt, pale, snow-grimed, he beheld her in amazement.

"You! You here? My God!"

"I—why Gerald? Yes—I——"

"I haven't had a chance to tell him yet," put in Hewlitt quickly. "His news was so ter——"

He stopped, pain in his frank eyes.

"Father! Where is father?" she asked brokenly.

"He's—he's——"

"He's back there," interrupted Hewlitt, "with the horses." He was struggling into his parkey. "They had some trouble back there only a few miles and need help."

She begged to go. The loneliness and suspense on the barge would be unendurable. But Hewlitt gently counseled her to wait in patience. And Gerald added his own awkward plea.

Greater to him than the misery he felt in the disclosure made to Hewlitt was the misery of finding Edith alone on the barge with this man—of her coming to him in dishabille. He did not know she had heard his step and had risen in alarm. Her surprise at finding *him* he took to be surprise at finding *any* one with Hewlitt.

"Hurry, hurry!" she pleaded.

Hewlitt took a ship's lantern and after instructing Edith to keep the lights burning on the barge strode off with Leveridge.

She guessed that her father was dead or Gerald would have assured her of his safety—concerning which she had not dared to ask. It was not until the long, sleepless night was ended that she *knew*. Just after dawn she saw them coming, a foreshortened line of dark objects moving slowly toward the barge, the two men, six horses, eight sleds. Albert Stanley was missing!

The young men were very kind to her, Leveridge, for the time being, sinking all condemnation and bitterness toward her in a generous sympathy. Hesitatingly he told her the story. And Hewlitt added, without her asking, that he and Gerald had spent hours at the crack in the forelorn hope of recovering the body. Against Hewlitt's entreaty she insisted on cooking for them, feeling that her only safety from terror lay in occupation. She got them their breakfast, immediately after which, though they badly needed rest, the men were compelled to move the cargo until they found the horse feed and to construct some sort of stable for the horses whose resistance to the cold was now at a dangerously low ebb. Hewlitt decided that the shore would be the best place and accordingly they got out scantling and canvas and hauled them to the beach just under the highest point of land—only an eight-foot scarp of the tundra but it would afford a little shelter from the prevailing wind. Leveridge worked faithfully at the hasty

erection of the canvas structure but he was very taciturn.

During the evening meal the grieving lad was very uncommunicative and Hewlitt, studying him, soon guessed the reason. It diverted him at first—before it angered him. He would have told him how the situation in which he found Miss Stanley had been brought about, but he decided that the cynical young cub was not entitled to that enlightenment. Edith left them soon after supper, pleading a headache.

"What is the program, Mr. Hewlitt?" asked Leveridge morosely as soon as she had gone.

"I've been thinking of that. And there's just one thing to do—leave the horses here and notify Holter of what has happened. Do you think you can make the Eskimo village all right?"

"Oh, yes," replied Gerald quietly. "I've merely got to follow the coast till I get there. And then on to Candle. I'll start to-morrow morning."

"Better stay here for a day or two at least, Gerald, and rest up after your strenuous journey."

But Leveridge declined with a single word —and a single look!

Hewlitt did some thinking that night and at breakfast he said to Edith in Gerald's presence, "Miss Stanley, perhaps you ought to leave the barge. Of course your mother's interests are still here. But they are now of such doubtful value and your staying is so—so inconvenient to you as compared with the way you might live at Candle, or even Nome."

"I can imagine Candle," said Edith bitterly, "if there are many like the citizens the *New Whatcomb* contributed to it!"

"Gerald would be glad, I'm sure, to take you to Nome, if you preferred. He could take you first to Candle on one of the horse sleds."

She looked at them. They looked at her. And covertly they were also observing each other. It was as though each were plumbing the thought and testing the character of the other two. Then, bravely she said:

"I think I know what you really mean, Mr. Hewlitt, and I thank you. But I am pledged to stay with the property, even if its value *is* uncertain. As for the—the unconventionality, a month or two more or less cannot add to it and it would be quite as unconventional, would it not, to take a long trip with Gerald under the rough and primitive conditions in which we would have to travel?"

"Perhaps you are right," returned Hewlitt, rising; and Gerald, wordless but looking unutterable things, rose with him.

It was all Hewlitt could do both for Edith and to set the young jackanapes right. But when that young man was ready for his solitary journey and turned to say his curt good-by Hewlitt realized that the youth was still far from convinced. Such is the pressure of the world's thought!

CHAPTER XIX.

HOLTER VISITS THE BARGE.

In the weeks that had passed since he gathered his flock, ruly and unruly, sheep white and black—and also goats, Holter had addressed his energies chiefly to two tasks —holding that flock together, and convincing all persons whom it might concern that Holter, Stanley & Hewlitt, notwithstanding they had been virtually wrecked "to hell and gone down the coast"—in the phrasing of sundry sympathetic Candleites—was still the biggest thing that had hit the new placer settlement of Kotzebue Sound and strictly a going concern. He needed money to help him achieve both of these objects, and he had mighty little money. He had, however, something that to an extent and for a while excellently took its place—a profound insight into mining-camp psychology.

His shifts and expedients with his "people," his coaxings, threatenings and cajolings during those weeks—and the months that followed—to keep them foot-loose and unattached exacted from him both the inspiration and the perspiration of genius. But he kept them—except a few. Yet, cleverly enough, he managed so to farm them out during the winter at occupations more or less congenial and more or less lucrative as to "see 'em through without actually grubstakin' 'em!" The quotes are Holter's.

He was less successful in his other undertaking, for here he was up against the force and influence of his competitors in a community in which public opinion, if not actually administered in the "hooch" they dispensed, at least was distilled in the social atmosphere of their warm, comfortable establishments and absorbed the flavor of their sentiments.

Holter was convinced that nothing could

be done until "spring," which has two meanings in the North. One is the sluicing time, the other the opening of navigation. In Nome there is between the two an interval of about a month—that of May. In far Kotzebue Sound, on Arctic water, there is both May and June; and what bothered Holter was whether he could get his outfit in shape to do business by May or must wait until July. In the former case the gold would be ripe—bright, clean, aching to spend itself. In the latter case most of this come-easy, go-easy gold, on which the saloon and resort men mostly depend, would be gone!

He had no doubt that the beers and wines on the *New Whatcomb* would be kept from freezing by Hewlitt the reliable and that all the stock, equipment and general outfit could be got safely ashore before the break-up and could then be reshipped by schooner or other craft and set up as a first-class place. But it would cost a small fortune to do all this; and with the cream already skimmed from the spring clean-up and summer prices prevailing he would face a year or two of hard labor against formidable, established competition before he could expect to get his head above water. It was perhaps a little better than sinking the barge where she lay, but that was all.

As to getting the outfit to Candle by the time of the other kind of spring, recouping all his losses almost in the week of their grand opening and owning the town by the time the boats arrived—it was a consummation devoutly to be wished! But he could see no way on earth by which to compass it. He could employ dog-team men—if they were to be had—or horses—with the same "if"—and haul his hundred and thirty or forty tons around the ice-piled sinuosities of the coast. At this time of year mining-camp rates for snow and ice haulage would probably total the value of the outfit. The alternative, the only one he could conceive, was to move Candle to Cape Espenberg!

There were compromise courses, naturally. For instance he could suggest himself as a partner to one or another of the three or four concerns that were already in the liquor business and which hoped to expand into the usual "first-class resort." Or he could sell out to them. Nothing could be easier than selling out. But at what price? All the three smaller men had, through "friends," approached him cautiously on the subject, but when he as cautiously sounded them out he discovered that they would give him virtually nothing. They did not fear his rivalry until the year's cream was skimmed. The fourth concern, Raker & Horn, stood pat on their resolution to let him come to them. Holter suspected it.

The ex-Dawson potentate had poked about considerably on both these compromise propositions, canvassing the situation in a more than tentative way, yet committing himself to no one, when lean Gerald Leveridge herded some long-haired canines into Candle, one raw evening, and inquired at the river bank road house for such a person as Mr. Edward Holter.

He was referred to a small, peeled cabin across the creek near the river, with a brown tent in front of it, where he found Holter and several other men and women, including Miss Rosamond Bloom. Not that the latter occupied the cabin. Like the others she was merely a guest during evenings—and days, too, but that is by the way. In so small a place as Candle a discreet distance should and did separate her domicile—which she shared with Evelyn—from Holter's cabin—about seven feet four inches.

"I've just come from the barge," Leveridge told him breathlessly; whereat Holter, turning a shade paler than the sunless winter had already made him, took him to the door and there received the tidings Leveridge bore.

"Good God! Poor devil!" he uttered whole-heartedly. Though they had been far different men, with little in common save the passion to speculate, he had cherished a cordial regard for Albert Stanley. When he learned the details, he made a rapid calculation of the effects of this new turn of affairs. The loss of Stanley's services was the least of these. His services had rarely been valuable, and sometimes, as in the case of this horse scheme, they had been exceedingly awkward and costly. Usually, though, he could "handle" him.

But now? That was it! The chief factor in the new situation was that he must now handle Stanley's successor in interest, which naturally would be his daughter Edith. And *that*, probably, meant handling Hewlitt!

A new anger and chagrin possessed him. Up to the present, from the time Rosie had given him her meretricious explanation, he had known only the anger and mortification of a sentiment, a dream, destroyed. But now it was business, Holter's greater pas-

sion, which was involved in the weakness of Edith Stanley. Yes, two against one, and as long as Hewlitt maintained his ascendancy over the girl these two would be David Hewlitt! With that inexperienced chechahco saloon keeper who now controlled an undivided two thirds of the venture he must deal as best he could.

When he left the barge Holter had taken with him an estimate of Hewlitt not altogether unfavorable to the prospect of handling him. He had liked him personally when he first met him. And latterly, with the cleverness the man had shown in the emergencies they had faced, he had gained considerable respect for his mentality. Nor had he seen anything about the man that at all reflected on his character. But since Rosie's disclosure, now impliedly verified by Leveridge's narrative—more than verified by Leveridge's reluctance to say one word more about Hewlitt and Edith than that narrative absolutely required to be said—he had become incensed and disgusted with him.

Libertine though Holter was, in his way, he knew *he* never could have done it—not against a partner, not against a man like Stanley. It had been some satisfaction to him to anticipate the result when Stanley returned. And had it not been practically impossible to do so he would have tried to intercept Stanley down the coast somewhere and go with him to the barge to prevent trouble—at least serious trouble!

"By the Lord Harry I'm glad poor old Stanley's been spared that discovery!" he exclaimed to himself. Character, or no character, there was only one thing to do about Hewlitt—face him. He would go to the barge, for there were many other things to attend to. Once there he would bring the whole question of managership and policy to a show-down. As to the personal matter of Edith Stanley's infatuation, it was, he supposed, none of his business. The women were all alike evidently. When they reached a place where the bars were down—and they were certainly down "north of fifty-three"—they did as they would always have liked to do but dared not—as they pleased!

He had continued to employ on many short trips the Eskimo and his son whom he had engaged when he first reached Candle. Their dog team had proved excellent. He sent word to them to prepare for a long journey. It was nearing February, usually the coldest and most perilous month of the long winter.

Down the long, sinuous, windy, drifted coast they crawled, the boy or the father breaking trail, Holter riding in his robe till he became cold and then trotting behind with the aid of the handlebars of the heavy sled. Nearly ten days of tough traveling and uncomfortable nights in igloos or the open until at last, toiling up the western side of the Sound, the incredibly altered form of the *New Whatcomb* rose on the horizon. Soon a dark object moving among the black lava rocks of the beach disclosed itself to Holter as a man—Hewlitt, no doubt.

Had he arrived a few minutes earlier he would have seen Edith crossing the ice to the barge to prepare supper, for it was late afternoon.

The two enthusiasts had organized their activities since Leveridge came and departed nearly three weeks before. The winter was advancing, there were many things to do and they had resolved to make the most of their time. After the first shock of her father's death had passed, Edith found work both a delight in itself and a refuge from the contemplation of a sorrow that was to fall far more heavily upon her mother.

She continued her observations of the tundra flora in the extremest cold of winter, emulating Hewlitt who was busiest when the spirit in the thermometer stood at its lowest. Both were convinced that the data they secured at these times would prove the most valuable of all their studies of Arctic nature.

With the great cold, however, Hewlitt's barge duties increased. The warm-storage plant, as he called it, required more attention, as did also the horses. Every third day he exercised them, at first alone, a pair at a time hitched to an empty bobsled. But as he found the ice safe anywhere west of the big crack, he permitted Edith to drive a second pair back of him—but always eastward, for he did not wish to see her shudder at sight of the big crack which, though frozen over solidly most of the time, was always recognizable. Thus they enlarged their horizon, Hewlitt learning certain things about the frozen Sound that proved of supreme value to him later. About the same time he learned some other things that proved of supreme value, but they were not about the ice!

During the last few evenings Edith had

nerved herself to go over her father's effects, among which were certain belongings salvaged from the sled on which he had ridden—the diary of his Nome trip and his accounts. These she turned over to Hewlitt who thus learned, much to his satisfaction, of the results of Stanley's inquiries regarding Mr. Patty Patterson. He decided to say nothing to Edith of the import of this for the present.

As Holter's eye ranged from the moving man to the low canvas structure from which he seemed to be walking he recognized it at once as the stable Leveridge had spoken of. "Wasting his time and my rolled oats on those useless critters," he muttered. "Eatin' their heads off, of course!"

He was in a murderous mood—what with cold and fatigue intensifying the grouch he had carried with him from Candle. He gave Hewlitt a rather churlish greeting as he perfunctorily shook his hand.

"Where's your girl?" he asked spitefully.

It took Hewlitt a moment to comprehend he had not said "the" girl.

"*My* girl? You mean Miss Stanley?"

Holter was in no mood for evasions. He had not meant to bring the subject up at once, but since Hewlitt saw fit to challenge a natural, offhand reference to the situation, he'd call that bluff *instanter!*

"Oh, hell, I know all about it. And damned raw I call it—enticing her off that way the minute her father's back was turned."

Hewlitt dropped the sack of implements he was carrying.

"You cur!" he gritted and aimed so sincere a blow at Holter's jaw that the man went sprawling.

As Holter struggled to his feet, his face purple with rage, he was jerking up the skirt of his parkey. Hewlitt, seeing his purpose, kept very close to him, intending to strike his arm before he could draw a gun. To Holter, ill appreciating Hewlitt's confidence in his own quickness, it seemed that his young partner was indifferent, that he courted suicide—defying him, as it were, to kill him. He thought he could draw and shoot his assaulter down; and in this assurance, necessitating debate whether to kill him or not, he cooled enough to hesitate.

His hand in his hip pocket, only the tail of his parkey handicapping a quick draw, his eyes still cruel, he rasped out: "For two cents I'd murder you!"

"I think not," said Hewlitt evenly. "You'd hit that snow again before you could get it out. However, think it over. What did you *expect* me to do, after what you said?"

Holter did think it over. The Eskimos, mildly alarmed, clucking their *"Naga, naga!"* or "No, no!" being of no assistance to him, he suddenly was glad that he had been forced to hesitate. He withdrew his hand and so was able with impunity to thrust himself still closer to Hewlitt, looking him defiantly in the face, searching him for the truth—the reason of that blow. Hewlitt let him. Levelly, eye to eye, he met that stabbing scrutiny and waited for Holter to answer.

"What do yer mean by 'What did you *expect* me to do?' "

"Just what I said. You left me no alternative but to knock you down, much as I disliked to do it. I"—he hesitated, his sense of exact justice determining his words—"I suppose it is natural for you—for *you*—to put such a construction on the fact that that girl and myself both live on that boat. But it doesn't lie in your mouth to criticize us."

"You mean—Rosie?" Holter forced himself to say it.

"Yes, I mean Rosie—if you like. But I mean it in another way than you mean it."

"What are you driving at, Hewlitt? And, say!"—Holter raised his finger and glared from a ferocious eye—"you be as careful as you know how, young man."

"You're a nice one to tell *me* to weigh my words," replied Hewlitt sarcastically, "after what *you* said to *me*. I'll tell you what I'm driving at, as you call it. I'll say that I came along with you and your chosen followers purely in the way of business and with no right to cavil and no intention to cavil at your habits of life. And I did *not* mean to imply that because you are living with Rosie you have no right to take me to task for what you seem to suspect. Quite the contrary. Though your suspicion is false and contemptible I respect you for your apparent solicitude for the unprotected daughter of your dead partner."

"Oh, you do, do you?" Holter's tone was less belligerent.

"I certainly do, though you never deceived me in that way. I judged you as a man of that kind of honor and decency. What I object to is your voicing your suspicion of

Miss Stanley. You can't expect to utter it and get away with it, can you?"

Holter replied slowly, "No, I suppose not, if it's *only* a suspicion."

Hewlitt's fist clenched again. "Cut that 'if,' Holter, or I'll hit you again, gun or no gun. And cut it out for good!"

"I said——"

"I know what you said. Don't! We'll have no more of that."

Holter gnawed his stubbly bearded lip, still angry but more perplexed, more crestfallen. His refuge was diversion to the other tack.

"What you were driving at a minute ago is what I'm talking about—your remark about Rosie. If it wasn't my living with her, then what?"

"Just this: *She* is responsible for your suspicion. You are too keen a man about other people to be so cocksure as you seemed to be about this thing without a suggestion from her."

"How do you figger that?"

"It's not a particularly shrewd guess, for knowing as I do that it was she who drove Miss Stanley to take refuge on the barge, it's a simple enough deduction that she probably poisoned your mind about her."

"Drove her to the barge! What in hell do you mean?"

"And cut out that hell, please, if you want to talk to me. Reserve that for bulldozing your gamblers." Hewlitt at a sudden thought almost broke into a smile. "*Our* gamblers, if you like," he amended.

The corners of Holter's mouth twitched responsively. "All right. What on *earth* do you mean?"

"I make it an invariable rule in serious conversations to mean exactly what I say."

"Miss Stanley told you that?"

"No; though she intimated that a general disgust with the behavior of that bunch on shore after you left was responsible for her return to the shelter of the boat. It was—somebody else—somebody too naïve and ignorant to be capable of deception. He said enough to show very plainly that if your young lady did not virtually force her out of the camp by encouraging the scandalous behavior of the others, at least she prevented the party from sending word to Miss Stanley that they were about to leave, so she could join them and go to Candle if she wished. They deserted her. That is what it amounts to. And your Rosie appears to have schemed it."

Holter was nonplused. "For what reason?" he asked himself aloud.

Hewlitt was through. He shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know," was his laconic answer. As he walked away he added, over his shoulder. "You're coming out, I suppose."

It took some minutes to straighten out the dogs, but when they made their new start they quickly overtook the caretaker of the barge.

"Look here, Hewlitt," said Holter painfully, as he jumped out of the sled and walked at the side of the younger man. "I apologize. Nobody ever claimed that Ed Holter wouldn't eat his words when a man showed him he was wrong. Understand me, I don't know that what you say is true. I'm a skeptic about such things. Maybe it's the way I've lived. But I've got absolutely no right to think that you and Miss Stanley are not on the square with each other, particularly after that last thing you told me. I don't quite get the explanation of that, but by the piper that played before Moses I *will* get it! From now on you're a hundred per cent to the good with me, and you can buy a pool on that. Here's my hand."

Hewlitt took it with the best of grace.

"And of course not a word to the girl!"

"I should say *not*," agreed Hewlitt very emphatically.

She greeted Holter without surprise, for she was waiting for them on the deck. Her salutation was friendly, but guarded—noncommittal. Too many thoughts surged through her timid, harried mind.

If Holter took observations of their way of living from which to draw inferences favorable or unfavorable to his former suspicions, at least they were too adroit to be perceived. His manner was that of a man of the world, though of a narrow world, making himself agreeable and very sympathetic. Before the evening was over he had spoken feelingly of his regret at the tragedy and had paid a tribute by no means tactless or ungraceful to the worth of Stanley as an Alaskan and as a man.

The next day was devoted to business, if the sorry affairs of the wrecked schooner could be so called. Holter looked things over, made comments and suggestions and then, calling his partners together after the

midday meal, he "got down to cases," in his faro parlance, with the following preamble.

"Now it's this way, young folks. We've got a hundred thousand dollars tied up here in goods and transportation, and we owe, according to Mr. Stanley's accounts, about four thousand dollars more on account of this horse deal and the expenses of the trip. That's a mere bagatelle, Miss Stanley, but unfortunately your father had to give a bill of sale as security on some of the outfit and that don't help our credit any. I've had the hardest kind of a time to get accommodations of that sort, and what little feed I was able to secure for your horses—when Leveridge told me the situation—they won't send down till I bring back the equivalent in merchandise. That'll be groceries, by the way, not liquor—though the groceries are heavier.

"Now then, there's a bunch of wolves in Candle itchin' to get hold of these goods for the value that's in 'em over and above what they figger it will cost to get 'em to Candle. And we've got to fool those porch climbers if we can! They're doing a lively business this winter and there's a good many things they're short of already. If they could make a deal with us they would send dog teams over for any of these short articles that are valuable enough in proportion to their weight to transport in that expensive way—worth a dollar or two a pound in Candle—not only liquors and cigars, but groceries, too, and various knickknacks. But all the rest of the stuff they figger on boating over in the spring, when it'll come into competition with goods from the outside—or, anyhow, from Nome. And on all that, which will be three quarters, maybe, of all our property here, they naturally won't give much. We'd get probably about ten cents on the dollar for it, and only part cash at that—for what they'd use now, too.

"It ain't a healthy-looking prospect. There seems to be just one way for us to get out with anything to speak of—if we can make it. They *do* need a lot of small stuff, right now, as I say, and they *will* need a lot more before spring. And the big men will give good prices for it, if I'm not mistaken. Raker and Horn, I'm referring to. They're keeping quiet, but I've had a feeler—or I think it's a feeler from them. I'm going to try when the time comes and it's coming p d q —excuse me, Miss Stanley—to make this kind of a deal with them: I'll let them have the whole thing, either sell it outright or on a partnership basis. Then we can freight over with dogs the small, valuable stuff they'll be needing so badly—or the horses here may help considerably, awkward as they are in the rough ice. Every gallon of whisky they need will net them a thousand per cent profit, and other things in proportion, so why shouldn't they be tempted to come to my terms? But we won't sell 'em the small stuff alone! All or none. Let's die game. We got a chance to make it."

They talked it over pro and con, Edith not fully comprehending, saying little. It seemed to Hewlitt to be the logical thing to do. He could think of no better plan for their financial salvation. At least he had evolved none, though certain mental germs already were stirring into life. He would therefore have given his carte blanche to Holter but for one accidental circumstance—he asked him about this "feeler" of Raker and Horn.

"I say I think it was from them," repeated Holter. "That fellow Patterson—you remember him? One of the tug men that went to Candle with me. We became kind of chummy. He's a wise guinea and knows the people up here. He's been nibblin' round a little about what we're going to do. Kind of sorry for us, I expect, being that he was with us and got a taste of what we had to swaller."

"But what connection has he with Raker and Horn?"

"None that I *know* of. But on the way to Candle when I was pumping him about the saloon men there he said he knew Raker and Horn quite well and gave them a great send-off for being bright fellers and on the level. Also, I've seen him in their place a lot, though of course that doesn't mean much —just his hang-out, most probably."

Hewlitt grew a little absent-minded. He was on the point of taking Holter into his confidence, but with so recent a demonstration of Holter's choleric temper he was afraid to. He felt quite certain that if he did, the remaining assets of Holter, Stanley & Hewlitt would soon be pledged for the defense of one Edward Holter, charged with the murder of Patrick Patterson! There were other reasons, besides.

He decided for the present to say nothing. But the circumstance determined him to

caution in the matter of a "deal," with the result that Holter was authorized by his two partners—Edith following Hewlitt, as Holter well knew she would—to negotiate any agreement he saw fit and report it to them for confirmation. Their forceful senior partner was not, at heart, wholly satisfied with this arrangement. The delay might be hurtful. Nor did the ex-proprietor of the great Klondike resort relish the idea of *confirmation* by a bartender and a college girl. But as they had agreed with him in his summary of the situation and had not objected to his tentative plans he thought he would have no difficulty in the consummation of whatever bargain he made and he therefore took their decision with all seeming satisfaction.

One thing only alloyed that satisfaction. If he had misjudged Edith Stanley he knew that with the resurrection of his former admiration for her and the revival of his hopes jealousy of Hewlitt would canker his relations with both. He resolved to put away all such thoughts for the next few months and to devote himself to a resurrection of something else—without which, in his belief, no man is acceptable to any woman worth having—his prosperity! He well knew that its accomplishment in this, the darkest hour of his checkered career, would call for every ounce of ingenuity and fortitude that was in him.

He got away at daybreak on his return journey to Candle.

CHAPTER XX.

MISS BLOOM "GETS HERS!"

"Isn't it the most *incongruous mixture!*" suddenly exclaimed Edith Stanley.

They were returning from a long, bracing walk, taken purely for exercise, in the teeth of an early March blizzard that had spent most of its force in the four days it had been raging. Earlier in the winter Edith, at least, would have shrunk from the discomfort and peril of it, but now, inured to Arctic rigors, learned in the following of the snow trails they had made, she would let no such period go by without resort to the bracing air and light that presaged spring.

"What? The snow?" inquired the practical Professor Hewlitt. "Not unless pure oxygen and hydrogen combined in crystals can be called such a mixture."

She pinched his arm—freedoms with Hewlitt being perfectly safe. "Silly! I mean —the whole thing."

"Adding, that is, the air and the land."

She stopped and smiled amusedly at him. "The *whole* thing—these physical surroundings, as you would call them so unpoetically, and the human activities and motives—our *being* here and living and doing and hoping as we live and do and hope."

"Gosh, what a sentence! Talk about poetry——"

They had reached the deck of the barge. She turned and sat on what was left of the rail—where a wind eddy had scooped out a nice rest for her feet. The rail was all but submerged elsewhere. "I'll tell you what I mean—or try to tell it."

"*Try* to tell it!"

"I'll be as nearly able to tell it to you, David Hewlitt, as to any human being I know, including mother, and she's mighty perspicacious."

"Some word—for a mere botanist!"

She gazed at the snow wraiths—trailing, trailing, to the scourge of the wind. "You pay no attention to the compliment, but we'll let that pass."

"I'm all ears!"

Her eyes returned to him—mischief in them. "If *I* had as good as called you a jackass——"

"I'd honor you for your perspicacity!"

"You see"—her eyes were on the snow wraiths again—"we've lived many, many years since we went aboard this dear old thing." Her foot tapped the glittering white that mantled it.

"Exceedingly old, and *mighty* dear," admitted Hewlitt.

"And we've changed our outlook upon our environment. It had a grandeur of a sort —stern and vast. But it was too forbidding, too deathlike. It didn't have beauty to us and we didn't love it. But now that we know it and it knows us and we're all so intimate, why we love it."

"Do we?"

"Of *course* we do. Think of the flowers. Think of the crystals. Think of the brave, incessant stir and energy of them, weaving, weaving out of grayness of sea and air and land these marvels of beauty, adding immense areas—principalities, kingdoms of beauty—to the world. In the tropics Nature can't help itself, as one might say. But here—why it's like our old Spartan grandsires on the bleak shores of New England

making outwardly real the inner beauty of their ideals. It's the wonder place of the world for *moral* grandeur!"

"But the incongruity?"

"The mining camp! The rush, the stampede—gold! Pell-mell we come, scheming, lying, cheating, quarreling—overturning everything in our mad, greedy struggle. Blind, insensible, contemptuous of everything that our senses might perceive of this physical and moral grandeur—just gluttonously grabbing, our fingers outspread like talons to claw into the earth, to tramp these fair garden acres into the mire they made of them at Nome in order to get a few pitiful grains of gold, and then—as contemptuously, as blindly, as barrenly—to depart!"

"All of us?"

"Yes, all of us—Holter, Stanley & Hewlitt no less than the rest." She paused and frowned. *"Worse* than the rest. Far worse. For we are not seeking to clutch the gold from the earth, but from the hands of our fellows. With us there isn't even the virtue of a struggle with Nature. We let others do that—and then we snatch from them. Look at it!"

She turned his head to the illimitable vista of the Arctic, inscrutable, all the granite of earth in its face, and yet, as they knew, mobile, purposeful, infinitely expressive.

"Look at *it*. And then think of *the resort*. Ah, God!"

"Incongruous? You are right. *Incongruous!"*

His eyes had caught her look of awe and reverence—and humiliation. It spoke for the efficacy of her unconscious appeal that he thought first of the things said and only afterward of the sayer—a young girl, unschooled of life. He permitted himself for the first time to regard her with an unhidden admiration which she, in turn, was too frank to resent.

"It's true, Edith. And it's an infernal shame!" he added soberly. "It's a region of earth that does not seem intended for looting."

Their gaze lingered. Reluctantly they left the deck.

With the waning of the blizzard Hewlitt's energetic nature reasserted itself. His mind doubled back upon its problems; and of these certain very practical ones were clamoring for an equal share of the attention he gave to the purely theoretic. Edith soon learned their trend.

He got to making experiments with one of the runners of the big bobsleds. He cleared a space on the level ice and patiently kept it free of the fitfully drifting snow. He contrived a small motor, worked by a spring, that would give the runner a kick which never varied in its force; and he observed the effect on the sliding of the runner of the varying temperatures of the next week or two.

"What on earth are you doing with those toys, David Hewlitt?" asked Edith. He liked that quaint calling of him—nor perhaps was she unaware of it.

"Just studying the forms of water. And incidentally perhaps I'm corroborating your father," he answered cryptically.

It was not until shortly after a very discouraging letter came to them by the natives who brought the promised horse feed that he took her more fully into his confidence. Holter's letter told them he would be coming soon with some prospective purchasers of the outfit. He warned them to expect no alluring proposal. But it would be better than nothing. And nothing, or virtually nothing, had been the grim specter that had been leering at him of late. At least that was the tenor of his letter.

The weather had brightened immensely and with the rapid northing of the sun the air at midday was almost springlike—the far Alaskan spring, that is—enticing Hewlitt to do a little exploring farther afield. With perfect confidence, so sure had become their ice craft, they made a journey half across the Sound, during which they slept out one night, Edith in the shelter of canvas rigged tentlike upon the sled, and returned the next day.

Over the outer expanses of the ice the sled glided more smoothly than a motor car on a polished highway, even when the big, clumsy horses trotted. It was a most enjoyable and exhilarating outing wherein prosaic doughnuts played the crowning part—flour, sugar, fat in ideal combination. Many another hyperborean than these science-educated ones had made the discovery that the north pole should long ago have been "ringed" by doughnuts.

On the return they discussed Holter's dispirited letter and that led Holter to speak of his "toys." Edith began it by remarking that the sleds glided so easily over the snow—why didn't they freight the outfit to Can-

dle, at least the things that could be carried on these big bobsleds?

"That was your father's idea, of course," replied Hewlitt. "But Holter couldn't see it. The objections were many. What happened on that night near the barge was probably the vaguest of them in his mind. We've noticed how rough the ice is near shore. The width of that zone of rough ice varies, of course, but it is considerable all along the coast. A mile or two out it is better. There seems to be large areas of smooth ice, but always there are barriers or walls of crushed-up ice separating these smooth areas from each other. It doesn't help one any to be able to pull a big load across a hundred or two acres of smooth snow only to be stopped by one of these barriers—and there must be hundreds of them along the coast zone of the Sound between Espenberg and Candle. Holter knew of this and he must also have heard of the cracks.

"It all strengthened his main objection to the idea of ice transportation that it would be prohibitively costly. There was first the horses themselves—it cost four thousand dollars, as you know, to get them here—a tremendously difficult undertaking in which your father was splendidly successful, proving his knowledge and skill as a pioneer Alaskan. But that was only the beginning. There was the uncertainty of feed. Mr. Stanley who had been told that considerable feed was shipped on the *Saidie*, insisted that we could get some of it—rather unreasonably, I thought, since there are mighty few horses up here and men are not likely to ship feed except for their own stock. In his mind's eye Holter could see the horses starving.

"Another difficulty he foresaw was the necessity of establishing camps along the shore at regular intervals, tents, bunks, cooking outfits and fuel for men and stables and stalls for horses—a complicated and horribly expensive undertaking just for a dozen trips or so in one winter. No wonder he could see the property value of the outfit being eaten up by it all.

"But I think his biggest bogy was that long, heavy, handsome bar and back bar of mine—or ours; and his gambling tables—or ours—heavy things impossible to transport, as he saw it, and yet the very backbone of the big splurge of the New Monaco. He's a kind of whole hog or none sort of man, and your father, except perhaps for his desire to conserve this last investment of his, would be likely to have taken much the same view of it."

"And what do *you* think of it, David?"

"I've been finding out something about traction. Holter knows the horses can pull very heavy loads on flat, snow-covered ice on a broken trail, but I wanted to find out what the limit was. I think I have, though I can't verify my calculations by actual experiment until we have some temperatures of twenty to thirty-two degrees above zero in the sun. But what could be drawn a mile or so on smooth ice——"

"Snow-covered ice you said before."

"I mean just ice, now. For the snow will melt off long before the ice loses its solidity. What could be drawn on smooth ice wouldn't determine anything unless the smooth ice were continuous. A patch of snow or a hedgerow of splintered ice, no matter how low—just a mild mound hardly discernible to the eye—would completely vitiate the theoretical result. For it would take hours to unload, carry over and reload the transported goods or separate the string of sleds and relay them over, one at a time. And a few such experiences would send the cost soaring again. Hence this expedition of ours out into the center of the Sound."

"Where we've found very, very few places that weren't smooth and flat!"

"Correct, young lady. Holter didn't think of that. Horses taken on the ice way out to sea, as one might say, is possibly a new thing in civilization. Who was to say that the ice zone would be five miles wide, or ten, or twenty? We've been about eighteen miles out, if the chart is correct, and where I measured the ice at that last little crack I plumbed, it showed the same thickness—a good six feet. There's open water out beyond, perhaps ten or fifteen miles. But I dare say the ice is safe almost to the very edge of it." He frowned a little. "As I say, I won't absolutely know what we can do until we have high temperatures on bare ice. But if I'm right about the traction problem—then it's horses!"

"But how are you going to get food for them for such long, hard work?"

"That doesn't bother me much now," he replied most surprisingly. "I think I know!"

"But how—where, David?"

"I'll say this, Edith. I expect to get it

from or through *the man who wrecked the barge!"*

Edith nearly lost her seat upon the bobsled.

"What *do* you mean, David Hewlitt?"

He told her exactly what he meant, except that he gave her no clew to the identity of the man, for he was still held by reluctance to bring so heinous a charge against any one on circumstantial evidence, no matter how convincing it might be to himself.

"If you didn't tell Mr. Holter, nor even father," said Edith, "of course you have no right to tell me. You certainly are scrupulous."

"It's a mighty serious thing," Hewlitt reminded her.

"But *why* did he do it?"

"Business, of course—the looting spirit that we find so incongruous with this great, beautiful, peaceful world up here."

"Business!"

"Competition, I suppose. *I'm going to know!"*

She was almost startled by the queerly metallic sound of his voice, at the mild face grown hard.

"The thing was so unbelievably cruel I've got to follow it up. That outrage is going to be paid for, in punishment, at least!"

Most of the three weeks that had elapsed since Holter left the barge had been a period of great discouragement to him and to those of his party whom he took into his confidence. Nothing in especial occurred, outwardly at least. But that was just the trouble—it was getting very late in the winter for "nothing especial" to occur! He had hoped against hope to enlist the smaller men, Camden and Pratt and Ricketts, in his salvage schemes. But no amount of business oratory of which Holter was master could avail against the hard facts—the stuff was virtually jettisoned on a far shore of Kotzebue Sound and transport of a sort at all adequate to so colossal an undertaking was simply not to be had—with Jimmy Head, the only real horse freighter tied up to Raker & Horn for all the hauling capacity he could spare from his regular freighting "up the creek" to supply the miners.

The creek was booming. Business, good all winter, in two months would be a world-beater. The town needed a first-class resort and plenty of goods—wet goods, particularly. They admitted it all, even to asseverating that they would be honored by a business connection with Edward Holter of the Monaco. But the stubborn facts remained.

Edward Holter of the Monaco had one card left—the one he had held to be played only when the rest of his hand failed—Raker & Horn. He had sized them up from every angle short of actual business relations. He knew they were waiting for him, though their independence of him was sufficiently evidenced by the foundation and framework of the big, new log building, twice the size of any structure in the town, which was to be the home not of the Candle Saloon, but of "The Candle," a complete resort, Raker & Horn, proprietors. Holter felt a stitch in his side—not far from his heart—whenever he passed the site of it. Following the ice when the Keewalik "went out," there would be rafted down from the spruce forests up the river, the sized timbers, the partition boards, the flooring and all the rest. And in not to exceed three weeks—two if possible—the place would be ready for business—which would be more than ready for it! It would be a contemptible affair, a virtually empty building, compared with what the Candle Monaco would have been. But it would "do the business," and that was both the *summum bonum* and the *ne plus ultra* of many besides the Raker & Horns and the Holters.

Months having passed without signs of hostility from the owners of the *New Whatcomb* it did not appear to Patterson's associates that he need longer conceal his connection, as silent partner, with the firm of Raker & Horn. As a precaution, however, Patterson, in solicitously inquiring of Holter what "arrangements" he was making to get his stuff to Candle, suggested his putting some sort of proposition up to his friends, Raker & Horn, whom he, Patterson, was "going to help out next spring." It appeared, or so Patterson implied, that he was an old hand at organizing and managing a competent staff of money getters in an Alaskan resort—the gambling and the dance hall being alike his "specialties." Yes, Raker & Horn were going to put him in charge, and he, Patterson, quite aside from his interest in "seeing you guys save something out of your hard-luck proposition," would welcome any accretions to the equipment of the place.

The pale Raker, an ex-carpenter, and the full-blooded Horn, an ex-everything, entertained Mr. Holter's suggestion that they

"make some kind of a deal" with a shallow mask of respect for the misfortune of a fellow business man. They talked it over with him as if they were considering what terms to offer or to accept. But their terms were long since agreed upon among the three partners. To pursue a few pleasant bypaths of generous talk was a conventional preliminary. Then their bludgeon fell on Holter's devoted, helpless head—and he blinked, swallowed, argued a little, and—tentatively accepted it. Subject to confirmation by his two partners, it would be satisfactory, he said. Holter had been beating his head against the stone wall of his difficulties so long that the bludgeon had struck nothing but a callus.

"I suppose you can handle them?" asked Raker. "We don't want to go down there to take stock and make arrangements unless you're pretty sure."

"Well, we've had no difficulty yet. They practically left it to me," returned Holter, not without truth.

"All right then, the three of us will go with you to-morrow if the weather looks all right. Patterson will drive us down. Got your own sled?"

"I'll be with you, gentlemen," Holter assured them. And he crossed the town to his cabin to prepare for the journey.

In the cabin, engaged in housewifely employments, was Rosie whom it was necessary to apprise of his forthcoming departure. He dreaded the announcement, any reference to the *New Whatcomb* or its young caretakers reviving a painful memory, or two, rather—that very dangerous altercation with Hewlitt and the equally disagreeable if less dangerous altercation with Rosie that had taken place on his return to Candle.

He had made no bones of telling her. In fact, he "sprung it" on her without preliminary—suddenly—in order to give her ready wit no time to operate.

"You lied to me about that girl, damn it. What did you do it for? Tell me quick!"

Generally he was kind and gentle to Rosie. In a situation of stress like the present, however, the queen tamer in him made no exceptions. Rosie's reaction was unexpected.

"Dearest love," she said sweetly, "three years with thee has taught muh wisdom. I know you, you gay Lothario. I seen your eyes on that sweet young thing too often not to know what was goin' on in the back of your head."

She laughed with that harsh resonance inseparable from the life that had made—or unmade her; a laugh that gives the lie to the face that may have escaped its ravages. "I wanted to show you, when you came back, just *how* innocent she was!"

"Say," said Holter, his small blue eyes retreating as they blinked wickedly at her, "I feel like chokin' you. You made her choose between standing for all the rotten devilment on that beach, which you could have shut down on in a minute if you had wanted to, or going out and living alone on that boat with Hewlitt. Living on another part of it, that is, which I guess isn't any great sin. You don't know a thing against her but that, and you're lying to me!"

Rosie sprang up in angry tears. "You wanted to *marry* her. I *know*. Your wife in California sued you for a divorce. You didn't tell *me*. You figured on marryin' *her* and not me."

"You know *why* I didn't figger on marrying you—and *don't?*" he asked, so white with anger that he would tell her this now instead of reserving it, as he had intended, for a day when it might better suit his purpose. "I'll tell you. It's because you sent the info to my wife, through your old pal Clementine—the info *about yourself!* Feature that! To goad her into doing it, so as I *could* marry you. I wouldn't have cared so much, only my old father and mother is out there, too. For *that* you've lost out, little lady. It was rank treachery and you know I don't stand for that!"

Since that painful scene, their first real quarrel—for they were more business partners than lovers—each had studiously refrained from any sort of reference to Cape Espenberg.

"I'm going to the barge with Raker and Horn to-morrow," he now told her. "We've got to sell for a song, I guess."

"And you expect me to dance to their music, too, Ed?" she inquired fretfully.

"Little girl, the window is open wide!"

She considered his words. "Why do you say window?"

"Don't you know the old saying: 'When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out of the window?'"

"You didn't get me, Ed. I just meant, do those guys expect *me* to manage their women for them?"

"Oh, that's what you mean," returned Holter, mollified. "That's better."

She put her hand on his shoulder. "You know mighty well, Ed Holter, I didn't mean what you meant. But if you *want* me to—go, I'll go."

It was Holter's turn to hedge a little. "Rosie, you've been an A-1 pal and an A-1 partner. For that I'll say I can stick it out, and will gladly as long as you want to, or unless either of us falls strong for a third party. But there's one thing you got to do. From now on you got to pedal just as strong in favor of that girl as you did against her. Her name's gone around these diggin's and you've got to bring it back. I don't care what it costs you."

"Is she on the square, Ed? Are you dead sure?"

Holter groaned. "Can you beat it!" he asked of the ridge pole. "Shakespeare was right—the female of the species is *sure* deadlier than the male!" He turned to her wearily. "I *do* know this: that the only thing any one has got on that girl *you* put on her—she had to go live on that barge. Now you take it off the slickest way you know how. Do you get me?"

"All right, Ed, I will," she promised meekly. But she didn't. For she could not. And she knew she could not.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONFRONTED.

"I guess that's them," announced Hewlitt, looking through the binoculars.

"David Hewlitt, no one would suspect you of being any kind of a professor. *Those* are *they!*"

He lowered the glasses and laughed. "Too utterly highbrow for the captain and mate of a defunct lumber schooner. The point is, have you plenty of dried prunes cooked up?"

"In their honor I have prepared a kind of mélange or compote—excuse the highbrow—of all the dried fruits on this liner."

It was a light beginning of a very heavy day. For it was still morning. Had they not been delayed by the accident of an overturned kerosene burner in the warm-storage plant they would have left the schooner half an hour before, and Messieurs Raker, Horn, Patterson and Holter, together with a small company of Eskimo guides and trail breakers would have cooled their heels, or rather warmed them, for several hours.

After greetings all round—and a sweetly sickening stare at Edith by both Raker and Horn—a conference was held at once in Hewlitt's quarters. As he led them there the young professor of physics said to himself with all the elation he had ever felt in suddenly obtaining the long-sought value of an unknown quantity: "If Patterson is *with* them and yet not in the capacity of dog driver or guide, then Patterson is *of them!*"

"I'll ask you gentlemen to set the ball a-rolling," said Holter wearily. To say truth the sight of his marooned wealth that was wealth no more so brought home to him the utter failure of his hopes that he had little heart in the proceedings.

"Well, it's like this, Mr. Hewlitt and Miss Stanley," began Raker, the coldly smooth. "We've agreed, if it's satisfactory to you, to take the whole outfit as it stands, at twenty-five per cent of the invoice price of everything, whether it was bought in Nome or on the outside, except the bar and back bar, pool table, piano, gambling tables and all that sort of thing that has to be left here till after the ice breaks. On those things that we'll have to take a big chance on we can only allow you ten cents on the dollar. They'll probably be a dead loss to us."

Hewlitt's face suffused, but he said nothing—as yet.

"We'll take the horses, too, at twenty-five per cent of what you paid for them in Nome," continued Raker. "You're out of feed, as I understand."

"That's correct," admitted Hewlitt.

"So you'd have to kill 'em for dog meat, anyhow," added Horn jocularly, "and I don't suppose there's any dogs around here."

"There are three!" said Hewlitt incisively. His face retained its high flush. Whereat Holter, keen to suspect, gave him a warning glance. It was unnecessary, however. Holter himself was listless. He had been through it all before. Edith was very pale.

"Whom are we selling to, Mr. Raker?" Hewlitt managed to ask quietly, though his heart beat with the realization that it was probably the last civil word he would have to address to the three men that confronted him.

"Why, Horn and me and——" He looked questioningly at his two associates.

"Better put Patterson in the bill of sale, too," consented Horn. "Mr. Patterson has been interested with us, I might explain," he continued suavely. "It's owin' to him that we're helpin' you people out. He's got

a feller feelin' for you folks, on account of his being with you on the trip up."

"We appreciate *all* of Mr. Patterson's efforts," said Hewlitt, rising. "We'll talk your proposition over a few moments, if you don't mind."

As Edith and Holter followed him out into the entryway, Raker called curtly: "Make it snappy!"

"Cut!" growled Hewlitt when he had closed the door. "Let's get out of earshot of them, Holter. I'm likely to raise my voice."

They made their way to Edith's cabin. When mechanically he had opened the draft of the heating stove and turned to them again, his face was black with anger.

"Infamous rascals!"

"Oh!" gasped Edith explosively.

"Holter," said Hewlitt, "there's something I should perhaps have told you when you were here before, but knowing your rather —ah—short temper at times, I was afraid you'd kill Patterson. But now I don't care if you do. In fact, if you don't, I think *I* will—unless Edith insists on taking over the job!"

"Is *he* the man?" divined the girl. "I could almost do it!" she exclaimed wrathfully.

"What in the name of——"

"Here—we haven't a great deal of time. I'll make it snappy as that insolent hound advised me. First, though, will you promise to make no use of the information I'm going to give you without our consent?"

"Why yes, of course, if it concerns all three of us."

"It does, certainly. And another thing—that you'll take my word for what I tell you. It's too long a story to go into the details at this moment. Do you trust me, Holter?"

"I do, Hewlitt, absolutely."

"Very well then—Patterson schemed to prevent our getting to Candle with this outfit. When everything else failed, he weakened and then deliberately snapped the towlines, set us adrift and grounded us here!"

"Patterson! Man, are you crazy?"

"He bought your space on the *Saidie* just to get it away from you. He tried to prevent our getting towed up here. He shipped as assistant engineer—and cut us adrift."

"Why didn't you tell me this before?"

"I've told you my reason."

"Why, we could have made them pay for all——"

"Hold on. *I* couldn't, or rather *wouldn't* make Patterson pay for anything even if he were able. That would be using a threat of criminal proceedings to compel restitution. A striped suit and a term in the penitentiary are the only things for him."

"But Raker and Horn!" Holter's active mind had leaped to them at a single bound.

"I didn't *know* that he acted for Raker and Horn till a minute ago. You had said only that you *thought* he might be feeling you out on their behalf."

Holter strode to him, his round face blazing, his eyes twinkling themselves almost out of his head.

"Can you prove it—to them—right now?"

"You bet I can—thanks to Stanley."

"Stanley?"

"He didn't know what I was driving at, but he got me the information in Nome that I needed."

"Good! Are you armed?"

"Right under my pillow in the bunk downstairs. What's the idea?"

"What's the idea? I'm trusting you in what you say about Patterson—mighty serious thing. And I'm going ahead on it."

"Yes."

"Well, then, will *you* trust *me* as to what to do?"

Hewlitt considered. But his blood was up. And, somehow, gambler, social outcast though the man was, he *did* trust him. So he consented.

"I've got the best little gat in Alaska right here," said Holter, tapping the usual place. "We're two against three, but if Miss Stanley will keep out of the way—and won't mind——"

"But I *do* mind, and I *won't* keep out of the way," she interrupted vehemently. "And we're *not* two against three. I've got a pistol too and we're three against three—the incarnate devils!"

"Whew!" went Holter, and Hewlitt looked earnestly in her eyes.

"I'm father's daughter, am I not?" she challenged. "And mother's representative. They shan't outnumber you."

"We'll take the drop on them, little lady," explained Holter, "and one gun is enough to hold the three—unless something unforeseen happens."

"There's no danger with those curs. Let her come," decided Hewlitt.

'Come on," urged Holter. "Take the cue

from me. Watch 'em—but keep one eye on my hip pocket—both of you."

They returned at once to the waiting partners, who smiled sociably—but not for long!

"Mr. Hewlitt and Miss Stanley make objections," said Holter.

Three years before he had won twenty-five thousand dollars on the turn of a faro card. What he felt then was a mere vapidity compared with the exultation of this moment.

"The deuce you say!" said Raker sarcastically. "Then the deal is off and you've led us on a wild-goose chase."

"By no means," denied Holter, "for there's a brand-new deal on and we'll dictate the terms."

"Sudden!" Horn called it.

"By no means," again contradicted Holter. "You noticed my partner mentioned the fact that there *were* a few dogs around here. He meant you three gentlemen!"

Out of the tail of his eye he had glimpsed Hewlitt at the bunk for a smooth, quick second.

Raker rose, a baleful look on him. "If you figure to insult us——" He glanced at the others for a concert of action.

"Impossible!" interrupted the Dawson man, drawing his automatic—and Hewlitt's right hand was at his side. "My partner, Mr. Hewlitt, will explain to you in language that even dogs can understand exactly what I mean."

"I will," said Hewlitt. "And with greater pleasure than I ever took in anything before."

Raker had reseated himself tremblingly. Patterson, though even more surprised, knew exactly what was coming and uttered in his filthy heart the rogue's equivalent of "Kismet!" Only Horn spoke up, and he falteringly.

"What kind of a damn trap do you call this?"

"You keep your 'damns' to yourself in the presence of Miss Stanley," admonished Holter, "or I'll wing you, you petty-larceny sneak thief! Go on, Mr. Hewlitt."

"Your henchman, or partner—remember you've admitted him to be your partner—followed Mr. Holter to Nome and beat him out of seventy-five tons of freight space on the *Saidie!*"

"Great crime!" sneered Raker, with what boldness he could muster.

"It was nearly a crime to use it to ship horse feed that you didn't want, when every one was predicting a scarcity of human food.

"When he could not prevent our shipping this outfit in this old schooner he made the acquaintance of the assistant engineer of the tug that was to tow us, got him drunk, bribed him to stay ashore and took his place. The towlines caked with ice that had to be beaten off night and day. Patterson, choosing night shifts when he could, devoted most of his attention to one certain point on each line and hammered them with the edge of his oar and sometimes—for I saw him—with the edge of a shovel—day in and day out. I thought it odd and poor judgment, but I didn't know that he was up to anything. When we got just inside the Sound and he was satisfied the ropes were weak enough at those points he waited until he was on shift in the engine room and the captain and engineer sleeping heavily, and then began to slow down and suddenly speed up. About four of those jerks did the trick. The hawsers parted and we drifted ashore."

Hewlitt, pausing a few seconds to gain the permission of his conscience, added somewhat apocryphally: "There are men in Nome who know this, besides myself and Holter. Then he transferred himself to the barge so as not to be taken back to Nome and he has since been very sympathetic and anxious to induce his *good friends,* Raker and Horn, to toss us a little small change in return for our hundred-thousand-dollar outfit."

Horn, the ex-everything, licked his chops. He hoped that in this pinch Raker would trust to him and be silent.

"It's rather queer," he drawled, "with the proof you have, that you haven't done anything all these months."

"Two reasons, my friend—though it's really none of your business. We lacked a little information which we have since obtained in Nome and we wanted to get you feeling safe—and careless, so you'd admit that Patterson was your partner. All we *knew* as to that—and it wasn't enough—was that he had bought and shipped the feed in your name."

"We *never* authorized him to do anything like you say he done!" bawled Raker nervously. "He was to prevent you fellers from bringing stuff up here to take the business away from men that was entitled to it, and that was all."

"Anyway I *could,* you said," blurted Patterson defensively, for he construed Raker's words as a repudiation of him and he felt he needed solidarity.

"We didn't mean anything like *that* and you know it!" snarled Raker.

"Nobody was hurt, was they?" whined Patterson with a conciliatory leer.

"*Oh!*" breathed Edith again, the human heart in her bursting with its passionate sense of outrage and villainy. "Imagine it!"

"Oh, no," admitted Hewlitt, "only a ten-to-one chance that we all would have perished miserably in the ice floes of the Arctic Ocean!"

"*I* would of been with you, wouldn't I?" he reminded them. His air was one of self-sacrificing virtue.

Hewlitt laughed lightly. In the relief of getting the whole nauseous business off his mind he found Patterson's unconscious bon mots irresistible. "Aye, faithful unto death," he conceded. "And no doubt you would have taken a fatherly care of us. What I suggest now, my ingenuous friend, in order that you may avoid being further misjudged, is that you put these explanations in writing—after describing how you parted the towlines."

"Nothing doing on a confession," interposed Horn. "You must think we're fools!"

"All knaves are that," said Hewlitt. "But you'll be the greater fools if you fail to encourage Mr. Patterson to accept my suggestion. For of course you will be shrewd enough to have him add a statement to the effect that while you instructed him to prevent our landing a competing outfit at Candle, you did not authorize him to do anything criminal."

"And *that,* you see," added the swift-minded Holter, "will make it unnecessary for me to swear out warrants for all three of you and hand them to my old friend Bradstreet, the Candle marshal—who is under obligations to me for getting him out of a nasty scrape in the old wild days of Dawson!"

"I know he knows you well," muttered Horn disgustedly. He exchanged glances with Raker—while Patterson, apprehensively watching them, saw his chances of *solidarity* go glimmering. Desperation spurred his wit.

"If we make a better deal with you fellers," he suggested briskly, "couldn't we call it all square?"

"I'm *counting* on a better deal without your assistance, my kind friend," Holter assured him. He turned to Raker and Horn. "The question is, gentlemen, whether you feel loyal enough to your silent partner to go to jail with him in Nome until your trial next summer, or are willing to let him take his medicine for what he had no right to let you fellows into, while you stay up here and look after your business. I'm just lawyer enough to remind you that when three men conspire together to do a job like this a jury don't listen very hard to the two that framed it when they try to throw the blame on the third guy that does the work!"

It was a telling shot and Holter clinched it by assuring them that in case Patterson should try to implicate Raker and Horn in his crime, Holter, Stanley and Hewlitt would cheerfully testify that he had admitted in their hearing that his partners had merely instructed him to "do anything he could" to prevent the outfit landing. "That's not telling him to do anything unlawful, you know," added Holter.

"I guess we'll have to let you take what's comin' to you, Patterson," said Horn, harshly. Whereat Patterson, somewhat under his breath, called them every vile name to which he could lay his highly proficient tongue.

"Now shall we get your confession before we're through with this meeting?" asked Holter.

"You bet you will," Horn answered for him, eager now to placate the vengeful trio. "He'll sign a confession or we'll sign it for him. He practically admitted the whole thing to us. And we were mighty sorry it occurred, gentlemen."

"You have shown your sorrow in the munificent terms you offered us for merchandise worth its weight in gold this spring," reminded Hewlitt, sarcastically. "What next, Holter?"

Holter was ready. "A fair and square deal all around is next. We want to be placed exactly where we would have been if this enterprising rat had kept his dirty claws off of us. Is that fair?"

"Why—yes, I suppose so," Raker was forced to concede. "Say, couldn't you talk business just as well if you was to put that gun away? I believe *I* could."

"It *is* a kind of nuisance, for a fact, holding it so long. Put your own on the

table first. Hold on! *We'll* do it, huh, Hewlitt?"

Hewlitt disarmed each man. Then Holter talked terms.

"About the stock—that's the first thing. We want it in Candle as quick as we can get it there. We'll put Head's four teams and all the dogs you can hire on the job."

"All right," agreed Raker. He could not repress a smile. "But judging by the beautiful time we've had getting here light over seventy-five miles of rough ice, I'm afraid we can't get a great deal hauled."

"It'll keep our bar a-goin'. Anyhow, you fellows can supply us with anything we run short of."

Raker swallowed hard—but he swallowed!

"We'll keep our six horses going. You've got feed enough to last them a year." Then Holter showed them the plans which he and Stanley had drawn three months before of "The Candle Monaco," which was to have been erected immediately adjoining the new building of Raker & Horn.

"It would have been a bigger place and a better one," he remarked. "And I don't like your front. Still, it'll do!"

"Want it, do you?" exclaimed Horn.

"Sure. No time now, nor money nor anything to build another. It's the only restitution you can make. We'll pay for it, of course, but you'll have to stand all the extra expense of putting us and our property into it."

The proprietors of the Candle Saloon looked black.

"Look here, Holter," broke out Horn truculently, "you can't equip that building till navigation opens in July, and you know it. It would look like thirty cents with a few spruce boards in one corner of it for a bar. It would be ridic'lous. We can use it to advantage till next summer. You're tryin' to play dog in the manger!"

"There is something in that, all right," admitted Holter reflectively. As he saw their disposition to make amends for the mischief they had done, he was inclined to be reasonable.

Hewlitt took him aside. "I have an idea we can get some equipment over there with the six horses, on the ice——"

"Forget it!" admonished Holter. "If we can wrastle our wet goods over and our grub and such we'll be doin' fine." When they returned to the others he said: "I'll tell you what we'll agree to. We won't ask you to turn the building over to us until we're able to equip it."

"Oh, you can haul a few lamps and chairs and curtains over. That isn't equipment. It's the doors and windows and inside finish. And the big furniture like the piano—and of course the bars. They're the things."

"Pretty foxy, aren't you?" sneered Holter.

"Let it go at that," Hewlitt advised him.

His partner gave him an indulgent smile. "All right. We'll put it that way in the agreement. We won't play dogs in the manger, as you say."

Assisted by Hewlitt, he drafted a contract that tied them up good and tight. And this they signed in duplicate, so that Hewlitt could keep one copy on the barge—a measure of self-protection openly suggested by Holter who added by way of explanation: "On our way back to Candle these gentlemen won't be so liable to go through my pockets when I'm asleep and tear up the agreement if they know you've got another copy here. Anyhow, we'll put the most enterprising of them out of temptation's way right now." He nodded at Patterson. "There's a little wrist jewelry in my trunk here somewheres that'd look swell on you. I'll go dig them bracelets out."

"I'm the goat, I suppose," muttered Patterson.

"Serves you right," returned Raker spitefully, "the money you're costing us."

After he had signed the paper put under his nose—which he only consented to do on Raker & Horn's solemn promise to provide him with the best lawyer in Nome—Hewlitt locked the miscreant in the warm-storage room, advising him to make no attempt to repudiate his confession or avoid prison.

"The penitentiary will save your life, while you're in it, at least," he elucidated. "I can't kill you till you come out. If you're able to keep out of my way, maybe I won't get a chance to kill you at all—worse luck!"

Alone with his two young partners at last, Holter presented Hewlitt with a very impressive verbal bouquet as they shook hands all around. But he warned them that their sudden fortune was in reality only a partial victory.

"We'll finally get everything up there and goin'—and at these porch-climbers' expense. But there's no use trying to get everything over the ice—the bar and back bar and such—good bluff though it was on your part.

What they're agreeing to do will take all the cash and credit they've got, as it is. That's all we can get out of them. We'll take their old shack, I suppose, and we'll do a fair saloon business between now and summer, dividing with the other little fellers. But copping the big money with a three-department resort is a lost cause for *this* year. Get the boat unloaded and the stuff high and dry the best way you can. I'll send you some Eskimos to camp right here and help you. And when that job's done perhaps we can get some reliable parties to play watchmen and let you two young folks come to the boomin' little city of Candle."

It was the old dynamic Holter who got away with his prisoner and the prisoner's two churlish ex-partners next morning on the back track to Candle. They took a little "stock" with them in order to utilize the advantage of a trail already broken and "slick" enough for fair sledding.

In Candle Holter employed a lawyer to put their deal into better shape and clinch it with legal safeguards. He turned Patterson over to his friend Bradstreet, the marshal. And cleverly he caused it to be bruited about the camp that Holter, Stanley & Hewlitt had been victims of foul play by the silent partner of Raker and Horn. Knowing that it would come out in course of time he saw no reason why he should not gain its publicity value immediately.

He made certain improvements in the plans of the building which was to be the future Candle Monaco, on which several new workmen were employed. He dispatched Jimmy Head with feed. Eskimos to help Hewlitt had gone already from Cape Deceit. Dog freighters were rounded up and contracted with. Taking him by and large, Holter was almost happy.

The one unextractable fly in the ointment was the fact that under the terms of the agreement there was no chance on earth, as Holter saw it, that the Candle Monaco would be his until Horn had horned in on the big money of the clean-up, and Raker had—done his part!

CHAPTER XXII.

KING TRANSPORT IN NOVEL GUISE.

"Now to business!" said David Hewlitt as he and Edith watched the last of the sleds jingle away from the *New Whatcomb*.

He certainly meant it. It was the middle of March and the days, already equal to the nights, would outstrip them far more rapidly than in more southern climes. And Hewlitt promised himself a task for each hour of daylight.

"Thank goodness there isn't much snow to melt. I wonder if there's less or more than usual. If I understood the gutturals of that old Eskimo who drove Holter's sled, he said there's less."

"Why are you so glad?" asked Edith, to whom the remark seemed an irrelevance.

"Can't stop to tell you now. You'll know," he answered in affected brusqueness. "Let's get out the tools, pardner."

He turned carpenter and, surprisingly, marked off and began sawing out a big door in the side of the barge on a level with the floor of the hold. In answer to her "Why?" he said he had a suspicion that the expected Eskimos would not prove fond enough of work to care to raise every ton in that hold up the hatches. Next he made beds for the bobsleds much larger than those that had come from Nome and began to freight ashore and cache the goods that Holter had designated for the first loads of the teams to come from Candle. But in the settled weather that followed the arrival of his crew of husky natives he got out the mess kit and the tent for Edith and announced a journey of perhaps a week.

"Where to, David?"

"On a voyage of discovery almost to Candle."

"That 'almost' gives you my company, sir. I won't go to Candle—and hide my head!"

"Edith!"

She turned away with the words: "I'll get out the food we'll want."

"There's something more important than grub, even, that we must take. Calico flags. You'll find some turkey-red calico in one of the big cases marked 'Siwash Trading Goods.' I'll be obliged if you'll tear up a whole bolt into pieces the size of a bandanna handkerchief."

"Yes, my lord," said Edith laughingly. "It *sounds* interesting."

Later Hewlitt turned over to Edith several bundles of laths to which to nail her flags. And part of their equipment was a ship's augur that with a dozen turns bored a hole in the ice deep enough to set a lath in securely. When they started on their journey and Hewlitt began to plant the flags every

few hundred yards Edith who had picked up quite a bit of the lore of the blizzard trail asked him in dismay if he purposed freighting in stormy weather.

"I do not," replied Hewlitt promptly. "I'm merely marking an exact route—one as straight as possible *and on perfectly smooth, flat ice.* We may have to shift some of these before we get back. It's to be straight across the Sound—which Holter and the rest think is suicide."

"Because they think the ice is unsafe?"

"I suppose so. And also because they know there are cracks. It's that, I fancy, that makes the freighters hug the shore with its rough walls and hedges of crushed-up ice —so that they can always go to the beach to get around the cracks."

"What are *we* going to do?"

"Take a bridge with us. I know how wide they will be because I know from the chart about where they must occur and therefore how far apart they will be, and therefore how much area of ice must have contracted to produce them. Finally, from the temperatures, I have calculated how wide a fissure would be produced. A little knowledge, you see, is not *always* a dangerous thing."

"But David, the horses will never pull heavy loads over wooden bridges. And think of the weight of the bridges."

"Wait till you see our traction power!"

He was elated with the results of the journey. The cracks were there and well within his calculated maximum width. And though rough ice several times chased them far out, they got around it each time on a "billiard-table" surface, as Hewlitt called it.

"It's too white for a billiard table," objected Edith.

"Wait until the snow melts and see the resemblance."

Once, however, he made a detour to avoid a surface merely mottled—as though the original mush ice had never been flooded and smoothed. It was, of course, perfectly level, and Edith thought it was smooth enough. "I can't feel any difference in the way the sled goes over it," she declared.

"You can't now, but wait until we have our eight sleds loaded with twenty or thirty tons."

"Twenty or thirty *tons!*"

"Yes." And he told her his bold plan. "You see, from what I have read and heard of spring weather conditions, plus my own deductions, there will be a period of several weeks preceding the breaking up of this great ice cake that fills the Sound when the snow will be melted off and the ice surface will lie naked to the sun—the 'glare' ice of the fall again, only wet and warm on the surface. Then the traction will be perfect. And I know what it will be in terms of mechanics from those experiments I made a while ago. The traction is excellent now in the middle of the day, but the difference between this and the wet glare ice is simply astounding—so great, indeed, that it will be economy to wait for it rather than make any trips before. We would certainly have to wait for that perfect traction to get the bar and back bar——"

"David! Do you really mean that you expect to sled over those colossal things that loom up in the hold? Why, they seem half the length of the barge!"

"Holter is so sure it couldn't be done that it makes an obstinate fellow all the more attracted to the idea of it."

"And you think there's a *chance* to get the big building and everything?" Like Hewlitt, she forgot her antipathy to resorts in the prospect of human triumph over adverse Nature.

"I really do, Edith."

When they returned to the barge and he showed her drawings he had made of the mechanical features of his plan, she realized how long he had been working on the problem.

One of these features was the lightering of the cargo. He freighted ashore a predetermined number of tons. At the same time he kept two natives at work sawing the vessel free from the ice, whereupon she raised exactly to the point he wished—so that the floor of the upper hold, where all of the heavy equipment was stored, was a few inches above the sea level. Without this elaborate preparation it would have been impossible to raise the bar and back bar to the ice. Now, with rollers under them, they were drawn by the horses out through the "door" of the hold upon the widely separated front and rear bobs of two of the sleds.

"That's that!" said Hewlitt with sober satisfaction. Then he busied himself—and it kept him busy indeed—pounding the end of a bar of steel. He had to convert the galley into a blacksmith shop for the purpose and to laugh off many failures before he was able to make the crook he needed. To tease

Edith he refused to tell her the purpose of this six-foot lever with the bent point. Later she learned it was the *crux* indeed of the whole bold scheme.

Though it still froze hard at night the April days were warm and the veneer of snow thinned and began disappearing in great oval areas. Hewlitt kept adding to the loads until the sleds looked like vans on moving day in a great city. He took all the things that "couldn't be moved!"—the great bulky, heavy equipment, and to avoid marring and breakage he packed in between the spaces and crannies curtains and rugs.

"Never, never, *never!*" prophesied Edith, dolefully.

But she was wrong. When the morning came for the attempt and the six big horses were harnessed to the first sled—from which the burlaped mahogany bar loomed squarely—Hewlitt called her attention to three things—that the coupling chains between the sleds were slack, so that the loaded sleds abutted upon each other; that each sled was frozen to the ice—they would be that way each morning, he said; and that the bar would get them loose. So saying, he pried each sled runner from the grip of the ice.

"Now, my dear partner of the future Monaco, I'm putting the lever under the bunk of the hind runners of the leading sled. When I say 'Get up,' and cluck at the horses, please start the sled forward. The weight of the lever will almost do it, for it's the sort of thing they start freight cars with. Can you then draw it back on the rail here? There's space left for it."

She tried it. It was heavy, but she was a husky girl by this time and she turned the trick.

"But how can the inch or two that the lever moves the sled forward give you any start—to speak of?"

"Watch!"

The horses got into their collars, Hewlitt gave them the word and Edith "pinched" the sled forward—and it continued going! Her eyes were on the coupling chain. She saw it rise, tighten, and with a little jerk the second sled moved—and the third, and fourth and all of them. The horses, digging their sharp calks into the ice, moved with the easy precision of a motor. And noiselessly some twenty-seven tons of a very odd sort of freight glided over the greenish, glassy surface of the frozen sea.

Edith, almost beside herself with joy, hurried to the driver.

"Oh, we're going!" she cried, clapping her hands. "We're actually going. Isn't it wonderful! David Hewlitt, I really could almost——"

"Don't!" he said—for he thought he knew. "I might drop the reins and stop the sleds and—become generally demoralized!"

There were many stops and starts during those five epoch-marking days. Epoch-marking indeed, for the journey, the first of its kind in the annals of the North, broke all sled traction records and became celebrated. People still talk of Hewlitt and his knocked-down saloon and dance hall on runners. Many starts there were, but each was but a repetition of the first.

One other feature of their journey—the passage of the giant cracks—was repeated, but only three times after the first one was encountered. Here Edith got the answer to her old question. It was a neatly trussed little bridge that Hewlitt carried with him, whose tracks, each twice the width of the sled runners, were trenches instead of rails. After upending it at the brink and letting it fall across the crack—its shod forefoot anchoring it securely to the other side to prevent slippage against the thrust of the load—he very deliberately filled the trenches with finely chopped ice, and every time but one the string of sleds moved across without uncoupling.

In spite of the anxiety it was a happy time. With land remote the vast ice field was a new world, no more like the snow-covered sea ice of winter than it was like unto its infant self, the dull, glazing congelations of the drear and stormy fall. Shallow blue-green and black-green pools intricately fretted a very gamut of lighter greens of the ice surface, its foregrounds daggers of high lights, its distances bathed in a phantasmagoric atmosphere of mirage, rich in shifting hues of tropic brilliance. If in midwinter they had found life and beauty in the dun and gray of the Arctic land and sea, of what unimaginable enchantment to them was this spectacle of vernal magnificence!

In its midst, the bar and back bar! And their coadjutors, the gambling tables, their green pitifully dull by contrast with the scintillance about them, marred by old stains of drink spilled by shaking hands. Incongruous was an epithet all too weak for Edith.

It was a *grotesquerie* from which their eyes learned to shrink. In the nostrils of their spirits it seemed ill-odored, a nucleus of miasma defiling the purity of the hyperborean world.

"Let's slither the whole rotten outfit to the edge of the ice and kick it over," suggested Hewlitt, when Edith called his attention to the tolerance of Nature—a kind of Alpenglow of the sunset casting its effulgence impartially over sleds and ice.

"But there's mother to consider, and the family of your old partner—Canby, and even——"

"Not ourselves, of course," excepted Hewlitt dryly. "*We* have no need of the money!"

"And even Holter, poor fellow. He's *so* earnest and *so* serious. One would suppose that the fate of nations depended upon his successfully reëstablishing that Dawson Monaco of his."

They were discovered by native seal hunters fifteen miles out from the mouth of the Keewalik; and these told whites, who brought the news to Candle that a monstrous, jointed caterpillar hundreds of yards long was advancing upon the town; that it was coming in *from the sea,* like some huge leviathan of the deep.

Holter thought there was a chance that Hewlitt had got together quite a load. But he couldn't imagine the fellow's foolhardy daring in braving the unknown ice of the open Sound. Followed by half the people of Candle in dog sleds and on foot he went out to meet the strange caravan.

"Almighty!" was his exclamatory refuge when the thing was near enough for him to *know.* "The fellow's crazy the way I'd like to be!"

"I've got you now," he told him as he wrung his hand—after his deferential greeting of Edith. "I knew you weren't what I could really call an expert saloon man. But I hadn't any idea you were an old freighter. You certainly are a genius with horses!"

"I'm hardly an old freighter," corrected Hewlitt. "In fact this is my first experience. I've driven a horse and buggy a few times. Outside of that——"

"You mean to tell me—— Well, then, in Heaven's name *what are you?"*

Edith knew he would not say. So she said it for him—policy or no policy. "He's a professor in a college."

"A professor!" shrieked Holter. "A professor of *what?"*

"A professor of"—skeptical of the explanatory value of titles, Hewlitt waved his hand toward the sled runners and the ice and the shallow pools of water—"oh—things like that."

"I—I—should—say—you—are!" vowed Holter. "Laughin' at mining engineers and other professors is one of the greatest indoor sports in Alaska. Never again for me!"

"Look here," said Hewlitt impressively, seizing Holter's shoulder. "I want it understood now and for all time, that this is simply the working out of Albert Stanley's idea. He knew, by applying his practical knowledeg to the conditions that he could foresee up here, what I have had to grope for by experiment. It was his scheme and we owe it to his memory to give him due credit for it."

Holter, much moved by Edith's silent tears, gravely nodded his head in complete concurrence.

When Hewlitt led him down the long line of sleds—the freight train, as Holter dubbed it—his delight knew no bounds. "The bar and the back bar—and not a mirror cracked. And the faro table and the wheel, crap table, black jack, poker"—he told them off ecstatically—"and all the fixtures and furnishings of the place. You tackled the toughest job first."

"Naturally—to save the place," replied Hewlitt.

"And you've done it—in the nick of time. The building is about finished, and Raker and Horn was going to move into it tomorrow. But it's ours! And so is the clean-up. You can buy a pool on that!"

They made three more trips before the ice threatened them, and averaged an even greater tonnage than the first. The teams of Jimmy Head, abandoning the almost impassable shore route, bravely followed in their wake, too short of sleds, however, to help much. The dogs, having no calks and slipping on the glare ice, were taken off the job as useless. By the eleventh of May there was nothing left on the barge but a camping outfit and a little food for the party that would be sent in a few days to save the hulk if it should be menaced by the breaking ice. All else was in Candle—in the Monaco and the warehouse back of it. And the next day a banner was paraded up and down the creek bearing the flaming

legend: "The Grand Opening of the Candle Monaco will take place on May 15th. Come one, Come ALL!"

After the second trip Edith had added her modest possessions to the loaded sleds—thistle-down on the back of an elephant—and thereafter, at Holter's suggestion, remained in Candle at the little home of the very broad-minded wife of the marshal, Amanda Bradstreet, who, after one glance into Edith's clean, sunburned face, needed no assurance from Holter that she did not belong to his "bunch." When next she met Holter, who was considerate enough to see little of her, she inquired as to the whereabouts and welfare of young Gerald Leveridge, feeling that either she owed Gerald an explanation or he owed her an apology, she was not sure which. Gratitude, as well as liking, inclined her to tolerance.

Holter's small eyes twinkled at her question. "He's another of those college fellers. He got a job bossing a drifting gang at topnotch wages on the biggest claim up here. I tipped him off not to admit that he was a graduated mining engineer or he never would have been hired—cook, even. You can stack 'em up on that proposition. He's been holding the job down steady, I guess. I haven't seen him around at all."

Hewlitt, turning over his six horses to Jimmy Head, had four days to convert himself from a teamster into the head bartender of the Monaco, a position for which, as he reminded Holter, he was about as well fitted as for that of dealer of a faro game.

"It's just for the opening," persuaded Holter. "I want 'em to reco'nize you as my partner and head of the saloon end of the business. You don't need to hold to that job afterward. Come on into the dance hall on this side of the house and tell me if you ever thought whipsawed spruce could be made to look so handsome!"

When the two of them called on Edith at the cabin of the Bradstreets Hewlitt seconded Holter's insistent suggestion that, as the third partner of Holter, Stanley & Hewlitt, she simply *must* be present at the grand opening.

"Do you want me to dance?" she asked mischievously.

"Sure, if you take the notion," replied Holter, though he knew she jested. "The élite of Candle City are going to take it in. I want to tell you that we cut out the rough stuff from the start. It's ladies and gentlemen or nothin'."

Edith's face took color with her decision. "Yes, I'll go. But I want to sit somewhere out of the way where I'll either not be seen or be *very* inconspicuous."

The grand opening was well-timed. By the fifteenth of May the coldest dumps were thawed and sluicing on the creeks and benches was in full blast. The snipers, too, with pan and rocker, were repeating their piratical exploits of the fall before. Everybody was liquidating his "bed-rock" indebtedness and there was an itching of spendthrift fingers encircling fat pokes or crinkling new bank bills brought over the trail from Nome by an enterprising dust broker. The hardships and privations of the first historic winter of that farthest north gold camp of the world were to be solaced by a period of spending—spending by men most of whom had never before been in possession of so much money.

Raker and Horn, Pratt and the rest were coining money already. But they well knew that the golden rainpour was about to shrink to a drizzle; that even now men were drinking only to satisfy an actual thirst and buying modest stacks of chips in their improvised games only to tune up their luck for the Monaco. Their big splurge they held in leash for May fifteenth.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SILK PURSES AND SOWS' EARS.

The Candle Monaco, festooned inside and out with the dark, grateful green of spruce boughs and blazing with gasoline jets and great, hanging kerosene lamps, seemed—as indeed it was—celebrating a long-delayed Christmas.

The illumination was needless, for the auspicious evening of May 15th being but little over a month short of the summer solstice was alive with light. But at eight o'clock sharp, when the resort was formally declared open, Holter had drawn the window curtains in both bar and dance hall, well aware that day*light* and night *life* have been sworn enemies from the first appearance of distilled beverages and fictitiously gay women.

Informally, the bar had been open from noon, though even in that part of the building workmen, both professional and amateur, were still frantically busy, jostled

about by the eager patrons that crowded the place. Holter, who at first had directed these gangs divested merely of his coat, stripped himself to his undershirt as the preparations became more fevered. The crowd of customers hampered him. He was constantly shaking hands with men who buttonholed him with "I knew you in Dawson, Mr. Holter. 'Member me—Tim McConnell? Meet me tillicum, Rodey Jamison." Or it would be, "Can I see you a minute, Mr. Holter? Now if you need an A-1 bartender——" Or the applicant would be a faro lookout man or case keeper or perchance a stud-poker dealer who had gone broke mining and wanted to "work a while and get ahead again."

Holter had nerves—plenty of them. But he had locked them up in his cabin that morning and fixed his face in a permanent smirk when he entered the sacred—to him—precincts of the Candle Monaco. Nothing flurried him—outwardly.

The third longest bar in Alaska was comfortably lined after one-thirty. At three o'clock it was continuously lined. At five it was too compact for elbows and there was a second line back of the first. Hewlitt, who had taken as his shift the hours from six to twelve, was in charge of the bar; but at his own suggestion Holter had given him among his four assistants a master hand—one "Red" McDermott who had worked many a long and difficult night shift in the Dawson Monaco in the good old days of Dawson. Appreciating the private tip Holter had given him this veteran ironed out difficulties for Hewlitt in "handlin' the crowd" in a manner that carefully avoided all semblance of boss-ship. For the big man wanted it understood that Hewlitt was a real partner and actually in charge of this steadiest gold getter of the resort—the long bar. Thither, once Hewlitt was on shift, he began convoying new acquaintances, saying to them:

"Meet my partner, Mr. Hewlitt. He's a chechahco, but he's all there!"

Holter had carried to the Monaco that morning, besides his irrefragible smile, a suit case devoted to the use that had given that article its name. And at seven-forty-five he tore it open and dressed himself in a Tuxedo set off by a pleated, starched shirt, a high collar and a neat black tie. Last, and most lovingly, he affixed to the center of the ample bosom of the pleated shirt his big diamond stud without which Ed Holter of the Monaco would have seemed only a clumsy impersonation of himself. More than once, in the doubly dark days of the past winter he had been tempted to "hock" that glittering emblem of his calling.

Rosie had assembled her fair cohorts at seven-thirty. She had personally seen to the waxing of the floor, the neatening of the boxes that lined the balcony above the dance floor and the placing of chairs on the platform for the musicians. At eight sharp she started things off, after carefully instructing the dance caller or "spieler," as well as her girls, in the policies to be observed in entertaining a first-night crowd.

"Don't go too strong for a day or two, ladies," she had cautioned them, as they arrayed themselves in the filmy garments of the dance. "And buy a bottle yourself, wunst in a while—it'll be on the house, you know. And be *perfectly refined!* You know it always pays, and it's *orders!*"

She herself did not dance except on special occasions—such as this.

Edith came with the Bradstreets at nine o'clock. They were immediately taken to the curtained-off, sumptuously furnished "office" at the rear end of the bar where after a few minutes Bradstreet left them, explaining that Holter wanted him to circulate among the throng as well for the moral effect of his presence as for its social value. His associate, the commissioner and recorder of the new district, was not only present but volubly enthusiastic in his appreciation of "what the Monaco is gonna mean for this metropolis of the Arctic Ocean." Hewlitt and Edith were almost morbidly curious to know what it meant—and was to mean.

The girl felt as if she were in a dream. But Professor Hewlitt, more matter-of-fact and extremely busy, received from the sights and sounds a very decided sense of reality—new to his experience, it was true, and a little blurred in the rapidity and variety of its movement and action, yet like enough to convivialities known to him to enable comparison and contrast. He gave to the spectacle all the perception not commandeered by his tasks as bartender. One thing he knew by ten o'clock, inexpert though he was—the grand opening was a "grand" financial success.

From the vantage of parted curtains Edith looked and listened for perhaps fifteen min-

utes before she uttered a word. The foreground of her view was the central part of the bar portion of the building, or saloon proper; across it was the wide entrance space of the dance hall; beyond that the middle part of the dance hall itself, with the opposite wall of the building as background.

To loud, almost stentorian strains from a piano, two fiddles, a bass viol and three wind instruments, queer and queerly assorted couples danced across her view for a few minutes; then with the ceasing of the "music" the raucous voice of the caller would admonish them to step out to the bar and take their drinks. At once there was exodus as the terpsichoreans flooded the saloon and crowded to the bar. The dances were rather short, yet not so short as they would be in a week or two, Mrs. Bradstreet informed her young friend.

"Why do they drink between each dance?" asked Edith naïvely. Whereat the elder woman, a seasoned sour dough, was much amused.

"There is no charge for dancing," she explained. "The house makes its money on the drinks. So it wouldn't do, you see, to make the dances too long. Or the drinks either! Without doubt they'll have a separate bar in the dance hall a little later, and smaller glasses."

Holter burst in on them. "Come on, ladies—the concert again. You missed it the first show, between eight and nine. There's four numbers, one every fifteen minutes between ten and eleven. I've got an empty box for you. *Some* talent, you'll say!"

He hustled them out and around to the rear entrance of the dance hall where, mounting a ladderlike series of steps, he conducted them to the unoccupied box, one of perhaps twenty-five ranged on all four sides of the balcony, each looking down upon the festive scene.

"Got to leave you," he apologized breathlessly. "Some influential miners downstairs I'm showing our bottled goods to. Enjoy yourselves!"

If utter novelty implies enjoyment, Edith must have enjoyed the four numbers, and not less the larger view she now obtained of the dancing and general sportings of the crowd below her. But it was only the novelty she enjoyed; and this was overshadowed by the disagreeable in the hour and a half she remained in the box. There was spice in those vaudeville numbers, from the costumes to the songs, from the songs to the dances.

"What do you think of it all?" she finally asked Mrs. Bradstreet during a kind of interlude in the cacophony of screeching voices and bellowing instruments.

"Oh, it's the same old thing," answered Mrs. Bradstreet, shrugging her fat shoulders.

"Mr. Holter says he always conducts a perfectly respectable place."

Her companion laughed merrily. It was only visible to Edith. Upleaping sound rendered it inaudible. But she caught the words that came after. "He does—for a saloon, dance hall and gambling hell—as respectable a 'joint' as there was in the Klondike. The Mounted Police that run Northwest Canada wouldn't stand for anything else. We'll see what he does here. I guess it all depends on how far the commissioner and my husband will let him go. It's not as strict in Alaska as it was in Canada, especially in a new camp. The people up here are just wild for a hi-yu time."

"It *is* awfully wild, isn't it," declared Edith. Whereupon Mrs. Bradstreet after a quick glance at the serious oval of her face, gave again her frank, infectious laugh.

"This? Why, they haven't *started* yet. Just wait a day or two! By the way, you haven't seen the games."

"Aren't they honestly managed?"

"Oh, yes, as far as Holter knows—or let's anybody know he knows. But when the house begins to lose steadily on a game the man running it, who generally has an interest in it, is more than likely to go crooked for a while till he's to the good again. Of course Holter isn't supposed to know anything about that, and if anybody finds it out and makes a holler Holter puts up an awful roar, fires the man, and almost weeps on the neck of the victim. Or so they say. I don't know."

"How well informed you are concerning these resorts."

"I ought to be. My husband's been a deputy marshal up here off and on for seven years. You'll be wise to it all pretty soon."

"I suppose so," said Edith with no enthusiasm.

Suddenly she brightened. At the entrance of the hall stood Gerald Leveridge in a neat miner's costume. His face was flushed.

She wondered if he had been drinking. And she wondered if he were going to dance. She hoped not. He looked curiously at the throng just in from the bar and listened, as Edith listened, to the caller proclaiming that the next dance would be "a nice, juicy, dreamy waltz." His face darkened, she thought, as he turned on his heel and disappeared from her view.

In the half hour that succeeded the vaudeville numbers, the place became in certain ways objectionable to Edith. It was not the dancing. She had seen worse in her own college town. It was the dancers and others. As the midnight hour approached, the boxes on either side of her, occupied before mainly by spectators like herself, filled up with drinkers, men and women. Waiters came and went rapidly. Snatches of vulgar songs and alcoholic laughter brought disgust to the girl, and, in scarcely a less degree, to her companion, used as she was to the realities of the northern frontier.

"My curiosity is satisfied," Edith told her, pride forbidding her to say more. "Let us go!"

They bumped into a waiter who was bringing them "a little bottle with the compliments of Mr. Holter."

"Thank him for us," said Mrs. Bradstreet, declining the service. "And say we were just leaving. Wouldn't you like to see the gambling, my dear?"

"I suppose I should," Edith replied.

Descending, they reëntered the other side of the building, the front half of which was the saloon proper, the rear half devoted to gambling. There in full swing were the big roulette wheels and faro tables so crowded about with standing men she could scarcely catch a glimpse of them or of the half-round crap tables. But there were other tables, green-topped, where men sat at blackjack, poker and sundry dice games. These too were flourishing.

Holter saw the timid onlookers and brought them chairs, dispossessing for the purpose two befuddled miners of evident inconsequence.

"That's right, ladies, take it all in. It's new to Miss Stanley. But *it's her own business now!* And by the way, it's beating all records," he told Edith triumphantly. "Never seen anything like it since the second spring in Dawson." He bent down to both of them. "There's a coupla mining kings with Rosie and Evelyn. Insisted on entertainin' 'em. Fine fellers, y'understand. You can buy a pool on 'em. But settin' 'em up? Great Jehosiphat, ladies, nothin' but *wine*—fizz wine—the real thing at twenty dollars a small bottle and they're sending for another friend or two every few minutes! And the gamblin'? Say! We got to have a little business meetin' when the rubbernecks and the solo drinkers gets thinned out in an hour or so. 'Scuse me, ladies——"

"Where's George?" asked Mrs. Bradstreet, referring to her errant husband.

Holter looked a trifle apologetic. "There was a little row a while back, over at the other end of the bar. A feller got cut—might have been serious if it hadn't been for Dave Hewlitt's quickness."

"He—he——" began Edith.

"He didn't have anything to do with it," interrupted Holter, "except stop it—of course not." With his usual lightning perception Holter saved her embarrassment by rendering the completion of her sentence unnecessary. "Just separated them, y'understand. Bradstreet is locking them both up. You know how slick he is in a mix-up like that—got 'em out so quick nobody hardly was wise to the little fracas. Well, I'll see you again in a little while." And the perspiring but happy resort proprietor moved dignifiedly off.

During the last few moments Edith's eyes had rested on a broad, graceful back which the thinning of the spectators at the nearest faro game had disclosed to her view. She thought she recognized the sitting figure as that of Gerald. Suddenly he rose and jammed his hat over his eyes. He stared about him a moment—the old roving look of young Leveridge. She knew it before he turned and flung out of the place.

Their eyes met as he passed her. He was too excited to bow—evidence enough to Edith, who knew his breeding, of some horrible perturbation of mind. He greeted her only by some muttered words and fled.

"Oh, what's the matter with him?" Edith asked, almost in a whisper.

"You know him?"

"Very well—a passenger on the boat. He went to Nome and back with father."

"Humph!" was all the elder woman said.

"And *there's* another of the barge's passengers, or rather one of the crew," exclaimed Edith, indicating a tall man leaning nervously over the nearest roulette table. "Such a nice, quiet, respectable man he was.

He used to talk to me sometimes about his family outside."

"Now is his very best time to think of his family outside," observed the experienced woman shrewdly.

"Is he losing?"

"Can't you *see!*"

"I suppose he must be," admitted Edith miserably. "Oh, let's go away. It's either that or I must go to him and beg him to stop."

Mrs. Bradstreet raised Edith's chin with a pudgy forefinger and looked unsmilingly into the girl's eyes. "It doesn't occur to you, evidently, that his ill luck is your good luck. I'm afraid you weren't cut out for a resort man's daughter."

Edith gave a little shiver of affirmation. "Come," she begged. "It's enough. Oh! here is Mr. Hewlitt. I'm so glad. He said he'd be off at midnight, for a while."

"And here's George," said Mrs. Bradstreet, giving place to Hewlitt.

Hewlitt led Edith to an unfinished room in the rear of the building, which was to be the warm-storage room, and confronted her with an inscrutable look. Slowly, carefully, he looked her over, his eyes dwelling long upon her face, flushed, forcedly enigmatic—as was his.

Suddenly she remembered. "Gerald! Did you see him go out?"

"I did," replied Hewlitt reluctantly. "And —I followed him."

"You saw it, too?"

"His look and manner, you mean? Yes. I caught him at the river bank, drawing his gun."

"*Oh,* David!"

"I was just in time—it went off in the air! He struggled for a moment until he saw who I was and then he sat down in the mud and wept. He—finally—after some bitter words to me—he told me it was a kind of weakness of his—games of chance."

"That is what he used to hint at, then. He used to say he was no good in a wide-open town. I didn't know just exactly what its menace for him was. Oh, David! The poor, faithful, sentimental, silly, strong, weak, foolish boy!"

She almost broke down—putting her face in her hands to help her hold back her sobbing. Hewlitt gently patted her shoulder.

"There, there!" he soothed her. "He's all right. I told him we owed him a thousand dollars for his trip with the horses and that he could have it in the morning. It's more than he lost. It seems he had agreed to do something that requires money and when he dropped his whole season's earnings he thought his honor was involved and was in despair. He's all right now."

"But—but there's old Mr. Carson! You remember that nice, quiet barge man. He's losing his money, too!"

"Oh, well, I guess he'll take it philosophically. The house is going magnificently on the *legitimate* side of it, if I might so term it—the bar."

"David, look at me!" She raised her tearful eyes to him—stern, seeing eyes they were now. "*Is* there any legitimate side to it?"

Hewlitt answered her evasively. "A resort is a resort. It's honestly run, I think, and will be."

"I'm—I'm glad for your sake, and the family of Canby. I'm glad you're doing so well."

"That *we* are doing so well. I'm glad for your mother's sake."

"David——" She was thinking. Finally: "Please tell Mr. Holter I want to see him about Gerald—and other things. Will you take me home later?"

"Yes, indeed, if you can stick it out for another hour or so. I'll send Holter right away."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LAW OF GRAVITATION.

Hewlitt found him shuttling between the gambling tables which were still going strong and the office wherein the "couple mining kings" and their friends were being entertained by Rosie, Evelyn and Connie.

"Miss Stanley wants to see you, Holter," he told him.

"What for?" wondered Miss Bloom aloud. With a quart or two less of champagne in her plump person she probably would not have voiced the question.

For his senior's sake Hewlitt was urbane. "It's just about Gerald Leveridge, I believe," he replied, addressing both of them in a low tone. "She's in the warm-storage room."

"I'll just be gone a moment, Rosie," Holter assured her. He threaded his way through the maze of gamesters, crossed to the other side of the building and found Edith where Hewlitt had left her, comfortably seated on a clean case of bottled beer.

"All alone? Why——"

"It's all right. I'm a little tired."

"You find it kind of strenuous round here, do you, after life on the barge?" It was more a triumphant declaration than a question.

She smiled in spite of herself. "Very different. So different that I'm going to ask you to do me a favor, Mr. Holter."

"You know you've only got to mention it, Miss Stanley." He felt an upleaping of the old futile flame.

"Will you give us back the money daddy invested in the—in the outfit?"

"The money he invested!"

"Yes—couldn't you? Both you and Mr. Hewlitt have given me to understand that there will be no loss now; that success is assured."

"No loss? I should say not!"

"Then would there be any objection——"

"Objection! Why, my dear Miss Stanley, I couldn't possibly let you pull out with only the investment. Say, I'm a business man and keen for a bargain, but not with my dead partner's womenfolks. Hell, there's a *profit,* now—excuse me, Miss Stanley. It's worth more right now—scads more. And by the time navigation opens—just wait, Miss Stanley. If you're homesick and feel you just got to pull out, at least wait till then and there'll be a good big dividend besides the capital you've got invested."

"But—but I don't *want* any profit. It's awfully good of you. It's more than fair. But really, Mr. Holter, mother wouldn't let me take any profit."

Holter's mouth was open, his lips moving bewilderedly toward speech.

"Young lady," he finally articulated, "I'm offering you what's yours; what your father's heirs would be entitled to, even if you hadn't stayed and watched the outfit and helped Dave Hewlitt save it by bringing it here. Don't you want what's *yours?*"

She looked down, her brows drawn. Then she looked up at him steadily, bravely.

"You won't be offended if I answer you truthfully?"

"No, Miss Stanley," he replied very simply and sincerely.

She rose. "Mr. Holter, mother and I had no idea father meant to invest that money in this kind of a business. And I'm sure that what she would do if she were here would be to promptly sell out our interest. And you've struggled so hard and we've been through so much together that it would be wrong and unfair of me to sell out to any one else without giving you the first chance."

Holter inclined his head. "I appreciate that, Miss Stanley. Certainly I don't want any partners not of my choosing. But refusing the profit! I don't understand."

She moved a step closer to him, still holding him with eyes that were frank and kind. "Yes you do," she said gently. "A man who knows as much as you do and has the qualities you have *must* understand, deep down in his heart—whether he is willing to heed it or not—just why mother and I cannot—*cannot* take one cent of profit from this business!"

It was Holter's eyes that were down now. And three white teeth clenched his lower lip.

"I get you, Miss Stanley," he said very soberly. "And while I—don't quite agree with you, I"—he lifted his head, his shrewd, keen little blue eyes twinkling rapidly—"I respect you for it! I will do as you wish."

"Thank you, Mr. Holter. I'm staying here till Mr. Hewlitt is ready to take me home. I'm quite comfortable. And, by the way, please don't tell him of our conversation. I—don't want to influence him."

He nodded, turned away, swung back, silently shook her hand and left her.

"A pretty long moment, Ed," was Rosie's greeting as he reëntered the little office. "And—say, look at him, girls. He acts like he's been a pallbearer at a planting!"

"Worse!" he told them, drawing them into the curtained doorway. Billy Wooldridge sauntered up. Since their near-tragedy of months before the two had become fast friends again. "What do you think? My little lady partner has sold out to me and won't take a cent of profit!"

"Tainted money, huh?" instantly divined Wooldridge.

"She's a little fathead, I'll say!" sneered Evelyn.

Holter made no reply but Rosie stepped into the breach.

"You two are the fatheads," was her caustic comment. "The less she takes of the tainted money the more there'll be for Hewlitt. She wants the name and the game too."

Holter frowned. "I wonder if there's anything in that?" he muttered a little bitterly.

"I've got a picture in my nut of your

other partner doin' it—nit!" remarked Wooldridge jocosely. "Can you feature Mr. Spectacles scheming all winter to get this outfit over here, workin' like a dog to do it, and *gettin'* it here—and then passin' it up like a white chip?"

"It don't look reasonable," agreed Holter. "And damn me if I want him to!"

Which simple if profane declaration, though sincerely uttered, was not necessarily true.

Several times during the next hour when chance threw them together in their busy comings and goings they discussed the matter interestedly—Evelyn and Rosie and Wooldridge, in a manner of bantering cynicism, with which Holter, when he spoke at all, was pessimistically forced to concur.

Meanwhile the unconscious object of this speculation, Hewlitt himself, went on checking out champagne and seeing to it, as Holter had admonished him, that a yellowback or an ounce and a quarter of clean dust came in for every bottle that rolled away. It was too delicate a matter to intrust to alien hands, so it had been Hewlitt's job since a little after ten.

But when the wine buyers had sung their last low lullaby in memory of their respective mothers and, having profusely shaken hands with every one whom they could induce to that friendly ceremony, had departed, the man who had consented to act as chief bartender for the grand opening found the general manager, drew him aside and asked him if he might now call it a day.

"You bet you can, my boy," consented Holter cordially. "Congratulations!"

"Congratulations to you. And, by the way, now that the enterprise is on its feet, would you mind buying me out?"

It was Holter's audible intake of breath preceding an exclamatory *"What!"* that silenced conversation in the curtained room, outside of which they stood. Thereafter Rosie, Evelyn and cold-eyed Billy Wooldridge lost no word of the ensuing colloquy.

"You'll remember, Holter, that my primary object was to sell the stock and fixtures of the Tundra Saloon. To do that it seemed necessary to take potluck with you and Stanley in the venture. But I still prefer just to sell out."

Holter put his hand on the young man's shoulder. He wanted to fully "get" him first. "You want me to place a valuation on your one-third interest in the property and business of the Candle Monaco and pay it to you when I can. Is that it?"

"No," corrected Hewlitt, flushing slightly. *"Not* the business. I dare say that that is now worth a good deal."

"And you don't want it?"

"No, I really don't."

Holter put his other hand to his forehead and continued patiently—anxious to make no mistake: "But the property itself! Why, in this camp to-day, the physical property is worth at least twice what it has cost us."

"That may be. Nevertheless I would prefer to have you pay me only what I put in—if you don't mind."

"You 'would prefer!' If I 'don't mind!' " Holter ran his fingers through his blond hair. "My dear Professor Hewlitt, don't you *want* money? Don't you *like* it? Can't you *use* it?"

"Oh, yes."

"If ever a man *earned* money in this world *you* certainly have earned the difference between what your third was worth in Nome and what it's worth now. If you don't want what you've earned, why in thunderation did you do what you've done for this partnership?"

Hewlitt brightened. "Well, in the first place, I couldn't bear the idea of those human vampires getting the best of us. As for landing the outfit in Candle here, you see that was a very beautiful problem in physics, involving a bully combination of lesser problems of traction, friction, plasticity, regelation and—oh, lots of things. And I simply couldn't resist 'em!"

Holter took a new and firmer clutch upon Hewlitt's shoulder and looked him as intently in the eye as Edith Stanley had gazed into his own. "You don't want to tell me all your reasons—the main reason—why you won't take this money!"

"Ed Holter," replied Hewlitt impressively, "I think too much of you as a man to wound you by putting into the words I would have to use *what both of us know!* Suppose we let it go at that?"

"All right, Dave," said Holter very quietly—so that his voice would not break. In another moment Hewlitt had vanished.

The man who was now sole proprietor of the Candle Monaco staggered to an upholstered chair and stared at Rosamond Bloom, in charge of the dance hall, at Billy Wooldridge, manager of the gambling department, and at Evelyn—just Evelyn, song

queen extraordinary. They stared back at him.

"You heard him," gasped Holter.

They nodded.

"Money. Good money. Big money. Yet you'd think it was sand! Two hours ago I would have said, 'Hell, there ain't no such animal!' "

"Seems to be two of 'em, anyhow," admitted Wooldridge cautiously.

Holter looked at him. Then at Evelyn. Then at Rosie. The three white teeth clenched his lower lip.

"Perhaps there's plenty more!" he murmured thoughtfully.

Hewlitt found Edith patiently waiting in the warm-storage room.

"The world is before us, dear girl," he cried gayly, as he led her out the back way, across many stumbly timbers—débris of building operations not yet ended—and up the long hill that overlooked the lower reaches of the river, shimmering already in the early predawn light.

They sat on a low rock covered with the same kind of lichens, Edith thought, that they had gently pried away from the shore scarp at Espenberg. And in silence, her hand in his, they watched the sunrise dapple the far sea and light up the intervening floes, slowly breaking, yielding to the vernal air.

"Listen—you can hear them still—the roisterers!" he said, first frowning, and then for her sake smiling.

Reluctantly she turned her eyes backward, down the hill they had climbed, to the lights of the Monaco, their sickly yellow slowly paling to nothingness in the eternal majesty of dawn.

"I'm glad," she said very bravely, "that it's *such* a success. You've worked so hard."

"Edith, I've a little news for you. I'm not your partner any longer—not, at least, in the Monaco. I won't *work* in the place. I won't step into the place—again. Nor will I be a silent partner, ashamed of it and still taking its fetid money. So I sold out to Holter for just what I put in. He was very generous. He wanted to give me twice as much. But I couldn't see it."

A light matching that of the dawn about her was in her eyes—a light of infinite satisfaction, of a hope fulfilled. But she affected disapproval.

"You have your future to think of, David—your work—which will be unremunerative for years."

"I'll have more than my patrimony back again. And I have my college job, and 'The Forms of Water.' That's enough for any fool scientist. And there will be correspondingly more for you and your mother!"

"*Will* there! So you think *I* ought to take their fetid money."

"You can go outside—by and by when you're through botanizing, and—forget the source of the money. Holter will protect you. He's no end grateful to us for saving his outfit and his honor, as he calls it." Hewlitt laughed lightly. "Queer chap. Talk about incongruities!"

She put her hands on his shoulders—he was always so safe.

"You're utterly and absolutely inconsistent. And no scientist should be that. Fetid money is fetid money—for man or woman, if they *know* it's fetid. And we do. David." Her eyes danced. "*I've* sold out to him, too. And on the same terms!"

"You little——" His face was a study. But there was the same infinite satisfaction in it that hers had shown.

"Little *what?*" she asked demurely.

"*Darling!*" he finished with tense breath.

"David, you never called me darling before. You've—you've always been so matter-of-fact——"

He took her other hand. "You remember when you came to me on the barge?"

"I deny I came to *you.*"

"I promised——"

"You would promise nothing!"

"I promised myself that never while you were forced to stay would I destroy your confidence and trust by uttering one word of love to you, not even when the withholding became almost agony. I wanted you to stay too much to risk it. But now—now that we're both poor—or rather rich, and have no barge to look after and want nothing so much as to get back to our disintegrating ice crystals——"

"Ours!"

"And our wakening tundra posies——"

"Yes——"

"We won't be able to do it together, now that we have no treasure barge to protect as an excuse. There's still the barge, of course, and the stove and a tent and things for us when the poor old tub sails grandly out with the first flood tide——"

"But you said we *couldn't* stay there."

"Unless, of course, we are married."

After some moments, gently she drew away from him.

"David, you are certainly making up for your coldness to me." They laughed.

"I made up for it yesterday when I was at the mouth of the river. There's a missionary down there says he'll be glad to fix it for us."

"Where?" She turned away to hide her furiously blushing face.

"There." He pointed her finger for her and her face too. "At the little Eskimo village where he has come with his flock from the Quaker Mission across the Sound for the sealing. Let's go now. Let's put our things in the sled and 'beat it,' in the language of good old Holter."

"You get them, David. I don't want to see the Monaco again. Until you come back I'll keep my eyes turned in the opposite direction—toward our crystals and our flowers."

Look for "The Fang Mark," a strong short story by Mr. Solomons in an early issue.

HOME, SWEET HOME

AS a people how are we situated as to our homes—the reference being not to whatever our "housing problem" is or may be, but merely to our status as to the homes we inhabit? Home, in this case, is to be taken as meaning the abiding place of a single family.

To the "cliff dwellers" of New York, Chicago or San Francisco, it may be a surprise to learn that of the nation's families as a whole fairly close to fifty per cent own the places wherein they dwell. Through the department of commerce we learn that of a little over twenty-four million homes close to eleven million are owned by the occupants—though it is to be noted that of homes owned only some 60 per cent are held free of encumbrance. Evidently a good proportion of our householders prefer meeting the interest on a mortgage to paying rent. And of these latter it may at least be said that if they cannot point to their hearthstones as entirely emblematical of the land of the free they can boast of them as fittingly symbolical of the home of the brave. Though of course the right sort of a home mortgage is by no means necessarily unwise.

The general section of country which can claim the greatest percentage of homes owned unencumbered is the so-called mountain region—including Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Nevada. In that district 35 per cent of all homes are owned free; there, in other words, some 800,000 families rejoice in roof-trees altogether their own. Of the more populous general sections of our country, however, the region that has the greatest percentage of free-owned homes is that called the West North Central—Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas, where the number of homes so held is close to 3,000,000, or 33.9 per cent of all homes. The one State in the land which holds the palm in this respect is New Mexico, where 49 per cent of all homes are owned free of any encumbrance. It is interesting to compare with this the Empire State of New York where the free-owned percentage is 14.5 per cent.

As to where the greatest percentage of homes are of the rented variety, we have to turn to the densely settled East, the Middle Atlantic States of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania holding the unenviable lead here. In this region over 62 per cent of all the homes are rented, the number of such habitats being over 3,000,000, out of some 5,000,000 homes in all. Old New England is not much better off in regard to such percentage, 60 per cent of the homes in this region being rented. Verily the paradise of the landlord is in the neighborhood of the Atlantic seaboard. The one State which mostly rents a home is New York, the percentage of this variety of domicile out of all homes there being 69.3. In New York City over 87 per cent of all homes are rented.

If no distinction is made between homes owned free and homes owned encumbered, the palm for the greatest percentage of "owned" habitats must be given to the before-mentioned West North Central region where over 56 per cent of all homes are owned either outright or mortgaged. The one State in the country leading in this respect is North Dakota with a percentage of over 65.

Who's Afraid!

By Thomas McMorrow

Author of "Little Amby," "Ladies Present," Etc.

Read this human story and find out why the Salvation Army captain believed that nobody can cheat one except one's self

IN a large room, broken of plaster and poorly lighted, a red-headed man in suspenders and shirt sleeves was talking.

His audience were types from the neighborhood lodging houses; at a glance they were tramps, thieves and highwaymen—all sorts of poor and desperate devils who insisted on living when they weren't wanted.

"You're afraid to try my game!" shouted the red-headed man at them tauntingly. "That's what's the matter with you fellows—you're afraid that somebody is going to cheat you! You've been afraid all your lives; you're yellow through and through!"

His audience looked at him with doubt, curiosity, amusement, but not at all with resentment. He had just told them that he was a thief and all-around rascal himself and they believed him and admitted his right to talk.

A policeman sauntered in and my neighbors shrank away, leaving me beside the officer. It had made me uneasy to stand among them, but I was not afraid of the police.

The red-headed man continued talking, telling of the evil he had done; I looked at the officer to see if he was taking the recital in. He was not attending to the speaker but was watching out of the corner of his eye a fellow who was slinking from the room. As the fellow reached the door the policeman strode forward and seized him by the collar.

"Lemme go!" whined the fellow. "I ain't done nothing!"

"You were running away, weren't you?" said the officer. "That's enough. You come around to the station house with me until I find out if you're wanted!"

The red-headed man sat down at a broken-winded piano and beat out a lilting ragtime tune. Some of the audience left but a few joined their voices to his and bellowed his song, maiming the words so in their harsh throats that I could not catch them.

Then a plain-faced girl who had been seated beside the piano picked a tambourine from its top and pointed it at the audience with a warning shake. They retreated before it as though it had been a pistol and swallowed their music and shuffled through the door. I dropped a half dollar into the tambourine.

I approached the red-headed man; a tramp was pouring a tale of woe into his ear.

"On the level, boss," said the tramp with his eye on the tambourine, "I got a good job waiting for me in Poughkeepsie if only I had a half a dollar to pay the fare. This is no stall, boss!"

"You don't want it for booze, do you?" asked the red-headed man.

"Cross me heart, boss!"

The tramp got his half dollar.

"You've been cheated," I said when the tramp had clutched the money and scuttled away. "He'll spend it for booze, of course!"

"If he does," said the red-headed man evenly, "he'll cheat himself, as it's the worst value he could get for the money. He can't cheat me, as I bought with that half dollar a ride for a man who has a good job waiting in Poughkeepsie!"

He excused himself and left the room, saying something about tucking the boys into bed. When he returned he had put on a coat and cap and I saw that he was in the uniform of the Salvation Army.

"Hello," I said. "So that's it!"

"That's it," he said.

We got to talking.

"You must get some queer characters in here," I suggested. The lead was trite but reliable, like praising a stranger's pretty baby.

"Not queer characters," he said slowly. "All men are brothers, only some of them have had queer experiences which they do not understand. God made the world, but the pattern He works to is very large and we have our blessed noses so close to it that we cannot see the design and we come sometimes to the fool conclusion that there isn't any. But we're all working for God, every man jack of us, whether we know it or not. I heard a man say once that thieves are here to remind us that all goods should be held in common!"

"A comforting philosophy for a thief," I observed flippantly.

"They too praise God," he said with calm certitude. "When Jesus was here he promised one man of all men that he should see Paradise—and that man was a thief! A thief does no one harm but himself, poor fellow."

I shrugged my shoulders. These were fine words.

He smiled at me out of his clear blue eyes. There was something rapt and invincible about him; he had a different angle on the world from mine and I felt that I puzzled him as he puzzled me.

"You must cast out fear," he said as simply as though he were asking me to take off a pair of blue spectacles. "Let me tell you of a thief to whom the ways of God were made visible; there may be something in the story for you."

"Go to it, captain," I agreed. "And if I think it's true I give you my word I'll believe it!"

"You remember," said he, "those thousands of people who went around during the war and collected hundreds of millions of dollars for various patriotic and charitable purposes? Some of them did good by their work and some of them were merely honest busybodies; and quite a few of them were crooks—and this Bailey was one of the crooks.

"He'd always been a crook and a confidence man. When the war came he merely changed his method of approach and went right ahead doing business as usual.

"He called himself the American Green Cross. He had an imposing letterhead with some very good names on it as honorary officers, names of well-meaning civilians who were proud and glad to indorse a proper activity so long as they weren't bothered to do anything further about it.

"He had some very good sucker lists and he traveled around the country in a fine automobile and collected money from the suckers. I'm using his name for them; these good people were not suckers when they gave him money, but he called them so, laughing at them—not knowing that he too was serving God, as all of us must.

"He spent the money as fast as he got it, on gambling and carousing; it did him nothing but harm as was to be expected.

"When the war was over he took to selling worthless oil stocks. His fine car roamed up and down the country as usual and he gathered in the money with both hands. Everybody had plenty—more than they could spend—and he promised them a hundred per cent with safety, explaining that there was a risk in any investment which paid more.

"He came to the little country town of Mallory, up in New York State. He had been there during the war but he had forgotten it.

"He consulted his list of names and called first on a Mrs. Anderson, a widow, who lived in a little cottage, white-painted and green-blinded, down by the tracks.

"As he opened the gate in the picket fence he saw the little old lady kneeling on a newspaper at the edge of the flower bed breaking up the soil about the roots of her French marigolds.

"She looked up at the impressive car which was halted before her small house and then rose quickly and shook the front of her dress and smiled and bobbed her gray head at the elegant gentleman who was coming up the walk.

" 'Mrs. Audrey Anderson, I believe?' said Bailey with a bow.

"He unfolded his proposition when he was seated behind the honeysuckle of her porch in her easiest rocker after she had apologized for not being dressed in style to receive him.

" 'We are giving you this opportunity, Mrs. Anderson,' he concluded, 'because we wish to have a highly select body of shareholders comprising the élite of each city in the State, and we know that you are one of the most prominent residents of the city of Mallory. Shall I write you down for five hundred shares?'

" 'Well, I really don't know,' said the widow.

" 'I beg your pardon,' said Bailey, looking

at her sharply, 'but is it possible that I have made an error? Is there another lady in this city by the name of Anderson?'

"'There is a Mrs. Anders,' said the widow conscientiously. 'She lives in that large house with the stables and barns behind it as you cross the bridge over the creek just below Bellew's hill.'

"'By George!' exclaimed Bailey, slapping his fist into his hand. 'That's the lady I intended to call on. I'm ever so sorry, Mrs. Anderson. You'll pardon me, won't you?'

"'Why, certainly,' said the widow, blushing slightly.

"'You see, Mrs. Anderson,' said Bailey, rising, 'we have allotted so many shares to each city and I'm afraid that I can't fill your application until I've given Mrs. Anders a chance—and naturally she will take the whole allotment. I'm really awfully sorry, as the stock pays one hundred per cent and it's just as good as Liberty Bonds. Judge Clifford—but maybe I'd better respect his confidence, as I don't think he wants it known.'

"'What about Judge Clifford?' asked the widow acutely.

"'No, no,' smiled Bailey. 'Don't ask me to betray the judge's confidence! And will you be at home this afternoon, in case Mrs. Anders doesn't take the entire allotment?'

"'Indeed I will not,' said the widow acridly. 'I guess my money is as good as Mrs. Anders'! If you don't want to sell me your stocks now you don't need to come back this afternoon!'

"'Oh, please don't feel that way about it, Mrs. Anderson,' said Bailey, sitting down with a look of pain.

"He arranged to sell her five hundred shares for one hundred dollars, thus exhausting his allotment for the town, if he had told her the truth. She showed him into the formal little parlor of the cottage and pushed open one of the green blinds. She sat down to write a check at a table with a Tennessee marble top and black and gold legs.

"She put the pen into her mouth and raised her eyes to the opposite wall. She started suddenly with a joyful exclamation.

"'Now I remember you!' she cried. 'Why, you are the Green Cross man! Don't you remember sitting in this very room and telling me all about the poor boys in France and how much they needed our help? It all comes back to me now! I remember so well one story you told me about a thousand wolves that the Germans let loose on our boys. Wasn't that terrible?'

"'I don't seem to remember about the wolves,' he said, sweating lightly.

"'Oh, but I do! It was that very story that made up my mind to join the Green Cross as a founder. I can still see myself reaching out for this book and writing the check for fifty dollars. I was only going to be a member before that, or at most a benefactor. See—there is my certificate!'

"She had framed the piece of trash with huge green and gold seal, and hung it on her wall over the mantel.

"'Yes,' she said softly, 'I have always wanted to thank you. It is my most sacred treasure, that certificate, and I have wanted to thank you night and day. It is my greatest comfort to sit here and look at it and think that I did my little part, that I did what I could to help them. And—my boy——' Her voice broke. 'God knows!' she whispered.

"'Your boy?' repeated Bailey stupidly.

"'He—never came home.'

"She breathed a tremulous sigh, and looked up at the certificate. A light grew in her face, a light approaching contentment, as though it were shed upon her from the wall.

"'You want to thank me?' said Bailey in a loud and rough voice, rising and pushing back his chair.

"'I do,' she said. 'I do!'

"'Very well,' he said. 'You can do it by giving me back that five hundred shares of stock. You can do it by letting me keep my engagement with Mrs. Anders!'

"'If you wish it that way,' she said, smilingly hiding her disappointment at losing safety and one hundred per cent.

"'Good day, Mrs. Anderson,' he said, putting on his hat and striding down the garden path. She followed him as far as the flower bed where the wrinkled newspaper waited beside the marigolds. She waved a wisp of white at him as he gave his big car the gas.

"When he had rounded the first curve he took a cigar from his pocket, snapped at it and jammed it hard into the corner of his mouth. He was thoroughly disgusted.

"'I was never such a fool before in all my life!' he grumbled. 'The idea of handing her back that hundred dollars!'

"He went next to call on an August

Bierbower, down by the creek. He rang the bell of the snug little bungalow but found no one at home. From behind the house came a noise of a hammering on iron and an intermittent thundering from a racing gas engine. He walked around to the rear, crossed a lush meadow whence water squirted up over his neat shoes and came upon a small motor boat standing on skids in the black mud of the creek side. A large man was draped over the gunwale of the boat with his head and shoulders inside it.

"'Hello, Gus!' shouted Bailey, on a venture that this was his man.

"The engine repairer raised up. He was a fleshy fellow with a bristly head, large and stupid blue eyes and an unkempt mustache hanging over his mouth. Through the mustache stuck the stump of a ragged cigar from which sparks and ashes fell as he puffed at it to get up steam before answering the hail.

"'Hello yourself!' he shouted back.

"'What's *los* with the ship?' asked Bailey, leaning over the gunwale.

"'I t'ink it's the feed bipe from the tank,' said Gus, scratching an oil-blackened forearm and making a hideous face as he took out his ragged cigar and blew smoke into the boat.

"He rolled a dull eye consultingly at Bailey.

"'Excuse me,' he said. "But don't I know you from somewheres?'

"'I shouldn't wonder,' said Bailey. 'Ever been down to the *Liederkranz* in New York City? I think I met you down there once. Weren't you one of the group that used to hang out down in Stilgebauer's? You remember Herman Braun and his brother Gus? Doc Braun held the pig's knuckle championship of Terrace Garden three seasons running; he was a *zahnarzt* up on Lexington Avenue and he was just as good with other people's teeth as he was with his own! And then there was——'

"'*Nein,*' said Gus, but he was favorably impressed. Suddenly a cordial grin broke like sunshine over his big face and he plodded over and clapped Bailey on the back.

"'Now I got you!' he shouted. 'You are the Green Cross man yet! You son uf a gun!'

"He grasped Bailey by the arm, and proceeded to drag him toward the house.

"'Come *mit!*' he said.

"'What's the idea?' snarled Bailey, trying to pull away from him.

"'No, you don't!' shouted Gus, pushing ahead over the soft ground with the slow power of a tractor. 'You come *mit,* you son uf a gun!'

"He dragged Bailey through the back door of the bungalow and pushed him down into a chair. The oil-stock salesman guessed that this violence was being offered to him in good fellowship and desisted from his struggles.

"Out of a pitcher into heavy tumblers Gus poured a couple of gills of a liquid which looked and smelled like gasoline.

"'*Gesundheit!*' he said, thrusting one of the tumblers into Bailey's hand and raising his own suggestively. He tossed off his own drink, smacked his heavy lips and then slapped his stomach.

"'Ah-h!' he sighed. 'What you t'ink of that stuff, hey? Great, ain't it?'

"'Great,' agreed Bailey, coughing and gagging. 'That's the real stuff!'

"'Made it meinself,' grinned Gus. 'Yep, made it this morning. Have another! Come on, don't be bashful! You don't get stuff like that very often, and there is lots more where dot comes from and it iss all yours. Well—here goes—*gesundheit!*

"'Haf a good cigar,' he exhorted, thrusting into Bailey's mouth a weed of mottled green and striking a light for him. 'Smoke up! Dot iss some cigar, ain't it?'

"'I'll say so,' said Bailey. 'Did you make these cigars yourself, too?'

"'Oho-ho-ho!' laughed Gus, shaking the house with his appreciation of this wit. 'You son uf a gun! Here, put some in your pocket to smoke after your dinner!'

"He reached down and seized Bailey by the shoulder, plucked him from the chair and whisked him into the living room. He stopped before a gold-framed certificate with a gorgeous green seal with red ribbon.

"'What iss it?' he demanded.

"'Why,' said Bailey uncomfortably, 'that's your diploma as a patron of the American Green Cross.'

"'You remember when you come here and you tell me you pick me out because I was Cherman born—and you said it I should make an example of meinself and show what a good American I was yet? And you said I ought to help poor guys out that got plugged in the war and I give it to you *zwanzig* dollars, hey?'

"'Now that you mention it I do seem to recall that the donation of a patron was twenty dollars.'

"'Dot was the best twenty dollars I efer spent in all mine life!' cried Gus. 'Yep, if it wasn't for that twenty dollars I would be down in the greek mit the fishes! Put it there, you son uf a gun, put it there!'

"And heartily he clasped Bailey's rascally hand.

"'It was this way,' he explained, putting one huge arm around Bailey's neck and drawing him in while he gestured with the other hand. 'I am sitting on mine porch reading in the baper and along the road comes some of the boys. And one boy hollers, "Hello, Dutch!" and I holler back, "Hello, yourself!" Dey was drinking booze down at the saloon and dey was feeling good. Dey was not bad boys, only dey was full of bad booze. And another boy says, "Iss dot a Dutchman? What do you say if we should lynch the sucker. Am I right?" And dey all say, "Dot is a corker! We will drow him in the greek!" And dey come up on mine porch, and grab a hold of me and I soak one guy on the nose.

"'And this guy says, "It is *besser* we should burn his house down as drow him in the greek. Am I right?" And dey say, "Dot iss a corker!" And dey say, "Will he buy any Liberty Bonds?" And I say, "Boys, I ain't got it any dough on account I spent mine last *swanzig* dollar this morning; but iff you should like to give it to me Liberty Bonds I would take them!" And dey say, "You could buy them mit the insurance maybe. We are going to burn down your house and show you this iss a free country!" And I smack some more boys on the beezer, but dey get me down in the house inside and dey ask me have I got it a match. And I says, "Boys, you could burn down the house yet, but spare the Green Cross stiffiticket!" And dey look and dey say, "So! Can this be right?" And dey give it to me a drink out of a bottle and say, "Gus, you old son uf a gun, you are a corker! Hurray for Gus!" So that is how it is. Dot stiffiticket saves me mine life and mine house and you are the guy what done it. You son uf a gun, put it there!'

"'That's all very nice,' said Bailey. 'But now I come to talk to you about another proposition. I have here——'

"'You want to talk something else? Sit right down in dot chair again until I get the booze and some more cigars! Not another word yet!'

"'He went after the homemade gasoline and Bailey decided the money wasn't worth it and quietly slipped out the door, and so to his car.

"He perceived that his roguery in connection with his bogus society had passed undetected and had indeed made him friends in Mallory, so he decided to try again in the same town. By mistake he had been using an old list of names; he glanced at the next one.

"It was that of the richest man of the town, old Orison Shook, and it was the only name on the list which Bailey remembered —this because of a complication which had arisen in the course of selling him a membership in the American Green Cross.

"Bailey drove along the road, which paralleled the creek, and up a little rise, and so to the promontory on which Shook's house stood. It was a large frame dwelling with shingled sides of a uniform dusty brown. Its many windows were uncurtained; behind them were yellow and wrinkled shades. It was set back from the road behind a high stone wall on top of which broken bottles were set in concrete.

"Bailey shook the iron gate which was set in the wall, and two Great Danes came bounding from the barn beside the house and erected themselves against the gate with yawning jaws. Bailey had been bitten by several breeds of dog in the course of his travels, but never by a Great Dane, and he pushed open the gate—not that he was anxious for a new experience but because he trusted the fearsome but good-natured brutes. He walked up the brick path with hands elevated; they stalked beside him, rubbing their huge, yellow bodies against him and sniffing at him, but forbearing to devour him.

"Shook came to the door—a tall and narnow man with yellow and puckered face, clean shaven and neat, gray-haired, with shrewd eyes of faded blue. He looked at the dogs, sprang out nimbly and kicked the nearer and they bounded back to the barn. Bailey got the impression that the dog was kicked, not because he had annoyed the visitor but because he had failed to do so.

"'Come in,' said Shook in a dry and inhospitable way. 'I'm glad to see you.' He

had preceded Bailey to a large and shabbily furnished room.

"Bailey was smoking one of his cigars. He tendered one of August Bierbower's to his host.

"'Do you smoke, Mr. Shook?'

"'No.' But Shook took the cigar and placed it beside him on the table. Bailey saw that there was no nonsense about Orison Shook; he took what he could get, dispensing with etiquette.

"'You're the Green Cross man,' said Shook. 'I'm glad to see you again.' When he had said this he put the knuckle of his index finger to his mouth and gently massaged it with his strong front teeth. He was a man at once passionate and cautious; he hungered to spring at Bailey and beat him and bawl at him and throw him to the dogs, but he would not do it. In a way he could not do it; his habit of calculation was too strong.

"'You remember what I paid you for a membership in the American Green Cross?' he inquired.

"'No, I do not,' said Bailey, after a moment's reflection, although he remembered very well.

"'It was ten dollars,' said Shook.

"'Ah, yes! That was the price of a membership. I remember that!'

"'I gave you a check for it,' said Shook. 'What did you do with that check?'

"'I suppose I put it through the bank in the ordinary way,' said Bailey, lying again.

"Shook sighed gently. 'You will be surprised then to hear that the check was raised to a thousand dollars and that I had to pay it, being unable to prove that it had been altered.'

"'No! How was that?'

"'You didn't put that check through the bank. You couldn't have done that, because I stopped the check by telephone immediately after you left me.'

"All of this was no news to Bailey. He remembered having taken the check—which was payable 'To bearer'—and having presented it at the bank and having been refused the money. He had then cashed the check in a local saloon.

"'I am very sorry to hear of this, Mr. Shook,' he said, suppressing a grin. 'You would have done better to let the check go through, wouldn't you? You will recall that you had your certificate, so that it was a completed transaction and you really had no right to stop the check. Don't think I'm reproving you, only——'

"'It was too much money to throw away,' said Shook calmly. 'And besides it couldn't do me any good. I joined your organization only after you promised me to use your influence with the government to get my boy exempted from the draft; and right after you left I got word from the local board that he had been exempted already. So what was the good of throwing money away?'

"'Perhaps I did say something about taking the matter up with the war department,' said Bailey with an air of conscientious consideration. 'But I could not have put the matter quite as you state it. You were acquainted with the objects of the American Green Cross——'

"'Yes, yes,' said Shook curtly, and added: 'I know that you didn't raise the check yourself, or cash it, because, from the way the money was obtained on it, it must have been done by some person intimately acquainted with my methods of business. That check was altered and cashed by some scoundrel right here in Mallory! And I'll have justice on him! I'll move heaven and earth to get that scoundrel and put him behind prison bars! There's no man living can trick Orison Shook and live to laugh at him!'

"He was screaming with rage; and then he seemed to hear his own voice and he cut it off. The glare passed from his face as abruptly as the slamming of a furnace door.

"'Will you help me?' he asked in a level tone. 'If you refuse I'll have you jailed, and I have enough influence in Mallory to make you regret it.'

"'That's not at all necessary, Mr. Shook,' said Bailey smoothly. 'I'll be very glad to help you, although I say again you brought your trouble on yourself by trying to trick me. If you're not content to look at it that way I'll help you to get your thousand dollars back.'

"'Well then,' said Shook eagerly, 'what did you do with the check?'

"'I cashed it in a billiard parlor down by the station.'

"'And can you remember the man you gave it to?'

"'I think so.'

"'Let's go and find him!' exclaimed Shook, rising quickly.

"They left the house together, entered Bailey's car and rode down to the village street. At Shook's direction the car was

halted before the local police station and Shook went inside and returned with a constable. They stopped again at Hendrickson's billiard parlors which were an adjunct to a saloon. A number of men were lounging at the tables.

" 'Is he here?' whispered Shook, trembling like a hound held in leash.

" 'I'll look them over,' said Bailey.

"He did not expect to discover the man to whom he had given the check; he had forgotten the face. He remembered only that he had shown the check to the bartender, who had declined it, and that he had been approached later in the billiard room by a man who had given him ten dollars for it.

"For the life of him he could not recall that man's features to mind. But if he failed to accuse somebody he himself would infallibly be arrested at once, in which event the story of the American Green Cross could hardly fail to come out. He decided to chance it and to accuse one of the men present, making no doubt that he could slip away during the subsequent proceedings.

"It was likely, though, that the person to whom he had given the check—and who must have been the forger or an accomplice, since he had kept his identity secret—would remember Bailey's face, in which event he would probably betray his guilt by some sign of confusion or by attempting to leave the room.

"Bailey therefore attracted attention to himself on purpose by pointedly staring at individuals. Shortly he had the eyes of the room on him, but all of the faces were strange to him. He waited for the sign.

"One of the men whom he had passed and who had returned his stare without agitation now looked toward the main entrance and saw Orison Shook standing there. The man was a dissipated-looking youth with the inevitable cheap cigarette pasted to his lower lip; he was typical of the crowd in the room, which was composed mostly of loafers, the time being half past eleven of a Monday morning. This young fellow had not been at all disturbed by the apparition of Bailey, but when he saw Orison Shook standing at the end of the room he lowered his head and slunk toward a side door.

"Bailey caught the slither of feet behind him and swung about.

" 'There he goes!' he cried, pointing at the youth.

"The young man stopped at the outcry, and looked ill.

" 'Come here, you!' shouted Orison Shook.

"Bailey swaggered back to the main entrance, and confronted his victim.

" 'There's your man!' he said, in a bullying tone. 'There's the man I gave the check to! Will you deny it, young fellow? Two years ago in this room you gave me ten dollars for a check drawn by Orison Shook, this man standing here. Do you deny it?'

" 'You're a liar!' snarled the youth through whitened lips. His arm, which he drew back to strike Bailey, was caught by the constable.

" 'Is it true?' shouted Shook in a guttural voice. 'Is it true? Tell me!'

"He had leaped at the youth and caught him by both shoulders; their faces as he spoke were so close that their noses were almost touching. The youth looked aside weakly; but the suddenness of the attack had scattered whatever plans he might have made for such a contingency.

" 'Yes, it's true,' he muttered. 'I owed the money and I had to get it somehow and you wouldn't give it to me, so I took the check to the fellow I owed the money to and we——'

"Bailey slipped out of the room and to his car. As the car began to move he spoke to a man coming from the billiard room. 'Who was that young fellow?' he asked.

" 'Old Shook's son!' cried the man, pleasurably excited."

The Salvation Army captain was not done.

He continued, after giving me a chance to chew the tale over.

"A little while ago you warned me that that poor tramp was going to cheat me. Perhaps, if we considered his case, we might not see so easily the workings of Providence; the end might be further removed from the means than it was in the instance I have given you. I ask you if Bailey cheated Mrs. Anderson, or if he cheated August Bierbower? Orison Shook was cheated—*but by whom?*"

"By himself!" I agreed.

"By himself," he nodded. "And that was the only man who could cheat him. The only man who can cheat anybody is himself! When once you grasp the fact that the will and the deed are ours but that the event is in the hands of God—how can you be afraid?"

"And what happened to Bailey?"

"He went along for a time, cheating himself as before. He didn't turn at once. He was like a whale in whom the harpoon has been driven to the quick; he didn't know he was beaten and he plunged down deeper than ever—to get free! But he couldn't do it. God had put the iron into him that day at Mallory. He could never live the old life again. He simply had to come up to the top."

He looked up at the discolored ceiling with shining face.

"He had to come," he said. "God drew him in. I know about it, because I am he. I am Bailey the crook—Captain Bailey now, of the 'Army!'"

The policeman came into the room.

"Say, captain," he inquired, "was 'Blandy' Carteret back here just now? I heard he was seen coming down this way. I mean that cross-eyed bum that hangs out with 'Black Jake.' You must know that bird. No? He's got a bottle scar on the left cheek and——"

"Why, that's the bird that was going to Poughkeepsie!" I put in.

"He went up to the corner saloon after leaving here," said the officer, "and he got half tanked on a half a dollar. Oh, yes, he could—you go up and try that stuff! And when he came out he took up a brick, and threw it through a cigar-store window at an advertisement showing a gentleman in a high hat. I went over to pinch him, but, just as I was taking him, out runs two yeggs who were inside robbing the cigar store, and I took them instead."

"Seems to me you ought to thank Blandy for helping you to catch the robbers," I suggested.

"Oh, no," said the officer. "He wasn't trying to help the police when he threw that brick! I'm going to pinch him, too. If you don't mind I'll wait around and see if he shows up."

I shook hands with Captain Bailey and hied me homeward. As I walked up the street toward the elevated stairs I was accosted by a cross-eyed tramp with a scarred face. It was the person who had got fifty cents to go to Poughkeepsie.

"Listen, boss," he said, "I'm choking for a ball and I'm taking up a collection to buy me one. You look like a regular fellow and so I won't give you no stall. I want to buy me a drink! What do you say? Are you game?"

"Whisky?" I said sternly.

"That's what they call it," he said.

I ruminated.

"Listen, 'Rags,'" I said. "I won't give you any money to buy liquor; that's out of the question. But the way I feel to-night I would fall for a good story. Mine not to reason why—you get me? Haven't you got a wife—a sick wife—and half a dozen children that are crying for bread?"

He leered at me suspiciously.

"I'm telling you the God's honest truth," he said, "and what are you asking me to tell you a lie for? What is the game? I don't think you're a right guy. I guess you're a dick! You want me to give you a yarn about having a family and then you are going to pinch me for nonsupport! That's what you're up to, is it?"

"Take a chance," I suggested, thrusting my hand into my pocket.

"Nix," he said, sheering off. "I'm too cute for you. You can't hand me any hokum like that! Ha, ha! I should say not!"

"Last call!" I said, holding up a half dollar. "What do you say? This is your only chance in the city of New York!"

"Is that so?" he said, with a cunning sneer. "Let me tell you I know a place where I can get dough and a bed for the asking, so put your four bits back into your vest pocket!"

And he rolled into the doorway of the Salvation Army shelter.

In the next issue will appear "According to Plutarch," by Mr. McMorrow.

NOT IRREPARABLE

SHE was a Frenchwoman, the wife of one of the attachés of the French embassy in Washington, and a most hospitable person, though not altogether proficient in the English language. She was urging a young society man to come to a dinner she was giving. Unfortunately, he said, he could not accept; he had a previous engagement and, thus, had "burned his bridges behind him."

"But," she exclaimed, frankly surprised, "at least, you can borrow another pair!"

Classics in Slang

Jazzed by H. C. Witwer

Author of "Phil Grimm's Progress," "Confidence," Etc.

McTague finds that being in two places at once complicates matters

VII.—THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

To the Sporting's Editor of the *Daily Shriek.*

My Dear Messrs Editor: Good afternoon and the etc. I bet you have went to work and fell a prey to the idea that I have hauled off and died, it is so long since I have got into the touch with you by the via of the jovial postman. As the matter and fact to the best of my knowledge I have not exactly breathe my last as yet, editor, but I did fall the victim to writers cramps which I think I caught from Joey Scalpel, my private doctor. Since the practical joke on Volstead has went into effect whereby a medico can prescribe a case of wine, a case of beer, or a pint of hooch for any of his patients sufferin' from the horrible disease of thirst, editor, Joey does nothin' all day long but write *"spirits frumenti, spirits frumenti"* til the merely sight of a pen gives him convulsions. You'd think they wouldst call that "ap*pen*dicitis," hey, editor? I know that is a bum joke, so don't bother laughin' at it if you're busy.

Well, apart from this applesauce, I have did fairly and well for myself since you last had the pleasures of hearin' from me. I ain't quite heavyweight champion of the world but I am headin' toward the covet title with the speed of a nervous bullet. Editor, I have got to be a two-fisted idiot with a set of boxin' gloves and I have developed a right hook to the jaw which is the cat's meow! I claim that this punch will do all that chloroform can do, without the sickenin' smell. Likewise, when it comes to bein' clever—well, I have built up a defense, editor, which I doubt if even a sarcastical remark could get through—though now and then somebody's glove does.

How the so ever, I wish you could catch my next start, editor, and you wouldst be either the first or second to agree that my improvement is nothin' short of illegal. No more do I get smacked for a row of Egyptian gravy bowls in the first round, a bad habit which I fin'ly broke myself of by practicin' day and night the use of footwork. In fact, I do all my roadwork now when I get into the ring. I begin sprintin' at the bell, editor, and I am so swift on my feet by this time that they ain't no guy in the world can get near enough to clout me durin' the first three minutes, not even if they give him a motor cycle!

This kind of tactics is bound to get the other guy's goat and likewise the crowd's, which has came to see felonious assault and battery and not leap frog. Nevers the less, editor, I pay no attention to the howls of the customers which screams for the other bozo to execute me, but I keep jumpin' and runnin' frantically, this way and that, usin' my head—in the clinches—until the end of Round One. In Round Two, editor, I spring another and fresh surprise by standin' right up and sluggin' with my charmin' versus. One minute of this and they is a dull thud. They is very few times of lately, editor, when *I* am the thud.

As far as that part of it goes I win my last start pulled up. I travel over to the country of Philadelphia and panicked the natives by flattenin' a kleagle called "Quick Watson The Needle." All this baby had was his trunks and I slapped him for a mock orange in two frames. They claimed he was a glutton for punishment, editor, but I give him acute indigestion.

So you see I am comin' along, editor, and with the ambition which I am fill of why they's no tellin' *where* I'll wind up. You know that Frank Lincoln started as a rail splitter and winds up in the White House. Well, I don't expect *I'll* get a break like he got, but I *do* expect to be elected president of the heavyweights some time hence. I ain't like a lot of other guys I know which always puts me in mind of a oyster. You

take a oyster, what I mean, and no matter how ambitious that little animal is or what plans it has laid early in life, why all it can ever hope to do is wind up in a stew somewheres. Well, I ain't no oyster, editor. Watch me travel—as Gulliver says.

Now as to my romantical love affair de heart, as the Hindus calls it, not so good, editor, not so good. It looks like Dan Cupid, the noted kewpie, is off of me. No more do I get out of one jam with the breath-takin' damsel which I hope to make my bride than I get in another! The other day I got a rush of brains to the head and tried out a scheme which I fondly figured wouldst make me solid for life with her. But in the stead of that why I went to work and gummed things up for real. Lean back in your chair and get comfortably, editor, and I will keep you out of mischief for the next twenty minutes.

In the first place, you remember I was left a bookstore by my uncle Angus McTague, which took this unique means of celebratin' his death. Now you know, editor, that I have the same pressin' need for a bookstore that a middle-aged codfish has for a bicycle, so I beat it to New York with the praiseworthy ideas of turnin' ye shoppe over for some jack. When I glide into the store, how the so ever, I get a awful, yet pleasant shock. It is bein' ran by Ethel Kingsley, a young woman of the opposite sex which wouldst make a statue of Buddha bite its lip! What effect she had on *me,* therefore, I will leave in care of your imagination.

Ethel is merely on the job until Uncle Anguses missin' nephew, in the short, myself, shows up. The old boy must of been a bit cuckoo before he started for merciful heavens, because he has in some way gave Ethel the idea that his roamin' nephew is as handsome as four Wallace Reids and as cultivated as the warden of Harvard. Now whilst I ain't exactly a double for no rhinocerous, editor, I am not no Mary Pickford either when it comes to looks, and as for education—well, I am all but certain that they ain't any "z's" in the adverb "dog," but that about winds me up. Likewise, *I am a box fighter.* Will I tell Venus, on earth for the second time under the name of Ethel Kingsley, that I am the missin' nephew in the view of *them* circumstances? And the answer is No!

But I got to tell her *somethin'* if I want to stick around the store. So with fiendish cleverness I says I am a intimately friend of the absent nephew and my name is Archibald Gustavus Windsor-Blenheim. I know that sounds like two hotels and a collar, but I got results with it. We get along like a roll and a frankfurter and when I says the only books I ever read was wrote by Bell Telephone, why Ethel decides to inject the classics into my system by givin' me one to take home every night, read it, and then put down on clean white paper my idea of it for her. Ain't we got fun, hey, editor? Last night I went through a dime novel entitled "The Count of Monte Cristo" wrote by Alex Dumas, the guy which writes scenarios for Douglas Fairbanks. But we'll get around to that later, as they say about the bill they owe us over in Europe.

At first, I told Ethel I was in the "glove business," but as she ain't half-witted she begin to think it kind of queer that I should pick up swelled ears, split lips, cut cheek bones and black eyes whilst engaged in the pastime of sellin' gloves. So one day I hauled off and told her the truth, to the viz, that I am a leather pusher. Much to my surprise, this seems to tickle her silly and I am sittin' pretty when I made the serious mistake of takin' her to see me quarrel. I knocked a guy stiff in a wineglass fill of seconds and the customers reared up on their hind legs and screamed for a extry bout. Always willin' to oblige, I took on another heavy in the same ring and what he done to me was criminal! After hittin' me with everything but the timekeeper's watch he smacked me for a goal, and the horrified Ethel fled from the clubhouse and me, all steamed up and supplied with enough boxin' to last her until a fortnight after forever.

This brings us pretty near up to date, editor, and I am merely repeatin' all this so's to save you the troubles of lookin' up your files—get me?

Well, editor, followin' my failure to stop them two tramps in the same ring I kept away from my bookstore for a week, knowin' by womens intuition that I wouldst be about as welcome as laryngitis wouldst be to Mary Garden. But I have got to get into the touch with Ethel in some way or I am positive my tender heart will break. So I hit on the scheme of sendin' her a letter supposed to be from the missin' nephew, highly recommendin' me as his pal and the like and windin' up by sayin' he wouldst love to leave

the store in my charge til he come back. I also says in this missive that the writer is at present in Africa, but expects to be in New York in a few days. To overcome the New York postmark which I knew wouldst be on the envelope, editor, why I put $3.75 in stamps on it to make it look like it really come from a long ways and that the New York postmark was simply a piece of typically carelessness on the part of the post-office clerks. But the way I disguised my handwritin' so's Ethel wouldst never know I wrote the letter, was a touch worthy of Nick Carter, editor. I used red ink! I'm good, what?

I wait a couple of days to give the letter a chance to arrive at my bookstore, editor, and then one afternoon I take the bulls by the tail and boldly walk in. As usually, they is a couple of dizzy dumbells hangin' around the counter tryin' to sell Ethel the idea of goin' out to lunch or for a auto ride in the evenin' by the moon's light or to the theater and like that. They have the same chance that a little mousie wouldst have at a cats' ball, editor. Ethel is not those kind of a girl, what I mean. But oh, what a panic she *is*—hair like gold silk, the skin you love to touch, that schoolgirl complexion and a figure which wouldst make all the Bathin' Beauties cry their eyes out. I trip lightly up to the counter in the spite of my hugely bulk editor, and ignorin' Ethel's well-bred start of surprise, I says I wish to get a book.

"What kind of a book?" asks Ethel coldly, like she never seen me before, editor, and feels she ain't missed nothin' by it.

"A nice thick one," I says, just as frosty as she is.

"Like his head!" remarks one of the male flirts to his friend. The both of them laughs and Ethel gets pale. She has saw me work before, editor!

"Both you stiffs put up your hands," I says, with a touch of Old World courtesy. "I don't wish to smack *no* man with his hands down and I am about to knock the pair of you for a string of Roumanian ash cans!"

"Please don't start fighting, Archibald!" says Ethel to me.

"*Archibald,* hey?" sneers one of the comin' suicides. "You talk heavy for a baby with a name like 'at!"

If they only had knew my *real* name, hey, editor?

"Let's take him!" snaps the other daredevil. Then they come at me.

First, Ethel shrieks; second, I hit victim number one; third, he hits the floor; fourth, sacreyfice number two is short with a right swing; and fifth, I crash him with a straight left to the button. The first guy gets up and looks around kind of dazed. Then he wags his finger at Ethel.

"Lookit!" he says. "If that bird's name is *Archibald* then my name is Elsie!" He grabs his pal by the coat collar and drags him to his feet. "Let's shove off from here," he says, "before a guy named Percy comes in!"

Well, the athletics bein' disposed of, editor, Ethel looks at me with not the little disapproval.

"I don't like your comin' in here and assaulting my customers," she says. "Business has been bad enough without your driving everybody away!"

"Them guys didn't come in to buy no books, Ethel," I says. "They was shoppin' for somethin' else and you should thank me for comin' to your rescue and givin' them the air. I'm gettin' more like a movie hero every day!"

Ethel lets forth a slightly snort, editor, and then she gives me a queer look.

"Have you heard anything yet from Mr. McTague's nephew?" she asks.

They is somethin' in her eye which makes me nervous, editor, but I am at my best when in a tight corner.

"I doubt it," I says cleverly.

Ethel gives me another queer look, makin' two in all.

"Well, *I've* just had a—ah—rather peculiar letter from him," she says, openin' the drawer of the useless cash register for prob'ly the first time in weeks. "I'd like to have you read it. It—well, it sounds awfully odd to *me.*"

With that she hands over the letter wrote her by Uncle Anguses nephew, editor, which it was for a fact, but she don't know the nephew is I. Here is a copy of it.

NEGRO, SOUTH AFRICA.

MY DEAR ETHEL: Well, Miss Kingsley, here I am in the middle of Africa and having just finished killing my daily slew of lions, elephants, tigers and all this sort of thing, I take my pen in one hand to thank you for taking care of my bookstore like you done. I expect to be in New York in a couple of days and in the mean's while, please take your orders from Archibald Gustavus Windsor-Blenheim, my lifelong friend. Be good to him, Ethel, and don't mind him being

a prize fighter and failing to knock out two men in the one ring, which is after all quite a feat. With my best regards and hoping you are all well, I remain, Respectably yours,

UNCLE ANGUSES NEPHEW.

"Do you notice anything peculiar in that letter?" asks Ethel, when I have got done makin' a bluff at readin' a thing I know by heart.

"Why, no," I says, sparrin' for a openin'. "Except that Uncle Anguses nephew seems to finger a cruel pen and ink!"

"Well, for one thing," says Ethel, "there is no such place as Negro, South Africa."

"They must be a Negro in South Africa!" I says.

"For another thing," Ethel goes on, ignorin' my wise crack, "the envelope is postmarked New York City and the letter is dated South Africa. And how would a person in South Africa know of your fights that only happened a few days ago in New Jersey?"

"He might of got the returns by, now, X rays," I says, feelin' a accident on its way to happen to me.

"Lastly," says Ethel, never takin' her dazzlin' eyes off my face, "lastly, this letter is dated two days ago and yet it is supposed to have been *mailed in South Africa!*"

"Mails is *always* late," I says, wonderin' did I allow enough time for a letter from South Africa to reach New York. "He should of sent it special delivery."

"If he had sent it special delivery," remarks Ethel, with a sarcastic toss of her beautiful head, "it would probably have reached me last *year*, since ordinary mail from South Africa takes but two days! Look here, I don't believe Mr. McTague's nephew wrote that letter at all!"

"Who do you think wrote it then?" I says, to change the subject. Editor, I am hopin' and prayin' that a customer will come in and I can get a chance to hunt for my presence of mind whilst Ethel is waitin' on he, she or it. But, of course, that's askin' for a miracle. The day you find a customer in my bookstore, editor, you will also find that Niagara Falls is made out of orangeade and not water!

"*I* think——" begins Ethel, and then she stops and frowns a bit. "You say you know Mr. McTague's nephew—will you swear that this is his handwriting?"

"I certainly will!" I says.

Ethel drops her shoulders with a little sigh.

"Go away!" she says. "And please don't come in here any more. I'm hurt and disappointed in you! I—I—well, with all your faults, I rather liked you. I thought you were big and clean and above petty falsehoods. I—oh, go!"

"Wait a minute!" I says frantically. Editor, I can feel that I am as pale as the word pale itself. "What's the big idea? I *am* big and I *am* clean and now about this falsehood thing, I——"

"Don't make it worse!" butts in Ethel, sternly. "You've lied to me. *You wrote this letter yourself!*"

Well now my justly famous brains begins to work like magic, editor. I am in a tight corner and no mistake! One wrong play and this girl is through with me—a fool can see *that* part of it. I made up my mind in a second, as I've often been called on to do whilst reclinin' on the floor of a ring, editor.

"Ethel," I says, drawin' myself up, "I admit the charge. *I* wrote the letter."

"And yet you swore it was written by Mr. McTague's nephew," she cries. "Oh, how could you!"

"I swore to the truth!" I says, grabbin' hold of her little, white, tremblin' and beautifully manicured hand. "Ethel—*I am the missin' nephew!*"

Ethel falls back against the cash register with a bang, makin' the astonished bell ring for about the third time since we had it. She seems unable to talk, editor, but *I* ain't. I begin to explain and make love at one and the same time and I'm gettin' nowheres with either. She just looks at me, that's all—just looks. In comes a customer, but even this phenomenon means nothin' to me. What I crave is to be alone with Ethel long enough to fix up.

"How much is a dictionary?" asks the customer.

"We have some for five thousand bucks and cheaper ones, without the adjectives, for twenty-six hundred!" I says, gruffly.

The customer darts a alarmed look at me and scurries away, which is what I wanted him to do, editor.

"Heavens above!" breathes Ethel finally. "*You* are the nephew?"

From a inside pocket of my nobby topcoat, editor, I takes the letter I got notifyin' me that Uncle Angus has permanently

retired from our midst. I shoved that and a lot of other proofs into her hand. She about reads the print off 'em and slowly her color comes back. After a while she looks up at me.

"And your name really isn't Archibald Gustavus Windsor-Blenheim?" is her first remark.

"Not quite," I says. "I am known far and wide as 'One Punch' McTague, but I didn't think you'd find that tasty enough, so I grabbed the other one out of a book I once read."

"So you've lied to me from the start," she says, very stern. "And I—I—believed you!"

Editor, if somebody had start in to play "Hearts & Flowers" I wouldst of bust right out cryin' and that's a fact!

"Now that my dread secret is out," I begins, "will——"

"Don't you dare make sport of it!" she cuts me off, with the flashin' eye. "You should be heartily ashamed of yourself! I'll resign here at once! I——"

"Please don't run out on me, Ethel," I butts in kind of piteously, editor. "Don't throw up your job and turn me loose amongst all these books! Go home and think matters over—they's worse guys than me, if I *am* a bit rough and tough. After all, I only done what I done on the account I'm overboard over you and——"

She gets a very attractive shade of red, editor.

"That's enough!" she says. "Go away now and let me think. I'll see you to-morrow morning and tell you what I've made up my mind to do. This is quite a shock!"

"O. K.," I says soft and low. Grabbin' up a book, I took the air. The book was "The Count of Monte Cristo," editor, and here's what it's all about. Snap this right back to me when you have put in the commas and periods at the right places and I will take it in with me on my next visit to Ethel and see if *this* will get me anywheres!

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO.
By Alex Dumas and One Punch McTague.

Eddie Dantes, a young major in the Abyssinian navy, was wildly in love with Mercedes, which was really a young lady and not no automobile like it sounds. On his weddin' morn either fifteen or seventy-five coppers swoops down on him and throws him into the local hoosgow on the charge of makin' silk purses out of sows' ears, which as everybody knows is against the law. Dantes is as innocent as a expert moving-picture vamp, but he has been framed by Dan Glars and Steve Fernand, a couple of ex-pals. Dan Glars is all steamed up because Dantes got promoted over his head in the navy and Steve Fernand is red-headed on the account of Dantes grabbin' off his cousin, the charmin' Mercedes. It seems that Fernand had laid some plans in her direction himself.

Dragged before the judge, Dantes is railroaded to the pen and put in solitary confinement for indefinitely. At the end of six years he is put in a cell with another con. They figure he won't try to crush out of jail now, as he has only thirty-seven more years to serve and the risks of a break for liberty wouldst hardly be worth his while. The other con is a guy named Abbe Farina, which has been in jail so long he thinks Adam and Eve is still livin' in the Garden of Eden. Abbe Farina takes quite the interest in Dantes, which spends his time broodin' over what his pals done to him and plannin' on how he'll make 'em wish they had died in the cradle when he gets out.

One night Dantes and Abbe gets to talkin' about this and talkin' about that and fin'ly Abbe gives Dantes a paper tellin' where a plumber's ransom in gold and jewelry is hid in a rock called Monte Cristo. Abbe says the stuff is worth exactly forty-two quillion and it's all Dantes', as *he* won't never be able to get it himself. Abbe has been locked up now for seventy-three years and he is commencin' to think that they are goin' to keep him there permanently.

The next day Abbe has nothin' else to do so he hauls off and dies. The warden has the body put in a sack and no more does he leave when Dantes removes the corpse and takes its place in the sack. He was clever, what? That night, as they say in the cinemas, the prison guards garnish the sack with a 36-pound weight and throw the whole, includin' Dantes, into the ocean.

Now this kind of treatment wouldst of discouraged the average guy, but who ever seen a hero discouraged in a book? Dantes shows he has the makin's of a movie serial star by cuttin' a hole in the sack and gettin' out of it whilst on the bottom of the sea.

When he comes to the surface he sticks his shapely tongue out at the dumfounded guards and then rollin' over on his back he starts to swim to Milwaukee with a vigorous but graceful stroke. Three months later he is rescued from the boundin' billows by a handy sailin' vessel.

So now fourteen years after he got pinched, railroaded to jail and his weddin' all gummed up, Eddie Dantes finds the treasures of Monte Cristo and sets out to get even with the babies which framed him.

In his travels hithers and yon, grittin' his well-kept teeth and howlin' aloud for revenge, Dantes meets up with a convenient old man. The old man, at the request of the author, wises Dantes up about his enemies. Dan Glars has knocked Wall Street for a row of shanties and has $2.50 for every egg in a shad roe. To top this off he has been made a count by Congress. Fernand has likewise been elected a count from his district, but what's even worse, this bozo has wed Mercedes, the limousine which Dantes was draggin' to the altar when Alex Dumas decided another little book wouldn't do any harm.

After hearin' all this, Dantes starts for Paris, gnashin' a mean tooth and swearin' bloodcurdlin' oats of vengeance. He is now fightin' under the name of "The Count from Monte Cristo" and nobody recognizes him, as the time he spent in jail has turned his once coal-black hair a brilliant red.

Well, to sum up, in two weeks Dantes has spread ruin with a lavish hand. He makes a bum out of Dan Glars and makes Fernand bump himself off in a fit of temper. Then he causes the wife of the judge which sent him up the river to poison herself and her young infant baby. This trivial episode drives the judge himself cuckoo and Dantes, with a pleased grin, calls it a day.

And that's what I'm goin' to do.
Adenoids till we meet again,
One Punch McTague.

This series began in the November 20, 1921, issue. In the next number Mr. Witwer's Mr. McTague will pause amid his troubles to touch upon "The Last of the Mohicans."

A FAULTY INVITATION

A MAJESTIC-LOOKING gentleman, one of the old school, he walked with stately stride down the street, bowing deep from the waist as he accosted members of the fair sex. His progress was deliberate, slow, an exposition of unhurried dignity. At a corner he met a young physician.

"Colonel," suggested the younger man, "how about walking back to my house and having a little drink?"

"Thanks," replied the colonel, pressing his hat closer to his ears; "but what's the matter with running?"

NOT ALTOGETHER CRAZY

CHARLES EDWARD STEWART, chief clerk of the department of justice, looked into the operation of a Federal insane asylum recently. Reaching the billiard room provided for the inmates, and admitting his own outstanding skill with the cue, he invited an old man in the room to a game and offered him forty in a hundred.

Developments showed that Stewart had, to say the least, underestimated the lunatic's game.

"Well," said Stewart, having been badly beaten, "you took my measure."

"Yes, I did," replied the crazy man, "and, if you keep on going around the country giving odds like that, you'll take my cell."

Spunyarn

By George Hugh Banning

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Tom Whittly had written a sailor yarn, but he wanted to know more of the sea than he had been able to learn from yachting cruises. So assuming the name of the hero of his story, Dick Farrier, he got a job as rigger aboard the new auxiliary schooner *Aggie Newmiller,* fitting out in a Pacific port for a voyage to Australia. He became a friend of Ross Newmiller, the captain's son and first mate, but crusty Captain Newmiller had small use for him and refused to ship him as one of the crew. While in Dick's room, Ross read a part of the manuscript of Dick's story, purporting to be the will of Gilbert Farrier, Earl of Merylswood, leaving a fortune to his son Dick on condition that within four years he learn the trade of sailoring, act as ship's officer aboard a deep-water vessel and marry "an eminently **respectable** woman of good repute." Mistaking fiction for fact, Ross, with his sister's future in mind, had Dick shanghaied—with the knowledge of Roberta who, just home from college, was to make the voyage with her mother and father. When Dick recovered consciousness Captain Newmiller put him to work with the crew. A few days at sea, Mathsen, a seaman, was struck by Captain Newmiller, stumbled overboard and was drowned despite the captain's belated effort to save him. A little later Stevens, the hard-boiled second mate, with whom Roberta had been amusing herself by conducting a mild flirtation, attempted to kiss the girl. Dick interfered and in the fight that followed was stabbed in the shoulder.

(A Four-Part Story—Part II.)

CHAPTER VIII.

CONVALESCENCE.

ROBERTA was recovering her senses as Farrier and Stevens were losing theirs. By this time all hands had tumbled aft, but the skipper had met them at the edge of the deck load and ordered them to hold their ground.

Ben-Tenny had been the first on deck. He had taken the wheel but not before the foresail had jibed over, carrying away boom tackle and sheet, and crashing on through the weather rigging. Farrier in his haste had lashed the wheel with helm up, but luckily only the foresail jibed as the vessel yawed to leeward.

The old man was calm. He ordered the men forward to clear the wreck while the two men continued fighting. When Roberta came to him pleading that he might put an end to the trouble the old man only scowled saying, "Devil take him! Serves him right. He left the wheel."

"But father!" insisted the girl, "he'll be killed!"

The old man gently brushed her aside, ordering Ross to take charge of the men forward.

"And when you finish overhauling the fores'l, stand by to shorten sail," he said.

He turned in time to see Stevens plunge forward across the deck under the pressure of a belaying pin, and Farrier crumpled beside the companionway like a leaf over a flame.

The squall was at its height. The moon was brushed by racing clouds until it wore away. The rain thundered against the sails and poured from each foot like so many waterfalls. Roberta rushed again to her father and clung to him. The old man did not move. He only lowered his dark clay face and said, "Go below, girl, and stay there!"

But Roberta did not go below. She shook him. If he had a heart she wanted evidence. She had noticed symptoms before, and she knew that she monopolized the only soft spot there. She would break through the crust and find it. She clung to him tighter and felt the muscles of his great arm grow tense and harden like iron.

"Please, please!" she cried. "If you are my father, help me—help me! I did it! It was my fault. He's dying!"

The wind was lifting the white surface from the sea, and screaming when the ship rolled against it. A huge swell heaved under the quarter and the *Aggie* fell back in the trough. Both bodies rolled over like logs and the spray swept over them.

"That'll fetch 'em to!" growled the skipper.

It did, in Farrier's case. He moved and tried to rise. Roberta ran to him. The old man, tilted from his stand by the same swell, stepped to the deck load and called forward: "Oh, Ross! Send a man aft!"

The man came but he had only one patient to tend. Roberta had helped Farrier down into the *sanctum* where her mother propped him with pillows on an upholstered seat to dress the wound. But down swooped the skipper bringing half the squall with him.

"Get 'im out of here! Get 'im farrard!" he roared. "What did you think I called a man aft for?"

"But, Charles," said the wife, "he'll die. I think it's an artery."

The old man glanced down at the blood.

"If it's an artery he's dead already. That's what."

"Quick, father! *Please!*" pleaded Roberta. "You can save him. You can! I know you can!"

The skipper eyed his daughter coldly but bent slowly down to examine the wound.

"Hm-mm," he mused. "Deep. Dam' deep." He looked up at his daughter who was dripping with rain and stained with blood. "Turn in and change your clothes. You look like a drowned rabbit."

"Can't I help you?"

"No! Change your clothes! Here! Hand me that box, Aggie."

Aggie obeyed and watched over her husband's shoulder as he worked.

"Deep. Dam' deep," muttered the skipper again, swabbing the wound with gauze.

"Is it an artery?" asked Roberta.

The skipper dropped the bandage and sprang to his feet. "Change your rags. What did I just finish telling you!"

Roberta turned toward her cabin. The old man resumed his surgical work. Farrier groaned a little. The skipper's methods were not gentle ones.

"Here! Lie still. How can I fix you up when——"

"Is it an artery?" asked Aggie.

"Just missed," said the old man. "Come now, hawse rat, lie still. Thought he was a hard chunk on deck the way he took a thrashing from the Second."

"He *didn't* take a thrashing!" protested Roberta standing at the doorway. "And Stevens was a strong man, too."

Farrier opened his eyes and smiled through the pain.

The skipper turned and stared at his daughter. "Hm-mm, so that's how she blows, is it? I told you to clear out of here."

Roberta vanished quickly. The skipper turned to his patient and began bandaging the arm.

Farrier was studying the deep lines of the old man's face—lines that never changed. He was wondering what true nature lay hidden there.

As he lay thus musing and feeling the firm coolness of the bandages being wound about his arm, a strange sense of shame crept over him. Perhaps he had misjudged the old man. Perhaps after all the skipper was human.

"I'm all right now, I think, captain," said Farrier at last. "I'll go forward."

"You'll go to hell faster and the devil can take you there!" growled the old man. "Keep still while I'm parceling you! You've caused me more trouble than all the rest of the crew put together. And if you tear those stitches loose there'll be a burial ceremony before I put in another. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you'll understand more before you take another belaying pin to a ship's officer!"

"Stevens stabbed him with a piece of pointed wood first," came Roberta's voice again. She was again on the wrong side of the door. "He stabbed Mr. Farrier with a piece of pointed wood first," repeated the girl somewhat nervously. "That's why I gave him the iron thing."

"That's why you—*what?*"

"I gave him the piece of iron. He had to have something, or——"

"So!" said the skipper. "It's a regular organized mutiny, is it? Maybe *you* can tell me how it started."

Roberta told the story in as few words as she could. When she finished the old man said nothing. He went to a cabinet, measured out some whisky in a tumbler and gave it to Farrier.

"Drink it down," ordered the old man. "Get him something dry to put on, Aggie, while I tend to Stevens. If his head's stove in, so much the better. Learning to make up to my daughter, is he?"

"I think I'd better go forward, captain," suggested Farrier.

"How many times do I tell you 'No?'

You're anchored here till you're well! That's what!"

The old man left the *sanctum.* Roberta returned again to her own cabin. Mrs. Newmiller helped the wounded man into her son's quarters and made up an extra berth. Soon Farrier was resting peacefully and before midnight was asleep.

At four o'clock the next morning he was awakened by eight bells. His shoulder ached so badly that he tossed about until eight bells sounded again when Roberta entered with his breakfast.

"I thought you might be hungry. Are you?" she asked; and without waiting for the answer: "How is your poor shoulder?"

"Fair enough," replied the patient. "But I didn't want to put you to all this trouble. Is Stevens on watch?"

"Let's not talk of him," she answered, resting the tray on the edge of the bunk. "I don't want to think about it any more. He will be all right. We thought you fractured his skull at first but he—you didn't hit him very hard."

"I wanted to kill him," grumbled Farrier.

"You might have! But never mind. It's all too terrible. And it was my fault entirely."

"Your fault!"

"Yes. My fault for having had anything to do with him. I—I should have known."

Farrier gazed over the top of his tray at her smooth, delicate features—eyes which now spoke true regret. They were directed seaward and focused on something far beyond. She seemed thoughtful and composed, as if in the presence of an intimate friend or brother. He recalled her words when she had said: "It seems I have known you for years!" How shallow they sounded at that time! How he had doubted their sincerity!

But now as he watched her from his bunk he too could have touched the same chord and found it harmonious. Perhaps he had misjudged her—made a prig of himself. He wanted to call her "Roberta" as she had once suggested. So they sat for some time, each unembarrassed by the silence—each thinking.

Several times the skipper passed by the open door, but did not so much as turn his head. Once Ross hurried into the stateroom for a pencil and pad, asked Tarry Dick how he felt, but left without waiting for the answer.

Farrier's pain was a pleasure and his weakness a strength. It was one of the happiest moments of his life only to see Roberta sitting there. God made some women good—so good that when they are bad they are not to blame; they are only play acting. And then He made those who are naturally bad—so bad that when they are good they are hypocrites. Neither category succeeds in its pretense. Of the two types Farrier classified Roberta with the first. She was only an amateur actress. Her reason for thus appearing in the limelight, however, remained a mystery.

"Are you through with your breakfast?" she asked at last.

"Yes, thank you, Roberta. May I call you that?"

Roberta stopped short. There was a sardonic twist in her smile.

"How did you remember it?" she asked.

"I could never forget it—*now.*"

"Your memory is improving, then. Very well, Dick, you have my consent." And she hurried out, balancing lightly against the roll and lurching of the vessel.

CHAPTER IX.

ATONEMENT.

Character in the making does not change from day to day, but rather from bump to bump. Its progress is not by way of the smooth incline, but by rough-hewn steps, some higher than others and with each step the possibility of a fall.

And so with Roberta. She had seen Farrier fighting her battle at the risk of his life —Tarry Dick whom she had abused in secret simply because he did not seem attracted by the sorry bait of her intrigue.

But upon sudden realization that her desires were being fulfilled; that Farrier's affections were focused upon her, and growing in intensity; that she could twist him as she had Stevens to fit the mold of her purposes, the old term, *"Victory,"* lost its meaning.

She glanced back over the vista she had traversed and beheld the winding track of a ship without a helmsman, the wake, fading with bursting bubbles to be covered by the winds. She looked ahead and saw the star she had followed deepen to a blood-red and

sink into the sea. Her game was a fool's game and the happiness she sought was false.

Several days passed. Her patient's arm had not yet healed; but the pain of it was burning in another wound and for this Roberta could find no remedy. It was located somewhere in her own heart.

They might have been happy days—those that followed. Roberta spent hours at Farrier's bedside, chatting or reading to him. Happy days indeed, for they carried her back across the hedged fields of England, to the lilacs of Kew, and the chapel bells of her school.

She thought of the glow in Farrier's eyes when she had told him of it: how her father had given her opportunities denied him in his youth, and all it meant to her now. She had expected some such revelation from Farrier. Perhaps he would tell her of his life at Cambridge or Oxford, or of his father's old manor near London, or perhaps of the globe-trotting experiences that followed. But Farrier sedulously cloaked his past with light platitudes and focused the trend of conversation back to her.

That he must have spent much of his life in America was evident by his Amercian provincialisms. But she noticed that he preferred his toast unbuttered, that he scalped his soft-boiled egg and ate it from the skull, that he enjoyed tea with his breakfast, and boasted only of his shortcomings, introspection being his chief source of humor. Surely only the blood of an English gentleman could generate such views and mannerisms.

For Roberta the visits with Farrier might have been a kind of rest cure—a reunion with herself and the type of civilization she had become used to. But the gloating approval of her brother, the tolerant grunt of her father, and the knowing smile of her mother visited her like spirits in a monastery, mocking the sincerity of her faith and crying *hypocrite!* when the chimes called for vespers.

Then to face the silent expression of admiration from the man she was wronging; to deceive him as she had deceived herself; was to twist the dagger and thrust it deeper.

She had been willing at one time to take his love and fortune in return for her empty self and a lie. The situation had never before presented itself to her in this light. It was "being done." It *had* been done for generations in the country of her schooling where matchmaking was a natural course of things. But now hers was the dream of romance divorced from fiction and married to reality: the dream of life and love walking together to the ends of the earth and leaving their toys behind.

But then would come the harsh awakening, like the troublesome aching of some cancerous growth that she had for the time forgotten and the past would come swinging back, leering, pointing its finger at her image in a distorted mirror. She would look upon herself with shame, see herself unworthy, turn away and leave Farrier to pass the rest of the day alone.

She could not blame Ross. He was her brother, and his interests, shortsighted as they were, worked always for her happiness, always toward that which he thought her due. His greatest pride lay in the fact that his sister was the rejuvenating spirit of his father's blood—a gem dug from an ancient sepulcher which he could not bear to see shoveled back again unnoticed. His highest ambition was to find the proper setting where it might be appreciated and preserved perhaps forever.

Nor did she blame her father. He had never pushed the suit. He left it entirely with his daughter whose judgment he had learned to respect. She was the image of his mother as he remembered her, and the soft spot Roberta thought she had monopolized in him was the fruit of a single sentiment; one that expressed itself through a tiny locket which held the miniature of Roberta's grandmother and namesake. For the old man Roberta was too precious to be trusted to any one—much less to a stowaway. But he had seen this same stowaway in action; seen him take the punishment that only red blood will not flinch from. If there was blue blood besides, so much the better. His daughter was entitled to both. So he had sanctioned Farrier's presence in the sanctum—something he had "never heard the likes of before." Then, too, it gave Aggie something to fuss about, and without this Aggie was always a nuisance at sea.

Nor could Roberta blame her mother. Aggie was a simple woman whom men call good, and women, commonplace. She took pride in her husband's ancestry and had even secured, during one of her numerous voyages, an intricate chart of a tree, the trunk of which held the sap of kings. She

saw Roberta, her daughter, as the one remaining blossom, clinging to a dying twig. This flower she knew must come to seed, and it was no sin to prepare a fertile soil.

All this was churning through Roberta's mind for the hundredth time and for the hundredth time blame pointed its finger at her.

She was alone in her cabin with Thackeray's "Vanity Fair" at page 105—a number she had noticed an hour ago—when there came a familiar tapping of finger nails at her door and Ross beamed in with lifted eyebrows and corrugated forehead.

"Not seasick, I hope, Bobbie!" he said, lifting himself to the edge of her bunk and studying her over his knees.

Roberta shook her head.

Ross paused to consider. "Then what's wrong?"

"I can't tell you, Ross. I don't think you'd understand," she answered.

"Come out of it, Bobbie! Sure I would!"

"It's all so mixed—so—I've been such a fool!"

"Come on. Forget it!" said Ross. "You're doing fine. Say, Bobbie, don't you worry. Dick's strong for you. When a man talks in his sleep he tells the truth. I *know!* So don't start unloading cargoes of grief to me. At least, not till I tell you what's brewing around this ship!

"This morning, just before I went on watch, I thought I heard Dick groaning in the bunk above me. So I turned out to find the trouble. Well, there wasn't any trouble at all. He was sound asleep—four fathoms under—and *talking*. He repeated your name over and over again. And what do you think he was doing: hugging a pillow! There! I knew you'd smile. When Dick knocked Steve cold with the belaying pin he knocked a home run for us. When Steve come to, the skipper drove at him tongue and tusk. Told him if he ever touched you again there'd be a second mate missing."

Roberta grew pale.

"I don't mean there's going to be bloodshed," added Ross, regarding his sister with a smile. "Not yet, anyhow. But Steve wasn't made to swallow the old man's dose without feeling the pain. If he'd been normal there'd been trouble right then. But he didn't forget. And he won't, for some little time to come. He's not alone either. There's not a man aboard who can handle the forem'st hands as he can, and half the time, lately, he's been forward, gassing with the men, blowing off enough steam to put us in thick weather for a week. This morning I was up under the foks'l head measuring off a few fathoms of spunyarn. Stevens was singing out blue blazes in the foks'l adjoining. No one talked but Steve, so I fancy there were lots listening.

"'There's no man sails,' I heard him say, 'who can kill a man and expect to get away with it, while Donivan Stevens is second mate!' He called it murder; harped on the law, the Seaman's Act, and all the rules and rails known to sea lawyers. At first I thought he was instigating a mutiny. But that wasn't his game. He was going to wait till we put in port and bring the matter up before the consul there, lining the men up as witnesses.

"When I told the old man what he was up against he laughed. First time in months. Then he sat for a while thinking and started studying charts and weather maps.

"'So that's the play, is it?' he said. 'Sounds like mutiny.'

"'Not that,' I told him. 'He's holding his dynamite for port!'

"The old man went on nosing charts—studying all kinds of out-of-the-way places from Nicobar to Kalamazoo.

"'It'll be a cold day when we touch, then,' he said.

"I asked him what he meant.

"'I mean that if Stevens doesn't start mutiny I'll keep him water-logged till he does! That's what! I'll keep him offshore till the sea runs dry. If it's trouble they want they'll find it without going ashore!'

"'What do you mean?' I asked.

"'I mean business!' he hollered. 'I mean mutiny! I mean to drive them to it!'

"'What good will that do?'

"'It'll give them something to sharpen their teeth on. It'll give me something to muzzle them with! That's what good it will do! Mutiny on the high seas is not to be sneezed at when it comes to laying cards on the table, Ross, m'boy. Stevens can't prove worse than battery against me. When Mathsen fell overboard it was accident and there's men to testify. Stevens knows it. So a little mutiny now, on his part, will make it horse apiece.'

"'But suppose they won't mutiny?'

"'I'll see that they do, and what's more

I'll see that Stevens starts it. I'll drive 'em to it, that's what. And if they don't mutiny before I get through my name's not Newmiller.'

" 'Yes, and suppose they do? Suppose Steve controls the foks'l and the three men of the black gang. Suppose he gets the cook to side in and the two cabin boys?'

" 'Suppose what you please, and include yourself with the mutineers. It's none of my business. What are fourteen half men to seven *men?* There'll be mutiny. *Understand?* And it won't be the first mutiny I've tinkered with.' "

Ross paused. Roberta was as pale as a statue cut in alabaster.

"I didn't want to frighten you, Bobbie," continued Ross. "But the old man *was* red-hot, and meant what he said. Not such a bad hunch either."

"But, Ross! I don't understand. What good would mutiny do?"

"Just this: if there's trouble, Steve will be behind it. That's certain. And if the old man gets that against him Steve will have good reason for keeping the Mathsen case up his sleeve when we hit port. The old man may be starting more than he can finish, but that's no reason why we should let grass grow under our feet. There'll be a vacancy for second mate. That's all we want. Ben-Tenny can fill it and we'll railroad Dick in third. He'll stay by us for more reasons than one.

"That leaves us the skipper, the chief, the first, second and third assistant engineers, Dick, Ben-Tenny and myself. We may get the three oilers and we have good chances for the galleymen. That's eight to count on and six more to hope for. Stevens has the seven foks'l hands and himself, with equal chances for the oilers and galleymen. Right now we can figure it a draw."

Ross had been talking so fast and furiously, Roberta understood only half of it, but the words "murder," "mutiny," "assault and battery" rang in her ears.

Ross smiled. "Don't take it so hard, Bobbie. It's for the best. Our little plan is working like a million-dollar oil well. Dick's all for you, even if he is a little too high-strung to admit it. He'd get down and roll over for you if you gave him half a chance. All you have to do is pretend you don't care."

"But I don't, Ross. That's the trouble! Or I mean I do! I do care! I care too much!"

"You do care! Of course you do. It makes it that much easier. Now you can go ahead with a clear conscience."

"If I only could," said Roberta, almost in a whisper.

"Sure you can! What's to stop you? It's clear sailing from now on. Four or five months to clear the deal. All I have to do is make an officer out of a stowaway and from the looks of things it's going to be the easiest little thing I ever did. He can navigate already. As far as theory goes he knows as much as any man aboard. A little more seamanship for him and he'll be there one hundred per cent."

Roberta broke down completely. "Oh, Ross!" she cried. "Why did you start all this?"

"Why did I start—why, Bobbie! What's the matter? You were with me, weren't you?"

"Yes, I was. And I was a fool! It's all a mean, selfish game!"

"*Selfish!* Mean and selfish to arrange a little happiness for you and Dick? He'll be the happiest man in the world!"

"And I," Roberta faltered, "I'll be the most miserable woman in England."

Ross started. "You—you told me only a minute ago that you——" He paused and a dark shadow swept across his face. "Don't you love him, Bobbie?"

"Oh, you don't—you can't understand! You never could!"

Ross lifted her to her feet and held her crying body in his arms while she clung to his shoulder, sobbing.

"No, Bobbie," he said. "I don't understand."

CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST BURIAL.

Captain Newmiller was a skipper of the old school but he did not know when he started to look for trouble that trouble was looking for him.

On September 1st, the *Aggie* was in a dead calm at latitude 7′ north, longitude 174° west, logging scarcely six knots under auxiliary power. She jerked her booms impatiently and lunged lazily southward in a languid swell. The sun rose like a spinning disk—white-hot. It burned the moisture from the deck and swelled the tar and calking from the seams.

Eight bells relieved the port watch, calling Stevens and Black-fin to the poop. All hands trooped aft and climbed from the deck load into the seamen's cuddy.

The usual breakfast comprised preserved eggs, black smudged potatoes hashed and greasy, coffee from yesterday's grounds boiled and reboiled, ship biscuits somewhat moldy, bread and butter. But to-day something was missing. Jack was the first to notice the deficiency. "Where's the butter?" he yelled.

Cocky, an Australian cabin boy, appeared at the window opening from the galley.

"Cocky!" sang out Scotty. "Dae we no' git butter-r?"

"That's what you don't!"

"Who says ve don't?" cried Andrew.

"I said so!" returned the impudent cockney retreating into the officers' cuddy.

Nine men rose in unison with blood in their eyes. Barnacle Joe appeared at the window wiping the perspiration from his face with his apron.

"Sorry, mates," he apologized, "but it's cap'n's orders!"

"It's a lie!" cried Olaf. "With me own eyes I seen five barrels of it come aboard!"

"Now, yust vate a minute, boys," said the cook; "dere ain't gonna be no bauter. De old mon sez ve vos in fer a long trip. He sez fer t'cut down on yez. Bauter, he sez, vos fer ship's officers."

"By Yiminy, ve see who it's for!" cried Olaf.

"Dot ve vill!" threatened Hans turning toward the door. "Ve *tack* de domned bauter!"

That move and the determination stamped on his clenched jaw was the cue for a general stampede for the galley. The men tumbled from either door, their faces dark and glowering.

Barnacle Joe, almost swept away by the avalanche which came pouring in from both sides, seized a swab and landed Hans a squashing blow in the face, nearly blinding him with soap and "squeegee." The volley of oaths that followed only stimulated the little cook's fighting spirit. He whirled like the drunken mouse who cried, "bring on your cats," and landed Scotty against the bulkhead.

But the mop had played its last trick. Barnacle Joe overcome by numbers was sent crashing headlong into the store locker. Scotty, blubbering and sputtering, cleared the suds from his eyes and stood blinking with rage in the grinning face of the cabin boy, Cocky, who had just returned from the officers' mess.

"Serves yeh right!" drawled Cocky. "Want butter, do yeh!"

"Butter be damned!" yelled Scotty. And his fist was as quick as his oath. Cocky went hurtling through the crowd and stumbled upon Hans who sent him sprawling over the red-hot stove. A sizzle like frying ham, followed by a piercing shriek, paralyzed the riotous mob. Cocky tore free, leaving the skin from the palm of his left hand broiling on the hot surface. His face was distorted with pain and rage. He glanced at his hand, then at Scotty. He seized a meat cleaver from the chopping block and sprang upon the Scotchman with a mad laugh.

Andrew made a dive at him from behind. Hans gripped a knife but it was too late. The cleaver fell upon the Scotchman, splitting him from scalp to eyes. Scotty dropped in a pool of blood. Cocky fell after him—three men on his back—a knife blade through his heart.

It happened so suddenly no one realized results or causes. Scotty was dead. Cocky was rolling the whites of his eyes, breathing his last. Hans stood over him trembling, a blood-dripping knife in his hand. The other men formed a semicircle, staring.

Suddenly they looked up—and moved back. Hans dropped the knife. Captain Charles Newmiller stepped over the threshold. He stopped short at the ghastly heap upon the floor but kept his eyes for the main part fixed upon the men. He was about to speak when Stevens appeared at the entrance from the main deck.

"Mind your watch, Mr. Stevens," said the skipper sharply.

Stevens did not move. He stood glaring at the bloody scene, stricken with horror.

"Mr. Stevens!" called the skipper sternly.

Stevens looked up, scowling.

"Mind your watch!"

The second mate muttered something under his breath and backed out of the galley.

"Who's responsible for this?" demanded the old man.

No one answered.

"Out with it, now! What's the row?"

"Dey vanted bauter," said Barnacle Joe, standing in front of the locker door. "Dey vanted bauter. I vouldn't give 'em none. Dey boosted in on me, and dan ven I——"

"Who killed Scotty?" interrupted the old man."

"Cocky!" came a chorus of voices.

"Cocky, eh! Who killed Cocky?"

No one answered. The old man looked from one to the other and finally fixed his attention on Flunky, the second cabin boy, a moron who had viewed the battle from the top of the sink.

"They got in a fight," faltered the demented lad, "and killed each other."

The rest nodded indorsement.

"What do all these men mean by being in the galley?" demanded the skipper of Barnacle Joe.

"Dey vanted bauter, sarr."

"Wanted *what? Butter!* Who wanted butter?"

"Scotty vanted it most. De rest yust jused to enyoy it ven dey got it. You give orders, sarr, not fer t'let 'em ate bauter."

"Ve vouldn't believe dat you gave no orders like dat, sarr," put in Olaf.

"You'll be glad to eat your bread dry. You'll be glad to *get* bread before this trip's over. That's what! *Butter!* Never heard the likes of it."

"De law says ve gat bauter!" said Olaf.

"The *law! What* law? I'll teach you the law," replied the old man clenching a fist. "Clear out of here! Every hand of you! And if there's any more murder to be done aboard this ship I'll do it myself!"

Olaf started to speak, but evidently changed his mind. Perhaps he recalled the Mathsen case.

Jack and Gloomy Gus were the first to leave. Hans, Olaf and Andrew followed. Two oilers, Shad and Peavy grinned cynically at each other and retreated by the opposite door. Barnacle Joe and Flunky carried the bodies to the deck load and covered them with tarpaulin. The old man returned to his sanctum. All this took place while Farrier was preparing to change his quarters. He had gathered his dunnage and was on the point of leaving when he met the man in the companionway.

"Leaving us, are you," said he.

"Yes, sir. I'll be able to get along for'ard now."

"Bad place for a one-armed man, I tell you!"

"Why?"

The old man grunted and went his way.

Farrier started forward toward the forecastle. He passed the two bodies laid out on the deck load. He lifted the tarpaulin and shuddered. He remembered the old man's words and paused to consider. From the forecastle came the grumbling of half the crew. The voice of Donivan Stevens sounded above them all. Farrier had not seen Stevens since the battle on the poop but there could be no harm in renewing the acquaintance. He continued forward and passed down over the deck load into the forecastle. A dead silence greeted him.

"Don't let me interrupt anything," said Farrier sardonically.

"Caum in lad," said Gloomy Gus; "ve vouldn't care."

"Hell, no!" said Stevens. "Glad t' see yeh well again."

Farrier looked at him somewhat embarrassed for words.

"Only don't never take a belayin' pin t'ship's officers in the future," continued Stevens. "It generally don't pay."

"Physically," said Farrier, "it's a decided loss."

"And it ain't as a rule customary," said Jack, taking a lip pouch full of snuff, "fer a man t'be livin' aft in th' ol' man's quarters, and then espect t' get along with his mates farrard."

"They kept me there on account of my arm. The skipper sewed it up."

"And I fancy it took five days fer t' do it?" sneered Jack.

"Stool-pigeon stuff don't go vit sailors!" put in Andrew.

Farrier colored with rage. "Who said I was a stool pigeon?"

"Dot's all right, sawny boy," said Gloomy. "Nobuddy said you vos. Ve only said don't be von."

Farrier turned to his bunk and began stowing his dunnage. He was conscious of his unwelcome, and felt it more keenly as the silence continued. No one spoke of the dead men on deck, and Farrier thought it politic not to mention them. But he linked their death somehow to the present estrangement of the men and Stevens' presence in the forecastle, though he could not understand their apparent intentions of secrecy.

Soon after Farrier entered, Stevens relighted his pipe and left the forecastle. The men went silently about their personal affairs.

Sunday at sea is usually an uneventful and long day. No more work is required of the men than that which is absolutely nec-

essary for the safety and well-being of the ship. This Sunday however might have been a memorable one, especially for men such as Farrier who had never before crossed the equator, latitude zero being the site of initiation for neophytes. Farrier might have been tarred, painted, greased, shaved, shorn, clipped, keelhauled and sent aloft to cross from main to mizzen on a single spring stay. He might have been submerged in a lifeboat filled with water and held under till his right eye shone green and his left shone red. Altogether it would have been merry sport, for few ships cross "the line" without being intercepted and boarded by Neptune and his deep-sea helpers, "Mrs. Neptune," "Davy Jones," the "doctor," the "preacher," and many others eager to lend a strong hand.

But to-day the crew of the *Aggie* was in no mood for such child's play. Instead of the usual gayety the men prepared a burial. Three timbers were taken from the deck load, cleated together and covered with canvas. They were lowered five feet to the rail and hinged in such a way that the end, projecting outboard, could be raised and lowered by means of a "handy-Billy" leading from the mizzen shrouds. Two canvas sacks were sewed and sufficiently weighted at one end. The bodies were shrouded within and laid side by side on the projecting platform.

All hands stood by waiting for the old man to conduct the ceremony. The day was already scorching, though a light air filled the sails and held the sheets taut and silent. The sea was a succession of rolling ground swells, like waving chiffon spangled with silver. An albatross winged a close contour over the crests. Sometimes it cut the glazed surface with the tip of its wing, admiring the reflection of its graceful maneuvers and the untainted whiteness of its plumage.

For the first time since Farrier had left St. Helens he felt lonely. The men avoided him. They stood in whispering groups or lounged about smoking their pipes or chewing snuff, satisfied in solitude.

It seemed to Farrier that the ship had reached the very pole of desolation. The universe had melted into sea and sky and the world had shriveled within its boundaries to the deck of a wandering ship. He looked down upon the shrouded bodies, tranquil and still, awaiting destruction by scavengers of the sea. Three hours ago these two bothered with petty things of life and cursed at meager trials. Farrier laughed cynically. He seized a splintery stick from the deck load and hurled it carelessly into the sea. So much for care. So much for life. So much for——

But his thoughts were interrupted. Captain Newmiller appeared on the poop followed by his wife and daughter. Farrier's eyes focused on Roberta who dropped behind her parents to lean on a pinrail and look far out to sea.

Perhaps she was thinking of the two bodies about to slide from the world—down through the green water, silently, slowly down, like shadowy spirits drifting through the atmosphere of a stranger planet. Down, down, fathom upon fathom, they would go until the brown-gold kelp, swinging in vagrant eddies, folded beneath them to form their resting place. Perhaps the shadow of a passing ship would glide noiselessly over them, or some monster of the deep might come and stare——

Roberta shuddered and looked about. The back of her hand passed swiftly across her eyes and there was left—not tears but a trembling smile, the reflection of a newborn courage. Perhaps she would have to see such things again before the end of the voyage.

Farrier, watching, thought of an artist's joy in such a model. He imagined himself tracing the delicate lines of her small slender body and lingering over the olive coloring of the rather piquant face.

Roberta seemed all herself now. There was no more of the clumsy actress about her—no more pretense. A difficult lesson had been well learned and the textbook tightly closed forever.

Captain Newmiller strode with an air of dignity to his place before the ship's officers who joined in a ragged semicircle opposite the foremast hands. Mrs. Newmiller stood with head erect, her eyes glowing with pride as she watched every motion of her husband. She had seen him deliver the burial sermon before. He had always done himself justice.

Captain Newmiller lowered his head to look upon the bodies. Hats were removed. A silence followed. Then throwing back his shoulders, the old man wore about and faced the crew.

"Men," he began, "we are gathered here

as shipmates in the solemn duty of consigning our dead to the sea. We are sailors. We have parted with shipmates before. We await the day when we too shall be shrouded with tarpaulin and sent alone on the long voyage to seas unknown. We await the day when comrades shall stand as we stand now, thinking the thoughts that we think now, while we lie still. It is not for us to dwell upon the whys and wherefores of this or that in life. Nor is it for us to conjecture on what seas men sail in death. We have only to take the days and nights and accept what good or bad they bring and trust the rest to whatever God we know. I need say no more. I have looked for the book containing the burial service for those who go down to the sea in ships. I regret that it cannot be found. We must do without. May God forgive the sins of those we now bury."

He gave the signal. Hans and Andrew commenced to lower away.

"Belay you!" rang out a voice.

Gloomy Gus sprang forward.

"Belay in the name of Christ!" he cried.

He fell upon the haul and raised the platform to its former level. The crew stood wondering as the big sailor faced them. He glared at the skipper, his eyes flashing in a kind of frenzy.

"God forgive *you!*" he cried. "God forgive you and de whole ship's company for allowing shipmates to be buried un-Christianlike. "Men," he said, growing calm. "Ay bane sailed de seas for thorty-seven years. Ay never seen Christian shipmates buried without Christian prayers. Ay got a prayer book, sarr. Ay gat it! Ay *de-mond* a proper Christian burial!"

Some of the men smiled at one another. Some of them watched the skipper and grew pale with fear. But the old man did not flinch nor change his expression.

"Lower away," he ordered.

Andrew and Hans hesitated, glancing from the skipper to Gloomy Gus. The latter stood with wild eyes fixed upon the old man. He was trembling with fury.

"Lower away," came the same stern order.

Hans and Andrew started to obey, but Gloomy sprang upon them again, this time with such force he sent the two men sprawling.

"In Christ's name!" he shrieked, clinging frantically to the haul. "Not vile Gloomy Gos is hare t' stop it!

"Leggo that haul!" demanded the old man.

Gloomy Gus did not move.

"Drop it! Do you hear?" The skipper had drawn closer.

Gloomy would not move.

"You refuse to obey orders?"

Still no response.

"Then take *this!* You dam' fanatic!"

Gloomy received a blow that lifted him from his feet and sent him sliding across the splintery deck load, blood issuing from his mouth and nostrils. He remained senseless.

A siren scream followed as the haul paid out through the hot, spinning sheaves. The platform lowered. The vessel dipped low. A wave rose, seized the structure, and tore it from its hinges before the bodies could slide into the sea. Two dead men put forth to sea on a raft.

CHAPTER XI.

DISCORD.

That evening after dinner—a dinner marked not only by the absence of butter but by the presence of insipid lime juice in the drinking water—Farrier sat on the forecastle head, leaning against the staysail stanchion. Most of the foremast hands were sprawling along the starboard coaming, their faces green and ghastly in the dim glow of the running light. Black-fin was drawing heavily upon his pipe, the sharp contours of his face appearing and vanishing with the intermittent puffs.

As the vessel forged slowly ahead to the drowsy beat of her auxiliaries, the great sails, hanging limply from their gaffs, swung to and fro, sweeping the sky like the wings of a monster bat.

"Lucky ve gat dem coffee mills grindin' us along," grumbled Andrew.

"She's a misfit," said Olaf. "Put 'er on a tack vit a stiff breeze and ve'll have fer t' shift runnin' lights fore and aft t' show vitch vay we're movin'. Dot ve vould, mon! Even ven she blows from de quarter, like ever since ve left Astoria, ve make leevay like a dronk crab. De wessel's a yona."

"And the skipper," added Black-fin, "if he ain't mad he's crazy."

"Crazy!" echoed Jack. "He's worse. We start gettin' cheap oleo in place o' butter, then no oleo even. Now it's lime juice

instead o' canned fruit and before the trip's over we'll be lucky t' get scurvy and kickin'. Gawd, but it's hot!"

Gloomy Gus cleared his throat and the words came drawling forth in a growl of hate.

"Dere's a hot-ter place called hell fer d' likes of him, and Ay svare by the God vot'll send 'im dare, it ain't so far-rr avay."

A silence followed, and Farrier perceived several eyes glancing sharply in his direction.

"It don't do no good to tell everybody about it," muttered Jack.

"Ay tell d' vorld. Ay bane a Christian. No mon can set dead shipmates adrift on a raft vile Gloomy Gos is aboard t' stop it. Dot Ay mean! It ain't proper."

Eight bells struck and Farrier walked aft to relieve Hans at the wheel.

West by south was the course transmitted to him. He studied the compass. He wondered if he had not mistaken the order. Looking forward he noticed Stevens, who had just come on watch, frowning into the binnacle. Ross, now relieved, was on the point of going below when the second officer stopped him with an oath.

"What's the trouble now?" asked Ross.

"What's that course again?"

"West b' south."

"What's the idea? We were sou'west a couple of hours ago. West be south don't get us no place."

"West b' south's the course anyway. Skipper's orders." And Ross vanished down the companionway.

"He's crazy," grumbled Stevens, turning to the wheelman. "What's the use o' that?"

Farrier was asking himself the same question. Southwest had been her course, and southwest, disregarding winds, was the most favorable. If any change had been made for the purpose of avoiding the calm belt and catching the southeast trades it should have been southward rather than westward. The *Aggie* was jerking herself to pieces in the doldrums and it would be a long time clearing this region with a westerly course.

At that moment the skipper came striding from below, chewing a long cigar. He glanced into the binnacle and met Stevens in front of the wheelhouse.

"What's the matter with you?" he snapped. "You'd let a vessel jerk herself to pieces before your very eyes. Lay farrard Mr. Stevens—and sharp. Take in the square s'l! Haul boom tackles taut, Get the hauls out t' leward and steady the gaffs before you part a halyard. And to-morrow, Mr. Stevens, I want all halyards rove end for end."

"They're not chafed a bit, sir."

"That'll do. I said *end for end.* Understand?"

"As you dam' please, sir!"

The old man choked in a rage, swallowed and choked again. Then, drawing himself up in all his dignity:

"Lay farrard, Mr. Stevens."

"As you dam' please, sir." And Stevens veered about and strode forward, the old man hurling curses at his back.

Soon all hands of the starboard watch were at work hauling taut boom tackles and securing gaffs to leeward. The square sail was brailed in. The old man watched, chewing his cigar with more and more animation and working it from one corner of his mouth to the other. When the job was done Stevens came aft, swabbing the perspiration from his foretop.

"Well done, Mr. Stevens," said the old man. "Now lay farrard again and *set* the square s'l."

Stevens stared vacantly. Twice he started to speak, and twice changed his mind.

"Did you hear me, Mr. Stevens? Set the square s'l."

"Set the square s'l!" exclaimed the other. "We just finished brailin' it in."

"Never mind what you just finished doing. I'm telling you what to *do*, and what's more I want it *done! Understand?"*

"I understand reason, yes. I'm no fool, cap'n, and——"

"Glad to know all this, Mr. Stevens. And you'll lay farrard and set that square s'l."

"It won't set. There ain't no wind. How d'you expect me to set it?"

"As you dam' please, sir!"

Stevens had nothing to say but the unsayable. He said it, however, and started forward.

"And Mr. Stevens," sang out the skipper; "when you're done you can leggo all the down hauls on the port side and make them fast t' starboard. Then send the watch aft to take in the jigger. I want it snug and fast. We won't need it till tomorrow morning."

This was the last straw. Stevens went ranting forward in a war dance. The old

man swung into the wheelhouse and blew down the speaking tube.

"Hello there! Mr. Kennedy? Captain Newmiller talking. Cut off the engines. We don't need them. Yes. Yes. Stop them. Yes, Mr. Kennedy. We'll have to save oil. We'll get a wind presently. That's right."

He slammed the tube in its bracket and eyed Farrier with a kind of a grin—one which must have pained him.

"Dick," he said, "what do you know about navigation?"

It came so abruptly that Farrier was groping for the answer when the old man added:

"Can you box the compass?"

Farrier had boxed the compass as regularly as Gloomy Gus had said his prayers and he did so now for the skipper's benefit:

"North, north by east, nor'-nor'east, nor'-east b' north, nor'east, nor'east by east, east-nor'east, east b' north——"

"Enough!" interrupted the old man. "Now, the rules of the road." And a rapid-fire quiz started in which Farrier held up his end save on a few minor snags.

"Study up on those rules. Keep them on the tip of your nose so's you can sniff them," nodded the skipper, then continued with simple questions pertaining to meridian altitude sights for latitude, fore and afternoon sights for longitude and so forth, all of which Farrier could answer, having become quite proficient in the use of the sextant.

"Anybody can learn that stuff," said the old man. "What you need is seamanship—how to handle a vessel. When you learn that, you won't need navigation. You'll be able to *smell* your way out of anything from thick weather to a typhoon."

"Seamanship!" Farrier looked forward at the distorted sails and wondered if this was seamanship. He looked at the compass and wondered again. What was the old man up to?

But his trend of thought was diverted by a sudden spluttering and coughing from aloft. The exhaust funnels leading halfway up the jigger mast were vomiting great rings and clouds of black vapor. Something back-fired in the engine room. A loud report like that of a three-pound gun resounded. Then all was silent and dark. The vibrations ceased. The engines were stopped. The *Aggie* refused to answer her wheel. She swung lazily into the trough and wallowed there like a log.

Presently a dim red glow shone at the headpiece of the jigger trysail and a thin column of white smoke rose from the truck. Without further ado Farrier dropped the wheel and started aloft. It was slow climbing, for he carried one arm in a sling, but upon reaching the trestletrees he found that the smoldering hemp and canvas was easily extinguished. Looking below he saw all hands swarming on the poop and several men, led by Gloomy Gus, halfway up the rigging on the opposite side.

"Vy staup de enyans?" asked Gloomy, tugging himself to a seat on the trestletrees.

"Don't ask me," Farrier replied. "The old man telephoned down to the chief while I was at the wheel. He said we'd have to save oil."

"And burn up the ship!" added Black-fin. "Why don't he wait till we get wind before he shuts down? The lunatic!"

"And vy do ve head south be vest?" grumbled Hans.

"And what's the idea of trimmin' sails farmerlike, ven dere ain't no vint t' trim 'em on?"

"The fool!" muttered Gloomy.

But Farrier was not listening. He was looking westward where, dim as a setting star, shone a light. Perhaps it *was* a star. If so it would soon vanish. But it did not. Gradually it became brighter. Farrier imagined he saw a mast and a white hulk beneath.

"Look!" he cried. "Must be a small boat."

"Dot she must!" agreed Gloomy Gus. "See 'im mates?"

The men were down the rigging and on deck before Farrier could start. When he reached the poop a boat was being lowered, manned by Stevens, Black-fin and Jack. All hands watched as the small craft bore westward over the glassy grounders. Later it disappeared in darkness.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FUSE OF INSURRECTION.

Eight bells sounded before the dipping of sweeps and the click of oarlocks announced the boat's return. She swung alongside with a small dinghy in tow. Neither

boat carried a light and instead of being manned by three hands there were only two.

"That you, Mr. Stevens?" called the skipper from the poop.

"Me an' Black-fin," came Stevens' voice through the darkness. He grumbled something further which the bumping of boats against the side rendered inaudible.

"Where's the other man?" cried the old man, peering over the taffrail.

At first there was no reply, then: "Jack fell overboard. Sharks got 'im. There was hundreds of 'em."

The boats were drifting astern. Men on deck stood staring. Scotty and Cocky had been killed. Now Jack was gone; and all inside of twenty-four hours.

Reluctantly Gloomy Gus and Hans shambled aft where they extended the davit falls to the water. Stevens and Black-fin made them fast to the rings fore and aft. They shipped the dinghy inboard over the thwarts; then, assisted by the men on deck, hauled themselves and the boats up till the falls jammed "two blocks."

"Lay farrard, you men," ordered the skipper. "I'll see you below, Mr. Stevens."

Farrier accompanied the men over the deck load. They were hurling questions at Black-fin, none of which he seemed disposed to answer.

"Give a man chance t' get wind," he grumbled.

In the forecastle he slouched down before his bunk and began filling his pipe. The lamp spluttered anæmic rays across his face, accentuating the deep furrows in the parched skin of his forehead. Suddenly, as he struck a match, he glanced up sharply at Farrier, then confined his attention to the bowl of his pipe where the dry tobacco ignited in a thin blue flame that died and vanished with the smoke.

"Four and one makes five," Black-fin began. "Five in a month!" He shook the match and tossed it carelessly at the door. "One dead almost before ever we knowed he was alive. White canvas breeches he wore, only they were salt-water soaked, yellow and grimy like himself."

As if there were no one else present in the forecastle, Black-fin addressed Farrier exclusively and there was a shadow of a grin upon his lips which it seemed he tried to repress.

"Young and shriveled he were, and shakin' like a sail tack with black water fever. Skin yeller where it aughter been redlike, and purple where you'd look fer white. Armed to the teeth, he were—full cartridge belt, two automatics, and a French rifle."

"Start at de start, vy don't yeh?" interrupted Gloomy. "You, Steve, and Yack left de *Aggie*. Dan vat?"

"All right. Then we pulls out, Steve at the steerin' sweep settin' us up a bit north o' west. We pulls about two miles before Steve sees the light and we pulls two more miles before ever we gets to it.

"She's a dinghy—same as you seen aft there. And she carries a light on 'er farrard thwart. But we can't make out nobody aboard till we pulls alongside and we don't get there till we plow through—by golly, I bet there was a thousand sharks. A *thousand,* mind yeh! So thick they is we can't dip a scull without scrapin' barnacles offen their backs. They takes after our sweeps, even! Crazy hungry, they is. Yeh can hear their jaws comin' together with a kind of a crack and splash till we can't pull no more. We *poles* our way through 'em—them a snappin' like crockerdiles. Turn on their backs t' bite? Say, listen. Them devils can bite a standin' on their bloody heads. They gets so playful they chews each other in half. We're outern the water half the time, slidin' every which way on their squirmin' backs. Their fins and tails goes skootin' along like ducks in a shootin' gallery; and would yeh believe me that——"

Gloomy Gus cleared his throat impatiently. "Sharks! Yeah—ve heard yeh. Dan vat?"

"Then we pulls 'longside and there on the bottom of the dinghy lays the shriveled up young man. If ever there was a lubber with a foot in hell, here he is. Sleepin' he lays with his head on a rifle and at his feet lays a five-gallon water jug—empty.

"'I'll get aboard,' says Jack; 'and pull the old boy to the ship.' And with that he starts steppin' over to the other boat. But just then a big man-eatin' devil come a-cruisin' along right between the two of 'em. Jack loses his footin' and falls, *squash,* right on the beggar's back.

"In all my life I never seen such a hullabaloo! One yell from poor old Jack and the sea's alive and crawlin'—crawlin' with the biggest, dirtiest critters ever yeh seen, drunk or sober. They tumbles atop o' one atother, tryin' to get at Jack what, by this

time, is et up by more'n a dozen of 'em. Our boat comes near capsizin' then an' there! They takes the dinghy and shoots it off: ten or fifteen yards. Shark tails comes whack-slashin' down on our gun'ls, and beatin' agin' our sides till I thinks we'll be stove in or swallered whole. Most of the devils is twenty-five t' thirty feet long if they're an inch. Bitin', twistin', jumpin', splashin' —they're *crawlin'! Crawlin'!* And the sea's alive and bleedin' with their bit-up bodies."

"More sharks," grumbled Gloomy Gus. "Jack et up. Dan vat?"

"'This is no place fer us,' I says t' Steve, and we starts clearin' away, hard as ever we can. But we don't go very far before Steve jerks 'imself around on his sweep, looks bravelike at me, and says: 'Black-fin,' says-ee, 'me an' you're goin' back fer the old boy in the dinghy. He'll get et—boat and all!' 'Right-o,' says I. 'I'm with yeh, Steve.' So we starts back through the stampedin' herd—the wildest devils ever yeh heard of.

"But before we gets there—what happens but up jumps the beggar in the dinghy with his rifle at his shoulder. He hollers like mad but we can't hear 'im fer sharks. But we can see he's crazy or mad. We don't know which. And we don't care particular, fer he starts in blazin' away at us: *plip, plip, plip, plip!* fast as that, every bullet singin' over our heads and strikin' the water or drillin' a shark. Steve and me is so serprised we stands there like a couple o' fools, watchin' 'im. Why he never hits us I can't say, except it's darker'n the devil's boots an' he's the kind what needs gun sights. But he keeps on blazin' away till all of a sudden—and yeh can believe me er not—up he shoots—dinghy, lantern, rifle and all—four feet in the air, and down *ker-plop!* bottom up.

"By this time I'm ready t' see the man-eatin' monsters take dinghy and all in one mouthful, but we shoves right on up in the middle of a regeler dancin' hell and there ain't no water at all—only sharks piled six deep on the surface. But Steve strikes down with the hook bringin' up the painter what he makes fast in the stern sheets.

"'Now!' he sings out. *'Row!'*

"I bends t' the sweeps and pulls fer m' life. But all we can rescue is the dinghy. I bet there's sharks out there now with everythin' in their bellies from lanterns to five-gallon water jugs. They et everythin' but the dinghy; and we pulls it out to peaceable water, rights it, bails it out and tows it back t' the *Aggie!*"

Farrier could not suppress a smile.

"And it's Gawd's truth I'm tellin' yeh!" added Black-fin, puffing heavily on his pipe.

"Was there no name on that dinghy?" asked Farrier.

"Not a scratch."

"Why didn't you go on a little farther. There was another vessel out there."

Black-fin's eyes flashed. He lowered his pipe.

"Another vessel!" he exclaimed. "What are yeh talkin' about? Would that lubber 'a' been sleepin' there with all them sharks if there'd been another vessel in sight?"

"At least *we* were in sight. Suppose he'd been on his way from the other vessel to this one. Suppose they were out of water aboard his ship or suppose they were down with fever? Isn't it natural, then, to assume that——"

"Sa-ay," drawled Black-fin. "Think a minute. If it was as you puts it, why did the beggar start shootin' at us? And wouldn't we 'a' saw the light if there'd been a vessel around anywhere?"

"The reason I thought so," said Farrier; "was that when I was aloft, just after you started down the rigging, I thought I saw red and green lights a little farther north of the white one. That dinghy looks to me like a yacht tender and it's my belief there's a yacht out there right now."

"You got another belief comin'. We did pull farther north and seen no sign of a yacht nor nothin' else. If yeh seen red and green, lay aloft now, why don't yeh? If yeh seen it then, yeh can see it now."

He scoffed, and a heavy frown settled down over his eyes.

"All right!" said Farrier. "I'll do it."

Stevens entered just as Farrier left.

"Hello there. That you, Tarry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Oh," answered Stevens. "I thought it was somebody." And he closed the door behind him in the forecastle.

"You did, did you?" thought Farrier, stopping short with a sudden idea. The men had dropped him from their confidence. This was evident. He had heard enough and seen enough to know it. Black-fin's story had been "fishy" to say the least.

"Sharks twenty-five and thirty feet long—a thousand of them!" What a yarn!

So instead of going aloft he climbed down the deck load again and listened at the door of the forecastle. Stevens was talking but the words were indiscernible, due to the groaning of the ship as she rolled in the trough. But he recalled a certain screen ventilator in the forward bulkhead of the forecastle and decided to make use of it. Tiptoeing into the boatswain's locker, he dropped down through the scuttle into the forepeak and made his way forward until his hands encountered the heavy links of the anchor chain leading up to the windlass. This he climbed, with some difficulty, having only one good arm, but his efforts were justified when he reached the opening.

Seated about the table were Black-fin, Gloomy Gus, Hans, Andrew and Olaf, glaring wild-eyed at a chart laid out before them. Stevens stood behind, leaning over and tracing along the chart with his finger.

"There it is!" he was saying. "Only about fourteen hundred miles from here. With this vessel under power, wind or no wind, we'll make it in less than ten days runnin'. But there ain't time t' sit here all night talkin' about it. Luck come our way and if we lose the chance t'-night we might just as well set back and take th' ol' man's nonsense fer the rest of the trip. He don't suspect nothin' at all now, except he knowed my yarn was cooked."

Black-fin laughed. "Even Dick—farmer he is—knowed that much!"

"No time fer chatter," said Stevens. "We gotta act and act quick. What d'yeh say?"

"Ay say dat in de farst place ve need more men," said Hans. "Vy not let de enyan vipers in on it—Shad, Peavy and Yoe?"

"Fair enough! Call 'em in!" exclaimed Stevens.

Hans slipped out and returned a moment later with the three men of the "black gang."

"What's goin' on here?" grinned Shad, one of the oiliest of the oilers. "Looks like mutiny!"

"It ain't exactly that, Shad. Listen here." Stevens pointed again to the chart. "See them islands? Them's the Solomons and that there's Malaita, the wildest o' the group. There's a gold mine on it a few miles back in the bush from Royalist Harbor. It's located about here." He placed his finger on the chart. "And this here's the caliber of it." He rolled a few gold nuggets across the table. "That there mine's been worked by at least a dozen prospectors, but the heads of all of 'em are hangin' sun-dried and smoked in nigger huts t'-day. If yeh ever seen Solomon bushmen, there ain't no forgettin' 'em. Yeh can't trifle with them devils. If the notion strikes 'em—*bang!*—an' yer minus a head.

"Now the salt-water men they're differ'nt. Some of 'em, while yeh can't tell 'em from bushmen, are a little more wary about killin' whites. Salt-water men ain't got no particular love fer bushmen. The two's fightin' all the time. So if yeh gets so's yeh can handle the one yeh can generally pertect yerself against t'other.

"So here's the proposition. What we're gona do is recruit niggers from the coasts of Ysabel, Pavuvu, Guadalcanal, San Cristoval and a few other o' them islands. The more we mix the breeds the less chance there is fer mutiny. Then we'll land at Royalist Harbor and push far enough back in the bush t' start workin' the mine."

"What's the game?" protested Peavy. "How *we* gona do all this?"

And here Farrier learned the true story of the men's discovery.

Stevens, Black-fin and Jack, had picked up a prostrate Englishman in a dinghy—a man answering to much the same description as the one incorporated into Black-fin's yarn. From his yacht, a sixty-foot yawl where he had remained a last survivor, he had seen the lights of the *Aggie* and had decided to pull to her for help. His companions had died, one by one, of fever during twenty-five days of calm. The yacht was on her return trip to Royalist Harbor, Malaita Island, from Tahiti, with a cargo of French munitions with which to defend a mine in bushman territory. Unfortunately, however, the yawl had got too far north and had been caught in the doldrums.

This, according to Stevens, came from the dying lips of the Englishman as he lay in the bottom of a yacht tender midway between the yawl and the *Aggie*. Before he died he gave them a crude chart of Fulaha Mine.

"We found the yacht," Stevens continued; "and we put Jack aboard 'er, tellin' 'im t' load 'er skiff with all the guns and cartridges the boat'd hold and t' throw the rest overboard. He'll be pullin' in any minute with the whole shebang. And that's

how we'll make a clean-up. We might just as well. Th' ol' man's crazy as a bat—trimmin' sails in dead calm, reevin' halyards end fer end before they're chafed—er even stretched. If a man's got crazy in 'im, the sea'll bring it out.

"He don't believe my yarn, so now he's sendin' Ross, Ben-Tenny and Jim out t' investigate. Good enough! It makes 'im three weaker. Jack know's the game and Ross won't find nothin' but the empty yawl. over the fo'c's'le head. Jack's trustin' us t' stand by 'im, so now if you boys are willin' "—Stevens paused, eying each hand with careful scrutiny—"if you're all willin', we'll just escort the whole after crew over the side into the boat and give 'em the yacht to do as they please with.

"We'll start the coffee mills and go t' Malaita t' work the gold mine. We got all the timber right here aboard fer the job and enough besides t' pay expenses fer a year. There ain't gona be no trouble at all. We won't hurt nobody—only their feelin's. We'll just surprise 'em, drive 'em into the boat—all but one. She stays aboard. She won't mind after a while—when she knows me. You boys can run them engines, can't yeh?"

"Duck soup," said Shad. "How about Dick? Ain't he gona join our party?"

"No. Where is he?" said Stevens with a start.

"Maybe he's aft, fixin' t' go with Ross in the boat," suggested Black-fin.

"So much the better fer him if he does!" mumbled Stevens. "He's in strong with the after cabin. He'll be treated same's the rest of 'em. If he or anybody else comes farrard here, tie 'em up and keep 'em quiet. I'll go aft now and line things up. Keep a lookout fer Jack. Three of yeh lay abaft the mainmast and keep a weather eye aft. Stow the guns in the foks'l and wait till I come farrard. Then we'll go aft in a body, and there won't be nothin' to it. All jake, are yeh?"

They nodded, eying one another suspiciously but none refused the proposal and Stevens left the forecastle with a satisfied smile.

For Farrier there was no time to lose. Sliding down the chain he found the ladder and scrambled up and through the boatswain's locker to the main deck. A shaft of light fell full upon him as the door from the forecastle opened revealing Black-fin, Andrew and Hans. Farrier withdrew in the shadow while the three men climbed the deck load. Evidently these were the sentinels to watch at the mainmast. Next came Olaf and Gloomy Gus who climbed to the forecastle head as lookouts.

Farrier paused to consider. The longer he stood the more angry he grew. He was thinking of Roberta and Donivan Stevens' allusions to her. The words, sharp as knives, spurred him to the action he knew was inevitable.

The situation was serious. The *Aggie,* becalmed at about latitude 10′ south, longitude 175° 10′ west, was only four miles from her doom—the yacht where Jack was loading munitions for the threatened insurrection. Three of the ship's officers, Ross, Ben-Tenny, and First Assistant Engineer Jim Murphy, had started off in the dinghy with a small gas "kicker" belonging to the *Aggie.* Stevens had already mustered a force of nine men and although there was an equal number opposing, three were absent in the dinghy. Farrier was partially disabled, Barnacle Joe had curvature of the spine and Flunky had no spine at all. This left only the skipper, Chief Kennedy, Second Assistant Ed O'Neal and Third Assistant Roy Harlow to defend the ship.

Farrier could not walk aft because of the sentry at the mainmast. There was no 'tween-decks. The cargo hold was all cargo. One way and one way only remained: swim.

He thought of his crippled arm. He recalled the sharks—shoals of them as described by Black-fin, then promptly dismissed all but purpose from his mind. Arm or no arm; sharks or no sharks, he resolved to carry the warning aft and join against the mutineers.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FIGHT WITH A SHARK.

Farrier, clinging to a line, descended slowly over the side and into the cool water. He released his hold and slid noiselessly below the surface, rising again in a scintillant glow of phosphorescence. Then, striking out lamely, one arm in a sling, he started aft, keeping close in to the shadow of the hull.

Naturally he thought of sharks. A ship cannot lie in the tropics discharging the average amount of refuse without attracting at least one; and it was this one that Farrier not only thought of, but encountered.

Swimming with his eyes submerged, there appeared in the blackness below the keel of the *Aggie* a gold, nebular mass, like a cloud, from the heart of which shot a glittering serpentine shaft. It soared silently and speedily up toward the telltale phosphoric aura surrounding Farrier.

He knew it was too late to retrace his strokes. Even had he ventured to do so his strength, vested only in one arm, would have been insufficient to lift his body in time to avoid danger. He knew too that to turn from the monster was suicide. To remain motionless was no less so, and to splash water—which action has saved more than one in the same plight—would only be to alarm the sentry on deck. One second was given him in which to decide.

Throwing his feet above the surface, like a blackfish bound for the bottom of the sea, Farrier shot down head-on to the sparkling shaft which now disclosed the dark torpedo form of a man-eater.

It happened so suddenly Farrier's mind was cluttered in chaos—a jumble of frenzied impressions common only to dreams. The heavy resistance of the water against the action of his limbs, the inky blackness, silence and suffocating pressure that weighed upon him from all sides were only vague parts of it. But he remembered a great black form, three times his own size, that twisted and bent like a contortionist and opened its great grinning mouth so wide that it presented a front like a yawning bear trap. He remembered a cloying sickness that chilled him with terror when a rasplike hide chafed him and tore the skin from his cheek and arm. He remembered a sharp pain that clamped and tore at his shoulder and settled a dizzy numbness over his body until it seemed he was being born swiftly away through darkness.

But he opened his eyes and found himself still in the water, still below the surface. He had been unconscious only for a second or a fraction thereof. Of the shark he could see only a gold blur in the distance describing a semispiral as if for a second attack. Farrier grasped for the arm that had pained him, but felt only the empty sling. Instinctively he tried to work the fingers. A pain caught him at the shoulder. He looked down—felt a tingling of joy; the arm was there and intact. He had tried to use it. He *had* used it and evidently with some effect, for the shark had sheered off.

Suddenly Farrier found himself again at the surface. He drew a breath, slung his wounded arm, and was about to resume his course when, dead ahead, breaking surface with back and fin, was the shark, twisting sluggishly from side to side, advancing with feigned disregard for the prowess of him it meant to devour. For a second Farrier remained treading water, as he reached in his pocket and withdrew a knife—a knife, unfortunately, too much within the law. Not a tooth in the shark's head was so short—and the creature had not one tooth but six rows of them.

Farrier weighed seconds with life. He backed against the slimy bottom of the *Aggie,* rested his feet upon it—knees bent to a crouching position. He thought of death, considered himself a memory, and with a sudden effort he snapped out rigid, like the opening of a jackknife, and plunged over the surface headlong at the jaws of the man-eater. As he did so, down came an arm and the toy weapon. There was a roar and tumbling of foam. Up swung the black tail of the monster and down went Farrier, tail, shark and all, in a whirlpool of gold, dulled by a cloud of blood.

Farrier spun, like a splinter in a whirlpool. His limbs were twisted with mad eddies. He went head over heels in a churning tumble of bubbles till black water closed in above, leaving him ten feet below the surface surrounded by a cool and untroubled silence.

But the trick was played. The shark vanished with the gold streak that dissolved in the inky blackness below the keel of the *Aggie.* Farrier started toward the surface when a sudden realization of danger turned his mind to opposites. His last lunge at the shark had caused such a commotion that, had the sentries at the mainmast been stone deaf, eyesight would have disclosed everything. Black-fin, Andrew and Hans, if not Gloomy Gus and Olaf, would be watching over the starboard side when he again broke surface.

"Good!" thought Farrier. "Let them watch!" And he struggled with what resources remained for the very keel of the schooner. His lungs were already exhausted. They pulsed in starvation for air. His left arm might just as well have been in the belly of a man-eater for all the service it rendered. His right arm, chafed until the blood rose in dissolving ribbons, burned as

it swept back and forth through the brine. But down he went from ten to fifteen feet, and fifteen to twenty. His ears sang with the pressure, his right cheek burned where it had come in contact with the sandpaper hide of the shark and his lungs rioted for air. Twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four feet and down he went until he scraped the barnacles on the keel, pulled himself across, and began slowly to rise toward the surface. In this he scratched his feet and hands on parasite growth in attempting to clear the schooner's bottom, but he broke surface off the port beam and breathed the deepest and dearest breath of his life.

Twenty-five feet is not deep for divers trained to the pressure. Men have been known to attain a depth of forty feet without the aid of diving apparatus. But to one such as Farrier, unaccustomed to pressure, twenty-five feet is deep enough. Eardrums have burst at twenty. When Farrier broke surface blood was streaming from his nostrils, cheek and wounded arm. He was exhausted. His entire body ached, and his arm was numb. But it was the happiest moment of his life. The shark was gone. He was undiscovered by the sentry. He had only to swim to the rudder and rest.

This he did; but found better than the rudder. When Ross had left the *Aggie* in the yacht dinghy he had lowered the larger boat and left it fast to the davit tackles. Farrier climbed aboard, though not without great difficulty, for his clothes were heavy with water and his limbs were tired. Sprawling out in the bilge he relaxed, waiting for strength. He could not have climbed the fall now had his life depended on it, which indeed it nearly did. Even now, stroke by stroke, Jack with a cargo of guns and ammunition was approaching in the direction of the *Aggie*.

And now also, directly above and staring down from the poop, stood Donivan Stevens. Farrier swallowed all his hopes. He nearly choked upon them. Stevens continued staring. Farrier settled down deeper in the bilge until the dirty water washed completely over his face, stinging the raw flesh of his cheek.

"Hey, you!" sang out Stevens.

Farrier nearly strangled. He wanted to cough. He *had* to cough. He coughed.

"Hey! You!" came the terrible voice again. "Get off yer dead feet and lend a hand here."

True, Farrier's feet were dead enough, but he was not on them and therefore could not be expected to "get off." A temporary relief came with the realization that the second mate was addressing some one else. And at that moment Black-fin and Gloomy appeared at the taffrail.

"Swing on them tackles, you fellas," ordered Stevens.

Farrier heard the blocks rattle and the tackles stretch. The boat began to rise. He saw the rudder chain go by. He saw the name plate, the after chocks, the lower part of the taffrail and then the upper part go jerking by.

"'Vast heavin'!" sang out Gloomy Gus.

"Two blocks!" cried Black-fin.

"Dot's a heavy one, dot boat."

"She's full o' water, that's all. Get on 'er there and we'll dump 'er."

Farrier delivered a rapid prayer to his Maker. Black-fin began to grunt. The water surged to the lower side.

"Oop she goes!" yelled Gloomy.

"Belay there!" came Stevens' voice. "Leggo! Leave that there water in 'er."

The boat righted herself with a jerk and a loud rush of water.

"What's the use doin' that?" continued Stevens. "Don't yeh see she's been leakin'? Leave the water be. Let 'er swell. She's goin' on a long cruise before long."

Farrier remained motionless till the three men walked away. Then he crept out and over to the wheelhouse. Several groups of men stood on the deck load, scarcely visible in the darkness. There were only a few yards between Farrier and the companionway. He covered them with brine and blood as he crawled, entering the door headforemost and scurrying down the stairs.

The old man was alone when Tarry Dick entered the sanctum. A quart whisky bottle, two thirds empty, rested on the table before him.

"I came to tell you," said Farrier; "that the men are about to mutiny."

The old man glanced up sharply, humping his shoulders. "About to, are you?"

"I said *'they.'*"

"Well, why the devil *don't* they?"

"For that matter, sir, perhaps they *have*."

Captain Newmiller leaned forward in his chair while a strange ecstasy stole over his face. He started to rise but fell back laughing. It was the first laugh Farrier had ever identified with wooden imagery. It was a

succession of guttural snorts like back-firing carburetors. Then suddenly he swung about and resumed his former mien, though his eyes focused themselves with the steadiness of glass upon Farrier.

"What do you mean, tramping in here with your dirty feet this way? Never saw anything like it. I didn't hear you knock either. What d' you mean by it, hey?"

"Just what I said," replied Farrier incensed. "After fighting off sharks and mutineers for a half hour or so, I don't mind going anywhere."

"Dick, if you weren't half dead already, I'd knock seven bells out of you. I'll teach you respect with the rest of the mutineers."

"Then," said Farrier; "I'll advise you to start your course of instruction right now. I know what's coming to you, if you don't. They've got it on you five to two right now. Five to two says you don't deserve respect. Five to two says you're not skipper. And five to two——"

"And five to two can go to hell! That's what!"

"And you and all the rest of us will ride there on its coat tails. That also is *what!* You believe Jack dead, don't you? Eaten by sharks! He's not dead, and he never saw a shark." And Farrier told his story while the old man chewed his cigar and listened.

"So that's how she blows, is it? Hm-mm. *Good!*"

"I'll get Roy Harlow," suggested Farrier, with sudden enthusiasm; "and we'll intercept the arms and——"

"You'll take orders from me, young man. You're third officer. Understand? I'm skipper. And no third officer can tell *me* how to handle pirates."

"But you can't do it alone, sir."

"Look here, Mr. Farrier"—the old man paused while the new officer caught the full force of the title—"I'll knock seven bells out of you yet. If you expect to get along here, you'll refrain from telling me what I can't do. *Understand?*"

"I'm only suggesting——"

"I'll take *no* suggestions from a third officer."

"You'll take his assistance though, won't you?"

"Not yours. You're half dead. Can't I see it? You couldn't assist a healthy jellyfish to *drift*. You can't even help yourself to a drink." The old man poured out half a tumbler of whisky and slammed it on the table. "Hm-mm. A *fine* third mate you are!"

The whisky went down at a gulp.

The old man grunted. "I've a mind to make you *second!*" he added, eying Farrier curiously. "Now you'll feel like a man. Get Flunky out and have him clear the stores out of the brig. We'll need it. Never mind waking the chief or anybody else. This little mutiny is *mine.*"

The skipper opened the drawer in the table, withdrawing an automatic pistol and a pair of handcuffs.

"And when you're done, Mr. Farrier, turn in. Take the top bunk in the mate's cabin for the present. We'll be under way at eight. Your watch at noon."

The old man swung out and up through the companionway.

TO BE CONTINUED.

WASHINGTON ON PEACE

GEORGE WASHINGTON has been much quoted by believers in military preparedness, and certainly he thought that a nation prepared for war was more likely to escape it than one whose weakness made it an easy prey for a strong and unscrupulous neighbor. It is equally true that Washington was no pacifist, and that when he fought in a cause he knew to be just he was prepared to fight to the death. But he was no lover of war for its own sake; to him it was a bitter necessity, and his letters written during the Revolution often express a longing to return to his life on his Potomac plantation. He wanted peace, and on one occasion wrote: "My first wish is to see this plague to mankind—war—banished from the earth, and the sons and daughters of this world employed in more pleasing and innocent amusements than in preparing implements and exercising them for the destruction of mankind."

Between Trains

A PLAY

By Percival Wilde

Author of "The Hunch," "In the Net," Etc.

Going to show that it's hard to be square when you're part of a triangle

Characters { THE DETECTIVE
THE OTHER MAN

SCENE: At the railroad station in a little mid-Western town. It is as bare and desolate as human ingenuity can make it. There is a booth, from which the ticket agent presumably sells a ticket once in a while; but it is closed by a wire grating, and the door next the ticket window is locked. Even the ancient boards which are nailed together to form a rickety platform look discouraged. A battered sign carries a nearly obliterated announcement of the name of the town, and adds the interesting information that it is three hundred and seventy miles from another town, whose name we are unable to decipher. But we need not know even this little, so far as we are concerned it is the end of nowhere.

There is just one evidence of civilization, and that is the slot-machine telephone at one side. As the curtain rises a tall, powerful individual is speaking into it.

THE DETECTIVE: Hello! Hello! Don't cut me off, central. . . . Hello, Jim! Can you hear me? . . . Well, I've got the man. . . . No, I haven't arrested him yet, but he can't get away. I'm waiting for him at the railroad station; he's got to come here. . . . Thanks. . . . Thanks. . . . It *was* a hard job, but it's worth it. . . . Shh! Here he comes now.

(*He hangs up quickly, and is looking innocently at a decayed time-table nailed to the mildewed wall as another man enters. The newcomer is a slim little chap, mild, unobtrusive, gently winning in his manner; quite a contrast to the burly specimen who is awaiting him. The newcomer sees the detective, starts visibly, as he recognizes him, and as the heavier man wheels to face him, evidently resolves to bluff it out. With elaborate nonchalance the little fellow extracts a cigarette from his pocket and places it between his lips, while the eyes of the detective never leave him.*)

THE OTHER MAN: Excuse me, mister, have you got a match?

THE DETECTIVE (*gazing steadily at him*): Here you are.

THE OTHER MAN (*taking the match*): Thanks. (*He starts to scratch it on his trousers; the detective misunderstands the gesture, and makes a lightninglike movement toward his own hip pocket. The other man understands instantly; holds the match out at arm's length, and scratches it on the wall. He lights up.*) Much obliged to you.

THE DETECTIVE: You're welcome.

THE OTHER MAN: Station open?

THE DETECTIVE: Eh?

THE OTHER MAN: I've got to get my ticket. Have you seen the agent?

THE DETECTIVE: No.

THE OTHER MAN: I wonder—— Oh, here's a sign. (*He reads it aloud*):

Pay fare on train; have set signal and train will stop; called home in a hurry. Twins.

Did you read that?

THE DETECTIVE (*whose gaze has never for an instant left the other man*): No.

THE OTHER MAN (*with pathetic reproof*): Not very chatty, are you?

THE DETECTIVE (*sharply*): What's your name?

THE OTHER MAN: Donovan. Bud Donovan.

THE DETECTIVE: What'r'ye doing?

THE OTHER MAN: What am I doing?

THE DETECTIVE: Yes.

THE OTHER MAN: Waiting for the train —same as you are.

THE DETECTIVE: Come, come, answer me: what's your business?

THE OTHER MAN: Is it any of yours?

THE DETECTIVE (*insolently*): Yes!

THE OTHER MAN: Well, I'm a drummer.

THE DETECTIVE: What are you selling?

THE OTHER MAN (*deliberately*): Jewelry.

(*And, as if in protection, his left hand moves toward the little valise which he is carrying in his right.*)

THE DETECTIVE: Selling jewelry?

THE OTHER MAN: Yes.

THE DETECTIVE: And your name's Donovan: Bud Donovan?

THE OTHER MAN: Well, what are you going to do about it?

THE DETECTIVE: Nothing. . . . I'm a buyer.

THE OTHER MAN: A buyer?

THE DETECTIVE: A diamond buyer. I'm Isaac Ginsburg, of Cincinnati.

THE OTHER MAN: Oh, are you?

THE DETECTIVE: Yes. Show me your goods.

THE OTHER MAN: Right here?

THE DETECTIVE: Yes.

THE OTHER MAN: I can't show them to you at a railway station.

THE DETECTIVE: Why not?

THE OTHER MAN: Well, the light's bad.

THE DETECTIVE: I don't mind that.

THE OTHER MAN: It's not safe.

THE DETECTIVE: Not safe? (*He draws his revolver suddenly.*) See this? Now we're safe, aren't we?

THE OTHER MAN: Is it loaded?

THE DETECTIVE: Right to the muzzle.

THE OTHER MAN: Oh! We *are* safe, aren't we?

THE DETECTIVE: Show me your stuff.

THE OTHER MAN (*hesitating*): You might not be interested, Mr. Ginsburg.

THE DETECTIVE: I'll take a chance.

THE OTHER MAN: Well, I don't like to.

THE DETECTIVE: What do you mean?

THE OTHER MAN: I don't know you, Mr. Ginsburg. And I've seen you following me around——

THE DETECTIVE (*interrupting*): Following you around?

THE OTHER MAN: Yes; all week. And long before that.

THE DETECTIVE: What's the difference?

THE OTHER MAN: Well, a diamond *buyer* doesn't usually follow a *salesman* around.

THE DETECTIVE: No?

THE OTHER MAN: No!

THE DETECTIVE: You know a lot about selling diamonds, don't you?

THE OTHER MAN: Well, what do you know about buying them—Mr. Isaac Ginsburg?

THE DETECTIVE (*smiling*): Not much. (*Tossing him a pair of handcuffs nonchalantly.*) Here: put 'em on.

THE OTHER MAN (*showing surprise*): Handcuffs?

THE DETECTIVE: Darbies, nippers: bracelets: Right in your line, Mr. Jewelry Salesman.

THE OTHER MAN: But—but who do you think I am?

THE DETECTIVE: Well, who are you?

THE OTHER MAN: I'm Donovan, sir. Bud Donovan.

THE DETECTIVE: Alias——

THE OTHER MAN: What do you mean?

THE DETECTIVE: Alias James Reilly. Alias Jerry O'Connor. Alias Jerry M'Guire. No, M'Guire's your right name, isn't it?

THE OTHER MAN: You've got me wrong, mister.

THE DETECTIVE: Have I? Want to see your picture? Two artistic poses?

THE OTHER MAN: Got it with you?

THE DETECTIVE: Surest thing you know.

THE OTHER MAN (*smiling*): Well, game's up. (*He puts on the handcuffs.*) I made you hustle, though, didn't I?

THE DETECTIVE (*nodding*): Three months. All the way from Seattle to Denver, and then most of the way back again. (*Taking up the bag; not opening it.*) And here's the swag.

THE OTHER MAN: All there. Tell me, were you following me all that time?

THE DETECTIVE: Most of it. I lost you for three weeks.

THE OTHER MAN: Lost me? Where was that?

THE DETECTIVE: San Francisco.

THE OTHER MAN: San Francisco? That's my home town.

THE DETECTIVE: That so? It's mine also.

THE OTHER MAN (*interested*): I didn't know that. What's your name?

THE DETECTIVE: M'Cafferty.

THE OTHER MAN (*with considerable surprise*): M'Cafferty?

THE DETECTIVE: Yes. Heard of me?

THE OTHER MAN: Yes.

THE DETECTIVE (*complacently*): Guess lots of you fellows have heard of me. (*He pauses.*) Say, what were you doing in San Francisco—those three weeks I lost you?

THE OTHER MAN (*smiling*): That would be telling.

THE DETECTIVE: Usually we can get you

fellows by watching your girls. But you haven't got a girl.

THE OTHER MAN: Haven't I?

THE DETECTIVE: They're in the way. You know, I used to be married.

THE OTHER MAN: Did you?

THE DETECTIVE: Until I got a divorce. And then I had to pay alimony. Fifteen bucks a week.

THE OTHER MAN: Like paying your fare after you've gotten off the train.

THE DETECTIVE: My sentiments. If I was a minute late for supper Rose would raise——

THE OTHER MAN (*interrupting*): Rose?

THE DETECTIVE: That was her name.

THE OTHER MAN (*with excitement*): Have you got a picture of her?

THE DETECTIVE: Yes. (*He opens his watch.*) I forgot to take it out.

THE OTHER MAN (*impatiently*): Let's see it! (*He looks, then with limitless surprise.*) Holy jumping Jehoshaphat!

THE DETECTIVE: What's the matter?

THE OTHER MAN: That's what I was doing in San Francisco!

THE DETECTIVE: What do you mean?

THE OTHER MAN: That girl got a divorce from you?

THE DETECTIVE: Yes.

THE OTHER MAN: Well, I married her!

THE DETECTIVE: I'll be damned!

THE OTHER MAN: I knew she'd been married to a plain-clothes man, but you—— Good Lord!

THE DETECTIVE (*smiling*): Say, what relation are we to each other?

THE OTHER MAN: Beats the Dutch, doesn't it? You're her husband once removed——

THE DETECTIVE: And you?

THE OTHER MAN: I guess I'm following in father's footsteps.

THE DETECTIVE (*after a long pause*): So she divorced me to marry you! (*He rises suddenly, and unlocks the handcuffs.*)

THE OTHER MAN: What are you doing?

THE DETECTIVE: You can go.

THE OTHER MAN: You're letting me go?

THE DETECTIVE: Anywheres you like.

THE OTHER MAN (*thoughtfully*): Gee! M'Cafferty, you must have loved Rose!

THE DETECTIVE: Loved her nothing!

THE OTHER MAN: Eh?

THE DETECTIVE: I was married to her first, see? And any fellow that's married to her has got enough troubles without *my* making it any harder for him.

THE OTHER MAN: Oh, so that's it!

THE DETECTIVE: I was a brave man when I married her—just brave—nothing more than that. But after I'd lived with her a year, I knew I wouldn't be afraid of the devil himself!

THE OTHER MAN: Oh! (*There is a long pause.*) M'Cafferty!

THE DETECTIVE: Well?

THE OTHER MAN: I think—I think I'd rather go to jail.

THE DETECTIVE (*with astonishment and dismay*): Rather go to jail?

THE OTHER MAN: If it's all the same to you, M'Cafferty.

THE DETECTIVE: But it isn't——

THE OTHER MAN (*kicking the bag*): There's the evidence. Any jury would convict me. And I feel as if I owed the State about ten years.

THE DETECTIVE: But I'll let you go.

THE OTHER MAN (*shaking his head mournfully*) : You're a detective. You've *got* to arrest me. Here—— (*He holds out his hands for the cuffs.*)

THE DETECTIVE (*putting the cuffs behind him quickly*): What do you think you're doing?

THE OTHER MAN: I'm going to reform, M'Cafferty.

THE DETECTIVE: I don't want you to reform!

THE OTHER MAN: In the last ten minutes something has come over me; something funny. I feel as if I were a different man. (*He turns pathetically to his unwilling captor.*) Don't stop me from doing a good action.

THE DETECTIVE (*utterly bewildered*): Say, what are you getting at?

THE OTHER MAN: M'Cafferty, I want to go to jail.

THE DETECTIVE (*indignantly*): That's a fine thing to do to me!

THE OTHER MAN: Eh?

THE DETECTIVE: Think I don't see your game, Mr. Jerry M'Guire, alias Bud Donovan?

THE OTHER MAN (*in the same sad, determined tone*): I want to go to jail, M'Cafferty.

THE DETECTIVE: Sure you do! And Rose'll come right back for *me!*

THE OTHER MAN: You're divorced.

THE DETECTIVE: D'ye think she'll mind

a little thing like that? Not if I know Rose! She'll be hanging around my neck inside of a week. You'll be locked up for ten years, and I'll have to support her for the rest of my life!

THE OTHER MAN: Well, you married her first, M'Cafferty.

THE DETECTIVE: I know it. Don't rub it in.

THE OTHER MAN (*with a touch of melodrama*): And she loves you, M'Cafferty!

THE DETECTIVE: Good God! (*He collapses onto a box.*)

THE OTHER MAN (*after a pause; touchingly*): How beautiful that is! Divorced, married to another man, but she still loves you!

THE DETECTIVE: Oh, shut up!

THE OTHER MAN: Yes, sir.

THE DETECTIVE (*brokenly*): M'Guire, I see your game, and I'll play it. How much will you take to get out?

THE OTHER MAN: You want to pay me money?

THE DETECTIVE: Yes.

THE OTHER MAN: That's bribing an officer not to do his duty! (*Loftily.*) It's a crime. I won't be mixed up in it!

THE DETECTIVE: My good idiot, I don't want *your* money: I'll pay you mine.

THE OTHER MAN (*hesitantly*): Isn't that bribery?

THE DETECTIVE: No. I'm sure.

THE OTHER MAN (*sadly; after a pause*): How much?

THE DETECTIVE: Fifty dollars?

THE OTHER MAN (*pathetically*): Oh, let me go to jail!

THE DETECTIVE (*quickly*): A hundred dollars? A hundred and fifty?

THE OTHER MAN: I want to do my duty, M'Cafferty.

THE DETECTIVE (*producing his bank roll*): Here: all I've got.

THE OTHER MAN (*without taking it*): How much?

THE DETECTIVE (*after counting*): A hundred and eighty-seven dollars. (*Quickly producing loose change.*) And thirty-two cents.

THE OTHER MAN: I don't like to take it, M'Cafferty.

THE DETECTIVE (*pressing it on him*): Be a good fellow, Jerry.

THE OTHER MAN (*takes it. There is a pause. He separates a bill from the roll*): Here's your car fare, M'Cafferty.

THE DETECTIVE: Thanks.

THE OTHER MAN: That's a pretty stickpin you're wearing.

THE DETECTIVE (*taking it out quickly and giving it to him*): Think so?

THE OTHER MAN: Thanks. (*He produces a watch.*) My Ingersoll isn't much good.

THE DETECTIVE (*exchanging it for his gold watch*): This is a repeater.

THE OTHER MAN: Thanks. (*A pause.*) You'd better not take this train.

THE DETECTIVE: No: there's another six hours later. (*He starts off; stops.*) Jerry.

THE OTHER MAN: Yes?

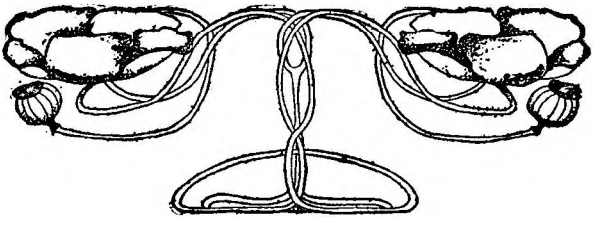
THE DETECTIVE: I'm going to take the swag. Make a showing at the office.

THE OTHER MAN: Oh, all right.

THE DETECTIVE (*taking the bag*): Thanks. (*He offers his hand timidly.*) Will you shake, old man? (*They shake hands.*) Good luck! And thanks; thanks! (*He hurries off.*)

THE OTHER MAN (*left alone, seats himself on the box, and produces a package from his breast pocket. He unrolls it thoughtfully, and gazes at its sparkling contents*): Wonder what M'Cafferty's going to do with my socks? (*A long pause. The whistle of the approaching train is heard in the distance.*) I never knew he was married. Wonder what his wife really is like?

THE CURTAIN FALLS.



The Whiffet

By Albert Payson Terhune

Author of "The Feud," "Sant-El-Klaus Najib," Etc.

The Whiffet was named wrong. He was just plain hell-cat—or he never would have lasted those second four rounds

ONE day Michael Ponder, solid and gigantic head of the solid and gigantic packing firm of Ponder & Brothers, roared just a shade too loudly and more than a shade too offensively to the boyish clerk who had been transferred from the shipping department to the inner office.

This because of a letter he accused the youngster of putting into the wrong file. And the clerk, Calvin Bryce, so far forgot the abject humility due to his huge employer as to wheel on the giant with a snarl of:

"Look here! Neither you nor any other man on two legs is going to swear at me and get away with it!"

For an instant Ponder glowered down on the stripling who, pale and with just the faintest tremor, clenched his fists and stood defiantly meeting the august glare. The office force stopped work, breathlessly waiting the curt command for Bryce to go to the cashier and get his pay.

The word of discharge was not spoken. From behind his glower Ponder was scanning the revolted serf. He noted the clenched fists, the steady eyes, the unflinching little body. But, presently he also noticed that unconquerable vestige of trembling. And the reluctant admiration which had begun to replace his scowl changed to something like disappointment. He turned away into the private office, calling back over his shoulder, with indulgent contempt:

"You mangy little whiffet!" And the glass door shut behind him before Bryce could retort or could fairly grasp the meaning of the taunt.

Thereafter Michael Ponder never again swore at young Bryce. Indeed he ignored him for the most part; except to pause once on his way through the room to jerk a disapproving thumb at the shiny elbow of Calvin's coat and say:

"You seem to have forgotten the office rule, Bryce, about the staff presenting a neat and well-groomed appearance. A new suit is cheaper to get than a new job in these hard times."

But throughout the whole half-acre main building of the plant seeped the story of Calvin Bryce's brief clash with the boss; and of the latter's grinning epithet of "You mangy little whiffet!"

And from that day on Bryce was cursed with the office nickname of "The Whiffet." Having been conferred by the mighty Ponder himself, the name stuck.

Now one dictionary defines "whiffet" as follows:

> An insignificant person who assumes a manner of importance.

Which assuredly makes the term a misfit for Calvin Bryce. In the first place, he was not insignificant, despite his mere five feet four of stature and his hundred and twenty-odd pounds of fleshless weight and his retiring ways. Nor did he assume a manner of importance or any other manner.

Cal was thirty-three years old; and he not only was married but had a daughter of twelve. It was because of this wife and daughter that his brief blaze of wrath against the bullying Ponder had been followed so quickly by an involuntary shudder—at thought of the loss to them, should his revolt cost him his job. It was also because of them that his office suit was shiny and that he had worn it for five seasons.

If heroism consists of sacrifice and of long-enduring struggle, bravely borne for the sake of others, then assuredly The Whiffet was a hero. And there are a million similar heroes in the wage ranks to-day—men who endure with outward calm a course of bullying and hectoring and overwork from office bosses in order that their own dear ones may continue to be clad and fed. If such

folk be heroes, there surely must be an equally superlative term to describe the boss who, knowing the conditions, harries the voluntarily shackled wage slave because of his helplessness.

All of which is extraneous to our story but is the wisest thing in it.

At high school Cal Bryce had won the interscholastic featherweight boxing championship of Midwestburg, his home city. He was a natural-born boxer, not only in physique but in brain and coolness and pluck. There was great wiry strength in his seemingly meager frame. And without having the slightest trace of brutality in his make-up he loved a square fight above all else.

His local prowess caught the notice of a fight promoter in Midwestburg, who added the lad to his string, while Cal was working his way through business college after graduation from high school. And, for a year or so Bryce forged rapidly ahead in the fight game. His manager foresaw the featherweight championship close ahead and predicted for Cal a second Terry McGovern career.

Then, at twenty, Bryce met Celia Marsh, a substitute school-teacher of his own age. Two months later he married her.

Celia thought pugilism was one degree worse than burglary. And before she would consent to marry him Cal had to promise most solemnly to give up his loved profession and to look for some less debasing form of work. It was a fearful wrench to his ambitions and desires. But if Celia had told him she would marry none but a one-armed man he would right blithely have cut off either arm.

Thus, while they lived on his ring earnings, he found a petty job in the packing house of Ponder & Brothers and threw all his energies, if not his heart, into mastering the new and uncongenial work.

By the time he was earning a living wage there, the bulk of his fight savings had vanished. Marrying and furnishing a flat and settling down to housekeeping—these are not on the free list. The remainder of his hoard went during Celia's long illness after Baby Mildred was born.

The next eleven years had been made up of days of utter drudgery and of the pleasantest kind of home life. All the couple's ambitions centered around little Mildred. She was their idol, their one life-hope, the only child fetish of their home.

They vowed to give her every advantage, although like most of the rest of us they were not wholly clear in their own minds as to what "advantage" really means for a child. They did not appreciate that often the greatest "advantage" which can be given the child of poor parents is a rigid training in economy and in unselfishness and in the sharing of family deprivations—all of which go to the building up of iron character and of true greatness.

Cal and Celia themselves had had this upbringing. And they had profited thereby. Yet they resolved that their adored child should have everything which they themselves had missed in the way of fun and social life and education and comforts. And they kept their resolve.

Public school teaches far more than is contained in its mere curriculum. Yet, from the first, they decided against public school for Mildred. She was sent to the costliest private school which her parents could afford. Celia took to turning and revamping her own old dresses. Cal's clothes began to take on the shininess that was henceforth theirs. But Mildred went to school, dressed as tastefully and as expensively as any girl there. Whereat her father and mother rejoiced in the sacrifices they were making.

When she was twelve they took her from the first private school and sent her to another. This second establishment was patronized by the loftiest families in Midwestburg. It was Celia who chanced to hear of its rarefied existence and who persuaded Cal that Mildred ought to go there.

"You see, dear," she reasoned as Cal scratched his head bewilderedly over the cost estimate she had scribbled, "Mildred is beginning to grow up. It is time she made friends who can be of real use to her in later years. It's different with a boy. But a girl like Mildred must start out by knowing the right people. She'll form friendships at Mademoiselle Cretin's School with girls who will some day be social leaders. They will invite her to their houses. She will become one of their set. She will meet eligible men there—men of wealth and social rank who——"

"Oh, hold on!" expostulated Cal. "The baby's only just twelve. She——"

"She can't begin her upward journey too young," retorted Celia. "I only wish we had known about Mademoiselle Cretin's School five years ago."

That month Mildred went to the new school; and that month Cal stopped buying lunches and began to carry a surreptitious sandwich to the office, instead. But that month, by Providence's mercy, his pay was boosted four dollars a week. And nothing cracked—noticeably—under the strain.

Almost at once, the couple learned that membership in Mademoiselle Cretin's School was like marriage and automobiling, in that the initial expense is the lightest part of it. There were myriad details of extra cost that neither of them had dreamed of. There were a million-and-one little expenditures, all of which were proven needful—expenses that ranged from class pins to school-dance dresses. Also the everyday type of clothing worn by Mademoiselle Cretin's gilt-edged pupils needed much living up to.

Then it was that Providence once more intervened in Cal's behalf by getting him a chance to balance the books for three successive neighborhood stores in the evenings, and to compile some dry statistics for a report which one of his superiors was making out for the Ponders. This meant several hours of nightly toil after a nine-hour day at the office. But it also meant a thimbleful of extra cash to go toward meeting the new expenses.

It was three months after his spat with Michael Ponder that the back-breaking straw was added to his burdens. Cal came home one evening to find Celia and the little girl in a glow of ecstasy. Through their volleyed explanations he gleaned the ensuing vital facts:

First, that there was a secret society in Mademoiselle Cretin's School. Second, that it was known by the mystic name of "Sigma Sigma." Third, that it was ultraexclusive and admitted to membership only a chosen few of the school's pupils. Fourth, that those few comprised daughters of the richest and most socially prominent families in Midwestburg. Fifth—and all-important, that the always popular Mildred had that day been elected to the sacredly secret clique and that it was quite the most wonderfully advantageous thing which had ever befallen the Bryce family or could ever be hoped to befall it.

Duly, though less understandingly than they, Cal rejoiced with his wife and daughter. Duly he listened to Celia's dazzling forecasts of Mildred's future. Then came the catch in it all. And he realized why Celia's blond face had worn that glint of nervousness beneath her air of rapture as she had told him the news.

Briefly, the initiation fee to Sigma Sigma was one hundred dollars. The darling little jeweled fraternity pin would cost another twenty-five dollars. Total, one hundred and twenty-five dollars. In other words, more ready cash than Calvin Bryce had had lying loose at any one time in the past ten years.

Cal said so—blunderingly yet frankly. Then Mildred burst into shrill weeping and raved loudly that her parents were the meanest people in the world and were always skimping her and spoiling her fun and grudging her everything—and how could she face the girls and tell them her stingy father wouldn't even let her have such a measly sum?

Celia shed a few tears, too, and looked at the miserable Cal with dreary-eyed reproach.

Cal jammed his well-worn hat down over his ears and stamped out of the house. He wanted to be alone—and to think. Every word of the silly, spoiled child's had cut him on the bare heart. He was fairly writhing. Even Celia had eyed him as though he were to blame in not being able to reach out and snatch one hundred and twenty-five dollars from the atmosphere.

He tried not to remember the scene at home, but to cast about in his sorely harassed brain for some miraculous way to get the sum which apparently meant present bliss and untold future social advantages to his worshiped daughter.

He might of course borrow it from the office, or seek to, and pay it back at the rate of five dollars a week out of his salary. But a gleam of intelligence deterred him. As things now were it was hard enough to save rent money from his tiny week's pay. Moreover it gave a chap a bad name to be known as an office borrower. The boss was supposed to frown on such transactions, though they gave him fuller power over the men thus involved.

No, there was no way to get the cash. Incidentally, there was no way to make Mildred believe her adoring father was not a miser who cared nothing for her. Bryce squirmed at the thought.

Then, on the instant, he saw before him the solution to his whole problem.

He had come to a halt in his aimless

strolling and was standing idly in front of a lighted store window. One corner of the window contained a cardboard sign, put there at billboard rates.

The sign set forth the stirring news that the Baldy Todd Burlesque Company was to appear at the Olympic Theater that week. The bulk of the space was taken up in announcing the show's "added attraction," in the shape of "Tug" Brindell, featherweight champion of the Middle West, who would give an exhibition with the punching bag and box three rounds with his sparring partner.

At the bottom of the card, in red letters, was an announcement that the champion stood ready to box any and all amateurs of one hundred and twenty-two pounds or under, at the end of each performance; and that he would pay one hundred and fifty dollars to any such who could last out four rounds against him.

Calvin Bryce had seen this sign a score of times on fences and in windows during the past week. It had meant nothing to him, except to stir old and buried memories. For Tug Brindell had been a Midwestburg boy like himself and had had his start in Bryce's home town. His present scintillating career might well have been Cal's own, if it had not been for Celia.

Now, for the first time, Bryce found himself scanning the one-hundred-and-fifty-dollar offer with a queer little thrill. At last it had a personal meaning for him.

In his day, he had been as good a beginner as had Tug Brindell. And his one recreation outside his home, this past thirteen years, had been his thrice-a-week hour of hard exercise at the Y. M. C. A. gym. There he had not only kept himself reasonably fit by calisthenic work but had boxed with the instructor and with fellow clerks.

Thus, at thirty-three, he was far suppler and in better general condition than are most business men of his age. True, for the past three months he had let the gym lapse because of his night work. But he was confident he was in more than tolerable shape for a short bout.

In any case, he was certain he could ride out four rounds against any man of his weight. All he need do was to cover up and keep out of his opponent's way as much as he could and trust to old-time skill and stamina and craft to enable him to avoid a knock-out.

The store into whose window he was peering chanced to be a grocery. Cal stepped in and asked leave to weigh himself on the back-room scales. To his annoyance he tipped the beam at one hundred and twenty-eight. This, after making allowance for his clothing, whose weight he knew to within a few ounces.

The Baldy Todd show was to begin its engagement at the Olympic three days hence. That meant he must get rid of six pounds in seventy-two hours. To a fat man or even a large man the task would have been more or less simple. But Calvin Bryce carried not a pound of soft flesh on his slim body. There was but one certain method of losing six pounds in three days. Namely, to "dry up."

Drying up is an expedient often resorted to by those who for some cogent reason must lose much weight in a short time. It is not a pleasant nor a healthful nor a strengthening process. It consists in depriving the system of all forms of moisture. No food containing liquid properties must be eaten. No drop of water must be drunk, so long as nature can do without water. Most vegetables, all fresh meats, tea and coffee and other beverages, in fact everything which moistens the inner man, must be avoided.

Nature, ever craving water, uses up such moisture as the body contains; and when liquid is denied she begins with the fats and similar easily consumed secretions. As a result the weight decreases at an amazingly rapid rate. But so do the stamina and the strength which depend so largely on the secretions thus dried up.

Frank Erne, in 1900, sought this means of bringing himself down to the weight required for his battle with Terry McGovern. And almost before the fight began he was beaten. Nature is a cruel dame, who permits no one to tamper, unpunished, with her world-old rules.

Nevertheless, Calvin Bryce took this one short cut to the required one hundred and twenty-two pounds and to the one hundred and fifty dollars cash. He was confident he could make the weight and that he could do it with none too much loss of strength or of speed or of endurance. And he rejoiced mightily at the chance which fortune had thrown in front of him. But prudently he said nothing to Celia of his plans. He explained his change of diet to her on the

grounds of indigestion. And forthwith he began the drying-up process.

The fact that Tug Brindell was a Midwestburg product filled the Olympic on the opening night of the show's engagement. As the stupidly tepid performance ended Brindell's manager came out on the stage, repeating the champion's offer of one hundred and fifty dollars to any one-hundred and-twenty-two-pound "amachoor" who could stand against the redoubtable Tug for four rounds. His call for volunteers was answered almost before it was voiced.

From a second-row aisle seat Cal Bryce scrambled up the runway onto the stage. In one hand he clutched his trunks and fighting shoes. Ten minutes later he was facing Tug Brindell in the center of the improvised ring and the manager was calling "Time!" for the first round.

With something of his olden battle joy Cal came up to the fray. He felt splendidly fit. Before his eager vision danced the one-hundred-and-fifty-dollar prize money. In his memory loomed the sulkily tearful child he had left at home. He had no fear of recognition from any one in the audience. The disreputable old Olympic was not a resort likely to be favored with the patronage of the severely correct office force at Ponder & Brothers'. Nor would any of his colleagues expect to see the meekly taciturn Whiffet in the rôle of gladiator. To add to his security, Cal had given his name to the announcer as "John Tebbins."

True to his plan, he backed away from the encouragingly dancing Brindell and continued to give ground before the other's careless rushes. Almost from the start the champion saw this opponent of his was no novice who had picked up a smattering of fistic skill from streets or gym. Such volunteers he was used to. And with such he usually played for a couple of rounds before addressing himself to the easy task of deleting them. This for the amusement of the audience.

But here was a different proposition. This supposed novice was shifty and catlike and graceful and he showed in every motion the mark of the professional. Moreover, such of his counters as landed were of a backbone-jarring quality and were delivered with consummate science.

Fierce anger blazed up in the heart of the money-loving Brindell. Here opposed to him was that bane of all professional sportsmen—a "ringer." This was a seasoned ring warrior who was seeking to annex the proffered one hundred and fifty dollars—and perhaps to outpoint Tug or even to knock him out.

Brindell abandoned his grin and his amused self-confidence and began to fight. Into Cal he tore, battling with every atom of force and ferocity in his perfectly trained body. Cal met him, foot to foot, with blow for blow, when he could not side-step or retreat. And the crowd roared itself hoarse at the outsider's splendid showing.

But the end was inevitable.

Tug Brindell was twenty-three years old and he had kept himself in the pink of condition. Cal was ten years older—this in a game where every year after twenty-five is a terrible handicap. For thirteen years he had taken only mild exercise. For the past few months he had gone without lunches or at most had eaten a mere sandwich at noon. For years he and Celia had skimped their daily fare on behalf of the money needed for Mildred.

For the past few months, too, he had been working nearly every evening and late into the night, after his office day. For three days he had tortured his system by the enfeebling drying-up process. None of these things tend to ring success.

During the first round Cal held his own—almost more than held his own. But as he went to his corner at the call of time he was aware of a wabbliness of knee, a heaviness in the arms, a shortness of breath, a sense of fast-increasing weariness. He had shot his bolt. And he knew it. Yet, confident of his power to ride out the three remaining rounds, he came back with a vim for the second period.

This time the men did not meet in midring. Almost before Cal had stepped forth from his corner Brindell was upon him. With a succession of short-arm blows he drove Bryce back against the ropes, giving him no chance to escape.

Nor did he trouble himself now to elude or block most of Cal's counters. Certain of his ability to avoid a knock-out so early in the bout, he bored in, savage with rage and eager to put out this ringer as quickly as possible.

Gallantly Cal met the whirlwind assault that he could not beat off. Momentarily weaker and slowing down, he could no longer avoid the champion's whalebone smashes as

easily as in the first round. Such of them as got through to his face or body began to distress him more and more. To the audience he was still putting up a slashing battle. But he knew himself gone.

Slipping aside once from Brindell's ceaseless rush he drove his left to the champion's jaw with all his remaining strength and snap. But luck was against him. For as he delivered the blow his braced left toe slipped ever so little on the ill-resined canvas. And his fist struck glancingly, instead of flush, on Brindell's chin point. Thus a possible knock-out was spoiled.

Yet the champion's head snapped backward under the impact and the champion reeled—dizzily. Starkly eager to take advantage of this one chance before his own waning powers should fail, Cal threw caution aside and jumped for his man. As he did so Brindell straightened from the assumed dizziness, blocked the flailing right fist that sought his jaw, stepped in with lightning speed and uppercut his adversary. The blow caught Bryce under the jaw point, lifting his feet clean off the floor and then atoned for this bit of levitation by stretching his entire body in a huddled mass on the canvas.

It was a mighty blow and delivered with all Brindell's fearful strength. The champion stepped back, while his manager, who also served as timekeeper and referee, prepared to go through the seemingly needless formula of counting the victim out.

At the count of six Cal Bryce shook convulsively. At the count of eight he was lumbering blindly to his feet. The audience bellowed and stamped encouragement to the plucky loser. Still gripped by fury, Brindell rushed in to finish the swaying and defenseless man. But, as he struck, the call of time checked the slaughter.

Back to his corner Cal Bryce groped his way. He was beaten—hopelessly beaten. That crashing blow to the jaw had taken from him his last hoarded atom of speed. And untrained and dried up as he was there was no earthly chance of his coming back to anything approaching recovery in the sixty seconds of rest.

Yet, out of his corner at the call of time he made his uncertain way. His head sang from the jaw smash. His body was as heavy as lead. His limbs all but refused the commands of his dazed will power. He dizzily hoped to be able to keep out of Brindell's way until he himself should have more time to get back his vanished speed and hitting power.

But Brindell willed it otherwise. He had no intention of sparing this professional who had rung himself in as a novice and who had tried to fool and belittle the champion. As before, he rushed from the very instant the round began. In less than ten seconds he recognized that Cal was of no further menace to him. Brindell knew he could end the fight at any moment. But still rankling at the trick attempted on him, he planned to make the trickster pay full price.

Wherefore, during the next two minutes his scientifically driving fists played havoc with his foe. He administered such a beating as sickened even his elephant-hided manager and made three women in the audience faint. Then, setting himself, he smote.

Cal had kept on his reeling feet, taking the awful punishment and essaying with uselessly hanging arms to fight back. Now, at the finishing blow, he crumpled and pitched forward on his face. Nor did he come to his senses until, some minutes later, he found himself lying on a table in one of the dressing rooms.

Promptly at nine, next morning, a truly hideous creature limped into the office at Ponder & Brothers' packing house and sat painfully down at a desk. From the astounded roomful of fellow workers arose a gasp of incredulous horror. The newcomer had some of the general characteristics of The Whiffet. But a second and closer glance was required to make certain of his identity. Tug Brindell had done his work with scientific efficiency.

Before the first excited voice could be raised in query the door of the private office opened, and Michael Ponder came into the room with a handful of papers. Halfway to the farther door the giant halted. His careless eye had fallen on Cal.

For a moment he stood blinking. Then abruptly he turned back into his private office and shut the door behind him. Immediately the buzzer on Cal's desk sounded. With leaden heart and reluctant limbs Bryce got up and prepared to obey the dread summons.

Into the sacred private office he limped, shoulders back, head up, face a battered mask.

He had been looking forward with wage-

slave terror to this meeting with his employer—the employer who demanded that his staff present "a neat and well-groomed appearance." All night Cal had worried over it. Almost he had been tempted to report sick and stay home all day to listen to his wife's tearful reproaches. But he knew it must be many days before his face could hope to return to normal. And there was no sense in putting off the evil hour.

He found Ponder awaiting him on the middle of the gaudy office rug, hands behind back, legs apart, shaggy brows puckered. And at sight of the disapproving wonder in his chief's glare Cal abandoned the well-rehearsed lie about a trolley car accident and resolved to spit the truth at this smug-faced hulk who ruled his financial destinies. He would not stoop to lie to him. The man wasn't worth a lie.

"Bryce!" Ponder was intoning severely. "What is the meaning of this outrageous appearance? How dare you come to the office in such——"

He got no farther. Forgetting the propriety of waiting in servile courtesy for the great man to finish speaking, Cal Bryce was at him with the truth.

Blurting out his words from between swollen lips, he told his story. Briefly, concisely he told it. He began with the need for raising one hundred and twenty-five dollars and he told what that need was. Then he went on to the means he had employed to get the money and described sketchily the fight with Tug Brindell. Not once pausing for breath he hurled the entire, terse narrative into Ponder's fat face. When he came to an abrupt end he stood with shoulders still squared to take his ignominious sentence of discharge.

But for a full minute Ponder did not speak—still staring cryptically at the battered clerk. Once before had the boss stared thus at Cal. And at that time, behind his flash of defiance, Bryce had trembled ever so little. But now he felt no tendency to tremble. He had withstood three rounds of Tug Brindell's murderous onslaught and he was in no mood to shrink from a mere job destroyer.

At last, when Ponder still kept silence, Cal put all to the test by asking a favor which he had been leading up to when he told the story of the fight. It could do no harm to ask it, even though it were refused.

"I should like," said Bryce, doggedly, "I should like to get off at noon to-day. The off time can be docked from my pay of course," he added from wage-slave habit.

Ponder grinned.

"It'll do you no harm to get to bed and stay there till you're more like a human and less like a devastated sector," he said with massive wit. "Chase along, at noon or chase now, whichever you like. Stay in bed till you——"

"I wasn't asking time off to go to bed, sir," rasped Bryce, honesty still riding his tongue. "I want to go to a Turkish bath and get suppled up a bit for to-night."

"To-night?" echoed Ponder, adding, "So that you'll sleep better?"

"No, sir. So that I'll fight better," answered Cal, simply.

Ponder's plump jaw drooped.

"What's that?" he blithered. "Fight better? What d' you mean—'fight?' You've sure had your dose of——"

"Don't you see?" interrupted Cal, impatient at the man's stupidity. "Brindell's only going to be at the Olympic two nights more. That means I've only two more chances at the one hundred and fifty dollars. I——"

"You wall-eyed fool!" yelled Ponder, aghast. "You don't mean to say you're going up, again, for such a beating as you got last night? You're stark crazy, man!"

"Maybe," assented Cal. "Or maybe not. Anyhow, I'm not due to find such another quick way of making the one hundred and fifty dollars. So I've got to take every advantage of *this* chance. Besides—I've been thinking it over and I believe I can maybe do it. Either to-night or to-morrow night. You see, I've had experience, now, in his way of fighting. And I'll know better how to keep out of his way. If he hadn't fooled me into going in to finish him when he played groggy, I'd never have got that haymaker that took all the steam out of me and I might have lasted the four rounds. No, this time I won't let him fool me. I'll stall and keep away. Maybe I can last out."

For another long minute Ponder blinked owlishly at the bruised and cut and swollen face. Then he said:

"I suppose you know he'll hurt you ten times harder than last night—now that you're just one big bruise?"

"It's worth the try," said Cal, tersely. "Can I go back to my desk now? If I'm

going to the bath at noon, I'll have to hustle to clear up my work. Thanks for letting me have the half day, sir. I'll be on the job at the usual time to-morrow, of course."

That night, as before, Cal Bryce was the first man in the Olympic's noisy audience to scramble up the runway in response to the call for volunteers. And, as before, he faced unflinching his opponent's hurricane rush.

The bout was a hazy dream, afterward, to Bryce. He realized that Tug Brindell was forever forcing the pace, that the champion's blows shook him like an earthquake and hurt most unbearably as they smote his aching ribs and face. Three times Bryce was knocked down. And all three times he took advantage of the full count of nine, before heaving himself to his feet again.

Every second of the bout was agony. Every second he forced himself to endure the onslaught as best he could, waxing more and more hopeless of withstanding his merciless opponent for another round.

But he fought on.

At the end of an eternity, the fourth round began. At the end of countless eternities it ended—with Calvin Bryce still on his reeling and staggering legs. By some miracle he had escaped a knock-out and had remained fighting to the end. He could scarcely believe his own good luck.

Hustling into his clothes and clutching tightly the fifteen dirty ten-dollar bills the champion's manager had so grudgingly handed him, the bleeding and exhausted little man turned his swollen face homeward.

At the same time a glumly scowling Tug Brindell slouched into the Olympic's "star" dressing room and confronted a huge and obese visitor who sprawled on one chair with his big feet on another. The visitor hauled from his pocket five fifty-dollar bills and passed them across to the sullen Brindell.

"Here you are," said he. "You sure earned 'em. Thanks."

Stuffing the money into his pocket, Brindell grumbled:

"I wouldn't 'a' done that for any man alive but you, Mr. Ponder. I'm not forgetting you gave me my ring start and my first backing. And I'm not forgetting how you helped me out when I sent you that hurry call for cash when they cleaned me in N'Orleans. I'm a grateful cuss. And I done what I done, to-night, because it was *you* that asked me to. But it don't do a champ no good to have it known that an amachoor stayed the distance with him. It don't——"

"So you said when I put this up to you," interrupted Ponder, the grin still playing on his fat jowls. "And, once or twice to-night, from the wings, it looked as if you were going to double cross me. If you had——"

"That's no way to talk!" said Brindell aggrievedly. "Not to a white man. You told me to give him everything he c'd take, but not put him out. And likewise I done it. I had to make some sort of a showing, didn't I, before that crowd? They'd 'a' hollered 'fake!' if I'd——"

But Ponder was not listening. He had broken into a noiseless chuckle that shook his whole enormous body. Speaking rather to himself than to Brindell, he exulted:

"The Whiffet's no whiffet at all. He's a hell-cat. I had a suspicion he was, that time he talked back to me, a couple of months ago. But then I saw he was shivering. And I figured he was a bluffer. But after the things he told me to-day—and the way he scrapped, to-night—say! It's worth a good many times that two hundred and fifty dollars to me to know I've got a man with all that gameness on my staff. He's thrown away—in the piker job I stuck him in. To-morrow he's going to start climbing upward. And if he's the man I know he is, he's due to climb plenty high—with Michael Ponder giving him the boosts he needs. Thanks, again, Tug! You've done me a big favor. But don't go gassing to other folks about my being a patron of boxing. I've always kept it dark. It hurts a man's business name. Good night!"

Calvin Bryce—looking as if a fire truck had twice run over him—walked lamely into his flat. Mildred was in bed and asleep. But Celia had sat up for him. She forbore to question or to scold. There was something maternal in the loving arms she passed about his aching body as she laid her cool cheek against his puffed and feverish face.

Cal, with a tired air of triumph, fished out the money and laid it in her lap. At sight of it she smiled—a rueful little smile.

"You poor boy!" said she. "I could have saved you all this horrible experience to-night, if you had come home for dinner—or if I had known where to find you. I could——"

"What do you mean?" he asked dully. "I——"

"Oh, it seems some famous sociologist—I forget his name—delivered a lecture at Mademoiselle Cretin's School this morning. And he explained his theories so simply and so fascinatingly that all the girls not only seem to have grasped his meaning but they went wild over him. Of course it is only a phase. But for the moment they are daft about economy and 'unearned increment' and all that sort of thing. Mildred came home fairly bubbling over with enthusiasm. On the strength of his teachings, the Sigma Sigma is disbanded, as 'criminally capitalistic;' and I understand that most of the girls have gone home resolved to lecture their rich fathers on the subject of 'hoarded wealth.'"

"But——"

"Even Mildred. She wanted to sit up to tell you how wicked you and I are—not to divide all our 'surplus earnings' with the poor. She——"

A gust of laughter from Cal broke in on her amused homily.

"That's just what we'll do!" he declared, merrily. "This one hundred and fifty dollars is 'surplus earnings.' And we're going to divide it between two poor people named Celia and Calvin Bryce. And we're going to insist that they spend it on some really up-to-date clothes for themselves. They sure need them. Hurroo for sociology!"

INEVITABLE SUCCESS

YOU can learn to be enthusiastic. Enthusiasm is being interested, and you can train yourself to feel interested by devoting to the matter at hand all your powers of curiosity, discovery, and appreciation. Force yourself to do that for a short time and you will find yourself developing the habit. It is then that you will be headed for success.

The man who can give himself wholly to a proposition, can get out of it all the good there is in it. All success is in exact proportion to the individual's capacity for enthusiasm. If you are interested in a problem, it means that you feel within yourself a pleasurable anticipation of conquest. The bored man admits by his boredom that he can get nothing out of his surroundings. The enthusiastic person is by his enthusiasm beginning to gratify his interest; that is to say, he is on the point of satisfying himself, which is success.

THE CROOKED VOTER

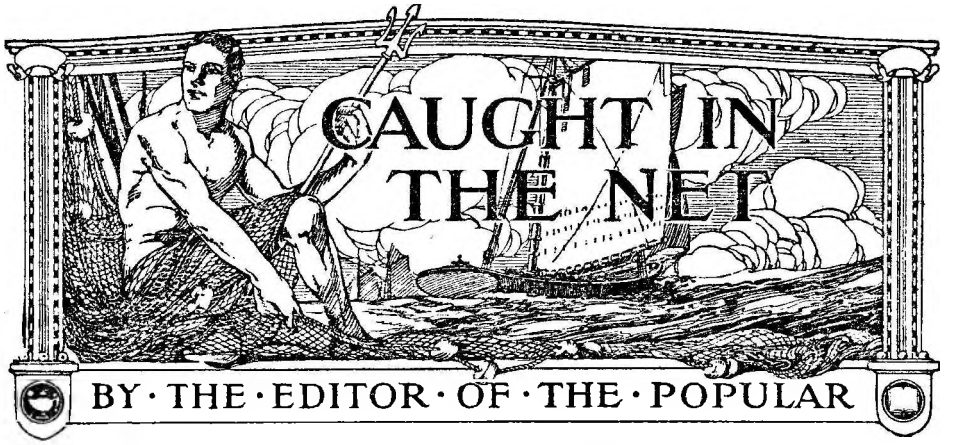
A CITY in the Middle West had a local option election. That night in a ward composed largely of Germans the vote was being counted, one German calling off and another recording the ballots.

"Vet," said the caller off, running the slips of paper through his hands, and continued monotonously: "Vet—vet—vet——"

He stopped and stared incredulously at a ballot before he cried out: "Mein Gott, dry!"

He went on: "Vet—vet—vet——"

After a while he paused a second time, mopped his forehead, and stared at a ballot with every sign of bewilderment. "Py Chiminy!" he exclaimed; "der son of a gun repeated!"



POOR MR. WASHINGTON!

COLD, grave, stiffly forbidding, his mouth ever full of high-sounding sentiments—that is the conception that too many Americans have of George Washington. His first biographer, the Reverend Mason Weems, started the process of dehumanization by inventing that silly story of the cherry tree, and it has been carried on until a very human as well as a very great man has been made into a sort of plaster saint.

Washington was no saint. He had a generous share of those little failings and weaknesses that make all men kin. Dancing came near being a passion with him, and he was fond of the theater, society, and going to the circus. Always a bit of a dandy, he was a professed admirer of pretty women, and had several unsuccessful love affairs before he was married to Mrs. Custis. He even wrote bad verse to some of these ladies who didn't realize that they were missing a chance to become famous. The "forbidding dignity" that some of his biographers write about couldn't have much awed the female members of his family, for he must have met domestic disaster at the hands of a combination that has been the undoing of many a lesser man to have written: "I will never again have two women in my house while I am there myself." Like other Virginia country gentlemen he rode to hounds, and ran his horses at the races, backing them with his money. He liked to shoot, fish and attend cockfights. Cards were one of his greatest pleasures, and his journal entry for one rainy day reads: "At home all day, over cards." He played for money, and on one occasion lost about fifty dollars—a larger sum in those days than now. The prohibitionists wouldn't have voted for him for president, for with his dinner he usually consumed "four or five glasses of Madeira wine, a small glass of punch, and a draft of beer"—moderate enough indulgence in a heavy-drinking age, but enough to give most men what used to be known technically as a "start." Although accustomed to hardship he lived well when he could, and even during the dark days of the Revolution showed his wisdom by seeking recreation in his leisure hours.

Another widespread misconception is that Washington seldom joked or laughed. As a matter of fact he had a robust sense of humor. Upon one occasion two distinguished judges, upon approaching Mount Vernon for a visit, decided to change their travel-worn garments for something more suitable before greeting their distinguished host. After disrobing they discovered that the pack containing their finery was missing. Coming upon these scantily clad personages Washington "was so overcome with laughter that he actually rolled on the ground."

Mr. H. G. Wells, in his "An Outline of History," goes to the other extreme in expressing an opinion of Washington. The best he can do for the man who spent nearly his whole life in public service, and managed a large estate in the few years that he could devote to his personal affairs, is to remark that "Washington was a conspicuously indolent man."

Poor Mr. Washington!

THE SAVE-AN-EYE MOVEMENT

A MOVEMENT has been started recently in railroad car foundries and other plants where there is a risk of employees' eyes being injured to establish a system by which they will be supplied with protective goggles. A special report was made lately by the committee on elimination of waste in industry of the American Engineering Council which stated that the eye was involved in 10.6 per cent of all permanently disabling accidents. This report embodies the results of an investigation in connection with the assay of waste in basic industries started a short time ago by Mr. Herbert Hoover. It gives the total number of industrial blind in the United States as 15,000, or 13.5 per cent of all the blind population.

The report stated that the protective methods now used in large plants where accidents to the eyes are likely to occur have brought about a great reduction in the numbers of workers' eye injuries. In the plants of the American Car and Foundry Company, it was said, there has been a reduction of more than 75 per cent in injuries to the eyes, through the use of goggles as a protective device. According to the management of the company, if they were worn conscientiously by the workers the percentage of improvement would be larger, as some of them do not like to appear at work wearing goggles. This feeling, however, is now wearing away. A striking reduction of eye injuries in its plants through the use of such protective devices is also reported on behalf of the American Locomotive Company. Recently in the shops of the Union Pacific Company employees at work in which there are likely to be eye accidents were required to wear goggles, with good results.

In the plants of other than railroad companies the use of goggles by workers where there is eye hazard is reported to have largely reduced the number of injuries.

The committee has taken up lately the question of defective vision among workers in many industries and also defective lighting. Like eye injuries, defective sight and poor lighting are responsible for much labor waste. The improvement of lighting in plants and offices and the substitution of appropriate eyeglasses for those with faulty focus, it is held, would mean more and better production. Even in some typewriting offices a surprising proportion of the workers were found with poor eyesight, who needed corrective glasses, and similar conditions were found in many other occupations. It is contended that the correction of poor vision through providing proper eyeglasses would mean an increase of work that in time would more than pay the cost.

The most recent reports from many plants are that the using of goggles where there is eye hazard is increasing and that the correcting of defective vision by proper glasses is receiving more and more attention.

CIVIC EDUCATION

RECOGNIZING the fact that the future of our country lies in the hands of the youth of to-day the government has issued a pamphlet, through the department of the interior, bureau of education, setting forth the importance of the teaching of civics as an agency for community interest and citizenship.

Mr. John James Tigert, United States commissioner of education, who prepared the pamphlet, quotes from a report of a committee of the American Political Science Association which says: "The aims of civic instruction should be as follows: (1) To awaken a knowledge of the fact that the citizen is in a social environment whose laws bind him for his own good. (2) To acquaint the citizen with the forms of organization and methods of administration of government in its several departments. In the case of schools the immediate problem is to bring to the mind of the pupil the fact that he is a living member of the community. The teaching of the subject should continually point toward active civic duty as well as toward civic rights. Scope and methods should be adjusted to this purpose, which means that the scope should not be confined to government alone, and that emphasis should be put upon relations rather than upon facts."

Commissioner Tigert suggests that the course of study should be made more practical, and that this can be done by making it detailed and concrete, placing great emphasis upon

the practical applications of civil institutions. In keeping with this, the method of instruction should be similar to the methods of the natural sciences. Students should have whenever possible, an opportunity to see in actual operation the things described and detailed in the course of study. The class should spend a great part of its time in the courthouse, in the city hall, and in the various other places where the actual practices of civil government are in operation. Of course, in some rural communities this may not be possible, but there are few schools where a visit to the nearest seat of local authority cannot sometimes be arranged.

Commissioner Tigert illustrates his point by his own experience as a member of the educational corps of the United States army in France. After the armistice it was his duty to teach history in Germany. His school center was at Arzbach, two miles from the town of Ems, where William I. of Prussia dismissed the French ambassador, Benedetti, and whence he sent the famous Ems dispatch to Bismarck. The commissioner took his history class around the city of Ems and lectured to them on the momentous consequences of what took place there. "I have taught," he says, "for fifteen years, but I never knew what it was really to have interest in a subject until I had the opportunity of teaching history in this itinerant fashion. Nothing stirs the interest and the patriotism like visits to historic places, such as Independence Hall, Mount Vernon, Bunker Hill, and others. Likewise, nothing can ever compare with itinerant classes in civics for arousing a real interest in civic and community interest."

WORLD-WIDE WIRELESS MESSAGES

THE wireless radio message service has been extending so rapidly of late that distances have been reached by wireless in the last year or two that would have been declared impossible to cover as late as twenty years ago. Very lately what is claimed to be the greatest radio station in the world, near Port Jefferson, New York State, built from plans by engineers of the Radio Corporation of America and then partly completed—was formally opened. The site of the station covers 6,400 acres or about ten square miles and it will have for its message receipts and transmissions, when finished, twelve steel towers, each 410 feet high. The distance between adjacent towers is 1,250 feet and the distance from the first to the last or twelfth tower is nearly three miles. A message of greeting, sent by President Harding from the White House in Washington, after the opening, was flashed to twenty-eight countries including Japan, where it was received at Tokyo, and Australia, where it was received at Sydney and other places by special receiving instruments installed on vessels. A number of the countries promptly sent replies by wireless.

That what would at one time be thought impossible or a miracle has been surpassed is shown in a published interview by a journalist with Guglielmo Marconi in the year 1897 on the possibilities of wireless at that time. Asked how far a wireless dispatch could be sent, he was declared to have said:

"Twenty miles. I am speaking within practical limits and thinking of the transmitter and receiver as thus far calculated. The distance depends simply on the amount of exciting energy and the dimensions of the two conductors from which the wave proceeds."

To scientists then the idea of sending a message by wireless even 4,000 miles would have seemed a wild dream, yet for some time past, up to 4,000 miles or more has been looked on as a mere chatting distance for wireless. Experts would not now think of a definite limit to the distance that can be covered by wireless messages. The existing radio and cable facilities to Great Britain, France, Norway, Germany and other trading commerce centers have now the addition of a direct radio telegraph service which is said to be second to none in speed, accuracy and economy.

After President Harding's message had been sent those who took part in the opening of the new station and a number of guests went to the community house, where messages of congratulation were read from radio men in all parts of the world. These included a specially cordial congratulatory message from Guglielmo Marconi, inventor of the wireless.

The latest reports as to wireless messages, from Sydney, Australia, indicate a widespread and growing belief that plans will now be hastened for a high-power station in Australia capable of transmitting messages direct to America and Great Britain.

COLLECTING

MOST people like to collect things. Schoolboys collect postage stamps, marbles and —in the past, at least—cigarette "picters." There are few of us who didn't at least start a collection of minerals or butterflies. As we grow older the collecting instinct may find different fields of activity, but it stays with us. Notice how few men leave lying on the cigar-store counter the coupons that the clerk passes out with their purchases. Broughton, the mighty English prize fighter of bare-knuckle days, whose ambition it was to fight and beat every man in the King of Prussia's guard regiment, ended his days, a gentle old man, haunting sales of bric-a-brac and pictures. Roosevelt collected big-game heads, the political scalps of his enemies and the hearty admiration or equally hearty dislike of his fellow citizens. Queen Helena of Italy collects historic footgear. Mr. Booth Tarkington collects ship models—and a more delightful hobby we can't imagine. One man we know gets a lot of pleasure out of a shelf crowded with books on cricket, a game he never has played and probably never has seen played. Another ruined himself and his family and spent a year in prison as a result of indulging his passion for rare books. The late William Henry Riggs spent a lifetime and a fortune in gathering together a collection of arms and armor that now delights visitors to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

A collection of art masterpieces, fine prints or period furniture usually requires a long purse, but sometimes knowledge goes farther than money. We know of a man who has a houseful of Colonial furniture that he has bought for low prices at country auction sales. Sometimes several layers of paint covered the mahogany, but his keen eye saw a prize in what others considered worthless. And lots of interesting collections of various kinds cost next to nothing. A newspaper man we know has a scrapbook filled with amusing bulls that have crept into print in the last decade, and a retired railroad engineer has gotten together a collection of photographs that embraces every type of locomotive ever built. The chief value of a collection of anything is the fun of doing the collecting.

POPULAR TOPICS

THE department of agriculture estimates that last year 5,000,000 hunters took to the woods and fields in search of game. In some districts the hunters outnumbered the hunted. The department urges that to prevent the extinction of our big game, hunting licenses be granted only in proportion to the game that can be spared in the district in which the sportsman wishes to hunt.

HENRY FORD, states a news item, has purchased, for his personal use, a $15,000 English automobile. Say it ain't true, Henry, say it ain't true!

FOUR-FOOTED buddies of the war now have their memorial, a bronze tablet in the wall of the State, War and Navy Building in Washington, presented by the president of the American Humane Society. Almost a quarter of a million horses and mules did their bit in the army, and 68,682 perished in the war.

LAST year was a record breaker for watermelon production, 44,000 carloads, 5,000 more than for 1920, having been shipped. Over half of these melons came from the Florida-Georgia-South Carolina melon-growing section, but Texas, California, and Mis-

souri each shipped between 3,000 and 5,000 carloads. Georgia is the leading melon-producing State, with 38,000 acres planted in the crop.

DURING the first eight months of last year Germany was our best customer for copper, cotton and lard. England was our best customer for wheat, with Italy second and Germany third, and England was the largest buyer of our bacon, with Germany second. Our exports to Germany for this period were valued at $263,211,000, an increase of $97,520,000 over the same period in 1920.

NEW YORK CITY has the fourth lowest death rate—12.93 per thousand of population—of the great cities of the world. Amsterdam, Holland, leads with a rate of 11.07, and London and Birmingham have rates slightly lower than New York's.

LOBO, a seventy-eight-pound wolf which for some years has been destroying valuable stock in Arizona, recently was killed by a government hunter. The big wolf was too wise to allow a man afoot or on horseback to get near him, but he didn't mind the approach of a motor car, and a shot from the hunter concealed in the car ended his career.

CANADA has found a way of helping both her ex-service men and her agriculture. The Dominion has loaned $84,000,000 to 27,000 returned soldiers, or 30 per cent of the men who were physically fit when released from the army, to establish themselves on the land. Four out of every five men who have returned to farming have taken advantage of these loans. Another thousand are receiving training in farming, and they also will be granted loans when they are qualified. Ex-service men may borrow a maximum of $7,500.

COLUMBIA, with an enrollment of 25,000 students, is our largest university. Last fall Columbia also showed the largest increase in enrollment over the previous year, 2,417. Other institutions with enrollments of over 10,000 students are the University of California, the University of Michigan, the College of the City of New York, and the University of Pennsylvania. England's largest university, London, has 7,000 students, and the University of Glasgow has 4,500.

PROFESSOR CADY, of the University of Kansas, who discovered that helium, the nonexplosive balloon gas, was a constituent of the natural gas of Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas, says that helium, because of the limited quantity that can be produced and its high cost, probably never will be used for commercial airships. The total production in the United States, after extensive and costly experiments, does not exceed 300,000 cubic feet, and all the helium available in the world would not have been sufficient to lift the unfortunate ZR-2. Professor Cady thinks that the government will reserve, for military purposes, all of this gas produced.

DARTMOUTH College and Smith College met in debate not long ago. We didn't hear the umpire's decision, but we'll wager that, no matter what he said, the Dartmouth boys didn't convince the Smith girls that they weren't right.

ALTHOUGH there never has been a period in which newspapers were so generally and eagerly read, 4,000 American newspapers have been forced to discontinue publication in the last four years. Cost of production, which has increased over 200 per cent in that period, was the cause.

Bright Roads of Adventure

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "First Down, Kentucky!" "Eyes in the Boat, Number Six!" Etc.

What the commander of the *Gussie* couldn't understand was what kept that big infantryman from going through the bottom after falling through the planking of three decks

VII.—ONCE ABOARD THE *GUSSIE*

IN January of 1898 a dozen or more staff correspondents of as many newspapers were sent to Wilkes-Barre to report by wire the trial of Sheriff Martin and his deputies for shooting down seventy miners as a bloody episode of a strike in the anthracite region during the preceding autumn. The sheriff and the coal operators called it a battle but it was popularly known as the "Lattimer massacre." As a sequel, a brigade of the Pennsylvania national guard, three thousand strong, had been hurried to that bleak and somber region of culm banks, unkempt hamlets and polyglot toilers. For several weeks the rebellious resentment was repressed by infantry regiments, cavalry troops and field batteries encamped over a wide area. It was the next thing to war.

Most of these newspaper correspondents had been in the field during this campaign and when they met again in Wilkes-Barre to "cover" the spectacular court proceedings it was like a congenial reunion of old friends. Among them was Ralph Paine of the Philadelphia *Press* whom a tolerant managing editor had forgiven and welcomed back after his wanderings with the sword of Gomez. The young man could lay claim to none of the wisdom of Ulysses but he could piously echo the declaration that "many griefs also in his mind did he suffer on the sea, although seeking to preserve his own life."

This prolonged tour of duty in Wilkes-Barre was unusually pleasant—an interesting story to handle and leisure enough to enjoy the hospitality of the clubs and the homes which had opened their doors to the visiting correspondents. The community had determined to regard them as a social event.

No matter how diverting the evening's entertainment might be, however, it was the correspondents' habit to saunter into the telegraph office before bedtime to make certain that their stuff had been forwarded without delay. One of them was chatting with the operators a little before midnight, on February 15th, when this brief bulletin was picked off the wire:

Battleship *Maine* blown up in Havana harbor. Most of her crew killed. Probably a Spanish plot.

The startled correspondent loped up the street and burst into the Press Club where he wrecked a serious-minded poker game. It was like tossing a cannon cracker into the room. The tragic news meant war with Spain. The opinion was unanimous. War was a novelty almost incredible to an American generation which had grown up in happy ignorance of it. In the clamorous discussion the correspondents forgot the sheriff and his panicky deputies who had riddled the marching miners with sawed-off shotguns. Every man was hoping for the summons to proceed posthaste to Havana. There was the big story beyond all others.

The round of work next day was perfunctory and absent-minded. Then the first lucky correspondent flourished his telegram and the rest of them went to the station to see him off and made an undignified amount of noise about it. My own orders were not long deferred and it was au revoir but not farewell to those left behind, for this was one of the happy phases of the trade we followed, that you met your newspaper pals again in Havana or San Francisco, in London or Shanghai, and were not in the least surprised.

The route to Cuba this time was respectable, by rail to Tampa and thence by pas-

senger steamer and not in a low-browed filibustering packet with a crew of piratical shipmates. There was one disturbing regret. In the hurry of departure the young man had failed to stage a parting scene with some particularly nice girl or other. It was missing a dramatic opportunity, this dashing off to war at a moment's notice. Destiny was kind, however, for while waiting a day in Tampa for the steamer *Olivette*, he met a most delightful girl who happened to be an old friend.

Promptly he invited her, with her mother, for a drive in one of those leisurely, two-horse vehicles which hovered in the offing and cajoled the winter tourist. All went well until the drowsy old negro took a sandy road out among the pines and palmettos and the live-oak hammock land. There he attempted to drive across a railroad track at a blind crossing. The infatuated young man turned and beheld a freight train not twenty feet away and coming rapidly. The paralyzed colored person endeavored to yank his horses to one side but they were deliberate animals, faithful rather than sudden or impulsive.

The agitated Ralph Paine was clutching at the ladies and yelling to them to jump. An instant later they experienced the sensation of being in collision with a freight train. It sidewiped the unfortunate vehicle and tossed it clear of the track, horses and all. The elderly African described a splendid parabolic flight and landed on his head which was of course impervious to injury. He could have done it no better with numerous rehearsals.

The ladies were flung into the deep sand while the freight cars thundered past no more than a few inches from their heads. The young man responsible for this little pleasure excursion crawled out of the wreckage of the carriage and discovered that he was not a total loss. The ladies were alive but somewhat incoherent and he made them as comfortable as possible with cushions and robes. Extraordinarily enough, they suffered only bruises. Meanwhile the freight train was halted and the crew came running back. The engineer was amazed to find nobody killed and he relieved his emotions by swearing at the old fool of a nigger with passionate gusto. Poor codger, he had troubles of his own, with one horse crippled and his carriage reduced to splintered junk.

In a passing wagon the ladies and the correspondent were conveyed to the Tampa Bay Hotel. That night he sailed for Havana with a strip of plaster on his brow and various aches in his bones. The incident is here recalled merely to indicate to the gentle reader what risks and hazards a war correspondent encounters in the line of duty. In this instance it cannot be denied that it was an obvious duty to devote one's self to a girl so uncommonly charming as she was and it would have been a pity to miss the cue for a farewell remark that it was a freight train which really threw us together.

There was nothing to make light of in the scene disclosed when the steamer entered Havana harbor on that February morning—in the ghastly tangle of twisted steel showing above the surface of the turbid water, all that was left of a powerful, immaculate American battleship; in the boats clustered about and the grotesque helmets of divers searching for the shattered bodies of two hundred and sixty-six brave men who had worn the navy blue; and in the barge piled high with waiting coffins.

It bit into one's memory as though etched with acid.

The tragedy had stirred the Spanish people of Havana, soldiers and civilians, not so much with sympathy as with a hostile spirit which smoldered like tinder ready for a spark. They had bitterly resented the act of sending the *Maine* to Havana when diplomatic relations were strained almost to breaking; they were the more incensed when Spanish agencies were openly accused of causing the disaster. They foresaw war as the result and felt no fondness for Americans. It was an unusual city to be in, with the lid likely to pop off at any time. And yet the Spanish army officers displayed their traditional courtesy of race when you met them in the cafés. One of them, I remember, took pains to explain to me, tracing a map on the tablecloth:

"If there is war, Spain will conquer your boastful United States. How? Permit me to show you in a word, señor. The thing is absurdly simple. In the opinion of foreign experts our navy is stronger than the American which recruits the riffraff of all nations—British deserters, Scandinavians and so on. As for the army? What is yours? A regular force of twenty-five thousand men, a bagatelle. Spain has two hundred thousand men in Cuba. They are seasoned troops. She will pick one hundred thousand

of these—leaving the others to garrison the island against the insurgents.

"This army of invasion will divide itself, one column landing at a Gulf port, the other on the Atlantic coast—perhaps at Charleston. Marching north and sweeping your handful of regulars before them they will maintain themselves on the country, exacting fabulous ransom from your cities, and unite to capture New York, Baltimore, Washington. Ah, you Yankee dollar hunters! So rich a nation and yet so helpless! May I offer you another glass of cognac, señor?"

The populace was not so courteous. Talk of stringing the Yankee pigs to lamp-posts was prevalent and the special target for threats was the American counsul general, Fitzhugh Lee. A fighting Lee of Virginia of the old strain was this ruddy, jovial gentleman with the white mustache. In his youth he had commanded all the cavalry forces of General Robert E. Lee and he had led the last charge of the Lost Cause. Would you have expected such a man to quit Havana just because various wild-eyed Spanish partisans expressed an intention of killing him?

Punctually at the dinner hour he took his seat at a table in the Hotel Ingleterra, close to a long window which opened on the pavement. There the passing crowd beheld him and he could overhear their remarks which were often superheated. Suave, leisurely, he lingered to smoke a cigar and sip his wine and perhaps read aloud with a chuckle, to the correspondents who dropped in to join him, a few more of the anonymous letters which breathed death and destruction. He was urging Americans to leave Havana and most of them obeyed, barring naval officers, correspondents and a few business men.

It was done with forethought, this choice of a conspicuous place in the café every night. Not that Fitzhugh Lee had to parade any proof of his own courage, but he knew it would hearten those of us who might feel nervous symptoms. And after a chat with him over the coffee, one felt ashamed of dodging dark streets or the slums down by the water front.

"Well, boys, you can stick around town until you see me grab my hat," he would say. "I don't plan on getting left when the last boat pulls out and I can move mighty spry, let me tell you. I learned how to retreat in good order a good many years before you were born."

Meanwhile the American naval board of inquiry was investigating the pitiful wreckage of the *Maine* and taking the testimony of the survivors. Upon the verdict hung the declaration of war. One bit of evidence seemed conclusive. We could behold it for ourselves while we watched the divers at work day after day. The keel plates of the battleship had been blown to the surface. They were identified as such by the naval constructors familiar with the ship's building plans. No internal explosion of magazines or boilers could have driven these bottom plates upward. And this, in a word, was the final verdict: that the *Maine* could not have destroyed herself by accident. But the cause is still an unsolved riddle of history.

And now the center of tension and expectancy shifted to Key West where the fleet soon mobilized in command of Rear Admiral Sampson. Long since obsolete, sent to the scrap heap or used as targets for flocks of bombing planes, those battleships, *Iowa, Indiana, Massachusetts,* were then the pride of the nation and superbly efficient for their day. The navy was ready, as usual, in respect of personnel and discipline and the keen-edged fighting spirit. Ships have vastly increased in size and speed and hitting power but the dominant factor is still the men behind the guns.

Key West swarmed with them in the spring of '98, the types eternal in the naval service, from the grizzled, steadfast captains who had been afloat on every sea to the taut, downy-cheeked young ensign fairly rampant for war and the two-fisted bluejacket who was ready for a fight or a frolic whenever he hit the beach. On the day when the order came to put the gray war paint on the ships, over the dazzling white which was their normal garb, the yell that went up from the fleet must have carried across to Havana. It was the first tangible portent that the trouble was about due to break loose.

Correspondents poured in by every steamer from the mainland. Just how they were going to report this war was a matter of hazy conjecture. Later there would be an army to accompany to Cuba but for a while it was the navy's affair and things might happen anywhere over an area of a thousand miles of salt water. Seagoing tugs

were chartered at enormous expense to follow the fleet and serve as dispatch boats. Only a few newspapers could afford such outlay but the correspondents kept coming to Key West with orders to get the news somehow. Most of us were competent reporters, assigned to cover this story as if it were a big fire or a railroad wreck. We did not aspire to be called war correspondents.

This dignity belonged to the Englishmen who joined the throng, veterans who had seen hard fighting in numerous campaigns on the Indian frontier, who had marched with the Turks, with the Chinese and Japanese armies. To us novices they were the real thing, like Archibald Forbes or with the flavor of Kipling's fiction. We never tired of listening to their yarns. That Key West hotel was a bedlam of a place while we waited for the war to begin. And when diversion failed you could stroll around the corner to the resort known as the "Eagle Bird" where a gentlemanly gambler, a regular Jack Oakhurst, spun the roulette wheel.

And there you would be most apt to find Stephen Crane, sometimes bucking the goddess of chance in contented solitude, a literary genius who burned the candle at both ends and flickered out before he was thirty years old. With his tired smile, he would drawl these cryptic lines when about to take another fling at the "Eagle Bird:"

> "Oh, five white mice of chance,
> Shirts of wool and corduroy pants,
> Gold and wine, women and sin,
> All for you if you let me come in—
> Into the house of chance."

There was a month of this waiting from day to day for the fleet to sail cleared for action. My own newspaper had not hired a dispatch boat but had made an arrangement with the New York *World* to share the cost of the service. This would enable me to cruise in whatever boats the *World* might send with the fleet. Other plans quite unforeseen, however, were suddenly devised on the very night the message came that war had been declared against Spain.

Amid the surging excitement of Key West no figure moved with calmer assurance than the great Sylvester Scovel. Yes, you could call him that. He had won his laurels in the field with Maximo Gomez and the Cuban insurgent forces as a correspondent of remarkable courage, dash and resourcefulness, taking his life in his hands and succeeding where others failed. He had been imprisoned by order of the Spanish captain general and sentenced to be shot. The protests of the American government saved him and he rejoined the Cubans. His nerve and audacity were proof against dismay. He was a public character. The title of correspondent was inadequate. The *World* called him its "special commissioner." To be ignorant of Sylvester Scovel was to argue yourself unknown. He was as ready to interview a pope as to advise a potentate. Through the daily journalism of his time he whizzed like a detonating meteor.

It was Scovel who drew me aside during the confusion of that memorable night in Key West and confidentially imparted:

"You are not to go in the *World* dispatch boat with me. I have made different arrangements. You will sail in Sampson's flagship, the *New York*, and you had better hustle yourself aboard."

"What's that? You're dreaming, Scovel, old man. No special correspondents will be allowed on the flagship. That was all thrashed out days ago."

"Oh, yes, I know, but I fixed this up with the admiral. He expects you."

"The devil he does! I can see him waiting at the gangway. He has a war on, but he won't let that stand in the way."

"I'm not joking, Paine," was the severe rejoinder. "If you're not out there by midnight, you'll get left."

"And you fixed it up with Admiral Sampson? I know you are a great little fixer, but——"

Sylvester Scovel turned on his heel and dismissed the topic. When he arranged things, they were as good as done. On the hotel piazza I discovered a young naval lieutenant who was in charge of the last boat which would go off to the flagship. He was a friend of mine and I frankly stated the case. It was risky business for him—putting a civilian aboard without orders; but he was willing to take a chance if the admiral had really invited me. If it turned out to be a false alarm, it was up to me to swim ashore. Presently the launch steered out of the harbor to the outside anchorage several miles distant. The fleet showed no lights. They were straining at the leash, battleships, lean cruisers, skittish little torpedo boats—the first American fleet under orders to engage the enemy since the Civil War.

Up the tall gangway of the armored cruiser *New York* clambered the uneasy young Paine with a suit case into which he had scrambled a change of clothes at the last moment. The officer of the deck eyed the suit case. It seemed to annoy him. Then his coldly critical gaze took in the stranger in civilian garb. Glibly, but with an inward trepidation, was the officer informed:

"The admiral expects me. I am to sail with the fleet."

"First I heard of it," snapped the other. "No orders given me to let you aboard. The admiral is asleep."

"Oh, don't bother to wake him up," was my idiotic reply. "I can see him first thing in the morning."

The officer of the deck removed a brass-bound cap and rubbed his head. Then he bawled to the boatswain to hoist the launch inboard. It looked as though the unwelcome visitor might have to swim for it. But this mention of the admiral had granted him a respite and he was finally permitted to make his way down to the steerage mess where dwelt the youngest officers, ensigns and naval cadets, and there he found a welcome. Nobody wanted to sleep and we cocked our heels on the table and fought the war in advance until shortly before daylight when the signal ran from ship to ship and the anchors were weighed and the jubilant fleet steamed out to begin the blockade of Havana.

There was a bit of excitement when the cruiser *Nashville* dashed off to capture the Spanish merchant steamer *Buena Ventura* as the first prize of the war. Some time after this, when the warships were moving in orderly array over a sapphire sea, Admiral Sampson paced the quarter-deck, a spare, erect figure in white uniform. The short, gray beard carefully trimmed, the precise and studious manner, suggested more the scholar than the sailor. From the list of captains he had been selected for this most important command because of the superior intelligence and efficiency with which he had performed every task of a career begun during the Civil War.

On this particular morning he was preoccupied with problems of momentous gravity. This war was to be won or lost by sea. Its chief concern was with the powerful squadron of fast armored cruisers under the Spanish Admiral Cervera whose whereabouts were unknown. Until this force could be made impotent or destroyed, it would be impossible to send an American army to Cuba.

To Admiral Sampson, then, wrapped in his anxious reflections, commanding a fleet untried in battle, came this inconsequential correspondent, Ralph Paine, and attempted to explain his presence on the flagship. The young man was distinctly ill at ease. He felt conscious that his midnight arrival had been informal. The admiral halted in his stride, his hands clasped behind him, and his immobile features failed to warm in a smile of greeting. He listened for a moment and spoke curtly:

"Scovel told you to come aboard? This is the first I have heard of it."

"Then there must be some misunderstanding, admiral," was the flustered exclamation, with a hunted glance over the side. It was, indeed, a long swim to Key West. The commander in chief briefly agreed to this statement and resumed pacing the quarter-deck. The unhappy correspondent was left rooted to the spot from which he presently removed himself to a refuge more secluded.

His young friends of the steerage mess offered condolence as did also the debonair "Chappie" Goode, representing the Associated Press, who enjoyed a privileged status. The situation was befogged but one could not hold the buoyant and irrepressible Sylvester Scovel guilty of deception. He had mentioned it to the admiral, no doubt of that, as a stroke of enterprise which would benefit the New York *World*. And whatever Scovel suggested was thereby arranged. For him life was one superb gesture after another. At any rate, the matter had left no impression on the burdened mind of Admiral Sampson. He had made this sufficiently clear.

The day passed and the fleet took station off the Cuban coast, from Matanzas to Havana, grim and vigilant and wary of torpedo-boat attack. The correspondent who had failed to obtain official sanction was still on board and his ribald messmates called him a burglar who had crawled through a hawse hole. He was an item overlooked in the conduct of the war and apparently it had been decided to make the best of him. Thus it happened that he remained a guest of the flagship through the first fortnight of hostilities.

It was a gorgeous opportunity for a zeal-

ous young journalist, permitting him to skim the cream of episodes, impressions, color and movement which were all unfamiliar to newspaper readers. He wrote columns and columns of it to be cabled from Key West, and the stuff was prominently displayed and double-leaded. It carried the line, "From a staff correspondent on board of the flagship *New York,*" but failed to state how he got there.

In the midst of this singularly lucky experience there was one unhappy episode. The enemy was observed to be constructing a series of earthworks to defend the harbor of Matanzas and mounting coast batteries behind them. Admiral Sampson resolved to discourage this pernicious activity and ordered a bombardment. It was undertaken by the *New York,* the light cruiser *Cincinnati* and the monitor *Puritan.*

Now this was the first action of the war, which fact made it more than a minor episode. The thunder of American broadsides was a spectacular event. By this time Richard Harding Davis had been granted a special dispensation to visit the flagship and we stood together on the superstructure, tremendously interested in the show and especially in the Spanish shells which passed overhead. The bluejackets of the *New York* served their guns with an enthusiasm which Davis described in this vivid fashion:

> At first I tried to keep count of the shots fired but soon it was like counting falling bricks. The guns seemed to be ripping out the steel sides of the ships and to be racing to see which could get rid of the most ammunition first. The thick deck of the superstructure jumped with the concussions and vibrated like a suspension bridge when an express train thunders across it. They came crashing from every point and when you had steadied yourself against one salvo you were shaken and swayed by the backward rush of the wind from another. The reports seemed to crack the air as though it were a dense body. It opened and shut and rocked you about with invisible waves. Your eardrums tingled and strained and seemed to crack. The noise was physical, like a blow from a baseball bat; the noise itself stung and shook you. The concussions were things apart; they shook you after a fashion of their own, jumping your field glasses between the bridge of your nose and the brim of your hat and hammering your eyebrows. With this there were great clouds of hot smoke that swept across the decks and hung for a moment, hiding everything in a curtain of choking fog which rasped your throat and nostrils and burned your eyes.
>
> The ship seemed to work and fight by herself; you heard no human voice of command, only the grieved tones of Lieutenant Mulligan rising from his smoke-choked deck below, where he could not see to aim his six-inch gun, and from where he begged Lieutenant Marble again and again to "take your damned smoke out of my way." Lieutenant Marble was vaulting in and out of his forward turret like a squirrel in a cage. One instant you would see him far out on the deck where shattered pieces of glass and woodwork eddied like leaves in a hurricane, and the next pushing the turret with his shoulder as though he meant to shove it overboard; and then he would wave his hand to the crew inside and there would be a racking roar, a parting of air and sea and sky, a flash of flame vomiting black smoke and he would be swallowed up in it like a fairy in a pantomime. And instantly from the depths below, like the voice of a lost soul, would rise the protesting shriek of Lieutenant Dick Mulligan, "Oh, *will* you take your damned smoke out of my way?"

I quote at this length to indicate that in the brisk bombardment of Matanzas there was excellent material for a newspaper dispatch. The American people were clamoring for action and powder smoke and here was the first taste of it, three ships banging away with every gun that could be brought to bear and the yellow streaks of earthworks spouting like geysers as the shells tore into them. The Spanish battery was soon silenced without damage to the attacking force.

When our bugles blew to cease firing and the smoke had cleared, a tug came churning alongside the *New York,* having witnessed the spectacle from a discreet distance. It was the New York *Herald's* dispatch boat, waiting for Richard Harding Davis to finish writing his story and eager to dash for Key West with it. Now the *World* boat was supposed to be trailing the fleet and to be on the qui vive for such an episode as this bombardment. Vainly I searched the horizon to find it. Sylvester Scovel had betaken himself and the boat elsewhere along the Cuban coast, "to take soundings for the admiral," as transpired later.

I could not write like Richard Harding Davis but I had the news and there was no way of sending it. Politely but firmly the *Herald* man megaphoned from the bow of the tug that he liked me personally but he'd be hanged if he would carry my stuff to Key West to be printed in a rival sheet, to wit, the *World.* And he grinned when he said it, for he was assured of the first real "scoop" of the war. Much as I admired Sylvester Scovel the magnificent, I fervently wished that he had attended more strictly to the newspaper game.

Sorrowfully I beheld Davis toss his copy to the deck of the tug in a weighted envelope. The boat's whistle blew two or three derisive snorts and she tore off at top speed for the hundred-and-twenty-mile run to Key West. This was how the *Herald* scored a notable beat on the bombardment of Matanzas, leaving a profoundly disappointed and unreconciled correspondent with his adjectives and paragraphs bottled up and no way to uncork them. Destiny had properly scuppered him.

A few nights later there was another story but it could not be even told, much less written. Secrecy sealed it until the end of the war. The flagship had returned to the blockade of Havana and moved slowly within easy vision of Morro Castle. In black darkness, with the weather thick and muggy, she drifted some distance from her station. The heat had driven me from below and I was asleep upon the superstructure. The awakening was tumultuous.

A gun barked from some vessel obscured in the darkness. The call to general quarters sounded through the quiet decks of the *New York*. Five hundred men leaped from their hammocks and raced to their stations. A moment or two of this prodigious commotion and the ship was ready. From her signal mast the Ardois lamps were flashing red and white and presently a reply winked in the night, a little distance off to starboard. It was repeated and the flagship also reiterated her own private code signal. Then the crew streamed back to the hammocks and cursed the false alarm.

The rest of the story was confidentially imparted by McCready, formerly my filibustering shipmate. He had been permitted to make a cruise in the torpedo boat *Porter,* by way of an experience, and was down in the stokehole, in dungarees, to see what that was like. The commander, Lieutenant "Jack" Fremont, was of the dashing, intrepid type best suited to this job, and while rolling about in his little tin pot of a craft he had sighted the looming shadow of a large ship where he thought no friendly man-of-war ought to be.

Promptly he had flashed his own code signal for the night, but through some blunder the signal quartermaster of the *New York* displayed the wrong combination of numbers. The *Porter* signaled again and once more the twinkling answer was unsatisfactory. This was enough for the bold Jack Fremont. It looked as though he had encountered one of Cervera's armored cruisers trying to steal into Havana. Instantly he cleared a torpedo tube and trained it on the great, spectral shape which floated so near. The torpedo crew was set and ready to launch the terrible missile at the target. Fremont told them to wait a minute and with his own hand he let drive with a three-pounder gun as his final word. The shell flew over the flagship which was much amazed and in the very nick of time she showed the correct night signal.

It was by this narrowest of margins that the admiral and five hundred men and a fine armored cruiser and a correspondent who felt a certain fondness for existence, although he didn't amount to much in the general scheme of things, escaped being blown to glory by the little torpedo-boat *Porter* which was everlastingly on the job.

"And Jack Fremont certainly would have done it," said McCready when next we met. "I popped out of the fireroom hatch when he called 'em to quarters and you never saw such a sincere little crew in your life. They stood on their toes and fairly yelped for the word to let go. And the skipper came so near saying it that I really dislike to discuss the affair. *There* was one big story that I thank God didn't happen."

An edict from the navy department finally banished the fortunate Paine from the flagship. He had fared ever so much better than he deserved. The editors of other newspapers were righteously protesting that their staff correspondents were discriminated against. Why shouldn't they be allowed to cruise in the flagship? What was the excuse for this man Paine, anyhow? As a matter of fact, there wasn't any. He had just happened. And so, in the best of spirits, with a sense of gratitude for benefits received, he went ashore at Key West to seek other means of seeing the war.

Among the opportunities offered shortly thereafter was the voyage of the good ship *Gussie.* It was mostly comedy. What else would you have with a vessel by that name? Yes, she had sailed the high seas as the *Gussie* for more than thirty years, a lumbering, red, paddle-wheeled ark which had been a transport in the Civil War, so the legend ran. In raking the coast for troopships, the government had discovered this venerable relic plying down New Orleans way and she was added to the collection of maritime

curiosities in which the army risked drowning during the war with Spain.

The strategists of the war department were undecided where to send the army of invasion for the conquest of Cuba, whether to undertake a siege of Havana by land and sea or to gain a foothold at Santiago. Meanwhile it was important to ascertain how much coöperation could be expected from the Cuban insurgent forces. It was known that they were in urgent need of munitions and supplies and the *Gussie* was therefore loaded with a valuable cargo and sent from Tampa. She carried also two companies of the First Infantry, a hard-boiled regular outfit which had been stationed in the Far West for many years and whose older officers had seen fighting in campaigns against the red Indians.

These troops were intended to protect the landing of the cargo, and three Cuban officers went with them to act as scouts and to get in touch with the insurgent detachments nearest the point of destination. It was to be a secret expedition, of course, in order that the enemy might not concentrate to spoil the plans and blow the *Gussie* and her people out of water. The *Gussie* waddled into Key West harbor on her way across to Cuban waters and her pilgrimage was enshrouded in as much secrecy as a well-advertised excursion to Coney Island.

When she departed, two newspaper dispatch boats followed in her wake just to make the voyage unostentatious. All that was lacking to make it absolutely stealthy was a brass band and a plentiful supply of fireworks. As an escort the navy offered the little revenue cutting *Manning*. On board the *Gussie* were six or eight of us correspondents who prayed for fair weather. One moved gingerly lest he stub his toe and kick a hole through the side of the hoary old tub. Her merchant skipper was a benevolent, elderly man with moth-eaten whiskers who preferred an uneventful life. One of the correspondents reported him as complaining:

"Why, those Spaniards have no idea what one shot will do to my vessel if they happen to hit her. Honest to God, young man, one of them fat regular soldiers stumbled down the companionway this morning and before we could stop him he had busted through the planking of three decks and landed in the lower hold. What I can't figger out is what kept him from going through the bottom."

Incidentally, this seafaring expedition, including two companies of infantry, was in command of a colonel of cavalry. During the first night the *Gussie* wandered close to Havana, inside the cordon of the blockade. She blazed grandly with lights from every port, like a hotel afloat. The warships had not been informed of the coming of the *Gussie* and therefore when they beheld this singular phenomenon they shot at it and afterward hauled alongside to ask questions. The excursion was shy a naval signalman who could have told the blockading force what it was all about. This made the situation excessively embarrassing.

It was an entertaining night, with the report of a gun every now and then as a peremptory mandate to heave to, then the disgusted accents of an officer on the deck of a cruiser or battleship demanding to know what in hell kind of a lunatic asylum had gone adrift. The *Gussie* was like a flustered old lady caught in a jam of street traffic. The merchant skipper lamented in his whiskers and plaintively informed the navy that he didn't know where he was going and wished he wasn't. It was no place for a respectable vessel that had seen better days. And would they kindly leave him alone because he had never meant any harm to nobody. Then the navy turned its searchlights on the *Gussie* and laughed at her in a ribald manner with a shocking lack of reverence for her sex and her age.

When morning broke, the secretive *Gussie* had strayed so close to Morro Castle, off Havana, that you could count the guns in the stone embrasures. One fanciful excursionist swore that he could smell breakfast cooking in the houses along the Alameda. The *Gussie* gasped and scuttled seaward with a startled air. All hands wondered why she was not fired at and sunk. The most plausible theory was that the Spanish gunners couldn't believe she was true. If they were subject to delusions like that, it was time to swear off drinking Cuban rum.

The *Manning* came along to chaperon the *Gussie* and the trim converted yacht *Wasp* joined the party. On deck the two companies of regulars sprawled on their gay Navajo blankets and down below the mules of an army pack train brayed for more water. The *Gussie* sauntered off to the westward, within sight of the coast, while Spanish heliographs talked about her

from their red-roofed stations on the hilltops and the round Martello towers. The excursion was already common gossip.

At noon the *Gussie* stood in toward the coast in order to send the Cuban scouts ashore near Mariel. She ran close enough to see that the landscape fairly buzzed with Spanish troops who were eager to welcome her. It was annoying enough to be peppered at by clusters of infantrymen who scampered out of the blockhouses but the thing was carried entirely too far when the *Gussie* was attacked by cavalry. A hundred of these Spanish horsemen broke out of the verdure and raced along the beach for a mile or more, firing from the saddle until the *Wasp* tossed a few shells among them and they wheeled into the jungle. The American colonel of cavalry in command of the *Gussie* expedition was much impressed. He was a veteran soldier of many experiences but this was something new. It was all he could do to restrain himself from telling the bugler to sound "Boots and Saddles" for a countercharge. In all respects this was an unconventional sea voyage.

Having survived a cavalry attack, the *Gussie* went on to the westward. The Cuban scouts had declined to go ashore at Mariel. The vote was unanimous. Near the inlet of Cabañas a small fort crackled with rifle volleys and the bullets came singing over the *Gussie*. A four-pounder on the *Manning* discouraged this sport. We began to surmise that the Piñar del Rio railroad was running special trains out of Havana and advertising the *Gussie* as a holiday attraction.

She hovered in the vicinity of Cabañas for some time, slowly drifting to the westward of the inlet until the coast was veiled in a tropical downpour of rain. Then it was decided to put the scouts ashore and start them inland. If they should return with favorable information, the munitions and the mules could be transported to the beach. What this expedition needed most was the professional skill of Captain "Dynamite Johnny" O'Brien.

The *Gussie* dropped anchor a quarter of a mile from shore where a heavy surf broke white across the coral reef. The three Cuban scouts, wearing boots and spurs, reluctantly got into a small skiff to find a passage through the reef. They were supposed to know. Very promptly they were capsized in the breakers and salvaged themselves by swimming, wading, and turning involuntary somersaults. Then the ship's boats were ordered away and into them jumped the husky regulars of E Company, under Captain O'Connell and Lieutenant Crofton, sixty men in all, while G Company was held in reserve on the *Gussie*.

There was nothing farcical about these hard-bitted infantrymen and the way they went about their business. They were samples of the magnificent little regular army which was to fight and win the war at Santiago, regardless of a grotesque ruin of a commanding general named Shafter who was too fat-bodied to climb a horse and too fat-witted to plan a campaign. In time of peace this army had been scattered at small posts and it was therefore at its best in such a minor operation as this landing at Cabañas —where the unit was a company led by its own officers.

Captain O'Connell's big lifeboat was upset in the surf, which caused delay while Lieutenant Crofton gained the beach with his detachment and deployed them as skirmishers. The blue shirts and brown hats instantly vanished in the luxuriant jungle. The men went at it as though they were trailing Apache Indians. Presently the captain and his force scrambled out of the breakers and also disappeared inland, but at some distance up the beach.

Meanwhile the *Manning* and the *Wasp* had taken positions to shell the woods should the enemy be flushed by the skirmishers. Aboard the *Gussie* it was discovered that three horses would have to be sent ashore for the use of the Cuban scouts. Here was an occasion when a certain Ralph Paine displayed a misguided initiative which again proved that he needed a keeper. These horses were nothing in his young life but nobody else seemed anxious to conduct them to the beach and he therefore offered to take one of them along with him.

Two sailors manned a small boat and waited near the ship. Half a dozen infantrymen laid hold of a large black horse and dragged him to an open cargo port. He objected violently but they shoved all together and he dropped twenty feet with a mighty splash. When his head emerged from the ocean the small boat paddled near and the aforesaid Paine, who was seated in the stern, grabbed the poor beast by the halter rope. He was very much of a disgusted, hysterical horse. It was a long

swim, this quarter of a mile to the beach, but by holding the animal's head up he was enabled to strike out bravely. Progress was slow and arduous, and the struggling horse absorbed one's attention.

The journey was more than halfway accomplished when those busy skirmishers ashore made contact with the enemy. An infernal racket suddenly filled the jungle, the Spanish firing volleys, the seasoned Yankee doughboys snap-shooting at will and picking them off from cover. Smaller noises, like angry hornets, were in the air as the bullets flew toward the *Gussie*. There was also an impression that they were aimed at a little boat and two profane sailors and a perplexed correspondent who towed a large, black horse by the nose.

This journey to the beach was like a one-way street. You had to go ahead. To turn and haul that floundering horse back to the *Gussie* was out of the question, for there was no method of hoisting him on board again. At least this was my belief at the moment. The two sailors were obsessed by the same notion that they could not abandon this horse as a derelict. Therefore they pulled steadily at the oars, glancing over their shoulders and communing with each other in phrases requiring expurgation.

The beach seemed to be miles and miles away, for the horse was like a sea anchor astern, although he swam nobly, snorting like a grampus. It was hard work holding his head above water when he began to tire. After a certain number of minutes or hours or days or whatever they were the boat reached the surf which broke over the edge of the reef. By this time an impetuous infantryman had come running out of the jungle to strip off his shirt and brandish it in the wigwag code.

What he had to say was evidently comprehended by the *Wasp* and the *Manning*, for they began to shell the woods. The projectiles flew high, to pass over the invisible American skirmishers, but the noise of them overhead increased the disquietude of two sweating sailors, a large black horse and a two-hundred-pound correspondent who felt himself to be the most conspicuous object in or about the island of Cuba. The fact that rifle bullets were spattering outside the surf and that a shortsighted shell from the *Manning* almost got the horse added to the feeling that here was too much publicity.

No sooner was the boat fairly in the surf than it capsized. The breakers were boisterous, rearing white-crested. Their blows knocked you down as with a club. The two sailors clung to the gunwales of the boat and one of them was heard to splutter that this was a bum place to be wastin' time on a blankety livery stable. They gained a footing on the coral bottom and managed to swing the boat around bow on to the surf. Then they scrambled in and shoved the oars into the tholepins. The boat reared like a broncho, but air tanks made it buoyant and they drove it seaward, pulling like madmen. Without another upset they fought clear of the surf and made for the *Gussie*.

They had done their duty to the horse. Although in the breakers, he had touched solid bottom. The situation had resolved itself into a short halter rope with the horse at one end and a fool of a correspondent at the other. It could not be said that they were on terra firma. First a ponderous breaker knocked the horse down and he stepped on the correspondent and then it was vice versa, with several encores. However, they were slowly approaching the beach and finding shoaler water. Short of wind and with various abrasions they finally stayed right side up, to their mutual relief.

On board the *Gussie* was one of the most famous illustrators of the time, Rufus F. Zogbaum, best known for his pictures of the naval service. For *Harper's Weekly* he made a double-page drawing called "Landing Horses Through the Surf Under Fire from the Shore." Although done with spirit and fidelity, it failed, of course, to portray the inner emotions of the young man and the large, black horse. Art has its limitations.

Once clear of the breakers, it seemed as if the beach were not a whit more hospitable. Bullets came singing across it from the Spanish force engaged with the American skirmish line. However, the idea still persisted that the horse had to be delivered to somebody and the transaction completed. He was a leg-weary animal and moved with reluctant feet. Also it seemed a long journey to find a tree to tie him to, for nobody was waiting to receive him. Moored in this manner, the young man concluded that it would be unreasonable for the horse to demand any more of his time.

The outstanding fact was that one was permitted to join the first American troops

to land on Cuban soil in the war with Spain. The altercation with the horse had been incidental—another episode in the career of a young man who could never seem to learn to mind his own business. He found a trail from the beach into the jungle and soon came to a row of old rifle pits from which the Spanish soldiers had been driven out. Here a squad of E Company men had tucked themselves in and were firing to discourage the enemy from crossing the trail and so flanking the outfit.

It was learned that the skirmishers had encountered a body of Spanish irregulars—a hundred or so of them, some mounted—who had been hastily sent from Cabañas to annoy the landing party from the *Gussie*. In a running fight they had been scattered and the shells from the *Manning* and the *Wasp* had no doubt hastened the retirement and held back reënforcements from the coastwise garrisons near by. They carried their wounded with them. In the dense undergrowth the American infantrymen stumbled over four bodies. One of them was the officer commanding the party, a handsome man of middle age, wearing a spick-and-span uniform with medals and ribbons on his breast.

This was the end of him, of his long years of service, of his ambitions and his affections, to be killed and left to rot in a shallow grave of the Cuban jungle as a tragedy wholly negligible. He had been blotted out as an incident of this absurd *Gussie* expedition which would leave not the slightest impression on the war. It was something to remember as typical of the enormous futility of these bloody quarrels between nations. He symbolized the primitive stupidity of it all.

The American soldiers suffered no casualties. Schooled in the traditions of frontier campaigns they had taken every advantage of the thick cover and had handled their rifles with methodical accuracy. The only casualty was a correspondent, James F. J. Archibald, who had gone ashore with E Company. He was pinked in the arm by a Mauser bullet, a slight flesh wound, which was very precious in his sight. He was the first American wounded in Cuba! It was a distinction. And those who knew "Jimmie" Archibald were aware that he would make the most of it.

Two more horses came ashore and the three Cuban scouts were firmly told to straddle them and ride for the camp of the insurgent leader, Perrico Diaz, at the foot of the Cacara-Jicara mountains which loomed darkly a few miles distant. They remonstrated until the irate doughboys walloped their steeds. Then, with theatrical gestures of farewell, they clapped the spurs home and crashed into the jungle trail as if shot out of guns.

The skirmishers trooped back to the beach in the late afternoon and piled into the boats. They wrestled with the surf and escaped drowning and so rejoined the *Gussie*, dripping wet and in excellent humor. They had chased the Spaniards through the brush and taught them to leave the old First Infantry alone. It had been a nifty little scrap while it lasted. The *Gussie* lifted her anchor and churned her paddle wheels to get away from a lee shore before night. It had been decided to attempt another landing somewhere else. Again she intruded herself into the blockade of Havana where the navy was calling her a chronic nuisance and she was scolded and cursed in a manner more scandalous than ever, particularly by the gunboat *Vicksburg* which chased her no less than three times before morning.

Then the patient *Manning* and the courteous *Wasp* resumed their chaperonage and the *Gussie* steamed into a broad bay near Baracoa. Here was another rendezvous with the Cuban forces. Ah, they were waiting! A white flag waved from the top of a royal palm in the chaparral. It was the friendly signal. The *Gussie* forgot all the trepidations and previous shocks to her nerves and boldly advanced within three hundred yards of the beach. Who had dared to call this voyage a nautical jest?

Two masked Spanish field batteries opened on her at this close range. They had decoyed the poor old hussy of a steamboat inshore for this very purpose. The marksmanship was perfect for direction but a trifle high. The first flight of shells passed a few feet above the spar deck. The *Gussie* reversed her engines so suddenly that she almost broke herself in two. Like other invalids confronted by unexpected peril she moved more rapidly than the doctors had believed possible. This disarranged the aim of the Spanish batteries and they failed to pot her. The *Wasp* was enjoying herself by knocking to pieces a Martello tower near the beach while the *Manning* practiced on the batteries hidden in the grass.

The merchant skipper of the *Gussie* thought it high time to protest to the colonel of cavalry. This foolishness had gone far enough. The *Gussie* was mighty liable to get hurt if they proposed to keep on letting the Spaniards use her to shoot at all up and down the coast. It wasn't unreasonable to ask the army to be more careful of her. But the army had resolved to try it once more and so the *Gussie* proceeded toward Matanzas. A Cuban pilot was put ashore, the jolly, stout old Ambrosito, with instructions to find the insurgent camp of Betancourt. The *Gussie* drifted offshore all night, awaiting his return.

A boat from the *Manning* found him hiding on the beach and fetched him off. Miles and miles had he slid on his belly through the grass, vociferated Ambrosito, and the country was full of Spanish patrols. They swarmed like *cucujos*—fireflies—and there could be no landing the mules and the guns and things between Cardenas and Matanzas.

"So I have come back to you," concluded Ambrosito. "And ah, my brothers, my little brothers, it is good to live on the *Gussie,* much better than being killed with bullets and machetes on the beach! Here we are all doing well—divinely—*como papas*—like potatoes."

Three times was out, as far as the *Gussie* was concerned. Thrice had she tried and failed, but nobody could accuse her of lacking the best intentions in the world. Back she sailed to Key West and the voyage belonged in the archives of history. In a restaurant I found McCready, ordering ham and eggs every few minutes, after a rough week at sea in a dispatch boat.

"What kind of a time did you have in the *Gussie?*" said he, in greeting.

"Don't ask me, Mac. You go find a big, black horse and ask *him.*"

This series of personal experiences began in the November 20, 1921, issue. In the next number appears Mr. Paine's story of how "It Happened in Haiti."

PAINLESS SALVATION

COLONEL THOMAS T. PICKENS, of Nashville, Tennessee, is a confirmed churchgoer and a connoisseur of good preaching. Consequently, he looked forward to an intellectual treat when it was announced that an evangelist of whom he had heard much praise would preach in Nashville.

When the colonel had been to hear him, he was asked what he thought of the reverend gentleman's eloquence.

"He preaches," said the colonel, "as if he thought sin were to be taken out of a man like Eve out of Adam—by putting him to sleep."

AUTOMOBILE DEATH RATE GOES UP

AUTOMOBILE accidents caused the death of 3,808 persons in the United States in 1919, an increase of 245 over 1918. The death rate from this cause is now 14.1 out of every hundred thousand of population. In 1915 this rate was 8. Youngstown, Ohio, had the highest automobile death rate in 1919, with 28.5 per 100,000, and Richmond, Virginia, the lowest for any of the larger cities, with 5.9 per 100,000. In New York City 780 persons were killed, over double the number in 1915, and an increase of 89 over 1918. In Chicago 328 persons were killed in automobile accidents. Among remedies suggested are improved traffic regulations, the erection of safety islands at busy crossings, and stricter licensing examinations.

The Spark in the Tinder

By Holman Day

Author of "The Psychomancers," "On the Long Leash," Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

A man lay dead in the Brassua wilderness. There were two bullet wounds in his head and a rifle on the ground at his side. Was it murder, or had he been killed by a chance shot from the rifle of "Skiddy" Trask? John Lang, Skiddy's hunting companion, a successful lawyer, thought the latter possible and decided not to report finding the body. Not far away they found a woodsman, Onésime Ouellette, pinned by a felled tree. When released his rifle was missing and he told a wild tale of seeing a beautiful woman in the timberland—but wasn't sure that she wasn't a vision born of delirium. He took the hunters to his cabin and when next morning Lang gave him his card and offered legal help should the other ever need it, his gratitude was boundless. Before they started for the city Skiddy broached the matter that had caused him to accompany Lang—he and Reba Donworth wanted the lawyer to release the girl from her engagement to marry Lang, so that she could marry Skiddy. Secure in his self-esteem and knowing Skiddy to be a ne'er-do-well owned body and soul by his uncle, old Serenus Skidmore Trask, owner of the Brassua region, Lang refused scornfully. When he met Reba in the city she confessed that she loved Skiddy, but Lang had no idea of giving her up. That evening at the Talisman Club the two men had angry words. Lang was called to the Trask mansion and learned that rough old Serenus Trask had married a beautiful girl of unknown antecedents. Trask made a new will providing for his wife and instructed Lang to use a legal "twist bit" to force Skiddy to marry Maravista Blake, heiress of the Tulandic timberlands. At an interview next day Skiddy, disregarding consequences, refused, and reproached the lawyer bitterly for helping the old man to ruin his chance for happiness. Later Lang was surprised to learn that Skiddy had accepted a thousand dollars from his uncle to visit Maravista, but instead Skiddy went North, became involved in an unsuccessful bootlegging operation, learned that his uncle had been married by Elder Ashael, called by the woodsmen a "Charmer Man," and bought information that would enable him to blackmail Anita, his uncle's wife, by using the name of Mack Templeton, a dishonest prohibition agent, who had disappeared from his usual haunts. To escape arrest he had to work in a lumber camp, and after a period of harsh treatment returned to the city half crazed, encountered Lang at the Talisman Club, told him that instead of killing him he would leave him to a worse punishment, and threatened to commit suicide. Later that evening he went to the Trask mansion and saw Anita privately. The other guests, among whom were Lang, were startled by a shot, and Lang and Trask found Skiddy lying dead. A revolver dangled from Anita's fingers. She said that he had shot himself, but was arrested, and Lang agreed to defend her.

(A Five-Part Story—Part III.)

CHAPTER XVIII.

MACK TEMPLETON RE-ENTERS.

SPRING, pausing first in the city parks on her way from the South, halting to display the early samples of her wares of bloom, went on to the North woods to pull away the coverlets of the snow which winter had heaped high over vegetation.

The brooks on the North country's steeper slopes ran riotously, carrying down the melting drifts which had been piled in the open spaces.

Out of the cocoon which winter had spun for a casing emerged a white frozen face with a black mustache wilted by the wet and plastered close to the flesh.

Spring cleared the tote roads and made them muddy ways along which the men who were called North by their affairs came toiling. Two of these adventurers were scalers—journeying to measure the scattered cords of birch wood which contractors had cut for a spool mill. They swung around by way of the Brassua Deadwater where the blackened ice, even in late April, awaited a strong wind to crumble it into dissolving needles. They arrived at the little house of Onésime Ouellette and shared with the family the steaming potage gras of the noon hour.

After eating they loafed with Onésime for a short nooning. He did his best to entertain them, anxiously assiduous in his politeness as their host. He played selections on a phonograph and beat time with his hands in childish delight. His little brood sat and listened raptly.

"Something new, is it, Onésime?" inquired one of the visitors.

"*Oui!* I buy him not so long ago. Walk twonty acre—the mile, so you call him—to buy him to make my childs have some good time."

Both of the men looked around the bare interior and then swapped stares with each other.

"Business good of late, eh?"

"Not so nice and good," confessed Ouellette. "I t'ink all mans buy so much of dat smuggle white rum up here—de *morson*—dat no mans have money for de snowshoe. And I get bad hurt las' fall, and t'ree or two mont' I don't get around so much." He tossed up his hands and smiled broadly. "But La Bonne Sainte Anne of Beaupré, I t'ink she don't forget me, ever. For once when I was sailorman I go to her shrine on de Coté and I burn some candle and make de prayers and I get help in tight place ever since. You shall see!" he declared proudly. He had shut off the music machine. He patted it. "You see him? He's good fellaire, eh, to sing for us in the dark nights! I buy him. I buy some more. Hey!" He flourished a gesture which his wife and children obeyed with eagerness. "You show de mans dat Onésime and his folks get along some well these day."

Madame Ouellette opened a rough box and drew forth new clothing which the children seized and displayed with pride, each child its own. And Madame Ouellette exhibited a new dress.

Onésime patted his pocket, puffing out his chest more proudly. "And here's some more. I don't know—I don't say—but I t'ink we all go nex' summer on dat great day of de feast of good Sainte Anne and wear our nice clothes and pray before de saint in de big church. And we shall buy in de sacristy a fine image of de saint to stand on dat place." He pointed to a niche which was occupied by a small and rather cheaply contrived image of Sainte Anne. "It shall be very fine, dat new one. Because we have some very special prayer to say these day."

"Is that so? What about?"

"I don't tell all my bus'ness 'bout de big friends what I have," retorted Onésime, indulging his childish pride in a secret.

The men went on their way.

"What do you make of that Quedaw being so flush all of a sudden?" inquired the man who had been rebuked by Ouellette.

"Oh, bootlegging, maybe! Plenty of fairly decent folks in these times are excusing everything by saying, 'I never did so-and-so till prohibition came in!'"

The spool-wood measurers were obliged to make many detours, zigzagging here and there to locate the tiered birch on the slopes of the hardwood tracts. And on account of this need of combing the section carefully, they came in the late afternoon to a place where the dead face was framed in the melting snow.

They peered and swapped awed comments on the find. One of them suggested that it was probably another "shot for a deer" case and his companion agreed. The two also agreed that they'd better make quick tracks for Calison's on the main tote road and report. At Calison's, an overnight hostelry for the wayfarers of the region, they found a couple of Federal enforcement agents among the other guests.

Calison immediately started a courier across country to call a medical examiner. The man rode on a "jumper," with a couple of lanterns lashed to the frame to light his way.

Calison's guests discussed the thing that evening.

"There's a chance that it's Mack Templeton, though he was always mighty well able to take care of himself," said one of the Federal agents. "It's the black mustache that gives me the idea it's him."

"Knowing most of the reasons he had for ducking out, I have held to the notion that he ran away," stated the other agent.

"Well, if that's him lying in them woods yonder, he managed to get thirty or forty miles south of the border—and that's starting to run away, at any rate—unless he was down here on other business. He had a plenty of that other business, such as it was, you know."

"Was it likely that he had much money on him?" inquired one of the spool-wood men.

"A wad of it! No doubt of that! He had been cleaning up before he dropped out of sight."

"We want it distinctly understood that we didn't go within ten feet of that body," declared the other spool-wood man. "Our tracks in the snow will show that, and will protect us, in case somebody dropped him so as to frisk him."

"And there's another thing that will help to protect us," proceeded Measurer Number One.

"What is that?"

"We'll have something to say if there's no money on the body."

An expedition in force was organized when the medical examiner arrived at Calison's the next afternoon. The spool-wood men were guides. The Federal agents identified the body absolutely and unhesitatingly.

"It's Mack Templeton," they said in shocked duet.

They had not much to say about the identification of a rifle that the examiner found in the snow, a rusted weapon.

"I never saw him lug a rifle," said one of the agents. "He only packed a gun such as you see on his hip."

The medical examiner had scraped the snow from the body. He went through the pockets, turning them wrongside out and leaving them that way in mute testimony as to emptiness. Inside the coat, in a fold of cloth, the examiner discovered an empty cartridge shell; it was still untarnished; the cloth had kept it away from oxidization by exposure. Tried in the rusted rifle, the shell fitted.

"How do you account for that shell being found where it was?" inquired one of the bystanders.

"This man was shot twice," said the examiner. "I should say that the party who shot him came up and stood over him, jacked out the empty shell and stepped back and shot again."

"Well," drawled one of the agents, "there were a number of men last fall who couldn't have expressed their opinion of Templeton by being any less emphatic than by putting over what you say probably happened." He turned to the spool-wood man. "Didn't I understand you to remark last night that you'd have something to say in case no money was found? You can see what the doc has done to the pockets."

"We don't mean to do dirt to any man, gents," declared the spool-wood measurer, addressing the crowd. "On the other hand, we ain't called on to hide a tip from the law. I suppose that some of you know Onésime Ouellette?"

Several nodded assent and others spoke out and said that they did know Ouellette.

"Who is he?" demanded the medical examiner.

"A Canuck who lives down side of the Brassua Deadwater. Poor'n a Pooduck pup—with a flock of young ones. We ate dinner there yesterday and he was playing us tunes on a new music box and showing us new clothes for the whole family. He bragged about being flusher with cash than old Trask of the Double T—or words to that effect. The question is, where did he get it?"

"Undoubtedly," agreed the examiner. He turned to the Federal agents. "You identify this dead man as a government employee?"

They reaffirmed their identification.

"Then it's a case for the United States court and you'd better arrest this Ouellette."

"Not much evidence!" protested one of the men.

"Well, if this State has had the nerve to arrest the wife of Serenus Trask, I reckon the United States government can pick up courage enough to haul in Ouellette on a chance. Don't give him any time to get away."

"You've said it!" one of the agents agreed.

"We'll show you where he lives," proffered the spool-wood men.

"Take along this rifle," counseled the examiner. "You may be able to jump him into admitting that it's his. But take good care of it. It's an exhibit in the evidence." He carefully pulled out the empty shell that he had inserted in the weapon and tucked the small object into his pocket. "This is another exhibit and I'll turn it over after I have examined it. It's a clincher when we find the man who owns that rifle." He perceived the interest that he had excited and was gratified. "If it was giving away evidence, boys, I wouldn't say anything. But what I'm saying won't change facts, any more than talk will change a man's finger prints. Do you know what's just as certain as finger prints as evidence? I'll tell you. It's the mark of a rifle's firing pin on the shell of an exploded cartridge. The experts have settled that point in a dozen murder trials. It takes the microscope to tell the story. No two firing pins make the

same mark. When you get to Ouellette, see what he says about that rifle."

Four men, still canvassing what Ouellette would say, came at last to the door of the shack in the clearing, their feet making no sound on the muddy ground. Within the house the phonograph was rendering a merry song. Onésime came to the door when he heard the knock.

The men had settled upon the sort of questions they would put to Ouellette regarding that rifle. They proposed to shake down the suspected man by the methods of the third degree.

The man with the rifle stood nearest to the door, holding the weapon with outstretched arms. Before a word was said, Onésime grabbed at the rifle. His face was radiant with thankfulness.

"Merci, m'sieu! Merci! It's more what our good Sainte Anne send when you make de prayer. Not so queek does she answer sometime—but so sure! You find him covered by de bush, hey? I hunt for him so many a time."

"Do you admit that this is your rifle?"

"Oui, oui! I go on de wood las' fall, and I have him. I t'ink some mans find him! *Merci!* You make me glad now when you bring him back."

"Do you swear that this is yours?"

"He's mine!" Onésime was showing some surprise because his word seemed to be doubted. "The little marks—I can shut my eye and tell about dose mark! *Ma femme,* she can tell. I don't need tell de lie for him," he went on, showing pride all at once. He leaped back into the house. He came again to the door bringing the new rifle that Lang had given to him. "You see! I have de much better gun. I don't need de old one. But I'm glad, maself, to see him come back home. So you shall come in." He stepped to one side, bowing. Not realizing the parlous admission he was making in the hearing of enforcement agents he said, "I have of de wild grape some wine. We dreenk, hey, *a votre sante?"*

One of the Federal officers clapped his hand on Onésime's shoulder. "You're arrested! Do you know why?" The officer was inclined to view the whole thing as a good piece of bluff by a criminal who feared that the ownership of the rifle would be proved against him, anyway.

Ouellette's jaw sagged.

"I tell you, you're arrested. I'm going to take you to jail!"

Madame Ouellette came hurrying to the door, her children huddling about her.

Onésime tried to push away the officer's heavy hand. "But I have permit from M'sieu Walking Boss of de Double T. I'm let to go on de wood for to cut some tree for paddle and snowshoe. Yes! I tell de trut'." As a squatter Onésime had been persecuted in the past.

"This hasn't anything to do with trees," said the officer roughly. "If you don't remember what you have done—because it was so long ago and just found out—I'll tell you. You shot and killed Mack Templeton last fall."

"I never heard about dat mans!" shouted Onésime.

"Well, perhaps you didn't know who it was when you shot him. But he must have flashed his money where you could see it. And you have been spending that money!"

Ouellette was trembling in all his frame.

"We have found the body up in the woods," said one of the spool-wood men. "And you know you bragged to us yesterday about having all the money you needed —even to go on excursions."

One of the officers snatched the new rifle away from Onésime and took possession of the old one that had been standing against the wall near the door.

"Come along and be good and we'll make it easy!" counseled the other officer. "None of that! Talk English!" commanded the custodian, pushing Ouellette away from the clamorous wife.

"Ma femme, she don't know much word. She don't understand. I don't understand—no, not maself!"

"You're arrested for murder. I'm a United States officer. Look at this badge. You've got to come along. Reckon that's plain enough."

In the bedlam inside the little house Onésime was silent while he made ready. He seemed to be trying hard to understand what it was all about. The officers pulled him away from the frantic hands of his family that strove to stay him when he at last started for the door. His head was bowed. He was still trying to stir his slow wits, to comprehend what this calamity signified. He only knew that it was a mistake. He could only go—and then somebody would find out that it was all a mistake,

and he could come back to his home. He stammered some sort of consolation to his wife and gave her all the money he had.

When he had stumbled several rods from the house, pushed along by his captors, he stopped suddenly and looked from face to face.

"What you say about where you take me?"

"To the big city—to jail. You have killed a man."

He shook his head. "I do nottins."

He stared down at the muddy ground. Then, all at once, as if his slow thoughts had broken from their thrall, he shouted so that the forest rang with the echoes of his voice. He turned and broke from them so suddenly that they did not catch him till he had reached the door of his house. The officers mauled him and choked him.

"But I don't try to run away," he protested fervently when they allowed him to speak. "It's de great t'ing—I must have it. You tell me what some mans will say I have done. If I have it, I don't care what dey say."

"Meaning your stolen roll? You'd better leave it with the woman. You won't be coming back here for some little time," stated the officer with peculiar emphasis. "We're going to be kind-hearted and let her have the money."

"Money? I don't need dat." He had gone empty-handed from his house. His simple ways made him as independent of personal belongings as if he were a horse shipped to market. "I need only one t'ing." Again he broke away, showing the strength of desperation.

"He can't get out of the house!" cried one of the officers.

But Onésime did nothing more desperate than run to the little niche where the statue of La Bonne Sainte Anne stood, a motherly figure with the infant Christ in her arms. He crossed himself, bowed his head for an instant and then gently lifted the saint and took something from the little shelf and tucked it carefully in his breast pocket.

"What was it?" asked one officer of the other who had stepped into the room.

"Only a little card with some printing on it. Let him keep it!"

Onésime had turned and faced them. He was smiling. He patted his wife's shoulder. He murmured comforting words to her. He went to the barrel cradle and lifted the baby girl and kissed her. "I'll kiss his hand —and it shall be what's sent by his lettle sweetheart, so he shall know what we all remember. So we don't worry now, hey? No, no! It's only au revoir, Delphine!" he assured his wife. "Soon home—soon home!"

With head up Onésime marched forth from the little house again, his hand against his breast where John Lang's card was hidden.

It was plain that the officers were impressed by his new, calm acceptance of the situation. They asked Onésime to see the card. He promptly showed it, holding it in the palm of one hand, guarding it with the scooped palm of the other hand as if it were something which might take flight. The officers went apart and talked with each other in whispers. They had pressed the French Canadian with all kinds of questions but he refused to tell them how the card of the State's best criminal lawyer had come into his hands.

They remembered the widely advertised case of Ovide Ouellette, and they knew now that he was Onésime's brother. "That's what the poor Canuck is banking on, probably. Of course, Lang doesn't know him. And Lang is thinking of nothing but that Trask case right now."

"However, there's no telling what John Lang may do. We'd better pussyfoot. We've got slim evidence for a murder arrest till that examiner reports."

One of the officers turned to Ouellette. "On second thought, brother, to show that we're sociable and will be your good friends if you'll stay as you are now, we'll try a hooker of that wine you spoke about."

When Onésime, much gratified, politely brought the wine in tin pannikins, the officers tasted it and one of them produced an empty flask and poured his wine into the receptacle. Then they took their prisoner along with them, after one of the officers had dropped a coin into the yawning pocket of Onésime's new coat. The Gallic sense of hospitality was outraged but the officers paid no attention to Onésime's protests.

In the eyes of the law they had bought liquor from a moonshiner, and they carried the evidence. By this sort of back fire they had protected themselves in case such a man as John Lang was interested in this poor chap. After the case had been more thoroughly probed it was up to others to arrest Ouellette for the murder of Templeton. In

the meantime, held on the minor charge, he would be where the law could lay hands on him.

With the precious card in his pocket, Onésime went along serenely indifferent as to why he had been arrested. He knew he had done no wrong to any man. He had John Lang's pledge of help in time of need.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT THE BAR OF JUSTICE.

Even when the trial of Anita Trask, charged with the murder of her husband's nephew, was well into the second week the district attorney had not been able to tear away much of the veil in which her personality and her antecedents were wrapped.

There were witnesses from the North country but they were few and their revelations were vague; under cross-examination by Lang those statements became contradictory. There was slurring rumor to the effect that the baron of the Double T had used his money and his might in the North country. The defense admitted that the accused wife had been in the North country —that she had been married to Serenus Trask up there.

A witness who was so extraordinary that the newspapers were filled with descriptions and pictures of him established the fact of the marriage. He appeared in court garbed in a frock of natural wool that was edged with rabbit fur. His wool boots were white. His hair and beard matched the color of his garments. He gave merely the name of Ashael—Ashael of Angel Knob. He was calm, patriarchal, serene, and with intelligent dignity resisted the efforts of the prosecution to secure his full name. When he was challenged as to his right to perform marriages he pleaded the permission of special privilege to preserve his anonymity and laid before the eye of the presiding justice, going alone to the bench, a paper. The court allowed his plea, after listening to Ashael's ex-parte statement delivered in tones too low for the courtroom to hear. The marriage was established as legal.

On the stand, Ashael acknowledged that he was known in the North as "The Charmer Man." He admitted that he performed cures, asking no fee, by spoken words and by the laying on of hands.

"Ever since white men began to struggle with the forests on this continent, sir, the remote lumber camps have been visited by men who had the power to heal without surgery or medicaments. I am only one in a long line."

He combated the allegation that he was a faith healer.

"It is a common human error to give the mysterious works of Almighty God a specific name and to claim for this sect or that creed, or this or that procedure, a monopoly of Divine blessings. For the Spirit of God is in all things and is not to be controlled. But even by the weakest it can be invoked and only the really humble can be blessed."

This figure in white, this calm patriarch of the North, was only a strange interlude in the tragic drama of the trial. He appeared, and then he disappeared. But all who heard him remembered his words of promise regarding the mystic quality in God's blessing of well-being and of being well, a free measure given in answer to an honest, meek and contrite appeal. And especially did they ponder on his statement that no human being should presume to name or limit, analyze or monopolize a fundamental truth that was as wide and deep as the universe. Even John Lang's cynicism was impressed; he was sorry when he found that old Ashael had gone away.

In that trial Lang knew that he was fighting prejudice. Therefore, he did not hasten the trial. He played the thing on a psychic basis, more or less. Day by day the young wife sat before the eyes of her accusers and the court, her aged husband loyally at her side. She was garbed plainly. Not a jewel was displayed. While the prosecutor flung his stones of accusation her wistful beauty silently appealed. When the chief witnesses blustered with bravado and lied brazenly about their blackmail plot her eyes timidly sought the faces of the jurymen and made earnest protest.

To what extent she was playing a part was not easily discernible.

But Serenus Trask was patently not acting his part. A dreadful shadow clouded his countenance. His jowls sagged, his hands trembled, his steps were uncertain. Every little while, when there was an opportunity, he pulled at Lang's sleeve. "No matter what it costs, I'm staying with her." On one occasion he added, "I'm with her to my last dollar, till this trial is over."

"What do you mean—'till this trial is over?'" Lang demanded.

"Perhaps that isn't the right way to put it. But it mustn't be said that I harbored a woman who would kill my only relative. You must get her acquitted."

John Lang saw that this was a case for the hearts, not the heads, of the panel. It was not one of his battles where success lay in battering down the fabric of carefully built circumstantial evidence. In this case there were eyewitnesses who doggedly and desperately insisted, in spite of his cross-examination, that they had seen what they had seen. They said that the prisoner stood in range of the keyhole, that she had cajoled the victim with honeyed speech, that they had seen her arms go around his neck and that she kissed him—and then the shot!

Lang was resolved to turn his back on State's evidence, on the blue-black revolver and the other exhibits on the table in the bar inclosure, and to stand before the rail of the jury box and go straight to the jury's hearts with all the power and persuasion of his eloquence—his exhibits a broken old man and a girl whose beauty was like a flower against the dark background of the tragedy.

While skimming headlines at his breakfast table, Lang noticed the report of the finding of the body of one Mack Templeton, a Federal enforcement agent, on the slope of a hardwood tract in the Brassua region. For months he had had his eye out for such a report. The report stated that there had been no arrest in connection with the affair; there was no intimation that anybody was under suspicion.

The name of Mack Templeton, whoever he might be, had not been brought into the trial of Anita Trask, though Lang had waited for it after the suggestion that Farnum had made. But Lang's guess as to Farnum's limited knowledge of Templeton had seemed to be justified by the silence of the State.

The counsel for the defense had not asked the Trasks privately about a man named Templeton. As a matter of fact, his attitude toward Anita had been to know as little of her past as possible. He felt that the more he could idealize her as a beautiful creature of circumstances, the more he could do for her in that line of defense which he had decided on.

However, not knowing what Farnum had revealed about one Mack Templeton to the prosecution, the appearance of this dead man in the public prints that morning prompted Lang to arm his cause against possibilities. He closeted himself with Anita and her husband before the hour set for the resumption of the case.

"He was her brother," stated Trask when the matter was broached by the lawyer. "I brought her the newspaper and broke the news. It has been an awful shock. I told you about him."

Lang turned away from the strange brilliancy he had found in Anita's eyes.

"You said, as I remember it, Mr. Trask, that you had paid him money to go out of the country."

"Anita paid him. I gave her the money. She could handle him best."

"I paid him the money," she declared.

Lang did not look at her. He had the curious feeling, in more intense degree, that he ought to preserve all his illusions in regard to the girl.

"The money may have been the prompting inducement for the murderer. The paper says that no money was found on the body," suggested the lawyer.

"He was a general renegade," declared Trask.

"He tried to make me cheat people," supplemented the girl. "At first he said he wouldn't go away. He wanted to stay so he could keep on getting money from my husband."

Lang was looking at the floor, meditating, and noticed Anita's feet peeping from under her black skirt. She had hooked them ankle over instep and he noted that there was a tremor in her limbs. He looked at her hands which were clasped tightly in her lap, the fingers whitened by the pressure, though when he looked at the face it was immobile. Emotionally, she was a cord stretched to the breaking point; when she had spoken, there was a high-pitched twang in her tones.

"I'm very, very sorry," said Lang, soothingly. "It's a distressing matter to come at this time when you need all your strength. But hold to your grit, Mrs. Trask. This is the day when you must be absolutely the mistress of your soul! The prosecutor will say bitter things about you in court. But keep thinking that the jurymen are kind men who will listen to reason."

"They will listen to you!" she cried.

She leaped from her chair, ran to him, flung her arms about his neck before he re-

covered his wits sufficiently to prevent and kissed him.

"I am not afraid! I am not afraid!" she kept saying. "You can save me!"

"I don't care what it costs," mumbled Trask. "I don't care—for money or anything else, now! Get her out of it, Lang."

Lang was at last free from Anita's frantic embrace! He was thinking on what the old man had said weeks before. "I wanted to pry her away, like I'd push off a snake," though he was not conscious of any sort of abhorrence.

He looked at his watch. It was time to go into the courtroom and he ushered the illy assorted pair ahead of him.

CHAPTER XX.

LIKE A HUNTED BEAST.

There is no loneliness in the woods for the men who are wonted to the friendliness of the trees. To go away from them, out from under their shelter, is like crossing the threshold of home, leaving behind the comforting privacy of a family fireside. In the moccasins of the true men of the woods it is not too fanciful to perceive a suggestion of the slippers one puts on in the intimate home circle. The woodsmen are not *outdoors;* they are *in* the woods.

So, as long as the April wind soughed in the branches of the pines over his head and the budding beeches and the birches checkered his pathway, Onésime trudged along cheerfully and confidently serene, trusting to a pledge of which he bore the talismanic proof in printing which he could not read.

"You feel all right about going along with us, eh?" suggested one of the officers. He had been looking to right and left, into the endless aisles of the woods, and was thinking that a fugitive, if he leaped suddenly enough and dodged from tree to tree could avoid bullets and win his freedom.

"Only for *ma femme* and poor childs do I feel sad. But for maself, I'm all so gay. Very queek I come back here—by dis path. And I shall sing loud, like dis, so dey come run to meet me."

He pitched his voice high and sang the lilt that the Canadian boatmen have sung since the adventuring voyages of Montmorency and Champlain:

"Rouli, roulant, ma boule roulant,
En roulant ma boule roulant.
En roule ma boule!"

"Good for you!" commended the officer. "That's the way to come along!"

After the winding trail there was the tote road, muddy with the wallows that the spring rains had filled. The trees thinned; the big black growth was left behind.

"We come to trees again, hey?" asked Onésime solicitously.

"No, no more trees! We're getting out into the real world, old top!"

Onésime looked over his shoulder at the comforting forest behind him and stared in front at the bare slopes and the ledgy hills and did not seem to find the "real" world to his taste. He had never been out in it.

There was a night in a wayside inn. There was a long buckboard ride to a flag station and the man of the woods showed suppressed excitement when the wheezing locomotive came dragging its train of cars.

"I have never ride on him before. Go fast, hey?"

When he was in his seat in the smoker of the express, crowded close to the window, he blinked at the speeding panorama of the landscape and after a time his cheerfulness departed. It was as if he were wondering how far he had come from the comforting forest. *"Bon Dieu!* So many acres have we fly over! Don't we be most to where we go?"

"It's a long ways yet. We're bound for the big city. We have to take you before a United States commissioner!"

Onésime did not in the least understand. "I have done nottins," he insisted. "Dey find dat out prattee queek. And I have to walk so far back!"

Onésime started to rise slowly. He wanted to look at the men in the car. He had begun to find the world very big and full of strange men. He was lonely. His captors were not friends. He wondered if in that big world there was anybody whom he knew. The officer who sat beside him pulled him roughly down. "Don't try any funny business, or on go the irons."

"I don't feel funny," lamented Onésime. "I t'ought mabbe I see some mans who know me—or p'r'ap' I see de great John Lang out here in de worl'."

"Well, he's pretty big," snickered the officer. "But he isn't big enough in this world to be seen from where you sit. He's in the city where we're going. That's where he lives. But you mustn't think that he's going to be bothered with you—not now."

"I must find him," Onésime insisted. "It's somet'ing you don't know about. I have his word."

"Don't throw us that bull. Sit easy! Your business is with us."

Ouellette's anxiety increased until it became a sort of panic. He sat on the edge of his seat, poising himself on the tips of his mud-caked moccasins. He shot glances from side to side like a frightened animal.

"Better calm him down by telling him that we'll take him to Lang," suggested one of the officers.

"What's the good in joshing him?"

A little later the train passed through cities. The woodsman had never seen cities before. He saw jostling crowds at the railroad stations and knew no face. He voiced some of his fears when he mourned. "I'm a good mans—I have done nottins bad. But I don't see somebody here who can tell 'em I'm a good man who works hard for *ma femme* and childs." He turned on the officer at his side. "What you tell me? I'm so excite I most forgot. You tell me dat I kill dat mans I don't know?"

"Well, perhaps not—perhaps not!" hedged the officer. "Our job is to catch rum runners and booze sellers. You sold us booze, you know. You broke the law of the United States. That's why we're taking you down."

Onésime's deep-set eyes glowed in passionate protest. "I give him to you! *A votre sante!* I say it when I give him for the polite t'ing in my little home."

"The law doesn't stand for this vote santy thing any longer. You made liquor. The law doesn't allow you to do that. It's moonshining."

"*Sacre nom de Dieu,* I don't go!" He struggled to his feet. "I'll jomp off. I'll walk back to where some mans know me and say I don't break dat law."

"Say, we're going to have a lot of trouble with that bird," stated the other officer. Receiving an understanding nod from his companion, he grappled with the prisoner and the two snapped on the handcuffs.

The nature of the man of the woods was changed after those fetters had been locked on his wrists. The accusation that he had killed a man was so atrocious that he had paid scant attention to it. The charge that he had sold liquor—that he had broken any law of the land by obeying the obligation imposed by the politeness of his race—was a taunt that was wounding Onésime Ouellette more deeply than naming him as a murderer. To misunderstand his hospitality! He rolled back his lips and raved at them. He wrenched his wrists and tried to snap the chain.

His vague fear of impending evil was the urge that made him struggle at his bonds. They were lying, those men! There was some dreadful calamity impending. He had killed no man. That could not be the reason why they were taking him away from the woods. And the excuse they had given because they had tasted the wine of his hospitality! No! They were hiding some other and terrible reason for their act!

Like the wild folk of the woods he feared the thing that lay in ambush. Here was menace which threatened most grievously because he did not in the least comprehend what it was all about!

One of the officers jammed him down in the corner of the seat and choked him. The prisoner was revealing too much about the affair in hand. The men of the smoker were crowding around, asking too many questions.

When they arrived in the big city, Onésime was silent, ominously calm. More than ever did he resemble the trapped beast, furtively peering from side to side as they dragged him toward a cab stand. Onésime for the first time in his life saw carriages without horses—sputtering, barking things that were making a great clamor in the gloom of the big shed. He pleaded plaintively against them. He said that he was cramped by the long hours in the train—that he was used to the woods—to walking. He averred that he would feel natural and would be himself again if he could be allowed to walk instead of riding in one of those devil things that went along without a horse to haul it.

His captors themselves were cramped by the ride in the train. The afternoon was balmy with the softness of late April.

"That's reasonable, Ouellette," agreed the man who escorted him—now handcuffed to him. "Walk it is! It will calm you down!"

They did not perceive that the man of the woods had become a beast at bay. What was really the craft of the animal, subtle and desperate, they saw only as submission. And viewing it as submission, they were inclined to be gentle with this man until they got him safely behind bars. They

walked slowly, humoring Onésime's apparently rapt interest in all sights of the streets.

The officer who had his hands free bought a newspaper from a newsboy and read the headlines as he walked, eager for any sort of late news after his tour of duty in the woods.

"Your great John Lang wouldn't have much time to waste on you to-day, Ouellette," he was moved to say. "Look at those headlines!"

Onésime blinked at the big, black letters and shook his head.

"Can't read, eh? Well, it says that Lang is making his plea for the defense this afternoon in the great murder case. You know that old Double T's wife is being tried, don't you?"

"I don't hear much t'ing like dat," confessed the woodsman.

The two officers gave up bothering with such ignorance and discussed the Trask case as they sauntered along.

"What about these rumors, Ben, that old Trask got hold of a girl that was hitched up with Mack Templeton in some way?"

"They gab a whole lot on the border without knowing what they're gabbing about. I get it straight that the Templeton dame —whether she was his sister or what not, I don't know—is in Quebec. Met a fellow who says he bought her drinks not two weeks ago."

"Real goods—or a look-aliker?"

"I only know what he says. But I think he says right. Old Double T wouldn't put the marriage log mark onto any timber in the woman line that didn't scale about right. They were after witnesses up North. Couldn't find anything but a lot of guess-so boys. Of course, the Templeton girl may have had a sister. But the real one is in Quebec. That bird who told me is a wise old owl!"

"What's going to happen to this one?" The officer whacked the newspaper with the back of his hand.

"If John Lang don't get her off, it'll be because something has happened to him."

"It's here—where dat great John Lang live?" questioned Onésime meekly.

"I told you that he lives in the big city here. We're going past where he is. I mean to say that we'll be going past the place in a little while. We're bound for the Federal building—and it's near the courthouse."

"You show him to me, eh?"

"Look here, I can't march you into a courtroom and show Lang to you. He's busy. He's trying a big case—getting a woman free."

"No, no! De house where he is—dat house—you show him to me?"

"Oh, sure thing! Talk United States."

They came to a great structure of dingy, gray stone.

"That's where Lang is holding forth today—up in there. See the big windows on the second floor, Onésime?" The officer was willing to impress the stranger from the woods. "This is my old stamping ground. I used to be a bailiff in that courtroom. But come along! Does you no good to stand and look at those windows." He dragged at the chain and the prisoner stumbled away, his chin hooked over his shoulder, his eyes on the big windows.

Their way took them across a square and down a narrow cañon between lofty buildings whose window signs revealed the habitat of all the various attachés of the law. Ouellette was looking straight ahead down the narrow street. His eyes blazed with a fiercer light. Under the wool jacket his arms, strengthened by his years of toil, grew knotted and hard. There was at the curb an iron post which supported a police signal box.

When Ouellette leaped it was with the spring of a wild animal. He swung his captor before the officer could stiffen his muscles, brought the post between the shackled wrists and dove around the iron standard. The officer's arm was still limp. There was the dull crack of a bone under flesh and the officer yelped like a wounded dog. But the Canadian's hornbeam wrist used the post and the shattered arm for a fulcrum and snapped the chain of the handcuffs. So tremendous was his strain against the post that Ouellette fell when the chain parted.

He was up with the lithe quickness of a wild cat. The other officer had dropped his newspaper and was trying to get at the revolver on his hip. The woodsman leaped high and drove both his feet against the man's face; it was the famous *coup de pied* of the French-Canadian fighter; the moccasins saved the officer's face from being wrecked, but he fell backward with such force that his skull rapped the pavement with a sickening smack and he lay unconscious.

Men who were going about their business

on the narrow street heard the yell of agony and whirled in their tracks and stared. They were in time to see Ouellette fell the officer and go leaping away. The other agent, faint and sick, reeled to the curb and sat down, nursing his broken arm.

Onésime saw men ahead of him at the mouth of the street cañon. He feared these men of the city, not understanding how easily daunted are the usual bystanders on a city street. He doubled on his tracks. He had exhausted his impulses of the panther by his attack on his captors; he fled with the instinct of the fox.

Men ran after him, emboldened by his flight though they would have retreated before his rush at them. The hue and cry was raised. The chase was on. A creature of the woods was being hunted through the streets of the metropolis.

With his sturdy legs and his moccasined feet he had the advantage. The others slipped at the corners, their leather soles incommoding them. When he found that the crowds of the other streets gave way before him, he was heartened. He turned many corners, but he knew where the great stone building was; it was the instinct of the woods operating. His sense of location was as accurate as a compass in the flight he was making. It was yonder—he knew the direction! 'Twas only a matter of turning the corners, always making his way toward the big house.

The crowds tangled themselves and were delayed because some ran from one direction and some from another.

When Onésime came to the steps of the great building and leaped toward the open doors he had outdistanced the pack.

John Lang was up where the big windows were!

Inside the building the main corridor led him to a broad stairway. Up those steps, three at a leap, he raced. He heard the shouts of pursuers outside in the square. He pulled out the magic card and held it, his palm cupped over it. He exhibited it to a staring man in the upper corridor. The breathless, wild, stammering intruder impressed the man with the sense of urgency—perhaps he was bringing news that the counsel for the defense should know. The man pointed to a door, outside of which many persons were huddled. It was the court overflow.

In the corridor below, feet were trampling and voices demanding. The pursuers were there.

In the case of Onésime it was as if the hunted fox saw safe cover just ahead. He ran and pulled frantically at the persons on the outside of the huddled group. They were too frightened to resist this gasping, babbling, desperate unknown. He had lost his hat. His shock of hair was erect, his beard was bristling. He dropped on his hands and knees and drove his head through the press of humanity.

The bailiff who was on guard at the door tried to stop the intruder. Onésime writhed out of the officer's clutch, buffeted him with a force that sent him reeling and leaped into the courtroom.

While he was in the tangle of legs at the door and under the trampling feet of those who tried to avoid his rush, Onésime heard a voice that he knew well. It was ringing among the arches of the great chamber. It was the voice of John Lang. The knowledge that Lang was near had nerved the hunted man to his last and final effort. The voice was suddenly quiet, because the disturbance at the door had become almost an uproar. A gavel clattered; the sheriff was giving peremptory orders.

Ouellette at last saw the man who had given a pledge on that memorable day among the trees and in the snows of the North. Lang was standing inside the bar inclosure, puzzled and frowning. This tumult had interrupted him at the very climax of his appeal to the jury.

Eluding the hands that were outstretched Onésime leaped over the rail and went down on his knees in front of Lang, plunging along the carpeted floor. In spite of the lawyer's gesture of refusal the fugitive managed to clutch one of Lang's hands. He kissed it. "I bring it from de leetle sweetheart of de cradle. And here—here!" He held up the crumpled card. "I bring it!"

The court bailiffs rushed into the bar inclosure but Lang put up one hand and protected Onésime, his other hand on the frowzy head of the woodsman. "This man is from the woods and is very much excited. Let me handle him."

Lang turned a fleeting and apologetic smile to the presiding justice.

The gavel of the sheriff had restored order. The silence was profound. All could hear the stertorous breathing of the man at Lang's feet.

"Brother Lang, impress upon your client that this is a poor place and time for an appointment," said the justice.

But when the lawyer bent down and strove to soothe and counsel the man in low tones Onésime began to beg in a shrill voice of terror. He talked in his own tongue to this man who understood.

Lang immediately showed an interest that was striking and profound. He hushed the man, even putting his palm over Onésime's mouth. He held the hand there while he addressed the judge.

"Your honor, I ask pardon for this man from the woods. I know him. I defended his brother on one occasion. He is in some kind of trouble and he has come to me. He doesn't understand the rules of a court. In fact, he has so little understanding of the matters outside the woods that he is in mortal terror of being hung, at once, if I don't protect him."

The justice displayed interest.

"I'm afraid that it will cause a great disturbance in this chamber if we call on officers to eject him while he is in this state of hysteria. He will go readily enough with me when I have finished my duty here, your honor. Will you grant me the especial favor of allowing this man to remain near me until I am through with my plea? I have nearly finished."

"The man may remain," said the judge, settling back.

Onésime resisted when Lang tried to seat him in a chair. In order to avoid the embarrassment of more disturbance Lang gathered himself and went on; the woodsman crouched on his knees close beside the protector.

So, while John Lang, for years accredited chief of the defenders of the accused whom the State threatened with the halter, spoke in urgent plea for one prisoner, another cowered at his feet, awaiting his aid. At the door of the chamber a bailiff was keeping back a policeman and that one of the Federal agents who had been felled and stunned; the other had been taken to a hospital.

The one whom Lang was defending with all the power of his eloquence was the most beautiful girl who had ever been presented at that bar of justice. The one who waited on his knees was only a mud-stained, unkempt, haggard stranger from the wilds of the North country.

Again the voice of eloquence was ringing in the arches of the chamber. Before Onésime came Lang had been reaching the heights of stressed and powerful appeal for a victim of slander and circumstances. Now that he stood, his hand on the woodsman's shaggy poll, a veritable statue of protecting strength, the attorney outdid all his efforts in cases past and gone.

The twelve men of the panel were leaning forward. While their ears were drinking in the counsel's fervid speech, their eyes were surveying in turn the beseeching girl who was accused and the pathetic suppliant who was kneeling.

Wilkinson, the district attorney, whispered behind his palm to the State's attorney general. "If Lang gets away with that girl's acquittal, it's because that man has slammed in here and given him a chance to pose."

And while the district attorney was saying that, Onésime's eyes, peering under the thatches of his thick brows, had found the face of the girl in the prisoner's dock. It may have been that her intent survey of him had drawn his gaze to her. They continued to stare at each other, steadily and long. On his part, his demeanor showed that he was fascinated, awed, half frightened. On her part, there was a display of defiance, of bravado, of a determination to sway and quell this man who had come rushing out of the wilds.

While the counsel pleaded with his voice, the girl and the kneeling man dueled with their eyes.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE VERDICT OF THE JURY.

The counsel for the defense was finishing his plea. His peroration was in a tone so low that the listeners in the crowded courtroom were obliged to hush every murmur and to hold themselves with the rigidity of statues in order to hear him. His half whisper was shot through with the intensity of his appeal.

In assailing the motives and the methods of the State's witnesses, his voice had been a trumpet clarion of invective. But when he referred to the devoted husband and dwelt upon an old man's sorrow, and when he pointed to the prisoner, extolling her wifely affection as partaking of the nature of filial love as well, he made it plain that mischief and machination often meddle with the affairs of a union which a cynical world

suspects is dominated by ulterior motives. Lang's light touch of tone handled the theme as an organist, alone and careless of hearers, might interpret a melody that was dear.

The chamber was dim with the approaching twilight. No bailiff had the hardihood to tiptoe to the switchboard and turn on the lights. The speaker was dealing with the sanctity of wedded love and his reverent reserve seemed to call for the shadows of the vanishing day.

"A play for the hearts, not the heads—and it's a peach!" whispered the State's attorney general to Wilkinson.

"The only thing that's going to save us is the night recess between that plea and your summing up. Of course, the court will adjourn after he's finished," predicted the district attorney.

But that proved to be a day of new features in the courtroom. The justice broke the profound silence that followed Lang's last words.

"You may proceed, General Phair," he directed the State's chief prosecutor.

Then came the lights—dome chandelier and all the bracket lamps—flooding the chamber with prosaic radiance. The spell was gone. The attorney general had his own keen sense for effects; he knew that he must stand forth in the hard lights and deal cruel blows in the name of the State and he realized that all the psychology of the thing was to his prejudice. He hesitated. The justice seemed to think that the hesitation was on account of the hour. "If we were merely dealing with evidence, general, I would observe the usual procedure and adjourn till morning. But this case has been long before the court on trial. Anxiety on both sides is now acute. Proceed, sir. My charge will be brief. The gentlemen of the panel shall have this case for their consideration to-night."

As soon as the attorney general was launched into his subject, Lang gently touched the shoulder of Onésime Ouellette. In the glare of the lights, the woodsman was staring even more intently at the girl in the dock. Lang was obliged to shake the man before he would give over that survey.

Onésime followed when the lawyer tiptoed away; Lang's air in leaving the courtroom was deprecatory, as if he were mutely apologizing to the attorney general; on the other hand, the withdrawal was justified because he was removing an object which might distract the attention of the audience from the State's argument.

In the corridor the Federal agent made known to Lang that Onésime was an escaped prisoner.

"So I gathered from what he told me." Lang had his hand on Ouellette's arm and the Canadian was meekly quiet; his countenance was serene once more. Lang's jaw muscles were ridged; he was repressing his feelings. "With what is the man charged?"

"Moonshining and single sale."

Lang revealed his surprise but he quickly got himself under control. "I'm afraid you haven't made him understand that thoroughly, officer. The man rushed in here nearly frightened to death."

"He's a hard ticket. We couldn't seem to beat anything into his head. I told him you wouldn't bother with him and his little fool affair. So, I'll yank him along."

"I have taken his case," returned Lang. "I would like to have a minute or so alone with him. I'll be responsible."

Though the Federal agent was considerably awed, he was bold. He was also nervously apprehensive lest too much might leak out about the more serious reserve charge against Ouellette. "I don't know about letting a prisoner like him out of my hands."

"He seems to have got out of your hands a little while ago, sir. And how long has it been since a man accused of a comparatively minor offense could not confer in private with his counsel?"

The agent was confused and stammered when he opposed further objections.

"What else have you against this man?" Lang demanded.

"That's what I arrested him for—what I told you!"

The lawyer cowed the agent with a prolonged stare and then he started to lead Onésime away. "You wait here in the corridor, Mr. Officer. Your prisoner will go along with you quietly, after I have had a few words with him."

In the consulting room Onésime continued to be placid. He was like one who had come through storm into calm and was consoled but infinitely weary.

"I don't be scare some more now," he said with wistful confidence in his protector.

"You must not be frightened. You did

not kill that man in the Brassua woods. I know you did not."

"No, m'sieu, I don't know dat mans. It's my rifle what dey bring—*oui!* But you know when I hunt for him, dat gun? And he not where I lef' him."

"Yes, I know!" The lawyer was weighing what he knew against the reasons for not making his knowledge public. At that moment, in spite of his pity for this man who was dragged away from the woods and his little brood, the reasons for not telling seemed especially weighty. He had long since confessed to himself that his pride had been the mainstay of his efforts and the source of his comfort in life. To confess to the world, on top of all the rest, that he had walked away from a dead man in the woods—had in a measure connived at crime —would be putting the knife to his career at the bar, so far as public estimation of him was concerned. And he was no longer in a position to defy opinion; the wolves had begun to bark at his heels since young Trask died.

"They accused you out and out, did they, when you owned up that the rifle was yours?"

"*Oui,* m'sieu! And den dey lie. When mans lie dey mean to do bad t'ings, eh?"

"I'll defend you against all the lies, Ouellette."

"Dey say I kill him to take his monee, m'sieu! But I have only spend de monee what you lef' in de sweetheart's crib. But when dey talk to me I don't tell 'em where I get dat monee. No, sir! You tell 'em, eh?"

"We'll attend to it all at the right time!" But again Lang's doubts were dulling the candor of his pledge; if he began to combat circumstantial evidence with statements as to his own part in the affair, there was no telling how far he might be led to his own undoing. His thoughts were not clear just then. He had been deep into the shadows of the Trask case and he had not been able to come back to other realities.

Onésime put some of Lang's reflections regarding his own mental state into words. "Ma head she go round some more to-day!"

Lang's pity surged anew at this plaintive lament. "No wonder, brother."

"*Oui,* she go round like she did dat day in the wood when de tree fall. So, I see again dat *belle au bois.*" He pointed his finger in the direction of the courtroom.

"What's that?" snapped the lawyer.

"*Miracle de beaute,* like she was in de wood."

"Do you mean to tell me that you saw in the courtroom the girl you saw in the Brassua woods?"

Onésime shrugged his shoulders and deprecated his surety of knowledge. "*Mais, m'sieu!* But you tell me she must have been fairy and den you say to me de fairies are not. You're wise so much more as what I am! I look long while you say de fine language, but I know ma head go round."

Lang put his hand on the woodsman's shoulder. The simplicity of this faith in him, even to the believing that eyes were not valid against his say-so, had imposed a responsibility that he could not shirk.

"Onésime, I must go back and attend to my work. The officer will take you along with him. I cannot prevent that. You will be put in a place where there are locks. But you must not think about the locks and bars. You must be quiet and good. When I have finished this job here, I will come and work for you. Do you understand?"

"*Oui,* m'sieu! I have nottins to do but wait for you. I'll sit all quiet and wait, m'sieu!"

"Yes, quiet! That's it! You must not open your mouth to anybody about yourself. Tell them I told you to keep still."

"It is for me as if La Bonne Sainte Anne she speak and give her orders. Dat's how I keep still, m'sieu."

Lang led Onésime forth to the Federal agent. "You don't need those handcuffs, sir. If you had kept them off this poor fellow you would not have had so much trouble with him. He will go with you like an honest man wherever you wish."

"*Oui!* I'd chop off ma arm before I'd break de word to M'sieu John Lang."

There was infinite trustfulness, there was absolute surrender in Ouellette's demeanor. He trudged away, a picture of humility.

Larry Devon, counselor at law, was smoking a cigarette in the corridor. "Phair is doing the best he can, John, but it isn't remarkably good," he reported, putting himself in front of the counsel for the defense. "He isn't interesting enough to keep me in there. I don't like to hear harsh things said about such a pretty woman. Perhaps Phair is under her spell, too. You sounded as if you were!" he suggested with the impudence of friendship. "But you landed the

big jolt in this case when you struck that pose of protection, the fugitive at your feet!"

"It was not a pose, Devon, and the matter doesn't call for humor."

"I didn't see any humor in it, either! There was a lump in my throat as big as a golf ball. I congratulate you, John. Your plea was a splendid effort—but I agree with the whisper that's going around among the boys. If the girl is acquitted you may thank the man, whoever he may be, who helped you in the wonderful psychology of that scene."

Lang, pursuing his way into the courtroom as unobtrusively as possible, felt all the grim suggestiveness of that remark.

He was fighting off the tragic idea that Anita Trask was connected with the murder that had been committed in the Brassua woods. That renegade brother had enough other enemies besides a sister, even though he had purposed to exploit that sister in maintaining a blackmail hold on her aged husband. And Trask had given her money with which to rid herself of the knave in a way that did not call for violence!

Lang met her gaze when he took his seat inside the bar inclosure. In her pallor her eyes were like circles of ebony inlaid in the marble of her expressionless countenance. There was frantic query in those staring eyes. It was as if she were demanding to know what that man of the woods had said —what information he had brought, rushing down from the wilds.

Lang turned from that disquieting gaze and pondered on what he should ask her when it came time for him to keep his pledge and save Onésime Ouellette from the halter.

The counsel for the defense paid only scant heed to what the attorney general was saying in the summing up of accusatory evidence. He did note, but rather indifferently, certain portions of the judge's charge to the jury to which the defense might file exceptions if there should arise occasion to move for a new trial. The judge charged briefly. He was not friendly to the defense. There were listeners, among the members of the bar, who felt that his honor was endeavoring to negative in some degree the emotional appeal of the trial—to show the panel that facts should govern their findings.

Lang felt singularly calm while he smoked his pipe in the anteroom after the jury had retired.

When bustle at the doors and the crier's call announced that the jury was ready to report, Lang smiled. The panel had been out a scant hour. That brief deliberation signified much to him; apparently there had been no long arguments in that locked room to bring soft-hearted jurymen into line for a conviction. The courtroom was crowded though the hour was late; the people had remained.

Replying to the demand of the clerk of the court, the foreman shouted with a sort of triumphant note in his voice, "Not guilty!"

There was applause that was kept up persistently notwithstanding the customary and conventional threats of the court officers. While the applause continued Anita leaped from her chair, avoided the hands her husband reached to her, and threw herself upon Lang's breast, sobbing her hysterical gratitude. He found her utter abandon distressful. Only by considerable force did he manage to unwind her arms from around his neck.

"It is truly a kissful day for our celebrated Champion of Innocence," observed Larry Devon to a confrère. "I can hardly blame him for pushing off the Canuck, but in this case I think I'd drain the chaser-cup in order to take away the taste of the wild-woods osculation."

When Lang placed the girl-wife in the arms of her old husband and a moment later led them out of the chamber to an anteroom, women sobbed frankly as the united pair passed along the aisle which the spectators formed; there were earnest congratulations and gloved hands patted Anita comfortingly.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE VERDICT OF THE HUSBAND.

When Lang had shut the door of the conference room Anita again embraced her savior, clinging to him in spite of his remonstrance and resisting his efforts to free himself. Lang had learned that her power of expression by words was limited; in times of mental stress words failed her and she strove to interpret her emotions by actions. This physical demonstration of her gratitude was now especially embarrassing under the eyes of the husband.

Trask wore a peculiar and complex facial aspect that the lawyer was not able to understand, exactly. Mere jealousy would have

been obvious and the old man's bodeful scowl would have been divided between the two. However, he was plainly centering all the venom of his gaze on Anita.

"I thought we would wait in here for a few minutes until the crowd dispersed," explained the counsel to Trask. Lang was unclasping Anita's fingers, one by one, from his arm and she was continually renewing her frantic clutch on him. "Then you can send for your car and take Mrs. Trask away to your home."

Trask gritted his teeth and mumbled something.

"And I wish you would prevail upon your wife to be seated and calm herself," urged Lang. "Please step over here, Mr. Trask, and get her."

Old Double T had posted himself on the opposite side of the table in the room. In his manner there was some suggestion that he had retreated behind a barricade. What Lang found puzzling in Trask's demeanor was the expression of fear and abhorrence that was mingled with his glowering rage.

He made no move to come and take his wife to himself. In spite of what his face hinted at in the way of resoluteness, the old man's physical weakness was apparent. He tottered, swaying from heels to toes as he stood there.

When he spoke it was with the thick utterance of a paralytic who was trying to manage a stiff, wabbly and unwieldy tongue. "She's acquitted, eh? You've got her free, Lang? Good lawyer! Always said you were. Sounded like I said 'good liar.' But, oh, no! I didn't say it. Something's the matter with my tongue."

"I wouldn't undertake to talk much now, if I were you," urged Lang. By exertion of main strength he managed to seat Anita in a chair and he quickly stepped away from her.

"Now is the time to talk, Lang. I've been bottling it up! Trial's over, hey? She's all free and clear! They can't say she killed my nephew—only heir—my namesake—and that I harbored her. Law says she is innocent. Damn good law! I stood by her. Right to the end. Good point you made in your plea. It worked well with the jury. I did my part to the letter, hey?"

Trask's excitement was increasing. He lunged forward and propped himself on the table by his shaking arms.

"I protest, Mr. Trask. You must get home. There has been too much excitement for all of us to-day."

"There's got to be a little more—right now. You can't stop a runaway sled load of logs on a slope after the snubbing warp has parted. Let her run! I'm a lumberman and I know! I'm a good lumberman—I ought to have stuck to that line and nothing else!"

The old man was swinging his head slowly from side to side. His eyes were very bright but the impediment in his speech made him appear like a babbler who was not just sure of his wits.

"Mrs. Trask, prevail upon your husband to go home with you. Talk to him. Urge him!"

"You wait till I tell you to talk to me," commanded Trask, extending a wavering finger to emphasize his command to his wife. "Who is running my family, Lang? You've had her set scot-free—that's your job. But I'll run my family. Good God, I haven't any family!" He almost screamed that, but his voice dropped at once into the husky babbling. "Nobody to be Serenus Skidmore Trask of the Double T! Skiddy said it was a homely name. But it has stood for something! He wasn't killed by the wife I married—the law says he wasn't. So, that's locked away. No more about that."

He leaned farther over the table, his hard eyes searching his wife's face.

"I helped the trial to go on all smooth even when that piece came out in the newspapers about the dead man in the Brassua woods. But now—now—we're going to try a case of our own Anita—right here! I gave you money so that you could pay it over to Mack Templeton. Did you pay him?"

"Yes!

"Where did you pay him?"

"He came in his canoe to the Brassua Deadwater. I paid him in the woods, at a place he and I knew and where I had told him to come." She spoke quietly.

"Where did he go after you paid him?"

"I don't know."

"Where did you think he went?"

"Away—to leave the country."

Lang had folded his arms and was listening intently; these were the questions which he, himself, wanted to put to Anita Trask.

"And you committed no crime against him?"

"No!"

Trask broke out into hideous profanity—then he checked himself. "I don't say but what he deserved to be killed. But you didn't commit a crime against him, hey, and now you will commit one against me?"

"No, no!" she expostulated.

"I say yes! And it's a crime next to the biggest one a wife can commit against a husband. You're lying to me—that's your crime—and I don't deserve it."

"I tell you the truth."

Again he cursed her. "Now you're lying about a lie—a woman who will do that will go on to the bigger crime when she gets a chance. Right here, a few moments ago, before my face and eyes——"

"Trask!" cried Lang with a veritable explosion of sound.

"Say it again—tell me that you paid him the money," insisted the old man, abandoning a line which seemed to be dangerous.

"I did pay it to him."

Trask paused for a full half minute before he went on. "There are good reasons why you shouldn't have paid the damnation scoundrel. You could have stood up to him and said that you wouldn't allow your husband's money to be wasted on him. You could have told him that you were sure of me—that I would protect you against anything he could do in the way of a grudge if he didn't get the money. There was a chance that you could coax him to be decent and go away satisfied with the money he had stolen from others. I was giving you all those chances in my thoughts. I didn't dare to think anything else of you, but what was on the square. I wouldn't admit that you would lie to me. I was waiting for you to get ready to offer me the truth on your own hook. It would have been all right. I would have stood by you to the limit. But you have lied! You didn't pay that money."

"I did."

"I told you that your satchel was lost off the sled when we came down from the woods. You were watching that satchel close, too. But I got into it. And I found this in it."

Out of his breast pocket, tugging hard because the packet bulked largely, he pulled something that was neatly tied and carefully sealed. He broke the seals. He showed the contents. There was much money in bills of large denominations. "That's what I found in the satchel before I threw it away—and you thought it was lost in the woods and would never come to light to bother you. So, you didn't pay him!"

Whether she were innocent or guilty, a frank liar or a mere opportunist who had shirked a task and avoided the awkward truth, Lang was not able to decide while he surveyed her. She was impassive. She sat straight in her chair. Her round eyes did not flinch under Trask's rage.

"I thought it was as well to tell you that I had paid him. He said he was going away. He said that he had been thinking it over and he would not persecute a sister when she had a chance to be happy with a good man."

"So Mack Templeton pushed away the money and went away and you didn't see him again?"

"He said he was leaving the country."

"And on the night of that same day—that night—you changed your mind all of a sudden and said we could get married, eh? And I had taken out a marriage license a month before, but you wouldn't go ahead till that night!"

"I didn't know what my brother would do—till all had been arranged with him. I was afraid of him. I told you so."

Trask came around the table to her, the packet of bank notes in his clutch.

"I never saw your Mack Templeton. I only had heard about him. And I suppose there was a Mack Templeton, seeing that they have found his body in the woods. Why were you so devilish afraid of what he would do? Who was he?"

"My brother!"

"If you're lying to me again I'll see you in hell before I'll put out a hand or a dollar to get you out of more trouble that may come to you. And it's probably coming!"

She winced.

"I swear before Almighty God that I'm going to the bottom of this thing! I'm going into the woods. I'm going to take my lawyer, here, with me. If we find you in another lie, after you have had this chance to tell us the truth so that we can help you, look out for yourself!"

This sudden move of Trask in taking John Lang into the thing as a partner in truth-seeking produced a sort of galvanic spasm in the woman.

"I wanted to tell the truth. I tried to keep you happy," she cried.

"Who was that man, I ask you?"

She looked straight at Lang. She was defending herself in his eyes; if he were to probe in the North it would be with surety —this potent man—and a quick impulse urged her that she would best serve her need by laying her secret in his hands instead of waiting to have it dragged from her to her shame! With her eyes entreating Lang, she replied to Trask:

"He was my husband. He wanted me to make believe marry you. He wanted to keep his hold on me. He would take the money I coaxed from you. That's the kind he was."

"You were that!" rasped the old man, a rattle in his throat.

"I had the right to marry you, after he was dead!"

"How did you know he was dead?" squalled the husband shaking the packet of money over her head.

"There was a man—he followed us through the woods. He was waiting. I think he knew about the money."

Trask was staggering to and fro. She rose hastily and put out her hands to him, trying to steady him. He retreated, his face ridged with hideous fear.

"You damnable snake! I've felt it before. I'm afraid! I'll be the next you sting! Keep away!"

In his frenzy and his weakness, finding that she kept trying to get closer to him, he employed the only thing at hand as a weapon of defense, hardly realizing what he did use. He flung in her face the packet of money. The bank notes filled the air like a cloud of leaves blown by a puff of a sudden gale. They fell upon her head and drifted down over her, sticking to the beads and the fabric of her gown.

Before Lang could reach Trask to stay him and put himself between the old man and the woman whom the husband so bitterly feared in that horrible reaction from slavish love Trask slumped downward, his elbows and back scraping slowly against the edge of the table. There was a nerve-racking grinding of his teeth; and a sluggish, ominous convulsion twisted his limbs till the joints cracked. Then he pitched forward and fell heavily.

The wife screamed and hid her face against Lang's breast, seeking a shield behind which she could avoid the dreadful spectacle. He strove to draw her away from that scene of death; there was no mistaking the grim nature of the collapse of the old man.

Therefore, it happened that when bailiffs came running and flung open the door, summoned by the thud of the fall and the scream of the woman, they found Serenus Trask dead on the floor, with money scattered about him and over him and his wife clasped in another man's arms—according to the evidence furnished by what their startled gaze beheld.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ONE, AS AN EXAMPLE.

On the fourth day after the close of the trial of Anita Trask—on the day after the funeral of Serenus Skidmore Trask—John Lang marched through the law library in the courthouse with the manner of one who had business to attend to. He went into the lawyers' lounge, a smoking room that was connected with the library.

There were a dozen lawyers in the room and Larry Devon, as was quite his habit, was doing most of the talking. He stopped talking when Lang swung through the door. The new arrival's countenance revealed that he found that cessation of talk especially significant. He went straight to Devon, and more than ever he conveyed the impression that he had come there for a special purpose and intended to make a quick job of his business.

"Still at it, Devon, are you?" he queried crisply. He tossed his hat on a table and took his stand in front of the attorney. "Sorry to interrupt you. But I'm claiming the right to step into a party where my private affairs are being tongue-lashed."

"There is no particular discussion of your affairs going on here, John," protested Devon.

"By calling it a discussion you have narrowly escaped having me tell you that you're a liar. However, you're a lawyer and are dodging the truth by your choice of descriptive words. I'll admit it's not a discussion. It's a monologue by you."

There was no misunderstanding the mood of Lang or the manner in which he had planted himself in front of Devon. All the men in the room were well aware of the provocation, in case Lang knew specifically the tenor of the attorney's remarks.

"I admit this is not a suitable place to settle trouble, but it is the place where all

of you have been condoning slander of myself and my affairs. The talk has all been behind my back. I have decided to face one representative band of slanderers—now and here—and I don't care what the room is."

"Lang, you're going too far!" objected another lawyer.

"I'm going farther! After I'm through slanderers in general may get to know how to govern themselves in the matter of my affairs. Hold on, Devon! You stand where you are!"

"I don't propose to be a party to a brawl in public."

"You have been making your talk about me in public. Do you dare to tell me what you have just been saying to these men?"

"I insist that this is brawling, and I stand on my dignity as a gentleman!"

"Do so! I stand here on my two feet as a man—a man who has been reviled and lied about, all his motives misconstrued and his innocent acts twisted into deeds of infamy. You're head and front of the gang, Devon. You have run the whole gamut from innuendo to accusation. You have held me responsible for the wreck of the Trask family. You have said that young Trask committed suicide because I drove him to it and that old Trask died in a fit of jealous rage because he found me embracing his wife. You have stated that I am after the Trask millions—the whole estate, including the widow. You have pitched the tune, and the others are singing it from one end of the city to the other. No real man can calmly discuss such things with you or get anywhere by denying and damning. So, *here!* I start with you!"

He imprisoned the lawyer's neck in the grip of his left hand and with the flat of his right hand he beat Devon up, threw the detractor from him and dusted his palms. "Any remarks?" he demanded truculently.

"I'd merely like to inquire what you think a performance of this sort gets you?" blurted one of the group.

"You're next!" declared the defender of a reputation.

But another stepped between the attacker and the intended victim. The intermediary was Judge Cleaves who had come hurrying from the law library, his finger closed in a big volume as a bookmark.

"Brother Lang, step this way with me!" The infinite gentleness of the venerable jurist prevailed. Lang went along, but it was clear that he was still vindictive and was nerving himself to argue the case to his own advantage. However, Judge Cleaves kept entirely away from the case—he did not mention the subject of the quarrel.

"My son, why don't you go away from town for a time? Go where it's quiet—go fishing!" he advised.

"I'm going! I'm leaving this afternoon."

"I wish you had gone this forenoon!"

"I waited in order to toss a little clarifier into the situation," was Lang's grim rejoinder. "It will work while I'm away."

"Go into the woods," insisted the judge. "I used to go there in my young days and fight with myself, instead of staying in town and fighting with others. I understand the fire that's in you, John. It was a long time before I could put out the fires in myself." The pat of the old man's hand was like a benediction. "It makes a hot blaze—the wrong sort of pride! Deep down in your heart, John, don't you feel that you need to go away and fight fires?"

The tears that dimmed Lang's eyes were not those of sudden conversion. But in the mental torture of the past weeks he had wrung from his own soul an acknowledgment that was in line with the gentle jurist's searching understanding.

Lang had begun his argument with himself by the rancorous thought that unless he did go away he would turn on some malignant gossiper and kill him as an example for the others.

Then remorse had battled with his rancor. He was not ready to allow that he had been wholly wrong. His emotions were too complex to admit of a definite understanding with himself. Remaining there in close contact with affairs, facing the folk of the town, he found himself unable to rise to a clear view of his own nature—whether to arraign his pride or acquit it of blame. He was yearning for the silent aisles of the great forests of the North. He wanted to mount into the high places and to be alone and weigh himself in the balances of self-judgment. Over and over he had murmured the lines:

> "And o'er the hills, and far away
> Beyond their utmost purple rim,
> Beyond the night, across the day——"

He had stopped right there, balking at the suggestion of a woman's companionship. He was not ready to admit that he was

afraid of women. But his recent association with them seemed to be exerting a particularly malign influence on his affairs.

He was insisting that his love for Reba Donworth was enduring. But he felt a strange disinclination to go into her presence.

That day the widow of Serenus Trask had summoned him, beseeching his aid in her affairs. He realized fully that it was his duty to go to her, to assume the burden of the great estate as the Trask attorney. But he was remembering the dreadful scene of the old man's death and the lament, "I'm afraid!" There was something of the same quality of thought in Lang's consciousness when he sent the widow a message that he must go away to the woods for a few days to recover from the strain of the trial.

When he shook himself free from his thoughts and looked up at Judge Cleaves Lang did not try to conceal his new emotion. He put out his hand and slowly set it into the understanding grasp the jurist gave him.

"Go on as you are going! You'll come out into the sunlight farther down the path, my son!"

When Lang walked down the courthouse steps he was taking rapid account of stock. He had the uncomfortable feeling that he was running away like a coward. He knew that the Trask estate needed his services at that moment. But he wanted to keep away from Anita and to discount the slanderous imputations that his association with her was anything except that of counsel and client. The story that the bailiffs had told was filling the mouths of the city and Lang knew it.

A sort of panic of flight was in him—and the knowledge of it tortured his sense of straightforwardness.

However, on one matter he did not turn his back.

He went to the House of Detention to see Onésime Ouellette. He had made a previous visit to comfort the prisoner; the dolorous plight of the caged man of the woods had stirred the lawyer's sympathy.

Lang had not been hoodwinked by the declaration of the Federal agent that Ouellette was held on a liquor case. The attorney had promptly forced their hand, down at the United States bail commissioner's office, when he had offered to give bonds for the prisoner's release.

The bonds were accepted and then Ouellette was at once rearrested in the guardroom, charged with the murder of Mack Templeton, on the strength of a medical examiner's preliminary report. And a man arrested for murder cannot be bailed.

Onésime was no longer disturbed by anything which these queer men of the city did in his case. He placed his doglike, implicit faith in what John Lang told him, not in what the other men did. And Lang told him not much more than that he must be patient and good in his cell.

The lawyer, that day, found Onésime sitting stiffly upright on his little stool, looking straight ahead—simply waiting.

"I am going North to-day, Ouellette. I will hunt up the truth about your case, and then you can go home to your folks."

At that moment, and during the time he had spent walking from the courthouse, Lang was wondering if the truth and the evidence were not right in the city instead of in the woods of the Brassua region. He was pondering on what Anita Trask might know—knowledge that would set this poor devil free. But Lang was in no condition of mind to go to her and demand information. He was feeling a queer sense of sympathy for her, considering her possession of that knowledge; he, John Lang, the counsel of Ouellette, could also tell a story that would unlock the cell door. He argued with himself that it would be better to go up into the woods and dig for evidence; there would be complications involved in Lang's appearance as a witness instead of counsel; Skiddy Trask could have been a witness, but Trask was dead.

So, Lang turned away and left Onésime sitting very straight on his stool in the cell—waiting—meekly waiting!

Outdoors the spirit of May was sending her balmy breath ahead of her coming. Lang could shut his eyes and behold in vision the budding woods of the North and hear the tumbling of the spring floods—the laughter of the little brooks of the Brassua and the hilarious roar of the big brother, the river. And he knew with what longing that man waiting back there in the narrow cell yearned for the outdoors. The zest for the spring after the trials of the winter is a passion in the man of the open.

Once more the lawyer, his face set toward the North, felt like a coward who was running away from duty. Now his shame had

a sincere sorrow in it and was deeper than when he had walked down the steps of the courthouse. By sinking his pride, by ample confession, he could set free that man who was longing for the forest and his family. But Lang was not willing to make such a sacrifice. He proceeded to arm himself against his conscience by testily reflecting that Onésime had been a fool to own that the rifle was his—to do any talking before consulting with his counsel. He was in jail on account of his own folly and must wait now to have the matter handled in a strictly professional way. And anyway, Lang reflected, he could explain about the money that Ouellette had spent—destroying, at any rate, the State's argument in regard to incentive. It would come out all right in the end!

He started for the North that afternoon, feeling that he had more than one reason for going there.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AS OTHERS SEE US!

The walls between the chambers of Debois' house on the Quassock upper waters were thin—only matched boards that had spread and split when the building settled. Eavesdropping was easy—was unavoidable when guests did not whisper.

Therefore John Lang heard the news that he had gone into the North country to wait for Anita Trask in order that a good understanding, which had started before the death of old Double T, might be cemented by marriage up there where society meddlers could not peer and pry. There were two men in the next chamber; one of them had arrived by buckboard after Lang had retired to his room.

Lang had tramped to far brooks that day and he was healthily weary. He had been a week at Debois' place. He dressed in rough clothes, had allowed his beard to grow and gave his name as Lane. He had the feeling that he wanted to be another man for a time.

The men in the next room were fishermen from the city who had been discussing metropolitan affairs.

"They wouldn't have the nerve to get married so soon," objected the man to whom the gossip about Lang had been imparted.

"Do you know Lang?"

"I have heard about him. I never saw him."

"Don't you worry any about his not having nerve. Nerve is his main asset. The story goes now that he dug that girl up and sicked her onto old Trask—made the match so as to turn a trick with the money, as he's doing. It's certainly an easy way for a lawyer to make a few millions."

"Say, look here! I don't believe that of a man with the reputation John Lang has had."

"The best of 'em cash in on a reputation when the right time comes and the stakes are big enough! I don't know Lang, either—not personally. But it's a fact that he stood up in the Talisman Club and admitted that he had driven young Trask to commit suicide—and be damned to the coward—or words to that effect!"

Lang gritted his teeth. The snowball of gossip does roll rapidly down the slope of credulity and becomes an avalanche unless it is stayed!

"He wouldn't eliminate the heir and brazen the thing out, would he, unless he had designs on the estate? Have you ever seen the girl old Trask married?"

"No!"

"Well, I have seen her riding along the street in her car. And if she can't make a man chase his grandmother with an ax and a stockingful of wet sand, simply by lifting a finger and promising a kiss, you can consider my judgment a dead one."

"And that accounts for Lang sitting in as he has done, eh?"

"That girl and the millions! Dad hammer it, I'm for sale, myself, for a cussed big sight less than what Lang is raking in. He could have got away with it in a lot smoother style—and the smooth way *is* his style—if the girl hadn't made so much of a public fuss over him and hadn't gabbled so much to women about how dear and close he was to her. But when they're married and arrive back from—well, Europe, we'll say, then everybody will kotow! It's what money can do when there's money enough!"

There had been a time when he would have considered that tattle in the next room as of no account—as the mere haphazard of gossip—as the sniping by hit-or-miss slander at one whose manifest probity in the past had been a subtle rebuke to meanness, malice and moral turpitude. In his newer enlightenment, he knew well enough that

these two men who confessed that they did not know him personally were revealing what the general public was saying—they were phonographs playing a popular selection. He was not astonished by the enormity of the current abuse of him. He had had occasion in the past to unsnarl the skeins of slander in the cases of his clients. He knew the nature of the impulse that was operating. He could name it in the language of the mob: "They had got John Lang on the run!"

"There's a friend of mine who is a lawyer. He's a chum of Larry Devon. Do you know Devon?" pursued the man who was opening the package of information.

"No!"

"Well, Devon is a Turk when he goes on the warpath. He's after Lang. Lang came into some place, drunk, and tried to make Devon take back something that Devon knew was so. Lang pulled a gun. But Devon stood up and said he'd go through and prove what he said. So my friend tells me Devon has hired a dick to chase up the Trask widow and nail the truth to the cross when she joins Lang. They're letting Lang run loose, wherever it is he's waiting for her. Lang would be wise to a trailer."

There was only one thing to do, according to Lang's customary straightforward policy of face to face in a fight! He would go back to the city and pitch into the mêlée. He got out of bed and rammed his possessions into his pack. He had not as yet visited the Brassua region to dig up the helpful evidence in the case of Ouellette. He had been postponing the trip. He felt a reluctance about going there and facing the family. Onésime's affairs must wait.

He confessed bitterly to himself that Reba Donworth would probably call this new shirking of his duty another proof of her claim that he was essentially and cruelly selfish in spite of the nickname that the world had given him. In his surly resentment against all things of life he was telling himself that he would agree with her and admit that he *was* selfish. He proposed to go on and to be selfish to the full extent of his hankerings. The world was giving *him* no quarter!

He was making his pack ready that night so that he would be able to start with the first peep o' day. He would let 'em know in the city that John Lang was back with his sleeves rolled up. He would give them no opportunity to work a frame-up on him in the North woods, stalking him from behind that woman. Therefore, in the gray of the dawn he was up. He wakened Debois and paid the score.

He had resolved to walk, feeling the need of calming his mind by tiring his body.

Dawn had smeared her first brushful of color along the eastern sky—a modest, subdued test of the rose hues of her palette. There was a tingle in the air. The birds were waking. The chickadee, a perennial and settled resident of the North woods, winter and summer, was already singing his love song for the entertainment of some of the fresh avian arrivals from the South. His clear, sweet *"dee-dee, dee-dee"* echoed among the trees. A busy, hairy woodpecker was clinging to a dead stub of a pine, rapping with his beak to make a dozing grub believe that he was wanted at the door of his retreat on special and urgent business. The bird gave Lang a sociable and approving *"ki-yeep,"* complimenting another early riser on knowledge of the really best time to be abroad in the woods.

And the hermit thrush was caroling. No one has ever heard the song of the hermit thrush at dawn or twilight, that flutelike, deliberately drawn-out note broken by effective rests, without feeling the mystic charm of the forest in more intense degree. A robin, very brisk, extremely optimistic, with breast painted in bright hues that had not yet been faded by the cares of hunting for family food, called *"cheer-up, cheer-up!"* when the thrush was not soothing the troubles of the world with melody.

After a time Lang realized that a very keen pang in the bitterness that raged in him was caused by the thought that he must leave all this peace of the woods. He loathed the prospect ahead of him—he hated the very idea of the paved streets of the town and the roar of traffic and the touch of the elbows of the throngs.

Indulging a sudden whim, he stepped off the path and went into a thicket and stood there, assuring himself that his feet were on virgin spots of Mother Earth—the exact spots where no other feet had been pressed.

Not far from him a pair of golden-crested kinglets were starting a home. The male was genially advising with *"tsee-tsee, ti ti ti ti!"* and the female was "chippering" her complete agreement. Lang found them mighty companionable.

And he must leave such company and such a scene to go back and meet those faces that he had been avoiding! He had been guessing for a long time at what was said behind his back. After listening to that clapper tongue in the next room at Debois' he had become so fully aware of the infamous nature of the scandal that was pursuing him that his dread of meeting the faces of men was intensified into something like a mania of resentment; he wondered if he would not find himself slapping faces on the streets as he had slapped Devon's face in the comparative privacy of the lawyers' lounge.

He strode on his way.

The upper limb of the sun was quivering through the grid of the trees, like the stirred coals of a breakfast fire. All the birds were in full voice. The idea of leaving all this cleanness and honesty, to go back and fight filth in the pack of humanity, became intolerable torture.

There arose from his wiser reflections—listening to the birds, sniffing the balm of springtime among the trees—the conviction that he was not yet in the proper mental condition to go back and fight with men. He had not had that promised fight out with himself. Until he was more sure of himself he had no right to take on the bigger conflict. He remembered what his handclasp had pledged to Judge Cleaves.

He had been getting into a state of mind where he was looking at John Lang's character squarely and frankly in the mirror of Nature, up here. He was admitting grudgingly to his soul that he was not impeccable. There was some sort of a sin on his conscience—and he was not just sure how guilty he was, or whether he was merely morbid.

He came to higher ground. He could look forth and see the rim of the purple hills. They lay to the north—they invited him. He wanted to look over that rim. Toward the south was only flat country!

He wanted to get beyond the rim that hemmed his honest judgment of himself as a man!

So after he had stood for a time on the height of land and had pondered he drove his fists into the air in silent declaration of a fresh determination to be sure of himself before he ventured forth to force other men to make an equitable estimate of him as a man.

He turned his back on the flat country which lay to the south.

He shifted his pack to an easier position, as would a traveler headed toward a distant destination. He swung away from the road which followed the river and he turned into a path which led toward the purple rim of the hills.

The frown left his face.

He had sandwiches in his coat pocket, food which he had bought from the drowsy Debois. He trudged on and munched his food and tossed the crumbs to the birds who were furnishing music along the way. The birds had helped to make the springtime woods coax him to stay. Therefore, he paid the birds. He put it that way, whimsically, in his thoughts. He was no longer making a parade of charity, even in that grotesquely minor matter of almsgiving to the songsters. He was hating that nickname, "Generous John." He admitted that he did not deserve it—and felt better there in the candor of the woods because he had made that admission.

TO BE CONTINUED.

DIRECT TESTIMONY

SOME American newspapers recently published statements that Americans living in Japan were being made the targets for abuse and insult by Japanese of all classes. To find whether or not these statements were true, the international friendship committee of the Federated Missions in Japan sent questionnaires to Americans resident in Nippon. Thirty-five replies were received from twenty-four cities in all parts of the empire. There were thirty-three answers of "No" to the question: "During the past few months have you, or any Americans known to you, been mistreated by the Japanese?" Two Americans reported minor incidents of an unpleasant character, both of which, the committee thinks, probably were accidental. The general opinion of those answering the questionnaire was that there has been no recent change in the attitude of the Japanese toward Americans living in their country.

Whistle: The Flagman's Dog

By Calvin Johnston

Author of "Crossed Records," "Temple Dust," Etc.

"Whistle" was rabbit-headed and his hind quarters didn't fit him, but when it came to nose he was all there

POLICE dogs there may be who bark at criminals as a profession, though I have always believed they were given jobs for reasons of politics," said Denny, the old switchman, acknowledging with suspicion the introduction to Jimmy the call boy's cur in the switch shanty.

"But listen," begged Jimmy piteously as the night yard crew nodded solemn assent to Denny's suspicions, "it is a true-blue police dog I am showing you, and the man who untied the stone from his neck at the edge of the pond and gave him to me said, 'Sure, he is a police dog, being Pinkerton, by Old Sleuth!'"

"Then I have no more to say," replied Denny. "Far be it from me to cry down a pedigree—me whose fathers were kings in County Clare when the families of switchmen who sit between me and the hot stove this winter night were trotting the bogs. And it is only the due of Whistle, the flagman's dog," he continued as no one made place for him, "who rose to be assistant chief of secret service on the old P. D., to say that a pedigree of one generation is enough if you have instinct for what is proper—and I am naming no names."

"Sure, you will have my seat, Denny," pleaded Jimmy. "See, it is next the stove. And tell me of Whistle again when No. 6 gets in."

"I will," consented Denny, and told the story that follows:

Nick Donovan, head brakeman out of Foothills, was saying as he crossed the hurricane deck of a box car on the west run, one such night as this, "It is the life of a dog I lead, and answering like a dog to a whistle. But a dog is only whistled up to be fed or patted on the head while an engineer whistles a brakeman out of the wicked nature of him." Then having got to the brake wheel Nick rises from the icy running board which he has been crawling along and with his lantern hanging on his arm gives a twist and the wheel spins round and round. "Sure, the chain is broke," he resumes and begins crawling along the next car as the train rocks down the Gray Gulch grade with a wild scream from the engine for down brakes. "Whistle, ye divil!" says Nick. "A dog of a brakeman I am but not a pack of 'em to ride every car in a train at once!" And rises to seize the second brake wheel.

Now, so much will seem a long conversation for a man to carry on while crossing two box cars. But in those times, y'understand—before trains were controlled by air and trainmen became the parlor-car dandies they are now, 'twas a far journey in the black winter night from brake to brake, with the whistle screaming of down grades and curves and danger signals. And even as he was swinging on the wheel of the second car Nick had time for another conversation.

"The ould divil in the cab comes onto this tangent with his cars hopping like frogs and expects me——" here there was a lurch and the wheel slipped in his cold hands and there was an end to Nick Donovan's braking forever, but the conversation went on faster than train ever flew or wreck piled up. "When I was a little gossoon, back in the ould State, I always wanted to be a railroad man, bad scran to me," says Nick. "Well, I have had my run and will hit the grit under the wheels this second. Aw, whist ye Nick Donovan," he says, "ye would not be then, or now, going down between the cars, anything but a railroader, for 'tis a fighting life. When I was a gossoon—but there is something else I would remember—Mistress O'Lynn—who keeps the coffee stand at Foothills—many's the time, after a

sleety night and the whistle blowing for brakes—sitting across the counter from Widdy O'Lynn and the heart warming up with the smile and blue eyes of her—and when I am conductor—— There is the whistle and I am not answering—I will never be a conductor and marry Mistress O'Lynn! Oh, 'twas the slipping of the brake catch and now the grit under the wheels——"

And with this the body of Nick Donovan, fluttering and sprawling down out of the dark, touches ground—but not under the wheels, for he has fallen clear and into snow. And though the lantern flings up again like the last flash of the spirit from the body huddled and still, Nick is only bruised and stunned and with a broken leg, which he drags behind on coming to his senses, till the lantern is found and he resumes the conversation:

"Divil a Donovan was ever born to freeze," he says, "with a live coal enough to keep a family in comfort all winter in the Ould Country." And finding the lantern unbroken in the snowbank he flags the next train and is carried into Foothills. And it is there, after a season of repair work by the company surgeon, that he limps into the office of Superintendent Rivets on his crutch.

A wiry runt of a man is Rivets with a blue eye which pulverizes you on the spot; and at the time he was in a dour humor over the robberies of the famous Carlot gang on the P. D. Cars loaded with silk or bullion, which have never left the train, have been received at destination, or by connecting lines, pilfered and empty. And never a clew or trace of the robbers has been found, unless a cap picked up in one of the looted cars and sent back to Rivets can be called one.

"It is all the bandits left us in exchange for a car of silk," he says grimly and throws it up on the rack back of his desk where Nick remembers it hanging later. He at once incriminates Nick for falling off a train. "Next time," he says, "consider the company property which you put in danger—and the engineer calling for brakes!" And he adds that he should discourage such practices by discharging Nick on the spot, or they would have trainmen falling off right and left.

"Divil a discouragement do I need, who will never ride a box car again," says Nick, and repeats the surgeon's word for it that his ankle will be stiff.

"Then I will put you on a crossing," says Rivets. "A wooden leg is badge of the flagman's order," he says, "but I will not draw the line at a man who is certain to get one cut off shortly with the criminal carelessness of him." So Nick obtains the job flagging Long Street Crossing in the lower yard.

"When falling off the train, Mr. Rivets, I thought of many things," says Nick, "but never a thought for the damage I might be doing the company."

"Live and you may yet learn," says Rivets, and after Nick has signed a release for damages, grants him the use of the shanty at Long Street Crossing, where he may retire with the red flag when no trains are going by. "It is for shelter, and do not fall through the roof," says Rivets; and with a promise of caution Nick hobbles downstairs and sits on a baggage truck, which is a chair of philosophy such as they had in the school I went to in Dublin.

"I remember when I was getting ready to fall off the car," he says, "that I cursed a brakeman for being a dog and answering to the whistle of his engineer. But now at the crossing I must answer the whistle of every engineer that blows, and am come down as low as low." And, with that, by the favor of the saints, he continues his conversation: "Many masters I have now," he says, "and none so low as to answer a whistle of mine." As a proof he whistles a note of despair and is answered by a bark under the truck, where after a moment's meditation he discovers a dog the color of rust tied to a bunch of baggage checks as large as himself.

"Faith, he is a journeyman of distinction," says Nick, reading the checks which are of many railroads from coast to coast. And, searching out a reason why the dog has not settled down like other dogs, he finds his biography written by many masters in an old train-order book attached to the checks.

"Time after time," he says then to the dog, "you have been tried and found wanting in all the uses a dog is born for; and are consigned by every division office in the country to a master who can find you fit for something!" And the dog looked at him with shamed face.

"He will answer to no name," reads Nick in the biography, "or wag his tail or bite." But Nick reflects on the baggage truck that the dog may have reasons of mystery for

doing none of these things. "Whatever his reasons, I will respect them," says Nick. "And a great use he will be to answer the whistle of a man who must answer everybody else's."

So he cuts off the bunch of tags and the dog follows him down the platform where they come to the coffee stand of Mrs. O'Lynn.

"A deep one he is," explains Nick to the widdy, who stands treat with coffee and sinkers, "and will answer to no spoken name."

"He has a head like a rabbit," says Mrs. O'Lynn, "and his hind quarters are higher than his shoulders."

" 'Tis the nature of him to deceive every one but me in his looks and character," says Nick; "but I tell you in confidence he is a hound of beauty and talent and the saints have sent him at need to advise with me on the future of us."

"Faith, poor Nick's head has had its share in the accident," thinks Mrs. O'Lynn, but as the dog, rising suddenly, prowls to the end of the counter and peeps around with caution and then prowls back to stare at Nick with his rabbit eyes—and Nick whistling without meaning—she feels a shiver between her shoulders.

"Many things be shown a man while he is falling from a freight train in the winter night," says Nick, "and one of the strangest I saw was yourself, Widdy O'Lynn, as I was lifted out from under the wheels and laid softly in the snow so that only a leg was broken. But do not fear," he says, "for I have taken the flagman's shanty to be near and watch over you, along of the dog, who is named Whistle."

"Bad cess to him," says the widdy. But the man, raising his hand in warning, hobbled off on his crutch with the dog backing and watching her, and she not caring for the secrecy of them at all.

Now, for many a day and week does Nick Donovan fulfill the duties of answering to the whistles of engineers, and it is great comfort that he may whistle in turn and be followed by the dog onto the crossing. And as there are no passers-by on Long Street, by reason of its being closed after the town aldermen have ordered a flagman there to protect traffic, Nick will sometimes intrust Whistle with the flag or lantern, which he will carry to the side of the rails and hold in his teeth till the train has passed.

Now, being such close neighbors in the shanty, 'tis not long till Nick discovers that never since the time Whistle answered from under the baggage truck has so much as a whine or a bark come out of him. "He has his reasons and 'tis not for me to question him," says Nick; "but 'tis not for nothing the saints sent him for company to a fallen brakeman and I must solve the problem of his presence, as they do in arithmetic, by putting two with two, or taking it away." So, it being dusk at the time, he sets out the red lantern and instructing Whistle to remain on watch for trains, limps, now without his crutch, down to Mrs. O'Lynn's, observing across the yard on the last track that is little used, a blue light.

Now, the blue light, as you know, Jimmy Burke, is the signal which protects the shopmen at work upon cars in the yard, and Nick reflects, "There is a car under quick repair and a workman to talk to;" and the crossing being so lonesome he is tempted to go over the tracks and pass courtesies with the shopman; but the Widdy O'Lynn is waiting beyond, and Nick having solved the problem of Whistle's presence is anxious to inform her. So he goes on to the coffee stand and explains that a dog without bark or bite or wag of tail is of necessity in secret service and has been sent to Nick to instruct him on his future.

"And is it the secret service you would go into, and forever telling all you know?" asked Mrs. O'Lynn.

"But, from this minute I am a changed man," explains Nick and will tell nothing more, though she asks what vision he had of her when falling from the train.

"Only this I will tell," says Nick, "that it was important and you must do nothing without consulting me. Now, I am a busy man, for there is much secret-service work on the P. D. and the Carlot bandits at work on every division."

"When you and the dog detect the bandits, I will consult you on what I do," says the widdy in scorn of them, but Nick calls it a bargain and limping down the yard already has his eye cocked for clews, when he discovers that the blue light has gone from the track across the yard.

Nick had intended to ask the shopman whether the bandits should be suspected of having a confederate inside the cars who broke out, or whether the inside man had confederates outside who broke in. " 'Tis

a disappointment," he says; and then seeing the blue light at the shanty, reflects, "Sure, he is repairing the roof and is a man of sense to hang out his light to engineers who would leap the track to catch a man working without signals." But at the shanty he comes on Whistle sitting against the wall and holding up the blue lantern which he has brought home and so left the workman unprotected.

"It is no time to call him on the carpet and kick him off for the blunder," thinks Nick, but as he hobbles across the track flings back a curse, never observing the intelligent wink of the animal or the signal he makes with his tail that all is well.

And Nick's curse trails off into a screech of warning as a great, black body looms and a car kicked from the switch engine far up the yards slides down the lead and into the bad-order car with a little crash. One moment and Nick's screech is answered by a call for help, and Nick helps the shopman from under the moving car where he is dragging by the brake beam.

A twisting, hobbling body of a man groaning at every step holds to Nick across the tracks and at the shanty sags down on the cot. But when Nick says he will go for the surgeon the injury shakes his head and pulls himself together.

" 'Tis only a shock," he says, "and the rolling over I got from the brake beam," and then finding the sprain in his back sits down again, cursing the yard crew who have kicked in a car against a blue signal.

"They can divide the blame among them easier then Whistle can carry it alone," reflects Nick, but is astonished by the dog's shrewd look and bristling hair, as if for a moment he had cast off the disguise of a rabbit and come out as a wolf. But as the wounded man turns his head Whistle looks like a rabbit again.

"We will make no report of this," says the shopman whose name is Ticker, "or I will be laid off ten days more as soon as I am well enough to go to work, for carelessness in being under a car when repairing it." And Nick, remembering the blame Rivets put on him for falling off a train, agrees to the wisdom of this.

"You can conceal yourself here till able to walk," he says and makes Ticker comfortable on the cot and himself sleeps on a pallet on the floor that night.

But Ticker, being hungry next day and finding himself able to walk by aid of Nick's old crutch, they venture as far as the coffee stand for breakfast.

"I am a cousin of Nick's, come to consult on family matters," Ticker tells Mrs. O'Lynn, on being introduced, "and do not wonder at his condescending to the flagman's job to be close by such a beautiful neighbor as yourself, Mrs. O'Lynn."

The widdy answers with a bright smile and Nick notices with alarm that his visitor is a tall and handsome man.

"And do all the family take to crutches by nature?" asks Mrs. O'Lynn.

"On seeing you even at a distance I fell that hard for you that I at once seized on the crutch," answers Ticker. And the conversation continues, Nick being outclassed by the blarney of him. And it is the same at dinner, and the next day, so that Nick puts a curse on his dog Whistle for bringing such a man into prominence with Mrs. O'Lynn.

" 'Tis all very well for you to pretend you knew what you were about in stealing the blue lantern," he says, "and that the serpent Ticker would be of use to us. Even now he is down at the coffee stand courting the foolish Mrs. O'Lynn away from me with his blarneying tongue. I am not deceived. You are a traitor, which the Donovans have done business with before in the Ould Country. I have found out the secret which kept you traveling in search of a master," and Nick announces that he will attach the baggage tags again and start Whistle on his way before worse troubles befall.

But at this the dog gives him a threatening look and walks out to the crossing, where there is a passer-by to-day. And a train coming up, with the passer-by standing on the track, Whistle bites him in the leg as a matter of duty and, as it is Rivets himself, Nick whips the dog with a stick for insubordination to officers.

"No doubt you are afraid to do the flagging yourself," says Rivets and, before leaving, orders Nick to wear a red shirt lest he get run over.

For he is put in great good humor by the behavior of Whistle, who after taking the whipping without whine or shiver stands looking at the superintendent in reflection.

"You will know who to bite now," says Rivets, and the dog passing a wink of understanding goes round behind Nick and nips him on the leg.

"Divil a licking shall he have for that," says Rivets delighted, "and from this date he must bite you when trains pass to remind you of your duty at the crossing. It is orders," he tells Whistle, "and do you come to my office on pay day and garnishee Donovan's check unless he has found you in bones and biscuit as assistant flagman."

Rivets being gone on, the others go back to the shanty. "Sorra the day I took you in," says Nick, "for now that you have learned how to bite me, I know the wicked spite of Rivets too well to report on pay day without you."

So soon after that he reports with Whistle at Rivets' office on pay day, and being convinced of the craft of the dog by this time takes down the old cap which has been sent Rivets as a clew to the robbers.

"Smell it," he says, "and if you ever find a man of the same smell, trail him, for the end of his trail is the fortune of us."

But it is about this time the dog decides he has enough of Nick and seeks a new master in Ticker, nor can all Nick's argument and beating break up the companionship.

These two visit the coffee stand together every afternoon for a week, Whistle stretching the instructions of the superintendent so that he does not remain at the crossing to bite Nick at every train, but instead snaps at him all during the morning, to cover the total of trains for the day.

"Sure 'tis not myself is flagman now, but Whistle," thinks Nick, "and myself is the assistant."

Ticker is well pleased with the arrangement, taking it as a sign that a man whose dog deserts him has small chance of holding the affections of Mrs. O'Lynn. But the widdy has a warning of the dog, who will sit watching them with the glare in his rabbit eyes when they hold hands across the counter. And once when Mr. Ticker whispers to her that he has indeed money saved up and large expectations from a rich uncle in the Ould Country Mrs. O'Lynn shudders to see the interest Whistle is taking.

At the end of ten days, Nick, being crowded from the affections of the widdy so that she gives him only a proud nod when passing him the coffee, tells them boldly: "You are leagued against me, man and woman, to destroy me. But I tell you the peace and happiness of a Donovan is sacred to him and I will preserve them by ignoring you all and forgetting the little worries you put on me, in the great work I have undertaken."

"And what is that?" asks the widdy in the curiosity of her, while the man and the dog yawn but listen closely.

" 'Tis the pursuit and capture of the Carlot gang who are looting the trains en route," says Nick, ignoring them all but answering loudly; and when they smile he smiles back, and when they tap their foreheads he taps his own also.

"How will you go about it, Nicky?" asks Mrs. O'Lynn with sympathy for his affliction.

"By working on the clew I have," says Nick, "and remember, woman, while I am away, the vision I had when falling off the train. And if you do anything important without consulting me it will be the worse for you."

"Bite him," says Ticker to Whistle in a rage, but to the surprise of them Nick makes a sign in the air and the dog follows to a corner where they are seen whispering together.

"Whistle reports that you have been speaking of money you will have coming to you, Mr. Ticker," says Nick returning, "and I think Mrs. O'Lynn had better see it in hand before believing you."

Ticker gives a curse as Nick goes out and Mrs. O'Lynn stands shocked by the talebearing of the dog who had received hospitality.

Not once does Nick look behind, but boards the caboose of a freight train made up near the roundhouse and is gone after the robbers. But at headquarters he drops off and goes into Rivets' office to thank him for the flagman's job before resigning.

"I had till lately led too busy a life, what with braking on trains and falling off them, to give proper reflection to what I was fitted for. But there is no place where people pause for thought as they do on the tracks at a railroad crossing with a train coming up behind. So now," he says, "I have quite caught up on my thinking and am going into the secret service as a volunteer to catch the robbers."

"And what are the means you employ in seizing on robbers?" asks Rivets.

"It is no part of secret service to be giving out information," replies Nick.

"But without your salary as flagman how will you support the dog, Mr. Donovan?

And without him to bite you you will lack the inspiration to keep on the job."

"I will draw the three weeks' time I have coming which will be enough, as the robbers' trail is a short one. Now I have an appointment with Whistle at dusk," he says, and getting his money from the cashier goes over to the street and buys a rusty revolver at a pawnshop.

And after dusk he meets Whistle, who has been kicked out of the coffee stand, and the two lie low till Ticker comes out from supper and then follow at a distance.

"Now, it may not be to-night or for a week that he will lead us to the gang," Nick has told the dog, "and we will watch over him till he does."

But to-night, instead of going to the flagman's shanty, Ticker flings a curse at it and passes on to a caboose made up with a string of cars. Here another man is waiting and when the conductor comes down with his bills in his hand, checking the train, Ticker hands him a pass good for two workmen to Brush Siding forty miles up from Foothills.

"There is a 'bad order' set out on the siding for temporary repairs," says Ticker, and all go inside the caboose.

And when the engine couples on and the train starts, Nick Donovan and the dog Whistle of the secret service are stowed away in the corner of an empty box.

'Tis late on the next afternoon when Rivets sits alone in his office with his head between his fists, staring at the wire from the eastern terminal of the P. D. which spells GRIEF in big black letters—for a car billed through with copper ingots has been opened before receipting by the connecting line—and found empty.

"First it is tea and then silk and now copper," he says. "Every once in so often a whole car lot is stolen en route, with the car never out of the train according to the train sheets and the reports of the detectives. May the devil fly away with me as he does with shipments on this road if I can guess the mystery. And there is only about one more mystery for me on this road, and a new superintendent will be doing the guessing."

"Here is hell to pay," says the chief dispatcher coming in with a pale face, and Rivets answers with scorn that it is paid in full already. But he hears the dispatcher's report with a growl so terrible that the snarling of lions is nothing to it and runs out into the telegraph office to take the key himself. The station five miles this side of Brush has reported a box car out of the siding and running wild.

"We will ditch it at Rock Creek," says Rivets, but the dispatcher halts him. "There is a man and a dog on top the car," he says, "and the line is clear to Rock Creek, glory be, where they will strike the curve and up grade and stop at the station."

"A man and a dog," repeats Rivets with a curse. "Sure, I should have had the lunatic Donovan locked up yesterday." And they await the report of Rock Creek, which is only a minute in coming, that the box car has arrived with momentum enough to take the grade and roll over the tangent and take a fresh start down to Foothills. And the man on top had cursed the agent who ran out to throw a switch, yelling that he had Rivets' order for right of way.

"So the fool did not sidetrack him," says Rivets, "and he is on the down grade to Foothills! As if a wild box car with a man and a dog as conductor and crew is given rights!" And he fires the agent at Rock Creek by wire, after the dispatcher during a moment of despair, catches the No. 35 pulling out of Cañon twenty miles away.

"Clear the line to Foothills," orders Rivets, "for now I do not want Donovan delayed or ditched till I can lay my hands on him."

Now the box car which is changed into a cloud of dust and cinders with a roar like a cyclone at its center is arrived at Cañon and gone again and is at Gray Goose, ten miles out.

The dispatcher at the key gasps with the time he is making.

"Is he still on top," asks Rivets, chewing his cigar.

"He is sitting on the brake wheel with his legs around the rod, holding the dog."

"Good," says Rivets, looking at his fists, "if it was a slow freight he would fall off."

The runaway passes the junction, leaping the switches and all the journals afire. "At the schedule he has arranged he will be in the yards in five minutes," says the dispatcher with awe, and word having leaked out of the lunatic special quite a number of people join them below to wait its arrival.

In a minute the blot of dust appears where the rails run together in the setting sun and the car tears flaming into the level yards.

with Nick Donovan twisting the brake and Whistle crouched on the running board.

So wild and black they are, coming out of that cyclone, that all stand back as they clamber down—except Rivets. But as he moves on Nick, such a burst of screaming comes from the car itself as if he had ridden a load of fiends into headquarters.

"Faith, I believe my passengers are catching fire," says Nick and dropping the bolt from the staple of the car door calls inside, "All out! It is the end of the run!" He steps back with the rusty revolver in his hand, but his passengers drag themselves to the door and drop onto the ground, bruised and battered and deathly sick. There are four, and as each one drops out Whistle gives a bark, but the loudest is for Ticker.

"Listen to him, Mr. Rivets—'Guilty,' he barks," says Nick delighted. "For he has his master's instinct for secret service and can detect robbers by the smell of them."

"Robbers!" says Rivets. "You poor lunatic——"

"Look into the car," says Nick, and while the flatheads pull the burning waste out of the journal boxes and throw water the superintendent peers in the door and, fascinated by what he sees, leaps inside.

"It is the copper," he gasps. "But how did it get here with this car——"

"Sure, it was never out of it," says Nick; and the superintendent, after waving a couple of railroad police to take the prisoners, orders Nick and Whistle into the office.

"You did right to invite Whistle," says Nick after they are in conference, "for he has not played second fiddle in this. It begins with the blue light," and he tells that part of the story.

"Now, we will discover whether it is you or me that is crazy," says Rivets. "What had the dog stealing the blue light to do with the case?"

"You understand that the man Ticker, although he had tools, also had a stencil for numbers and a can of paint. When I went out to pick up his tools to bring them in I found he had painted out the old number and painted on a new one, which is no business of a car repairer."

"But that is not enough to make you suspicious."

"Not in itself. But do you remember the cap which was found in a looted car at the eastern terminal, which Whistle and I come up to examine?"

Rivets nodded.

"Well, I made Whistle smell it again and again and talked to him about it. And later I come back a second time when you were not in and had him smell it and told him, "If ever you smell a man like that, stick to his trail.' And being a hound by nature he understood. Never after that would he do anything but follow Ticker and would try to bite me if I kept him away. So suspecting Ticker I asked myself why he should be painting new numbers on cars while pretending to repair them? And there was only one answer to that, y'understand—the correct one."

"You amaze me," says Rivets. "Go on."

"The explanation is this," says Nick. "A crooked conductor with a car of silk in his train will report a bad-order empty car to set out on siding at some flag station. But instead of setting out the empty he sets out the car of silk and brings the empty on to the end of his run. There, the train being broken up to redistribute the cars according to their 'baling,' a crooked yard foreman sides the empty, and a crook like Ticker, pretending to be a repairman, paints out the number and paints on the number of the car of silk. Then the empty is made up into a train and sent through as the car of silk."

"You are not so crazy after all," says Rivets, and, after Nick thanks him for the compliment, goes on: "And of course the car on the siding is looted and its number changed to the old number of the empty car. In so many words, the cars exchange numbers."

"It is so," agrees Nick, "and as you know, the sealing of the empty with a counterfeit seal is an easy trick to a professional crook like Ticker."

At which Rivets makes him a member of the P. D. secret service on the spot, officially, with Whistle as assistant to bite him in case of neglect of duty.

"Now, how did you catch the gang?" he asks. And Nick explains that, after the freight had dropped the supposed workmen at Brush Siding, he had ridden a hundred yards farther, and dropped off too. "And prowling back to the siding——" he says.

"Did you prowl?" asks Rivets; "I see you are born to the job."

"There two men drove up this morning with wagons which they kept hidden back

in the woods. And, when they joined Ticker and his pal in the copper car I slammed the door and locked it. But they begun to shoot at the lock and, afraid they would break out, I brought them special to headquarters, the car needing nothing to start it after I kicked off the brake."

"But did they not shoot through the roof?"

"They did, but I had a carload of ammunition, y'understand, and after hitting the first curve they were dodging volleys of copper ingots all the way to Foothills."

At this Rivets gives him his first raise in salary, but Nick sighs in a low humor and, being put on the carpet, is made to tell of the unfortunate love affair. "What is money to O'Lynn," he says.

"And you do not know how to handle widdys?" asks Rivets with scorn. "And you an expert in criminology!" So he puts on his coat and goes to the coffee stand by himself.

"What is this I hear, Mrs. O'Lynn?" he asks. "That you would marry against the interests of the company into a family of bandits? Sure, the captured robber Ticker claims you as bride elect."

"Elect is it," answers Mrs. O'Lynn, "and only one vote to be cast and that is mine. Faith, if I would not marry him as an honest man I would not marry him a robber, as you say he is."

"But still, you must have a man, Mrs. O'Lynn," says Rivets and explains he must marry her off quickly before she takes a man of her own choice and so brings discredit on the company.

"Do you run the division and I will run the coffee stand and my own love affairs," she answers.

"I nominate Nick Donovan," says Rivets, and for all her indignation the widdy hesitates before shaking her head.

" 'Tis the handsome figure and face he has and character, but the mind is knocked out of the head of him by the fall from the car."

"I have noticed it," agrees Rivets, "and explained to him that the wish to marry you was a lunacy when with the bright prospects of him as an officer in the secret service department, he might pick and choose."

"What is he doing but picking and choosing when he asks me, Mr. Rivets?"

"Well, he is crazy, but I thought you might humor him so far as marrying him. 'Twas the saints sent him the vision, as he struck on his head, of leading you in church in a white dress with a wreath in your hair."

"Oh—so the saints sent him the vision," says Mrs. O'Lynn, nibbling her lip. "Well, it puts quite a different face on the matter. But do you not think it was in the moment before he got the knock on the head?"

"It must have been after, Mrs. O'Lynn."

"It was before," she insists with pride; "and you say he is in the secret service with the bright prospects. Well, the saints are not to be denied after all."

At the moment Nick himself comes in, and Rivets bows to them both politely. "I will meet you in church," he says, and the blush and silence of Mrs. O'Lynn do not contradict him.

In the following number will appear another short story, "Mrs. Kadiak's Fortune," by Mr. Johnston.

ULTRAMODERN WOMEN

OLD residents of the village were overcome by the specimens of the "new woman" developed in their midst. Gathered at Sim Herkimer's grocery store, they lamented the tragedy of an effete community and the indecency of dress reform. They admitted their despair and confessed the absurdity of expecting a return to feminine normalcy.

"It's a fact," said Zack Wheat, "that these here women won't think they're on a plumb equality with men till they can grow a beard."

"They're so goldarn mannish now," remarked Jim Smithers, "that they git mad every time they pass each other and one of 'em fergits to raise her hat to the other."

"Durn my cats," exclaimed Pete Biggers, "ef they ain't so masculine that I expect them to wake up any day with a bad case of the goslings!"

Lone Wolf's Lodge

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

THUS spake The Lone Wolf, thus and never turning
From the magic picture on the cañon rim:
"Out across the Sand Hills my fathers' fires are burning,
Out across the Sand Hills, desolate and dim."

Floating in a pony's mane he drew an eagle feather,
Drew our lodge of bison hide laced with many thongs.
Said: "My brother, when we go we'll take the trail together:
I shall paint my pictures and you shall sing your songs."

Straightway I answered him: "Name, and I will follow,
I will ride my white horse, you will ride the roan,
Even to the Sand Hills, over ridge and hollow—
Brothers, we, on many trails; then why the last, alone?"

Softly laughed The Lone Wolf. Slowly, by his magic,
Color followed color, and the desert of his sires
Grew upon the canvas, lone and vast and tragic,
And far across the Sand Hills gleamed their hunting fires.

Round the lodge the low moon's slender arrows slanted,
Burning on a white horse, burning on a roan.
Turning from his picture, The Lone Wolf chanted:
"Brothers, we, on many trails; then why the last, alone?"

Fragrant were the tall pines, pleasant was the weather
Where we shared the hide lodge laced with many thongs;
Silent in the lodge door we gazed afar together—
He was dreaming pictures. I was dreaming songs.

Standing the Gaff

By Theodore Goodridge Roberts

Author of "Musket House," "The Bridegrooms of the Orisquibo," Etc.

"Goods on hand," not "past performances," was Lane's motto

GIMME three years steady an' I reckon I'd made a right smart woodsman of ye," had said old Andy Wire.

"What's wrong with me now as a woodsman?" had asked young Lane good-humoredly.

Andy had wagged his head and the abundant gray whiskers attached to his face.

"Ye're a sport, that's what's wrong," he had replied. "Ye kin tote a pack an' p'int a rifle, but it's all play. Ye ain't never had to stand the gaff. Too rich! But if ever ye lose yer money I'll take ye on for my pardner an' make a reel smart man of ye."

That had been years ago, at Andy Wire's lower camp at the foot of Beaver House Lake. Much had happened since then and the present day on which Lane ran the nose of his canoe into the mud, jumped lightly ashore and broke the golden silence of the September afternoon with a shout. The stooped figure and large gray beard of the old woodsman appeared immediately in the open doorway of the camp. He stared hard for a moment. Then:

"It's yerself!" he exclaimed with an unmistakable ring of pleasure and relief in his voice. "Why didn't ye send word in so's I could meet ye at Piker's an' fetch ye up?" he asked as they struck hands.

"Because I'm not a sport this time," replied Lane. "I'm your partner now."

The old man's glance softened suddenly and slipped aside as if he feared to detect embarrassment in the other's face.

"Zat so?" he said. "Pardner, hey? By glory, ye're welcome, Dick! Fetch up yer dunnage an' choose yer bunk."

When Lane's kit had been stowed in the camp the two men smoked and talked until it was time to boil the kettle and fry bacon for supper. Andy did most of the talking—but he asked no questions. He felt that if Lane wanted to talk, he would get it off his chest; and if he didn't, he wouldn't.

It was evident that Lane did *not* want to talk. His manner was not as Andy had known it in the past. It was subdued.

After supper Lane produced and opened and offered a box of cigars. "I'm sorry they're not quite as good as the ones I used to bring in," he said.

Andy helped himself, bit an end and lit up. "All seegars is the same, so long's ye kin suck the smoke through 'em. This one draws great."

Lane smiled and lit his pipe. "Any sports booked for moose this season?" he asked.

"Nope," replied Andy. "Nary a one. I be too durn old an' sot in my ways for to p'int rifles an' dry out socks an' fill hot-water bottles any more for the kinder sports comes into this country nowadays, Dick."

"No sports sounds good to me. But what is there for me to do now, before trapping commences?"

"There's plenty o' work. There's the winter's grub to fetch in from Piker's pretty soon an' some chinkin' to do to the Snowshoe Pond camp, an' dry firewood to trim out an' stack an' new trap lines to cruise. Don't ye fret."

"But remember that I'm not a woodsman yet, Andy. I had your own word for it, six years ago. You may regret your generous offer many times in the next three years, while you're making a first-rate woodsman of me—if you don't fire me in the meantime."

"Did I say three, Dick? Maybe I'd oughter said two. Anyhow, ye be worth yer grub right now—leastwise, if ye ain't fell off since our last meetin'; an' if only ye'd ever had to stand the gaff, Dick, ye'd sure be the best woodsman in two moccasins right at this minute."

"The gaff? Perhaps I've felt it, Andy—since our last meeting."

"It ain't for me to say, Dick—but I be listenin'."

Lane smiled and shook his head.

"There are gaffs and gaffs," he said. "What I'd like to do instead of talking about myself, is prove myself to you right here on your own stamping ground some day, Andy."

They were silent for several minutes. Andy's cigar burned down to the wide band of heavy red and gold paper which in his innocence he had failed to remove. He puffed along steadily, ignoring the fumes.

"So ye was to the war, Dick?" said Andy, at last. "Ye sure got the look in yer eye—of havin' been somewheres I ain't an' killed men the same as I kill pa'tridges. There was some gaffin' done in them parts, I wouldn't wonder."

"Some. When I tell you things—if I ever do—I wonder if you'll believe what I say."

"Sure I will! I'd believe ye now, Dick—every durn word!"

Lane shook his head and refilled his pipe.

"Have it yer own way," said Andy. "I ain't curious."

With the passing of the days most people in Andy's position would have asked direct questions and demanded straight answers of Lane. Had he bungled his military career? And what had become of his wealth?

The partners made the long run down to Piker's, just below the Fork, with two empty canoes. There they loaded up with grub and a dozen new steel traps. They worked their way back to Beaver House Lake by ripple and rapids and rocky portage, climbing to the thrust and bend of their iron-shod poles day after day without mishap and carrying around vertical falls of water without accident. Lane proved himself to be still a willing and capable canoeman. The two were never more than a few hundred yards apart on the upward journey. They boiled the one kettle at noon each day, worked together on the carries and always made camp together. They talked every night, smoking in their blankets by the fire—and still Andy had to do most of the talking.

The last and hardest carry between the Fork and Beaver House Lake was around Pot-hole Falls. Lane was well in the lead when this roaring obstruction was reached. He ran ashore at the foot of the rocky track just below the black and eddying pool, lifted out his dunnage and landed the canoe. He produced a tumpline, roped together considerably more than one hundred pounds of freight, squatted and set his head to the broad leather band, sagged forward to catch the weight, arose slowly and then went briskly up and over the rocky way. He deposited his load at the water's swift edge fifty yards above the falls and returned down the portage with the tumpline coiled in his hand. He found Andy awaiting him beside the two canoes and the remainder of the freight.

"What ye got there?" asked the old man, with a quizzical eye on the contrivance of rope and leather in Lane's hand.

"It's an improved tumpline," replied Dick.

"Tumpline, hey? I've heerd tell of 'em—but they ain't used in this country."

"It's a good thing, all the same."

"Reckon I kin do without it. I been totin' loads on my shoulders an' back all my life an' I cal'late they be still stronger'n my neck. Where'd ye git it, Dick? if that ain't askin' too much."

"I brought it in with me. It was given to me by a man from away north and west in the Peace River country about three years ago."

For a few seconds Andy looked as if he were about to ask a leading question. But he didn't—with difficulty. He turned away, shouldered his canoe and went up the track like an elongated tortoise.

II.

From the camp at the lower end of Beaver House Lake the partners continued on their course, which was generally northward, after a day's rest. Snowshoe Pond on the northern watershed and just beyond the height-o'-land was to be the center of their winter's operations. When they got there they repaired the little camp on the western shore and overhauled the traps which Andy had greased and stowed away in April. By this time the frost was hitting hard every night. They cruised the country for miles in every direction, selecting likely ground for traps.

Lane worked hard and well, looked fairly cheerful and talked about everything under heaven except the last six years of his own life. Andy gave him chances every day to explain his altered position in the scheme of things and to throw a light on his recent activities, but without result. And so, being too proud and polite to question, the old woodsman brooded. His natural and friendly curiosity festered. He became sus-

picious that Dick was simply making use of him, Andy Wire, in the name of friendship. He had disgraced himself, queered himself with his own world and his great friends, and did not consider him, Andy, worthy of his confidence. Old Andy was better company than nobody; old Andy's trapping country was a safe and healthy hiding place; but at heart he was still the rich sportsman and in his innermost thoughts Andy was still nothing more nor less than an honest guide. But he was nobody's durn fool. He still liked Dick, yes. But in spite of this liking he'd up and tell him what he thought of his durn pride some day!

Snowshoe Pond froze over. Running water was skinned with black ice. A few traps were set each day. The partners worked together, for Lane knew less of trapping than of any other branch of woodcraft. The ice thickened night after night and snow came down. Gray moose birds came in and screamed around the camp and hopped about the door for scraps of food. The snow deepened and packed. Traps were set farther and farther afield. Lane learned the art of removing and stretching the pelts of mink and fox.

Andy was a firm believer in highly scented bait; and of the several scents which he used to lure on the shy and suspicious fur bearers, that of the skunk was his favorite. He had this in mercantile form in a bottle and when he doctored the bait his partner didn't have to be told about it. But Lane was not squeamish. He could stand an occasional gas attack with more fortitude than most men of his kind.

The thing soon ceased to be occasional, however. Unruly strands of Andy's beard and whiskers frequently received what was intended for the bait. The bait was taken far away, but no matter how far off the beard and whiskers went they always returned with Andy; and every night Andy and Lane were together in one small hut. Andy might talk of the heights and depths of human nature or of the days when he was the slickest dancer and trickiest wrestler on Racquet River, but Lane had only to shut his eyes to feel convinced that Andy was not human and had never danced with girls or wrestled with men at all.

One night, at supper, Lane's fortitude broke. He dashed from the cabin into the frost and snow and reeled in the starlight. Andy stared in amazement at the slammed door for a few seconds, then hurried anxiously after him.

"What ails ye?" asked the old man. "Hev ye et somethin' ye hadn't oughter? Don't lay there, Dick, or ye'll catch yer death. Come on back in."

Lane was unresponsive for ten minutes. Then he staggered to his feet, avoided the old man's proffered support, leaned weakly against the nearest tree and gulped audibly at the frosty air.

"What ails ye?" cried Andy.

Lane told him, in broken but convincing phrases. The old man was dazed and confounded, at first with astonishment and then with shame.

"Guess I be that used to it I don't git it," he murmured. "Made ye sick—an' me not even smellin' it! Might jist as well *be* a skunk as be like that!"

"Rot!" returned Lane. "Quite natural. Senses seasoned to it. I failed to stand the gaff, that's all. Spirit willing but stomach weak."

When Lane awoke next morning he did not recognize the little man with the whimsical and somehow pathetic little round face who fried venison steak at the rusty stove.

"It's me, Dick," said the queer fellow.

"Andy!" exclaimed Lane.

"Sure. I shaved 'em off an' hove 'em out. I've had 'em forty years—but what use was they, anyhow?"

"It's heroic!—and it makes me feel like a cheap sport. Most men would rather lose a partner than a bunch of whiskers like that."

III.

Andy marked down a family of otters on one of the frozen streams winding northward out of Snowshoe Pond. He glimpsed one of the family at an air hole in the ice and found the well-packed slide on the snowy bank where they desported themselves on moonlit nights. He set four traps accordingly, with his utmost cunning. The nearest of these traps was five miles from camp as the crow flies, northeast across the pond and a corner of Big Barrens.

The partners set out for the otter traps at the first red lift of a bitterly cold morning in December. The sun came up, lost his color and dwindled and a gray lid closed down upon the red horizon. All the sky was gray and the fireless sun was veiled and lost. Now and then a flick of wind from

the north snatched the frosty breath from the trappers' lips, started and chased and dropped a wisp of frosty snow and was gone.

Andy set a brisk pace, for he did not like the look or feel of things; and of late the twinges in his joints had been both sharp and frequent—the twinges of that rheumatism which he hid from his partner though he could no longer hide it from himself, which he treated furtively with a potent liniment in secret hours between midnight and dawn. So he moved fast, anxious to do his duty by the otters and get back to camp before the gray sky and flicking wind fulfilled their promises.

They struck the most distant of the four traps first and found it empty and undisturbed. Andy felt doubts and dissatisfaction and decided to shift it to what now seemed a more likely spot. As he stooped to spring it he felt something else sudden and sharp in his right hip. It was as if he had been stabbed with a red-hot blade. He jerked with the pain but he made no sound. His back was to his partner. He stooped lower and sprang the trap with the heft of his belt ax. The pain was gone—but he wondered how far. He was afraid to move.

"Anything wrong?" asked Lane.

"Nary a thing," replied the old man, straightening himself slowly.

Nothing happened. He went hot and cold with relief and with the horror of the thought of how nearly he had come to receiving the gaff and failing to stand up to it. He turned and moved off.

"But what about the trap?" asked Lane. "Are you going to leave it here—and sprung?"

The old man turned again, and in a flash the other read the utter and abject confusion of his mind and spirit.

"Fetch it along, will ye?" said Andy.

Lane cleared the snow from the light trap, unmoored it and lifted it. He avoided the other's glance, suspecting something of the truth—for he had not missed the sudden jerk of pain. More than that, the nose that had refused further combat with the scent for the bait had detected the fumes of strong liniment more than once.

Lane carried the trap to the new spot selected by Andy but Andy insisted on setting it. What else could he do but insist? Nothing—unless it was to admit that he had felt a twinge of rheumatism and was afraid of feeling another. And how would that sound from Andy Wire? From Andy Wire to a city-bred ex-sport?

So the old man reset the trap, and in his pride he made a good job of it. Then he straightened, yelped and fell tangled in his snowshoes.

The wind came whistling and moaning out of the north.

"It don't ease none," gasped Andy. "Rheumatiz, I reckon."

"Home is the place for you," said Lane.

"Home! Sure! An' me not able to hoist a foot!"

"I'll carry you. That's easy enough—but with this wind kicking up, I'm afraid you'll freeze."

"Me freeze? Not in the distance ye kin tote me. This durn rheumatiz! I can't stand up to it, Dick—an' nobody couldn't; an' ye couldn't tote me a mile. Reckon ye best make camp right here. Nothin' else to do."

"Don't you believe it, Andy. Home's the place for you where I can rub a quart of that fine liniment into you. This is no sort of day to spend out in the snow—and it's getting worse."

Lane worked quickly. He hung Andy's snowshoes and the two rifles in a tree and then produced his tumpline from inside his outer coat. He adjusted it swiftly, regarding it and the old woodsman with measuring eyes. He got a loop under the sufferer's hips, squatted and set his head to the strap and stood up.

"How is it?" he asked in a matter-of-fact voice. "Position comfortable?"

"Ye can't stand it," moaned Andy. "Close onto five mile! Can't be done. Lemme down. I quit."

Lane passed loops behind him, two more to take the weight and two higher up. Then he made all fast with a single knot.

"I don't want to hear the word *quit* from you again, partner," he said. "But if you feel yourself freezing, let me know."

Andy made no audible reply; but in his humiliated heart he said that he would freeze stiff before he would speak.

Lane retraced their fresh tracks, walking steadily and with apparent ease. Once out of the woods, the wind from the gray north caught him mercilessly, harsh with drifting snow. The tracks were already filled in, wiped out. The course was straight, however—a straight line across the corner of

the barrens, down the bank and across the pond.

The wind baffled and lulled, the stinging white veils of drift eddied and fell and Lane saw trees in front of him. The barren land was crossed. He breathed deep, soothing his aching lungs with the still air.

"Lemme down," said Andy.

"Can't you stand a little more of it?" returned Lane. "We're doing fine, Andy. Another mile or so?"

"Stand it? It's yerself I be frettin' about —durn ye!"

Lane chuckled and continued to trudge forward. He reached the brush and timber in front, passed through it and descended the bank to the white and level surface of Snowshoe Pond. He headed straight for the distant gloom of woods beneath which the little camp nestled warm and secure. He had not advanced more than fifty paces on the pond when the wind flooded down again from the north with outriders of running drift. In a moment he was enveloped, blinded, half suffocated. But he neither wavered nor checked.

The wind held. The world was full of it. The white drifts rode on and on, troop after troop, squadron after squadron.

Lane wavered. He staggered.

"Lemme down," sounded a voice in his ear no stronger than a sigh.

"Can't—you—stand it?" he shouted; and the wind tried to choke him.

"Me? Yerself—frettin' about."

Lane stooped forward, lower and lower. He closed his tortured eyes and swallowed and gasped for breath. Again he stumbled and again he recovered. The ache of his lungs made him dizzy. And now for the first time he became painfully conscious of his legs. They felt suddenly as if they had melted to water—or frozen to air. Ah, that was more like it! Frozen to air—and blown away——

He fell forward on hands and knees—queer game this, crawling on hands and knees! It couldn't be done—not with snowshoes on, anyway. He must get up. That was the idea—up onto his feet again. He rose slowly, unsteadily, oblivious to the shrill voice of old Andy in his ear. His whole mind was concentrated on the fact that snowshoes are to walk on, not to crawl on. And he walked—right foot—left foot—right foot——

He reflected that it would be easier if the band would play.

He became aware of an obstruction. It was flat and hard. It was a door. He investigated it blindly with a fumbling hand, at the same time leaning against it and trying desperately to pull his breath up from somewhere below his knees; suddenly the door swung open and he fell forward.

Old Andy Wire used a knife to clear himself from the tumpline. He rolled on the floor until his circulation was restored, then lit a fire in the stove and dosed Lane with brandy.

Lane opened his eyes, sat up and looked around him.

"I made it," he said.

"Ye sure did," replied Andy.

"Stood the gaff, what?" queried Lane.

The old woodsman rubbed his naked, frostbitten chin.

"I never see the like in all my born days," he said.

"The improved tumpline deserves most of the credit, Andy—and you the rest for not freezing to death," returned Lane, smiling and reaching for the flask. "I'd have done it easy but for the wind. Did quite a lot of that sort of thing in the war—toting wounded men."

"I be listenin', Dick."

"Well, they pinned a Victoria Cross onto me. I would have told you before, but I was afraid you'd think they had made a mistake—that I'd got it by a fluke."

"I'll bet ye'd oughter had two of 'em, Dick! An' what about yer money—now that ye ain't too proud to tell about yerself?"

"It's well. I heard at Piker's that you wouldn't have anything more to do with sports, so I remembered your old promise and came in as your partner."

Then old Andy Wire sat back and laughed long and heartily. Even a sudden stab of lumbago did not kill his mirth. It only changed the key of his laughter.

A Chat With You

ALMOST all the way up from Washington the lawyer was the only other occupant of the smoking compartment. He was clearly, at a glance, a good lawyer, a successful one. His forehead was imposing, his eye piercing, his chin overbearing and contentious, his voice rich and resonant. No one need worry about a case placed in his hands. He would not be one of your crude, bullying cross-examiners. Rather he would be suave, disarming, humorous, and sudden. We thought that we would like to hear him cross-examine a witness. And presently our wish was granted, though not perhaps the way we meant it, for he began to cross-examine us.

PATRONIZING yet inoffensive, polite yet powerful, he managed the conversation—or rather the interrogation, for he told us nothing about himself—with consummate tact. Our prejudices, our hopes, our fears, our simple life, our humble aspirations, our obscure ambitions, all were laid open to him.

At mention of THE POPULAR, there came a little twitch to the corner of his mouth, a slight deepening of the wrinkles about his eyes. We were sensitive enough to notice this and yet it did not make us unhappy. Unworthy we may be and doubtless are—personally. But the magazine is another thing.

Yes, he had heard of it, of course. He had even seen it once or twice on the tables of friends. He had been surprised to see it there. But he had never read it.

SO we were not surprised when he lifted again the morocco-bound book which he laid aside. It was Wordsworth. We hoped he was reading "The Excursion." If you want to know why we hoped that, try it yourself and find out. With the protective instinct of our race we pulled out a long manuscript and dove into it. We could feel the eyes of the lawyer watching us over the top of his book, but we did not look up and we gave our best imitation of feverish interest and enjoyment. Then we forget to act, forgot about the lawyer, forgot about everything till we heard the train clattering over switches and looked out to see that we were at Manhattan Transfer.

When we glanced up again the porter was there brushing the lawyer down as though he were a horse. The lawyer regarded us curiously.

"Is it really as interesting as all that?" he said in the kind tones of a rich banker addressing a small boy.

For answer we handed him the manuscript and bade him see for himself. Our address was on the script and we knew that he could be trusted to return it to us. This last was by way of getting back at him, an effort at condescension on our own part. There was a flash of aroused interest in the lawyer's eye and we suddenly remembered

that all men were born free and equal after all.

THE following afternoon we received the manuscript together with a note on the paper of a famous firm of corporation lawyers. We give it verbatim:

"You did me a damned bad turn when you handed me this story. Wordsworth puts me to sleep, Carlyle is a perfect opiate, but this infernal thing is like a pot of strong coffee. It kept me out of bed till two in the morning and then I lay awake thinking about it. I generally retire at ten especially when I have to appear in court the following day. I was not in court when my case was called. It was put over and there is a good chance that I shall lose it, as my most important witness is sure to disappear before the case is called again. May I be excused if I fail to thank you for the pleasure this story gave me? I was surprised at its vividness, its intellectual quality, its humanity and the excellence of its English. Some day I will buy a copy of your confounded magazine but not when I have work before me. When I have I will stick to the classics."

WE have no regrets to express even if the lawyer does lose his case. He can stand it. The manuscript he was reading, by the way, was that of a novel by H. de Vere Stacpoole, "Vanderdecken." It is as long as the usual serial but we are printing it in two parts, the first appearing in the next issue of the magazine.

SPEAKING of the classics, a friend of ours told us that the night before he had seen Sothern and Marlowe in Shakespeare's "Hamlet."

"What a long play it is," he said, stretching himself and yawning. "And doesn't *Hamlet* have a lot to say? And most of it is stuff I've heard before It's all made up of quotations. 'To be, or not to be,' and things like that."

We asked him how he liked it. Did he really enjoy it?

"It's this way," he said after a moment's consideration. "I feel like the man who had sixteen children. Somebody asked him how it felt to have so many children. 'I wouldn't sell one of them for a million dollars,' he said, 'and I wouldn't give a quarter for another.' That's the way I am about seeing 'Hamlet.'"

Perhaps there are others who feel that way about the great monuments of literature. For them,

Not from the grand old masters, not from the bards sublime,
Whose distant footfalls echo down the corridors of Time.

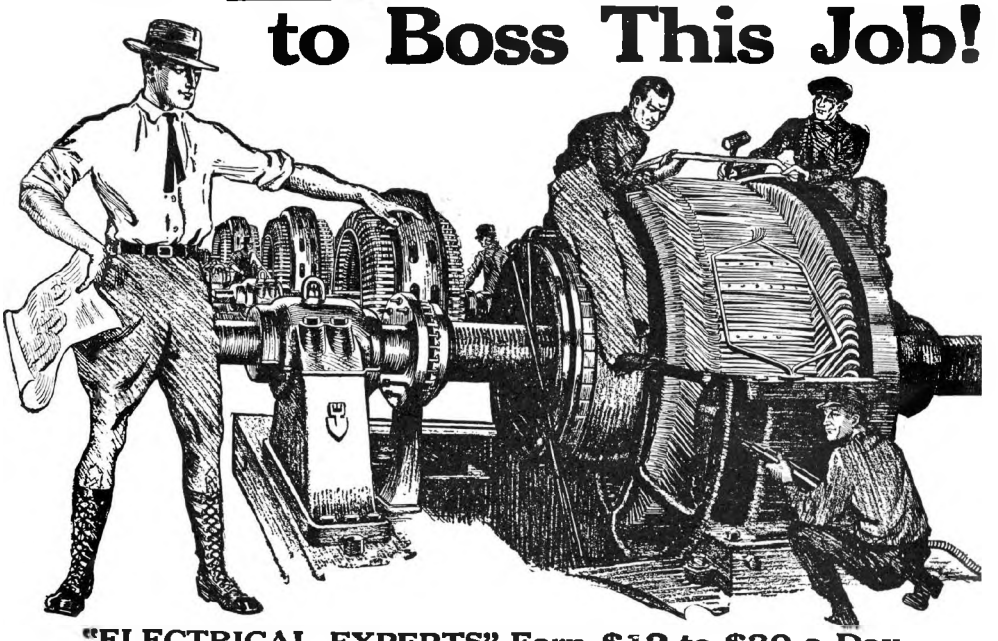
A MAGAZINE of contemporary fiction has some advantages. We are always ready for one more and then another after that. The list of the original readers of the magazine who have been following it steadily through the years grows as the letters come in. We also have many letters on the subject of proper titles for stories. We will print some of them later and finally decide who gets the year's subscription.

WE ought to say something wise and appropriate here about Washington's birthday, but the subject is too big.

An orator, one Fourth of July, said of Washington that he lived to become the father of the country which gave him birth.

Such a man is beyond our eulogy.

You, Too, Can Learn to Boss This Job!



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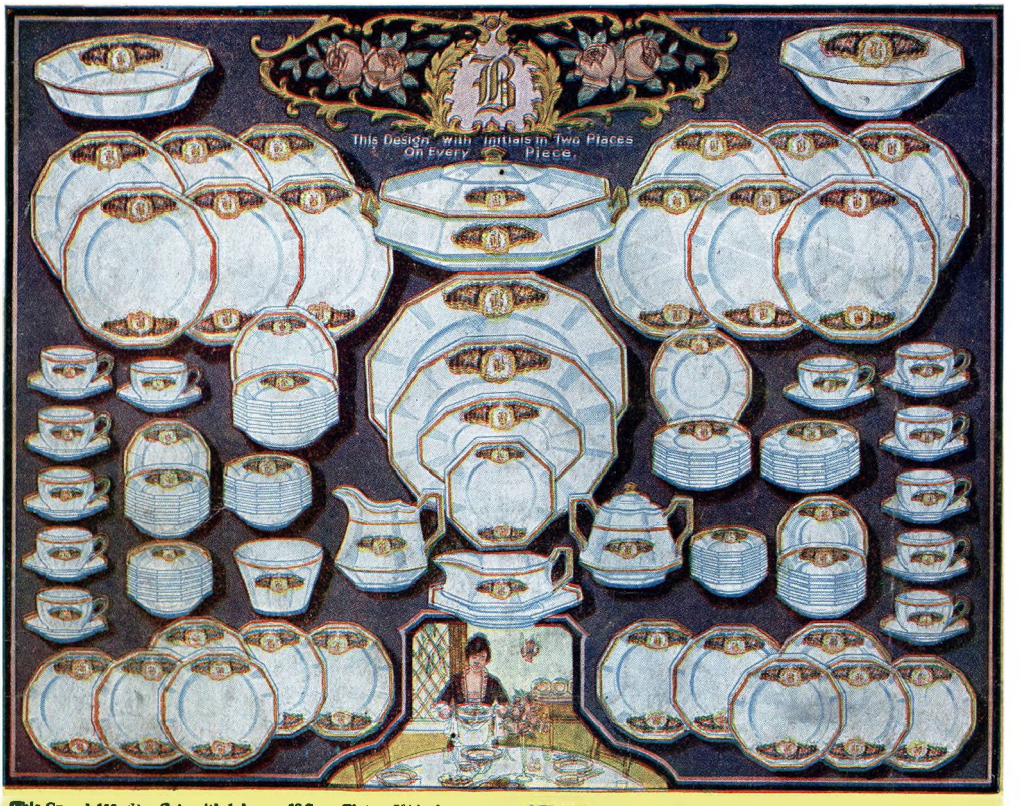

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12 Cereal Dishes, 6 inches
12 Fruit Dishes, 5¾ inches
12 Individual Bread and Butter Plates, 6¼ inches
1 Platter, 13½ inches
1 Platter, 11¾ inches
1 Celery Dish, 8¾ inches
1 Sauce Boat Tray, 7¾ inches
1 Butter Plate, 6 inches
1 Vegetable Dish, 10½ inches, with lid (2 pieces)
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