SECOND FEB. NUMBER

On Sale Jan. 20, 1930

The Popular MAGAZINE

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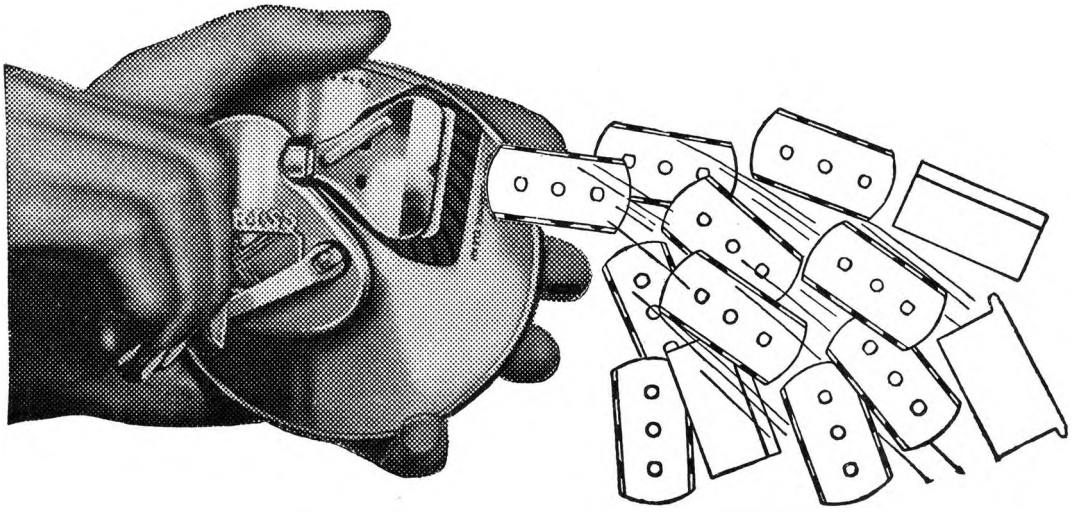
A GLAMOROUS NEW SERIAL

BY

FRED MAC ISAAC



NOW... A Shaving Machine That Ends Buying Razor Blades!

AT LAST! The invention every man has been waiting for—a device that practically ends razor blade expense! J. T. Main (Wisconsin) has already gotten 1,500 slick shaves from one old Gillette blade. E. L. Vinal (Oregon) hasn't bought a razor blade for two years. Thousands write letters like this. Millions of dollars are being saved by Kriss Kross users with this amazing machine that makes old blades like new—in fact often makes them keener than when new!

Unlike Stroppers

This wonderful device is far improved over ordinary blade sharpeners by an uncanny new principle that makes "perfect edge" an automatic certainty. It sharpens any blade (except Durham Duplex) in eleven seconds, and even a child can safely use it.

Just imagine what you could buy with the money you've spent on razor blades for the last ten years—and how much you can save the next ten—then you'll realize what a wonderful investment Kriss Kross is. But saving razor blades is only one of many Kriss Kross advantages. From now on, expect shaves that are 50% easier, cooler, quicker. No more tender, burning skin. No more tough, wiry beards or "missed" patches.

A FREE FORD
and
$5300 Profits

Become a Kriss Kross man. Win a free Ford and make $5,300 in a year like G. B. Loughren. Work full time or spare hours. No experience needed—we show you how to make money. Check bottom line in coupon below.

Sensational Offer

And now for my surprising offer. To introduce KRISS KROSS to those who have not yet seen it, I am giving with it Free a new kind of razor. Possesses remarkable features. Instantly adjustable to any shaving position. A flip of the finger makes it (1) T-shape, (2) straight (old style), (3) or diagonal (new way). Gives a *sliding* instead of pulling stroke. Simply zips right through the toughest crop of whiskers and leaves your face satin-smooth and cool. Made of *rustless* metal. All one connected piece—nothing to assemble or screw up. Comes with 5 special-process blades and is entirely unlike anything you ever saw before!

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Without obligation, please send me illustrated description and full details of your special introductory offer on KRISS KROSS super stropper and FREE 3-way razor.

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( ) Check here if interested in making money as authorized KRISS KROSS representative.

They Told Him Salesmen Were "Born"

But Now He Makes $10,000 a Year ...Thanks to This Little Book

IT was just a little free book that made the difference between Ed Pinkham and the rest of the men in our shop. Nobody ever imagined that Ed would land, even in the $5,000-a-year class, let alone be making $10,000 before he was thirty. Ed didn't know himself the abilities he had in him as a money-maker.

But one day, a strange occurrence changed his whole life. During his lunch hour Ed started to read a little book he had brought to work with him.

"It's a book called 'The Key To Master Salesmanship,' Bill," he told me. "It's the most amazing thing I ever read. I never dreamed there was so much in salesmanship. You ought to send for a copy yourself. It's free."

"Huh!" said Luke Jones. "Does that book tell you how to become a salesman?"

"It sure does," replied Ed, enthusiastically.

"Don't waste your time," advised Luke. "You can't learn how to be a salesman. A fellow has to be 'born' that way to be a good salesman."

Ed just smiled at that, but he said nothing. Soon afterward he quit the shop, and we forgot about him. And then last night, I met Ed again—driving a snappy new sedan and dressed like a million dollars.

"For Pete's sake," I said. "What are you doing nowadays, Ed?" He smiled. "City salesmanager for the Steel Castings Company," he told me. "What are you doing?"

"Still at the shop," I replied. "But what I want to know is, how do you come to be salesmanager for Steel Castings? They're one of the biggest firms in the business."

Ed smiled again. "Remember that book on Salesmanship that Luke Jones was kidding me about one day? Well, when I finished my Salesmanship training the Association I took it from gave me a choice of twenty-two jobs through their Free Employment Department, and I took a position as salesman for Steel Castings Company. They made me City Sales Manager three months ago at ten thousand dollars a year."

"Good night!" I said. "And Luke and I are still punching the old time clock!"

Ed looked at me seriously. "See here, Bill," he said. "Are you sport enough to risk two cents that you can do as well as I did? Then spend the two cents to write to the National Salesmen's Training Association tonight and get their free book. Then take their course. When you have your diploma, their Free Employment Department will help you get a good sales job—every year they have calls for over 50,000 salesmen. Not only will they help you get the job, but they give you an iron-clad money-back guarantee that you must be satisfied with the training received—or they refund your tuition!"

FREE—TO EVERY MAN

A book—but what a book! Just seven ounces of paper and printer's ink—but it reveals facts and secrets that have led hundreds of men to success beyond their fondest expectations! See for yourself—FREE—why "The Key To Master Salesmanship" has increased the earning capacities of thousands, as a direct result of their reading it! You'll know then, how J. H. Huppert of Michigan learned from its pages the secrets that enabled him to make $525 in one week. You can understand how it helped A. A. Fidler of Alabama to raise his pay 700%. Learn for yourself the REAL TRUTH about salesmanship. You do not risk one penny or incur the slightest obligation. And since it may prove the turning point in your career it is certainly worth your while to fill out and mail the coupon below. Do it now!

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Dept. A-582, N. S. T. A. Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

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Age ..... Occupation .....

On sale the 7th and 20th of each month

IN THIS ISSUE

You will find the first installment of

THE LUCK OF LICANIA, by FRED MacISAAC

An intensely exciting story of romantic adventure

Volume XCVIII Number 5

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

Title Registered U. S. Patent Office.

CONTENTS FOR SECOND FEBRUARY NUMBER

Twice-a-month publication issued by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York. Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, Vice President and Treasurer; George C. Smith, Jr., Vice President; Ormond V. Gould, Secretary. Copyright, 1930, by Street & Smith Corporation, New York. Copyright, 1930 by Street & Smith Corporation, Great Britain. Entered as Second-class Matter, December 22, 1927, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, $4.72. Foreign, $5.40. This issue dated February 20, 1930.

We do not hold ourselves responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts.

All manuscripts must be addressed to the Editors.

Yearly Subscription, $4.00 Single Copies, 20 Cents

What Will You Be Doing One Year From Today?

Three hundred and sixty-five days from now—what?

Will you still be struggling along in the same old job at the same old salary—worried about the future—never quite able to make both ends meet—standing still while other men go ahead?

One year from today will you still be putting off your start toward success—thrilled with ambition one moment and then cold the next—delaying, waiting, fiddling away the precious hours that will never come again?

Don't do it, man—don't do it. There is no greater tragedy in the world than that of a man who stays in the rut all his life, when with just a little effort he could bring large success within his grasp.

Make up your mind today that you're going to train yourself to do some one thing well. Choose the work you like best in the list below, mark an X beside it, mail the coupon to Scranton, and we will send you, without cost or obligation, the full story of what the I.C.S. can do for you.

Right now you can decide where you will be this time next year.

Common sense will tell you that it is far better to send in this Success Coupon today than to wait another precious year and then wish you had!

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- ☐ Electric Lighting
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- ☐ Toolmaker ☐ Patternmaker
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- ☐ Gas Engine Operating
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Writing

a source of income that many people neglect

MANY people who *should* be writing never even try it because they just can't picture themselves making "big money." They are so awe-struck by the fabulous stories about millionaire authors that they overlook the fact that $25, $50 and $100 or more can often be earned for material that takes little time to write—stories, articles on home or business management, sports, travels, recipes, etc.—things that can be easily and naturally written, in spare time.

J. L. Williamson, 11 St. Andrews Ave., Center Island, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, is but one of many men and women trained by the Newspaper Institute of America to make their gift for writing pay prompt dividends. He writes:

"You may be interested to know that with the help of the knowledge gained from your course I have secured a place on the editorial staff of the Toronto Globe, and now besides doing general reporting, I am editing a special column entitled 'Aviation Topics.'"

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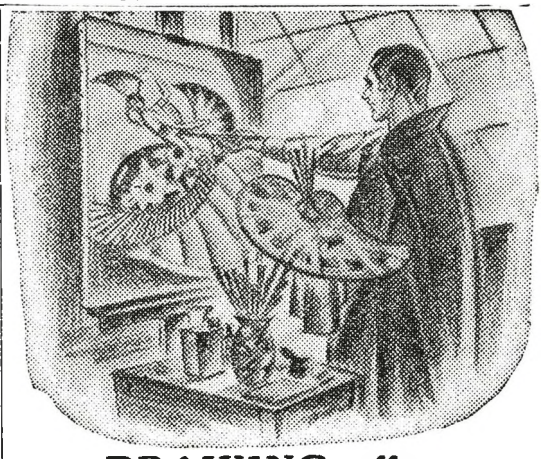

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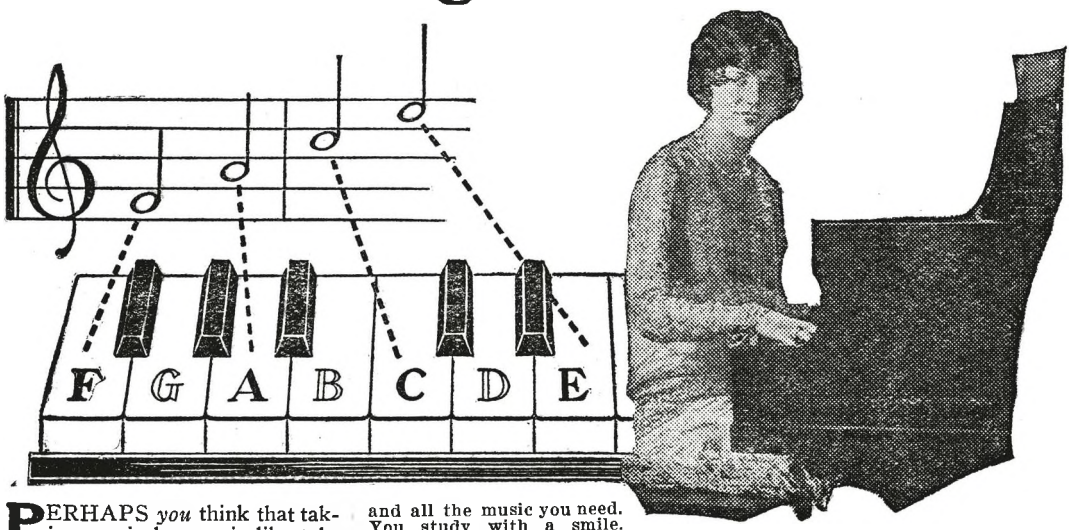
To those who think Learning Music is hard-



PERHAPS *you* think that taking music lessons is like taking a dose of medicine. It isn't any longer!

As far as you're concerned, the old days of long practice hours with their horrid scales, hard-work exercises, and expensive personal teachers' fees are over and done with.

You have no excuses—no alibis whatsoever for not making your start towards musical good times *now!*

For, through a method that removes the boredom and extravagance from musical lessons, you can now learn to play your favorite instrument entirely at home—without a private teacher—in half the usual time—at a fraction of the usual cost.

Just imagine . . . a method that has made the reading and playing of music so downright simple that you don't have to know one note from another to begin.

Do you wonder that this remarkable way of learning music has already been vouched for by over a half million people in all parts of the world?

Easy As Can Be

The lessons come to you by mail from the famous U. S. School of Music. They consist of complete printed instructions, diagrams, and all the music you need. You study with a smile. One week you are learning a dreamy waltz—the next you are mastering a stirring march. As the lessons continue they prove easier and easier. For instead of just scales you are always learning to play by *actual notes* the classic favorites and the latest syncopation that formerly you only *listened* to.

And you're never in hot water. First, you are *told* how a thing is done. Then a picture *shows* you how, then you do it yourself and hear it. No private teacher could make it clearer or easier.

Soon when your friends say "please play something," you can surprise and entertain them with pleasing melodies on your favorite instrument. You'll find yourself in the spotlight—popular everywhere. Life at last will have its silver lining and lonely hours will vanish as you play the "blues" away.

New Friends—Better Times

If you're tired of doing the heavy looking-on at parties—if always listening to others play has almost spoiled the pleasure of music for you—if you've been envious because they could entertain their friends and family—if learning music has always been one of those never-to-come-true dreams, let the time-proven and tested home-study method of the U. S. School of Music come to your rescue.

Don't be afraid to begin your lessons at once. Over half a million people learned to play this modern way—and found it easy as A-B-C. Forget that old-fashioned idea that you need special "talent." Just read the list of instruments in the panel, decide which one you want to play, and the U. S. School will do the rest. And bear in mind no matter which instrument you choose, the cost in each case will average the same—just a few cents a day. No matter whether you are a mere beginner or already a good performer, you will be interested in learning about this new and wonderful method.

PICK YOUR INSTRUMENT

Piano	Violin
Organ	Clarinet
Ukulele	Flute
Cornet	Saxophone
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Guitar	'Cello

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Our wonderful illustrated Free Book and our Free Demonstration Lesson explain all about this remarkable method. They prove just how anyone can learn to play his favorite instrument *by note* in almost no time and for just a fraction of what old slow methods cost. The booklet will also tell you all about the amazing new *Automatic Finger Control.*

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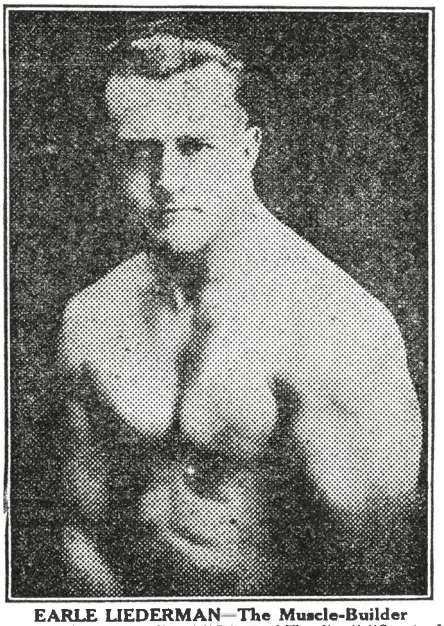

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The Man I Pity Most

POOR OLD JONES. No one had any use for him. No one respected him. Across his face I read one harsh word—FAILURE. He just lived on. A poor worn out imitation of a man, doing his sorry best to get on in the world. If he had realized just one thing, he could have made good. He might have been a brilliant success.

There are thousands of men like Jones. They, too, could be happy, successful, respected and loved. But they can't seem to realize the one big fact—that practically everything worth while living for depends upon STRENGTH—upon live, red-blooded, he-man muscle.

Everything you do depends upon strength. No matter what your occupation, you need the health, vitality and clear thinking only big, strong virile muscles can give you. When you are ill the strength in those big muscles pulls you through. At the office, in the farm fields, or on the tennis courts, you'll find your success generally depends upon your muscular development.

Here's a Short Cut to Strength and Success

"But," you say, "it takes years to build my body up to the point where it will equal those of athletic champions." It does if you go about it without any system, **but there's a scientific short cut.** And that's where I come in.

30 Days Is All I Need

In just 30 days I can do things with your body you never thought possible. With just a few minutes work every morning, I will add one full inch of real, live muscle to each of your arms, and two whole inches across your chest. Many of my pupils have gained more than that, but I GUARANTEE to do at least that much for you in one short month. Your neck will grow shapely, your shoulders begin to broaden. Before you know it, you'll find people turning around when you pass. Women will want to know you. Your boss will treat you with a new respect. Your friends will wonder what has come over you. You'll look ten years younger, and you'll feel like it, too.

I Strengthen Those Inner Organs Too

But I'm not through with you. I want ninety days in all to do the job right, and then all I ask is that you look yourself over.

What a marvelous change! Those great squared shoulders! That pair of huge, lithe arms! Those firm, shapely legs! You'll be just as fit inside as you are out, too, because I work on your heart, your liver—all of your inner organs, strengthening and exercising them. Yes indeed, life can give you a greater thrill than you ever dreamed. But, remember, the only sure road to health, strenght and happiness **always demands action. Start now!**

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It contains forty-eight full-page photographs of myself and some of the many prize-winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over now and you will marvel at their present physiques. This book will prove an impetus and a real inspiration to you. It will thrill you through and through. This will not obligate you at all, but for the sake of your future health and happiness do not put it off. Send today—right now before you turn this page.

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$3750.00 REWARD

Find the key to unlock this PRIZE Bag of Gold

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THERE are 19 keys pictured here. To be sure, they all look alike, but, examine them closely. 18 of them are exactly alike, but, "ONE," and only one is DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE OTHERS. It is the key to OPEN THE PADLOCK on this $3,750.00 FREE "Bag of Gold."

SEE IF YOU CAN FIND IT?

$ Clues The difference may be in the size, the shape, or even in the notches. So, STUDY EACH KEY CAREFULLY and if you can find the "ONE" key that is different from all the others SEND THE NUMBER OF IT TO ME AT ONCE. You may become the winner of a Special Buick Sedan or $3,750.00 cash money,—without one cent of cost to you. I will give away ABSOLUTELY FREE,—5 new-six-cylinder 4-door Sedans and the winners can have CASH MONEY INSTEAD of the automobiles if they prefer it. 15 BIG PRIZES TO BE GIVEN FREE—totaling $7,500.00 cash.

Win a Special Buick or $3750.00

Choice of this beautiful Special Buick Sedan or $3,750.00 cash. We pay all the freight and tax in full on all the prizes and deliver them anywhere in the U. S. A. This is an AMAZING OPPORTUNITY. No more puzzles to solve. ACT QUICK, and here is why—

$1,750.00 Cash—Extra for Promptness

I will pay $1,750.00 cash money extra JUST FOR PROMPTNESS. In the event of a tie for any of the prizes offered, the full amount of the prize tied for will be awarded to each tying contestant. YOU CAN WIN the Special Buick or—$3,750.00 cash. ANSWER QUICK!

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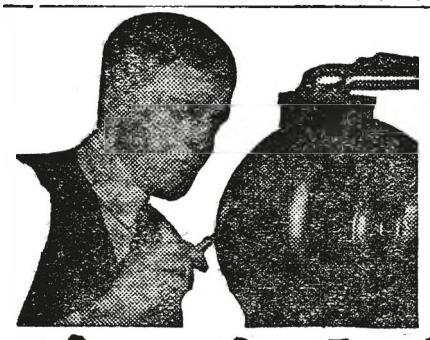

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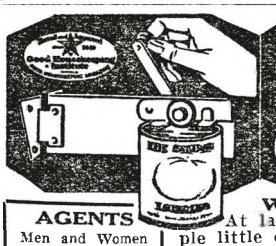

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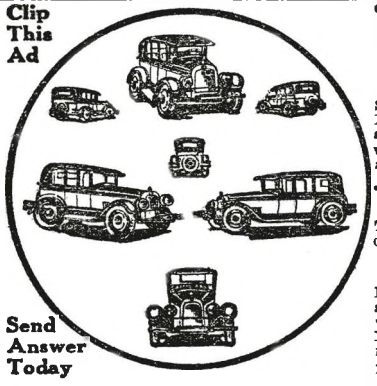

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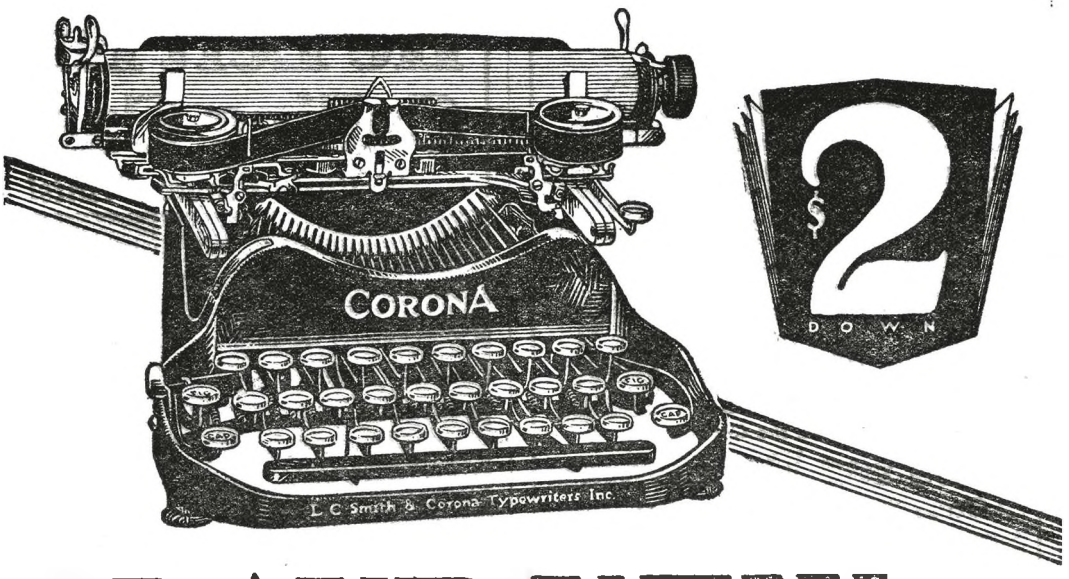

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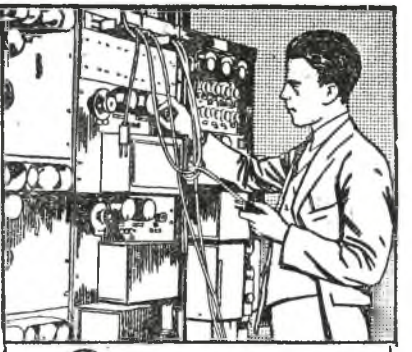

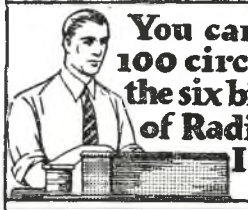

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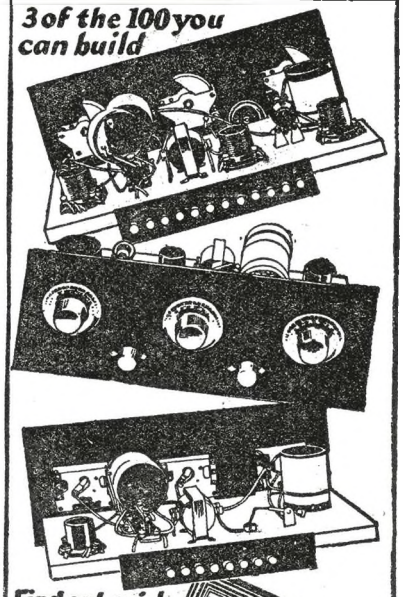

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A MINUTE WITH—
HODGE MATHES

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GREETINGS to the POPULAR family from the mountains of Tennessee, the land of sparkling sunshine and trickling moonshine. Here's my picture, also a verbal snapshot of myself in the act of writing this souvenir post-card message. Behold a veritable Ichabod Crane type of schoolmaster, his lank frame doubled up in a porch rocker, a writing pad on his knee, a fountain pen in his hand, a most villainous pipe in his mouth, and a dark frown upon his noble brow as he puzzles over how to spell "villainous." That's me.

I'm looking down from my veranda upon a very modern little city of nearly forty thousand people. A slight turn of my head and I'm looking up at the blue wall of the Unakas towering six thousand feet above the sea. I live at the meeting point of two worlds—a twentieth-century world of paved streets, trolley cars, roaring motors, and untuneful radio jazz, and an eighteenth-century world of log cabins, oxcarts, covered wagons, tub mills, and old-time fiddle music.

Some of our own native folk who have lived long in the open-country cities or the foothill towns will protest that the typical mountaineer no longer exists except in the fertile imaginations of the quill-pushing fraternity. But that's only because they've forgotten.

The fact is, there's something about this balmy Southern air that makes all of us mountain folk a bit forgetful. Which reminds me of a quaint old mountain woman at whose cabin door I called one day to inquire as to the road I should take to reach my camp. Having given me the desired information she then asked in true hill-country fashion:

"An' what mought your name be, mister?"

"My name is Mathes," I replied.

"That's funny," the woman observed. "That thar's my man's name, too."

"Why, yes, that is a strange coincidence," I agreed. "And how does your husband spell the name?"

"Law, mister, ye've got me thar. I've been aimin' fer thirty-odd year to ax him that, but somehow or 'nuther hit jes' slipped my mind!"

True, the railroad, the highway, the rural post route, the mail-order catalogue, and the flivver have changed the mountaineer's outward appearance and modes of locomotion until he's less easy to identify when he comes to town. But he's far from extinct. Every week I see the old-fashioned "schooner" parked on some vacant lot in the outskirts of the city. And when I catch the aroma of frying bacon and steaming coffee and hear the tinkle of a banjo in the gathering dusk I always want to go and sit for an hour beside the evening camp fire, for I know "my folks" are there.

The MATE of the *AMY C*

By CAPTAIN FREDERICK MOORE

CHAPTER I.

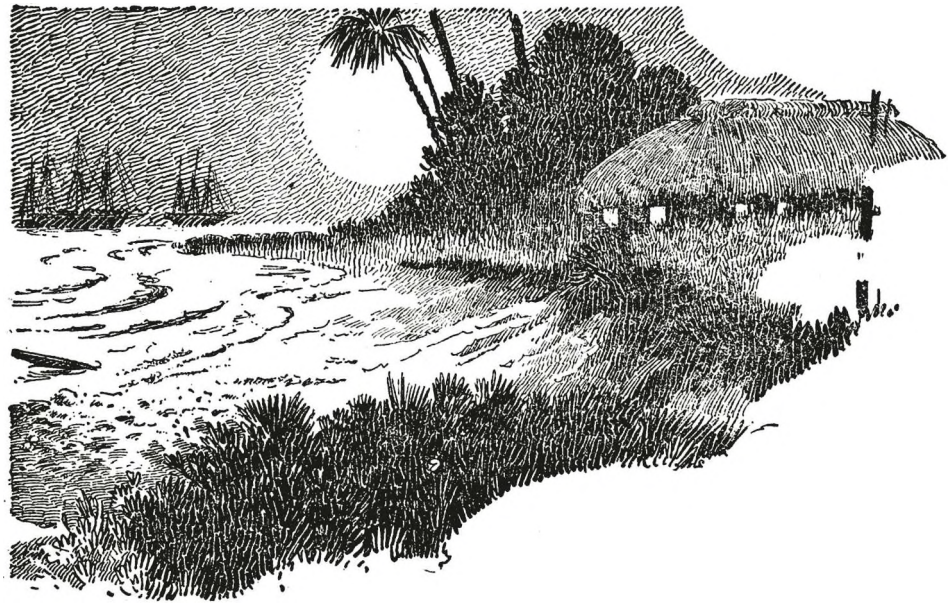
AN UNDER-COVER PROPOSITION.

A WOMAN'S voice startled Captain Carsten. The voice, low and cautious, carried up to him from a boat which was approaching his schooner across the heaving fluid silver which was the sheltered bay of the island port of Numentia. The silver of the water was the heatless glare of a swollen tropic moon.

The captain hastily reared himself up from his reclining canvas deck chair beside the skylight of the *Amy C,* and moved forward toward the mizzen chains. There, just below the break of the deck, the sea ladder was hanging from the bulwarks. And toward the ladder's foot where it slapped in the water there was coming swiftly the black shape of a long, native canoe.

Close at hand to starboard, jungled hills rose like huge black pyramids against a sky spattered with fuzzy stars. At the base of the inky pyramids, the white beach made a luminous ruffle. Halfway of this glistening band of sand showed the dull, yellow lights of the Penang Bar. And from their direction came clearly the noisy singing of shore-going sailors, and the wailing notes of an accordion, which was being played with amazing vigor and a careless attention to tune.

But neither that singing nor the loud music of the instrument drowned the voice in the canoe. Now, from still nearer at hand, it sounded again, furtively subdued, yet plain to the captain's ear. It gave an order in the Numentian dialect. He caught the cold light flashing from a moving jewel as a hand waved; and he heard the soft tinkle of



At the Bamboo Penang Bar on an Eastern Island, and on a Schooner in the Harbor, a Drama of Love, Hate and Death Comes to a Sharp Climax.

several bracelets as these played along a pointing arm.

"Mister!" Captain Carsten called to his mate forward. "See that nobody comes aboard."

"All right, sir!" came the prompt answer.

A quick command followed. Bare feet came pattering over the deck as a swarm of black figures took form out of the shadows of booms and bitts and ladders to the forecastle head. The men gathered in the waist at the ladder. One perched on the bulwarks and called down a warning to the approaching canoe.

"Pergi! Pergi!" It was the thin, shrill voice of the *serang* telling the natives in the canoe to go away.

The mate added to the *serang's* order in English. "Sheer off, you in the canoe there!"

Obediently, the paddlers backed water and stopped the way of the craft. Then there was a short whispered parley.

John Wright, the mate, came aft and climbed to the quarter-deck to stand beside the skipper. As Carsten blinked against the silvery glint of the bay, his eyes holding the silhouette of the canoe and the figures rising from it, he grunted. "If it's anything secret, mister," he observed to the mate, "and if there's a woman in it, you can lay that it spells trouble. And I ain't looking for any rows in this hole of a Numentia."

"Some of the natives here are a bad lot, sir—special those that hang around that bar ashore," agreed the mate in a quiet tone.

The whispered parley in the canoe ended and the craft shot forward toward the side of the schooner. And the

woman's voice which had first attracted Carsten's attention, lifted from the water in restrained tones that were half whisper and half hail. "I be Mrs. Latello. I come for spik at the *captinna.* That is all right? Hey, please?" It was apparent that she did not want her voice to carry too far. Now the moon glinted on those clustering bracelets as the dark arm reached from the bow of the canoe toward the lowest rung of the ladder.

"Oh, that you, Mrs. Latello?" called the captain, relieved. To his mate, he added in a puzzled undertone, "what the devil can she want aboard us, mister?" And, without waiting to hear any ideas of the mate on the subject, the skipper went on to the woman below, "Some of my crew been making trouble at your place, Mrs. Latello?"

"No, sar!" the loud whisper came back. "No troubles for you, *captinna.*"

"All right, come aboard."

There was more pattering and movement forward as the native crew of the schooner began to help the woman to climb the ladder. Captain Carsten took advantage of these activities to have a private conversation with his mate, thrusting the latter down the after companionway and following him below into the main cabin.

"Say, now, what's in the wind to bring that dame out here?" he demanded, wriggling his graying, bushy eyebrows. "You've been ashore the best part of the day. Know anything about what's been going on at her Penang Bar?"

"I haven't heard of any trouble, sir," said Wright, his face revealing the fact that he was mystified also.

"Mrs. Latello!" said the skipper, staring at the lamp. "I can't make it out at all—if there's been no trouble. She's got some good reason for poling around out here in a canoe." He dropped into the chair before the chart table and leaned back while he stared upward at the mate.

John Wright had halted before a mirror on the bulkhead, his pale-blue tie grasped in both hands. Now he tugged at it to finish the knot he had been tying, as he turned a dark, grave face on the captain.

"It's plain to me she wants to see you, sir," Wright replied. "And I'd judge that it's some business that's under cover."

"Right!" pronounced the captain in a cautious whisper. "Hit it that time—under cover! She doesn't want the shore to know she's out here—and that means she's up to some game."

Wright allowed himself a smile. He had joined the schooner at Sandakan only two months before, so that Captain Carsten did not feel that he knew his mate very well as yet, though the skipper had found the young man so far to be quiet, respectful, efficient and dependable—and a sobersides who was not given even to an occasional joke. Now he seemed to find amusement in the arrival of Mrs. Latello alongside.

"Mr. Latello isn't along with her, you'll notice, sir," he suggested, as if that fact was something that increased the humor of the situation.

The captain leaned forward in his chair toward Wright. He could not see anything amusing in the circumstance which the mate had brought to his attention.

"No," said Carsten. "That's exactly what bothers me, mister. The Penang Bar's going full blast now; and what's she doing away from the place? Why ain't her husband here instead? She's generally on the job when the cash is being raked in—and she's got some mighty good reason for leaving *him* to look after the cash drawer. Can it be about Latello that she's coming?"

"I hear they don't get along any too well," said Wright, as he made sure his hair was smoothed down.

"They fight like four monkeys in a bee hive," agreed the skipper as he took

a cautious look up the companion steps. "And she's hard aground if she thinks she can mix me up in any of her husband troubles. He's a pretty slick bird, and I've heard the police up around Saigon would like to get the bight of a rope around his neck."

"I've heard he had to skip, and paid his bills with the topsail yard. Had a gambling house, they say—and so on." The mate was now intent again on his appearance. The tie settled to his satisfaction, he raked his freshly shaven jaws with the tips of his fingers and hunched his shoulders in the coat of sand-colored Shantung silk. He was finishing dressing to go ashore again.

"Where we going to sit her, mister?" asked Captain Carsten, glancing about the cabin. His heavy eyebrows lifted and fell under a forehead which was filled with deep furrows. Then, as if for the first time aware that the sand-colored coat and the matching trousers, with pointed yellow shoes, meant that the mate was headed for shore, he raised a cautioning hand to Wright. "You just hold up your shore trip, mister, and stand by me here until this woman's finished her gab."

"All right, sir. But maybe she'll want to talk to you alone." Wright turned away that the skipper might not suspect any disappointment over the delay of the trip ashore, and the younger man began to gather some garments that littered the transom seat.

"There ain't going to be any alone about it!" declared the captain. "Don't you leave this cabin while she's here. Put that gear away and sit down over there by the chronometer and work with a pencil and paper like you was figuring up accounts, understand? I ain't got any use for this woman. I don't trust her, and I don't trust her husband, neither. They're up to something, you mind my words, coming paddling out in the bay like this. Now, mister, mind your eye—— *Sh-h-h-h!*"

Mrs. Latello had reached the quarter-deck, as the pounding of her heels overhead told the skipper. He hastily pulled on a coat, drew the mosquito netting about his bunk to hide a raffle of clothing, and turned up the gimbal lamp over the chart table.

"I'll give her my best chair," he chuckled. "Where she'll have to face the light." He drew the chair to one side and turned it toward the lamp.

John Wright went to the little desk on the bulkhead at the after side of the cabin and began to rustle papers from a small drawer. And as he slanted an eye upward he saw a shadow drop athwart the opening of the companion scuttle, outlined against the moonlit sky. There came the *click-click* of heels on the top steps. Then there appeared within the glow of the cabin lamp a figure that was like some vagrant rainbow.

A prismatic shawl of soft silk covered Mrs. Latello's head and shoulders, and wound her spare body Spanishwise, dripping brilliant fringe against her bony ankles. The gay colors made her middle-aged features stand out sharply —bold brows, shrunken cheeks, black, narrow eyes, a too-aquiline nose, and thin-lipped mouth. In the left nostril of the nose, which resembled the beak of some predatory bird, there flashed the flickering blue rays of a small diamond.

Tossing backward the folds of the bright shawl, Mrs. Latello showed her crowded teeth in a smile, and held out to Captain Carsten talonlike fingers covered with bejeweled rings. "Ah, *captinna!*" she cried gayly. "To-morrow you sail on the morning I find out, so I have come for see you before. And you go Zamboanga, hey?"

The captain shook the bony hand that was heavy with gold and gems. "Yes," he answered. "I've my holds full of copra, and I sail with the land breeze in the morning." He pushed forward the chair for her.

She sat, letting the shawl fall away from her head and shoulders. Its folds had frowsed straight backward-combed hair which was already streaking with gray. With her fingers she stroked her head from front to ears, pressing down the large coil of hair at the nape of her neck.

She looked to be a Kling. Yet there was in her eyes the peculiar up-twist for which the women of Soochow are noted. And her dark skin showed a subtle blueness which may be seen shadowing beautiful lids and throats on the jetty at Ceylon. She might have had a trace of Parsee in her, though the nose was strongly Arab.

"And for me," she went on, "you can take a passenger? One? So I pays you—how much moneys, hey?" She had garnered most of her English from the conversations of sailors at her Penang Bar, and she talked with the blunt frankness of a bos'n's mate out of a collier.

"Passenger!" exclaimed Carsten. "Why, yes—that is—I might take a man who's willing to sign the articles as one of the crew. Just a matter of form, you know—to meet the law for a vessel carrying freights."

Mrs. Latello shot a glance behind her at the bowed shoulders of the scribbling mate. She studied the moving hand for a moment, then veered her look slowly back to the skipper. "Maybe, I lak to spik—what you call—private alone," she suggested.

"Oh, never mind my mate," said the skipper. "He knows what goes on aboard here."

She nodded, but hesitated a moment before she resumed. Then she leaned forward confidentially to the skipper. "I not got a man for passenger, no. It is yo'ng lady—you know, girl from my place—my little Mutiara."

There was a rustle from the bulkhead desk. John Wright sat up straighter in his chair, put back his head, set the end of a pencil to his lips thoughtfully, then bent swiftly again to his paper and made the pencil fly over the sheet.

The bushy brows of the captain jerked spasmodically. "Oh, that girl in your place! Mutiara—the pearl, that is, in Malay." He did not attempt to conceal his astonishment.

"Yes, she go away from Numentia," said Mrs. Latello. She tried to be casual about it. But she was nervous. Once more she turned chin to shoulder for a glance round at Wright.

"Well, I'd say you made up your mind kind of sudden about the girl going away," said Carsten. "I was in your bar a couple of hours ago, and she didn't say anything about going away—and you didn't mention it, neither."

Mrs. Latello was still intent on the mate. But the speed of the young man's work with the pencil seemed to convince her that he was too busy to listen to the conversation. Again she concentrated on the skipper, and even the narrowness of those slits of eyes could not mask her craftiness.

She took her time about meeting Carsten's suspicious inference. She kept her eyes on him and twisted a silver-tipped cigarette into a long jade holder, her bracelets tinkling and her ring gems giving off jets of reflected light. "Oh, for a long tam I have think of this go away business," she began smoothly. "I lak to send my girl to some places. And just now, a little back, I tell to myself that you be the one man only I lak for to send Mutiara by. You un'erstan', *captinna?*"

The skipper, as he hesitated, was conscious that the mate's ears were trimmed to catch every word. "But I thought you wanted Mutiara to stay and work in your place," he argued. "She sings good, along with that guitar of hers, and the sailors like to buy cigars and tobacco from her. She's a smart girl. You'd miss her. Maybe you wouldn't take in so much cash as usual. Thought

about that, Mrs. Latello? You know, you've told me yourself that you've spent a heap on her since—since you got her."

Mrs. Latello waved an assenting but careless hand. "Sure! She was only seven year when I get her. I was not marry to Latello that tam', and also, too, I like her ver' much to be with me, that little girl. Don't I send her to missionary schools in Padek? Oh, she is good girl, *captinna*—you know this."

Carsten, seated across the chart table from her, now lit a cigar. Then, more at ease, he looked straight into those smiling, oblique eyes which were watching him so intently. And he caught in them a strange and feverish glitter which did not seem natural for a mere negotiation about sending Mutiara away as a passenger.

"Of course, you've talked this thing over with your husband." said Captain Carsten.

The nostril holding the diamond swelled and quivered. The clawlike hand balancing the jade holder gave a quick jerk. But Mrs. Latello was mistress of herself at once, and made a little grimace that swept away any interest which her husband might have in the matter.

"What do Latello got to do with Mutiara?" she inquired carelessly. She took a long draft from the cigarette, charged her lungs with the smoke, and expelled it with a luxurious sigh. Then she added, "Mutiara is not daughter to him. So—I say she go, she go, and he keep his trap shut, hey?"

Captain Carsten thought a moment, gazing along his cigar. "Well, of course, if he's willing anyway, as he probably is. As you say, he couldn't stop her leaving Numentia." He shrugged his shoulders, as if he had no concern with that angle of the business.

His visitor took another languid pull at her cigarette before she spoke again. *"Captinna,"* she said, "all people know that Latello is not marry with me so much as he is marry with my Penang Bar. Not'ing, he has. And my father, he is leave me ver' rich on this beach. Latello, he's do anything for moneys. He is smart, hey? Yes. But Mis' Latello, I am not fool, you know ver' well." She showed the overlapping teeth again.

"I don't know about Latello marrying you for money," objected the skipper gallantly. "You're a mighty taking woman on your own account—leave your money to one side, you know. I been saying for six years you're one of the smartest women in these islands. I ain't seen many women as could beat you."

"Thank." She nodded graciously. But one high-heeled foot was teetering impatiently. She returned abruptly to the business in hand. "Now! You tell it to me what it cost to take Mutiara to Zamboanga—and she go to Maneela from there. I pay you. Shoot!" Her free hand went under the shawl with swift gropings, and was drawn forth holding a thick package of paper money. This she laid on the chart table, blowing across it a gust of smoke that was like a screen intended to hide her nervous anxiety.

The desire for secrecy in her visit seemed plain now to Carsten. And the skipper saw himself on dangerous ground. He began to hedge. "I'll be ashore a little later, and take it up with you then," he announced. "It's a matter I'll have to think about. A girl, you know—little more of a problem, you know."

Instantly she lowered the jade holder, and sat erect. The blue tint on her face deepened. Her lids widened, showing fear and some trace of what might be called sudden panic. "No, you not talk it to me ashore," she objected almost in a whisper. "Now you tell it to me what it cost—and you do this thing for me! *Now, captinna!"*

There was not a movement behind her where John Wright sat at his fig-

ures. Carsten remained quiet, too. And the cabin was so still that there came down through the skylight the sound of the native crew babbling with the men in the canoe waiting overside.

Mrs. Latello broke the silence. With a sudden forward reach, she grasped the money package. She slapped the table with it. "How much for take Mutiara to Zamboanga, you say it?" she insisted. Then she waited, returning the jade holder to her lips where it cocked at a sharp upward angle and quivered in the grip of her teeth.

The captain still evaded. "What's Mutiara going to Manila for?" he wanted to know.

"For to learn education, *captinna.* About business numbers. More school comes good for Mutiara. I lak for her to know how to put moneys down in books. What you calls that? Keepery? Yes! And how to make up the letters to buy trade gin when I buy it. That, too, is good for know. Book-keepery! Then she comes back from Maneela, and knows all good—more better than my 'usban', Latello, is know it."

"Very nice idea, all that," complimented the skipper, but he had little enthusiasm.

"She is good girl, Mutiara," was the reply. Then, rapidly Mrs. Latello began to slip bills from the rubber bands about the thick package of money, and lay out a pile for Carsten.

He checked her. "Don't trouble yourself to count out the cash, Mrs. Latello. I can't take Mutiara aboard."

Her hands faltered. She put the money down. "You say no," she said, aghast. "Oh, *captinna!* What you say like that? It is not good for me—it is bad for Mutiara! Ver' bad!"

"You know more'n I do about that, but I can't be bothered with a woman aboard," he explained curtly. "I'm sorry, too. But—well, that's how it is—and no argument." He rose.

Staring up at him, as if unable to believe his words, she also got to her feet. "I don't un'erstan'," she pleaded in a bewildered way. "You are hones' man? She make no troubles! I trus' you right up to the hilt!"

Carsten tried to be patient. "You've heard what I said. I never take a woman passenger—and Mutiara's only a girl, anyway. I've a native crew, and with——"

"To hal' with the crews!" she spluttered. "I am not hire the native to carry Mutiara—and they not come this side in your ship!" She searched his face for the true reason which she felt must lie behind his abrupt refusal to meet her wishes.

"Just the same, I can't risk it. There'd be talk—and the missionaries might not like it. Other ship's officers would make gossip about the thing. Might even be something in the newspapers. There's my owners. They'd probably make an awful kick. You don't understand my position."

"Missionaries!" she repeated, with a vague questioning look in her eyes. "Owner! You mean you are slave to these peoples? I don't un'erstan' what you spik."

He waved an impatient hand. "I've got a wife and daughter. I can't take Mutiara unless you happen to be going along, too."

She brightened, throwing out her hands to him. "You have girl yourself! Yes! I am not mother to Mutiara, but she is like girl-child to me. So I like her to be smart—educate up—un'erstan', *captinna?*"

"Oh, I understand, Mrs. Latello," he returned a little ironically. "Only that business school—well, it's just a blind, isn't it? Not the straight truth you're handing me?"

Her expression changed to dismay. But a moment later she burst into laughter at being discovered in chicanery. "How you know that, *captinna?*" she asked.

"Easy. You don't want Latello to know you're out here, in the first place —and you don't want him to know Mutiara's going away. Well, I'm not anxious to have any trouble with that husband of yours, madam." He pretended great solemnity.

She snapped her fingers at him. "For that, Latello!" she declared.

Captain Carsten shrugged. "That's all right—you sauce him all you want to! But don't drag me into any rows with——"

She held up her clenched hands in fierce emphasis and broke in on his words. "I owns the Penang Bar! If it is not for me, then Latello have no shoes and pants. So! He is not boss to me! What the hal'! Who is boss at Numentia? That is me, and you put it in your pipe and smoke it good!"

Carsten dared a smile. "If you're so sure that you boss Latello and the whole town of Numentia, why do you come sneaking out to this schooner to put this deal over on the quiet?"

But she readily twisted out of the corner he had put her into. "Do I tell to Latello *all* of what my business is for? *Huh?* It is *my* money that I pay to you—for take my girl away!"

But the skipper shook his head. "I see your argument. But I've got to come to Numentia for cargoes, and I'm not going to have Latello sore on me because I play an underhanded game with you, even if you are boss. He'd be good and mad."

She drew back her head, pretending astonishment. "What, you are 'fraid for Latello?"

"No." And, with a lift of a shaggy eyebrow at her, "Are you?"

She jeered the idea, pacing to and fro in the cabin, the shawl in wide folds across her shoulders and back. "Then what I do? What? What?" she demanded at length, halted again before him. "Say it to me!"

He shook his head. "I never was good at riddles, but I'd say offhand that you'd be wise to go back home—and keep Mutiara there."

"But she must go, Mutiara. She no can stay on Numentia! I tal' that to you!"

Now he leaned forward to look at her searchingly, his brows lowered over the eyes focused on her knowingly. "Now we're getting down to cases! So she's *got* to go, eh? Why didn't you say so in the first place? There's something behind all this business-school trip—something you ain't told me yet! Aw, don't try to play me for a fool, Mrs. Latello."

Balked and perplexed, for a long moment she held her breath, staring back at him. Then, with a straightening of her shoulders, she suddenly burst out, "Ha! So! You so smart! All right, then I tal' to you all what! Mutiara, she can no stay because Latello is send her away himselfs. So I send her quick!"

Behind her, John Wright lifted from his chair with an abrupt upward jerk of the head, as if he were taking note of something on deck which demanded his instant attention. But he did not go. Instead, slowly, reluctantly, once more he sank into his chair.

Meanwhile, the captain had not taken his look from Mrs. Latello, who, breathing deep, was striving to control her hidden feelings.

"Oh, so you want to make the deal with me before Latello sends Mutiara aboard here, eh? Well, I'll not take her for Latello either."

"No-o-o!" she cried impatiently. "Not your boat he want to send her—awther ships—to Macao—to Saigon. I not know for sure of the places he pick." She whispered the words.

There was a short silence while the captain pondered, his head nodding slowly. The mate kept on with his figures.

"And is Latello sending Mutiara away

to business school, too?" sneered Carsten.

"He just come back from Saigon, Latello," she said. "And he tells her—she is to go somewhere—quick. He is fix it. She not want to go to some ship—to-night, maybe he send her. So I ask you." She glanced back at John Wright, who seemed wholly indifferent to what was being said—yet his head turned, bent to catch every word she spoke.

"But what's he sending her for?" insisted Carsten. "Why don't you tell me what's behind it all?"

One swift look over her angular shoulder, one step nearer the skipper, and Mrs. Latello whispered again. *"Captinna!* What you think? *Latello is sal' Mutiara for to go an' marry rich man!"*

John Wright's scribbling hand froze upon the paper. But the pair at the chart table were too intent on the shocked admission of Mrs. Latello to give any heed to the mate.

Captain Carsten scowled. "He's selling her off to a *husband*, eh? How can you be sure of that?"

"I know—because he come back from Saigon with plenty moneys. He have nothing to sell at Saigon. But he come back and say Mutiara go. I am not fool. Mutiara, she is my property, *captinna*. And he marries her away from me!" Her voice broke.

Carsten whistled softly. "He's a bad un, that husband of yours!"

"Sure! It is bad for me—bad for Mutiara. And this is why I ask you take her away before that happen. Then Latello, he no can fin' her."

The captain glanced away with a shake of his head. "So that's it. And he's got the cash in his pocket. Well"—he took up her package of money and thrust it at her—"I'd be in a mess, and you know it, if Latello was to get onto the fact that I prevented delivery of what he's sold." Then, staring at Mrs. Latello to impress upon her the finality of his decision, he said, "Just count me out of the game, that's all."

"Captinna!" she begged. "You have girl yourself. You be father to my girl! Oh, yes! Save Mutiara for me, plis'!"

"Not on your life!" he retorted, with a slap at the table for emphasis. "I won't mix in. I'm sorry. I sail in the morning, so you'd better see some of the other skippers in port. I got troubles enough, Mis' Latello, without takin' on yours. Now, mister!"

As before, John Wright stood abruptly. He was still fumbling with the paper and pencil, as if he were engrossed with them, and he did not turn to face the skipper or the visitor.

"Take Mis' Latello on deck, mister," said Carsten, "and see that her boat comes alongside. Help her to board it."

The mate stepped to the companionway, halted, turned sidewise, and waited, his head lifted, his body rigid, his look avoiding the others.

The owner of the Penang Bar did not follow at once. She centered her gaze on the skipper, and an angry scowl drew her brows together and pushed out her lower lip. "I don't give you 'nough moneys, eh? You like more—and more!" Then savagely she began to tear the rings from her thin fingers. "You take her! *Yes, captinna!* You mus'! I give you all what I have with me—moneys—ring—all!"

The captain backed away, holding up a hand. "Not if you bought the *ship*, I wouldn't take her!"

Her rings were in one palm. She clutched them, made a face at Carsten, slid the jewelry and money into some receptacle under her shawl, threw up her chin defiantly, faced square about, and ran past the mate up the companionway.

Captain Carsten followed slowly. As he set foot on deck, he made out the mantled figure of his departing visitor against the nearest bulwarks, where she was whispering down orders to her own

boatmen. John Wright was farther along the side, speaking in low tones to some of the natives of the crew of the *Amy C.*

Presently Wright came hastening aft to the skipper. "Captain, are you going ashore to-night?" he asked respectfully.

"A little while later," the skipper answered. "But you can take the longboat, and send it back for me."

The mate stepped beside the captain to speak under his breath. "If I was to go ashore with Mrs. Latello," he suggested, "then I wouldn't need the longboat and four men. Then I can come back aboard with you."

"No!" said the skipper sharply. Then, speaking lower, "Didn't you hear all that was said below? You keep away from that woman, or you'll have Latello down on us—and he's got some dangerous friends around this port. Do as I tell you, John! Do *exactly* as I tell you!"

"That's an order, sir. I understand. I'll go off in the longboat when that dame's got clear of the beach."

CHAPTER II.

AT THE PENANG BAR.

MRS. LATELLO'S Penang Bar resembled a wicker hamper of gigantic proportions—a hamper that might belong to a giant householder. This colossal receptacle, which was made of bamboo and attap, appeared to be leaning on one of its expansive sides, where it threatened to spill its contents beachward through several small, partial openings in the side—these the *kajangs,* or side awnings propped up on poles.

As the mate of the *Amy C* went up to the building through the palms that spiked that slope of Numentia, the resort gave forth the light of its half dozen rafter-hung oil lamps. Out of it came, also, a noisy chorus compounded of the half-breathless pumpings of an accordion, the regular *tromp tromp* made by the feet of men dancing with men over a loose floor, a steady undertone of gruff talk, and bursts of open-mouthed laughter.

Its big veranda was like the flat-laying cover of the hamper. As John Wright climbed the rickety steps slowly in his yellow shoes, he got a clear view of the interior. A long bar stretched from one end of the room to the other. Scattered before the bar were zinc-topped tables where some of the sailors sat about keeping time to the music by whanging their beer mugs on the zinc. The dancers clumsily clumped over the floor by twos, some of them uncertain of their balance but sure that they were enjoying themselves.

At the center of the bar sat Mrs. Latello in her great basket of a cashier's cage made of bamboo slats. Now she wore a black dress well suited to business. From time to time one or another of the half-dozen Chinese bar boys in starched jackets ran to the cage and turned over cash. As she took the coins she clicked the buttons of her abacus, or *swanpan,* keeping tally of the silver passing on its way through her ornamented claws of fingers to the tin money till.

Latello was on the far side of the bar, opening bottles and preparing the trays for the bar boys. Now and then he leaned idly against a wine cask, his small, prideful, black eyes roving the saloon. A scarlet cummerbund, or girdle, halved his long, loose, white-clad figure. A diamond the size of a pea lit up the cravat which made a loud, orange splash upon his silk shirt front. Trimmed, clean-shaven, olive-skinned, sleek and jaunty and surprisingly young, he was sure of his own attractions, looking exactly what he was—a dandy out of a Saigon gambling hell where his natural craftiness had acquired a smooth polish.

Perched on a barrel near Mrs. Latello, a husky, tawny-haired sailor out

of the whaler in port was providing free music out of a hard-breathing accordion. One blue eye was fixed upon the rafters while the other was tightly shut. At any moment his great bare arms seemed likely to tear the instrument in two.

Near the musician was "the captains' table," where four skippers were now seated—Hollings of the brig *Austral,* out of Sydney; Bragler, master of the rusty tramp *Starlight,* in for repairs after an ugly raking by a typhoon in the China Sea, and overdue in Saigon; Lanfer, in command of the *Merchant Prince,* loaded with trade goods for the big company that ran things in the Carolines; and greasy old Svensen of the Norwegian whaling bark *Cetacea,* who had the grimy soot of his try-pans about his neck and in the wrinkles of his weathered cheeks. He was home-bound from the Japan Grounds with his holds full of casks that oozed oil.

In the absence of his own skipper, John Wright held back from going to the captains' table. Mates from the other vessels were already there, "below the salt." But Carsten's quiet mate picked a table and chair by himself, and lifted a hand to signal one of the scurrying Chinese boys.

Just then, something like quiet fell upon the great room, as the performer on the accordion slipped from the barrel and became one of the audience. The pairs on the floor halted, let their arms fall, and laid unsteady courses for their tables. The pounding mugs rested and were rapidly refilled by the waiters. Matches scratched on rough woodwork, smoke began to rise to the rafters, and feet that had been dancing were stretched out restfully.

A moment later, through the haze of rising smoke, all eyes turned to take in a new picture. It appeared by a rear door opening out of the private portion of Mrs. Latello's domain, and came softly on canvas slippers that were bound to a pair of tiny feet by scraps of dark-red ribbon. The perfume of a long neck-wreath of white blossoms came with it, the heavy odor of the blossoms outweighing that of the tobacco smoke.

The picture was Mutiara.

Over her slight, half-formed girl's body she was now wearing Mrs. Latello's rainbow shawl. Its fringe fell to the floor, and trailed a little. Out of the seething colors of the wrapped garment, the pearl-and-cream of a childlike face stood forth palely. In that setting, her gray eyes looked pathetically large. Her brown hair she wore like a sleek hood.

It was plain enough to any guest of the bar that Mutiara was not of native stock. The natives of the islands—most of them mixed Malays—were dark-skinned. Their features were coarse. But her nose was small, and slightly tip-tilted. Her small, full mouth came short of a pout. And her color, so pale, was indisputably that of an all-white girl.

She went first to the captains' table. Then from under the shawl very timidly she brought forth a small basket. In it were ranged a few packets of cigarettes, and a score or so of cigars—long ones and short ones, upended in a row, like ninepins, revealing the flashy bands about their middles. At Captain Hollings' right, she proffered her wares a trifle wistfully, making a little half bow. When the skipper bought, with a smile and an extra shilling for a tip, Mutiara made a second slight curtsy. Then shyly she went to the skipper seated next at the table.

It was no wonder that she was self-conscious. The whole bar had centered its attention upon her. There was something awesome in the look of certain sailors. Others were bold as they appraised her, and whispered to their mates with nudges and a kick or so under the table. Latello's expression was masked. He was playing the stern and watchful father, just as if he were her

father. Mrs. Latello seemed to wake at sight of the girl. She sat straighter, gave less of her mind to the abacus, and turned on the place a gaze charged with forbidding warning and proud challenge.

Only one man of those present seemed to ignore Mutiara. That man was the young mate of the *Amy C.* His gaze roved about the bar, now and again resting upon Latello, and then observing his wife.

With downcast eyes and slow steps, Mutiara was now making her round of the tables. At each, her youth and her wistful beauty compelled silence as she held out the basket. Men helped themselves to a package or a cigar without taking their eyes from her pale face. They did not count the coins which they dropped in among the tobacco. No one addressed her, and she scarcely looked at one of them.

Not even Captain Carsten's young mate. By the time she had reached him, her round of the room was finished. She turned her slender back to the crowd and went out by the door she had come in, her basket freighted with silver. The racket of the place rose in a wave behind her. And Mrs. Latello, with a swish of a black skirt, left the money cage and followed the girl—to take over the cash Mutiara had just collected.

Every man in the place except Wright had watched the double exit. Latello had noted it most carefully of all. The moment his wife was gone, he turned the bar over to the No. 1 boy, left the wine cask and approached the table where Carsten's mate sat alone with a mild mixture of *Picon* on the table before him.

"Good evening," he began. He inclined himself in a half bow, showing strong white teeth in what was meant to be a particularly friendly smile.

The mate nodded, but did not relax his grave expression.

"Where's your skipper?" Latello swept a hand toward the captains' table. "He is not come to-night for to have a glass of somet'ing for the good of his health, eh?"

"He's coming later," was the answer. The look of the young mate held that of the older man steadily, and somewhat searchingly.

"Later! That is good! He is pleasan' man. And maybe that is why you not drink trade gin?" went on Latello banteringly. "Soon, the skipper, he's here, and—you don't like for be dronk, eh?"

The mate's lips twitched with a reply that, however, remained unspoken, as a wave of resentful color showed and ebbed above the light-blue tie. But when he spoke again, there was no trace of feeling in his tone: "In the morning we sail, and I need my head at the anchor gear."

Latello had sensed the tactlessness of his remark concerning trade gin. Now he hastened to mollify this guest of the bar. "You *always* sober," he asserted admiringly. "You can be depend' on. For job. I know. Your skipper, he say this to me. *You* not spend your moneys foolish like the other ones." He seated himself on the edge of Wright's table, and gave the mate a commending pat on the shoulder.

The latter started to draw away, but checked himself. "When I have a mate's berth," he explained, "I generally try to keep it."

"Su-u-ure! That is right!" Latello made his agreement hearty. "It is hard for skippers like Captain Carsten to find such one good mate. I know. Good mens are scarce. Sober mens. Mens that save; that don't like for be broke. Before, when you come here, you not have so good berth like the *Amy C.* You like this new ship, eh?"

"I've never had a better berth—or better skipper," said Wright.

"That is fine!" declared Latello. But his thoughts were straying with his looks —to that door through which Mrs. La-

tello had disappeared. He grinned at nothing as he stayed beside the mate, who stared past him, smoking thoughtfully, and not troubling to invent conversation.

Presently, as if with a sudden making up of his mind to something which he had previously considered, Latello bent down a trifle and sank his voice as he leaned close to the young man's ear. "So! Mrs. Latello, she is go out to your schooner, eh? For a little business on the private, eh?"

By now Wright had himself well in hand. He showed no sign of surprise at the question, but countered in a careless undertone, "Did she?"

Latello chuckled. The Swede was dragging at the accordion once more, and it was easy to talk without being overheard.

"And maybe my wife is slip a piece of money to your skipper, eh?" pressed Latello.

"What'd she give him money for?" demanded Wright.

"About the girl, I am thinking," said Latello.

"You do a lot of thinking, don't you?" observed Wright.

Latello laughed. "I think—and I know," he said in that subdued voice. "Everyt'ing I knows. My wife is want to send Mutiara away in your schooner, is not? Now—do I not think true and pick the right card, eh?"

The other considered the question. After a moment he shrugged.

"And so Mutiara is go in your schooner," continued Latello. "That will be nice; it will be pleasan' trip."

Another pause—a long and cautious one; and Wright was wondering just how much Latello really knew. "Maybe what you say is true," said Wright. "I don't know my skipper's private business."

"Maybe so, Mutiara, she go. If Mis' Latello give your skipper plenty moneys, that is right. He make her pay big, I bet. But"—now Latello leaned farther down—"I can say somet'ings to you if you go out the front way from here. Eh? You go out from here slow? Like you ready start back for your schooner? Pretty soon I come—and I am with you, and we talk a little private, too, eh?"

Carsten's mate was as blunt as he was cautious. "And what'd we have to talk about private, you and me?" he demanded in a half whisper.

"About fifty dollar. Just a little job for few minute of your time. You work a long time for that in a ship; but suppose you do a little business for me—nice and private—for fifty dollar?"

The younger man carefully put out his cigarette. "Of course, I'd have to hear what you want me to do before I'd know if I could do it," Wright declared.

"Oh, sure!" Latello slid from the table and straightened. "We talk. Outside. Pretty soon—not too quick." He returned to the wine cask in a slow swagger.

He was just in time. For as he reached his station, Mrs. Latello emerged from the other part of the house and made toward her cage, which she entered. At her heels came Mutiara, dawdling, one small hand setting the basket to rights before she charged it with a fresh supply of goods. Her appearance being the signal for the Swede to quit playing, once more in a sort of hush the girl began to circulate among the company. And with the tobacco, this time she had also a supply of native shell carving, such as combs and other trinkets made from turtle shells.

As she slipped from table to table, the mate of the *Amy C* kept to his seat, though Latello shot him a meaning glance. Presently Mutiara came to that table with the lone guest. Her look was downcast. His was straight before him. He interrupted what appeared to be deep thought, and bought a supply of Chi-

nese cigarettes—without speaking. He simply helped himself with one hand and paid generously with the other.

Next, a stir went through the big place. For the unusual was happening. And not only was every one staring in amazement, but every ear was strained. For Mutiara was addressing John Wright in a clear treble that could be heard at the nearest tables. And what she was saying was, "When do you go away from Numentia, mister?"

Those near-by tables heard his answer, made after a choking swallow: "The—morning wind—takes us, miss."

"Ah! So! Well, this time you go quick."

Now he looked directly at her. "When do *you* go away from Numentia?" he demanded.

She gave a little careless laugh that crinkled her gray eyes shut, and she lifted her shawled shoulders in a jaunty shrug. "Me? Oh, I do not go away from this places," she declared. "I stay here with Mamma Latello—all time."

"Nobody can blame you for that," he told her, giving her one of his rare smiles. Next, he was leaning over her basket, taking up her wares one by one, while she fumbled among the coins of the receptable, and made change for a Dutch gold piece.

Latello saw all this with satisfaction from outside a *kajang,* for he was by this time on the veranda. Mrs. Latello saw it, too. From under lowered lashes her look drew sidewise at the young pair, stealthily, yet in a smile. A touch of friendliness between the mate and the girl went well with the plans of each of these other two.

When Mutiara at last sidled away from Wright's table, the young man rose and sauntered his way in the opposite direction, where he went stoopingly through a front *kajang* to the front veranda and across it into bright moonlight. Ahead, among the first of the coconuts, a dark figure was waiting for him, leaning against a tree. Wright joined Latello, and, without a word to each other, the pair continued on into the grove. The beach was before them, where the small boats of the various vessels were pulled up along the sand. Then Latello broke the silence.

"This is the job I like for you to do me," he began. "You go back to Mis' Latello, and say how you will take Mutiara to Zamboanga, like my wife, she want. Mis' Latello, she will hurry to send the girl. So you then——"

"But," broke in Wright, a little impatiently, "what if my skipper won't let me aboard the schooner with the girl?" He believed now that Latello was simply fishing for information, and would bring out by this talk the fact that Captain Carsten had refused the proposition made by Mrs. Latello to take Mutiara in the schooner.

"I know that, the same like you," agreed Latello. "Well, this makes no matter. You guess why?"

"Captain Carsten won't have a woman aboard."

"All right, good!" declared Latello. "Your skipper not have to get his mad up about you. And my wife, she think Mutiara go to *your* schooner; and Mutiara she also thinks the same. But—you take the girl to the stimmer *Starlight*—and she not go to Zamboanga but she go to Saigon. It make no difference to she."

"Oh, the *Starlight!*" exclaimed the mate.

Latello laughed. "Sure! *I* send Mutiara—not my wife."

John Wright was silent for a little; and Latello, watching the mate's face for evidences of unwillingness, saw only a sudden shine of teeth; the younger man seemed to be smiling broadly at the idea of the proposed job.

"If she's to go to the *Starlight,* that's easy," said the mate.

"Ah! You do it for me!" exclaimed Latello, grasping the mate's arm.

"But what if Captain Bragler of the *Starlight* won't want the girl aboard his tramp steamer any more than my skipper wants her aboard the schooner? What kind of a jam would I be in then—for fifty dollars? I might be buying myself a lot of trouble."

"Oh, I have fix it with Captain Bragler," Latello assured him. "He is take her to Saigon for me—and I pay him good."

"Then why doesn't he take Mutiara aboard his ship himself?"

"It is just that he want no trouble with my wife," explained Latello. "She is watch him. He say to me I must put her on his ship myself, so he cannot be caught by the law. But you do the business, it is all right. You only put her to the ladder of the *Starlight;* the steward is meet her."

"But what if Mutiara won't go in a boat with me?"

Latello chuckled. "You say to Mutiara how she is go with you to your schooner—and you take her to the *Starlight.* She go. I know. She like you; she not afraid from you."

"Perhaps you're right," agreed Wright. "I'd say myself that she'd go to the schooner with me; she likes Captain Carsten, too. But your wife—if she's suspicious that you're sneaking the girl away, she'd raise the devil with me. And my skipper'd put me on the beach if he knew I had a hand in the thing."

"Not if you be smart, my wife not make trouble," advised Latello. "You say to her, your skipper will take the girl if she pay you the money—he want to cover up the business that way. Then my wife think you take Mutiara to your schooner—and you be paid twice for the job—once I pay you, once my wife pay you. And both women be fooled." He laughed lightly at his ability to deceive those who were working against his interests.

"Say, that's not a bad idea!" agreed Wright. "I could work it that way—and nobody be the wiser until my schooner has sailed in the morning."

"Yes, you make my wife pay good. I pay Bragler too much. But half an hour you have the girl at the *Starlight,* and fifty dollars is good money, eh? I give it to you now." And Latello drew from an inner pocket of his coat a few bank notes and handed them over.

"You want a receipt?" asked the mate.

"No, no! No paper like that!" objected Latello. "I trus' you like I trus' myself."

Wright examined the bank notes hastily in the moonlight. "Not much for the job," he declared. "When you think of the risk I run of getting into a bad row—and losing my job in the *Amy C."*

"You get more from my wife, don't you?" reminded Latello.

"Yes, that's so."

"Well, I go back to the bar now. You come pretty soon, eh?"

"Yes. And I'll try to have a private talk with your wife. I'll have to wait until Carsten comes ashore, so I'll be sure the longboat's here at the beach—and it looks to me as if the boat's coming away from the schooner now."

"All right!" said Latello with an approving slap on Wright's shoulder. "You play the business smart, now." And with a farewell gesture, Latello left abruptly, heading for the lights of the big building.

Wright did not wait for the longboat to reach the beach with Captain Carsten, as Latello had been advised. Instead, the mate made his way up among the trees as soon as he heard the skipper's voice giving an order to the crew of the boat, when there was no doubt that Carsten was bound for shore.

But the mate did not follow in Latello's wake back to the bar. He went off to the right, to approach the building from another direction. And Wright was impatient to attend to his part of

the plan with the least possible delay. Behind the great main room of the hamperlike structure was a short, covered runway that connected bar and cook shack. He circled round to this passage, which had no wall on the side away from the sea, and waited in the deep shadows of the thatch until, through a rear *kajang,* he saw Mrs. Latello leave her cage for a rear room.

She was on her way to the cook shack with an order for fried eggs to the Chinese cook, and as she slapped the rattan door behind her, Wright stepped out of the shadows and revealed himself in the light of the cook-shack door. She halted, startled at sight of him. But before she could find her voice to challenge his appearance in that quarter, he made a gesture for silence.

"I can help you send Mutiara to Zamboanga," he said quietly. "Captain Carsten is afraid to take her, but I'm sorry for you, Mrs. Latello—and for the girl. There's no harm in her going in the *Amy C* if you want her to go—and I can fix it for you."

She was staring at him, scarcely able to comprehend the new thing he was proposing. "What you—you come to tal'—to me?" she asked. "I not un'erstan' you." She was wary of some trap.

The mate leaned down to her ear. "Captain Carsten won't know she's aboard—I'll hide her. And he'll be mad, but what good will it do when we're away from Numentia? He'll have to take her to Zamboanga then—and that's all you want. He won't find the girl for two or three days, and if Mutiara's got some cash, she can fix it up with him. He's a good man—but he's afraid of trouble, that's all. You leave it to me."

"A-a-ah! Now I un'erstan', mister!" The light had broken on her, and she grasped at the chance to defeat her husband. "So you are the man to help me, eh? Good! Good! You hide Mutiara—and pay the skipper when his mad is gone! That is all ri'." She took Wright by the arm, drew him along beside her, and together they entered the living quarters of the family, a small, low-ceiled, disheveled room in which mingled the smells of tobacco, cheap perfumery and the reeking sweet odors of the ylang-ylang blossoms.

And there was Mutiara, waiting to turn over the cash from her basket. She stood hastily as she saw who had entered with Mrs. Latello. Then as her eyes met those of Wright, and she saw his eyes filled with subdued excitement, and taking her in with a new and startling interest, she seemed to divine the fact that his secret visit had to do with her own affairs. She sat down again, appearing confused, if not a little frightened, for Mrs. Latello also seemed wrought up about something.

"Mutiara!" exclaimed the woman in a loud whisper. "Quick—you make the tie-up I tal' to you! All clothes, she go in bundle, and I give the blue rings for the ear, like I promise. Also, the silk I buy from Chinamans. This mister, he will carry for you. You go away from this places—in a horry!" Then, as the girl rose to obey, "Oh, I am so glad for all you do, I think I go loco! That Latello! Now we see who is smart!"

Wright did not reveal any excitement. Carelessly he turned the leaves of the year-old magazine beside the little coal-oil lamp on the living-room table.

But Mrs. Latello was trembling—in mingled triumph and apprehension—while for the second time that night she hunted for and counted out her bank notes to cover the cost of Mutiara's passage in the *Amy C.*

"I say how I am boss," she whispered, "and now Latello, he sees how I spik trut'! Mister, two hundred is for the *captinna* when he is mad at you, and awther hundred is for yourselfs, because maybe you lose your jobs."

At that, the mate lifted his bent shoul-

ders to shrug indifferently. "Don't you worry," he told her. "If I lose my berth, I can sign up with some other ship." When she held out the bribe and passage money together, he did not even trouble to count the several bills, but thrust them in atop the cash Latello had just given him.

Mrs. Latello laid an apologetic hand on his sleeve. "I give you no drink," she explained. "Gin is not good for this business. It makes too much rattle in the tongue. Also, suppose you drink, how I can trus' you take my girl?"

He smiled down at her. "You're wondering what I'm doing all this for," he guessed. "Well, not for money, Mrs. Latello. No, I heard you in the cabin to-night. You didn't want me there. I could see that plain enough. You'll be glad before you're done. Why, I understand what it'll mean to you if this girl of yours is sent away, and you don't know where. That'd be terrible for you, wouldn't it? Also, pretty bad for her." He allowed himself a swift glance toward where Mutiara knelt above a heap of her belongings, folding the dresses and arranging the furbelows, before she cross-tied all into a generous square of gay printed fabric.

"You are good mans!" vowed Mrs. Latello. Then, her glance following his, "You have sure tie up the good knot for her."

Quickly he knelt to the work, and Mutiara stood. Her childish face was flushed. Otherwise she seemed strangely composed in the face of a sudden departure from the place that had been home to her—a departure which was still full of mystery to her.

Mrs. Latello noted the girl's eyes and the questioning look in them. "You don't be 'fraid for go," she said to the girl. "That is ri', Mutiara. Mamma Latello fix it good for you, and maybe pimeby you come back. Much better you go. If you stay, that Latello, he do some bad cheating about you, and I keel him!"

The girl nodded quiet assent. The bundle was ready, and the mate lifted it as he straightened. "We'll start now," he said. "You understand, I'll have to pay the men in the longboat if I want to keep their mouths shut—so look out that Latello doesn't get too thick with any of our native crew." He held out his hand to take Mrs. Latello's bony, beringed fingers in farewell.

Her narrow, black eyes misted with tears. Her thin lips trembled. "Mister," she said huskily, "you give good care to my girl! And maybe you come back to Numentia again, I see what I can do more. Yes? Make promises to me how it be like that!"

He seemed touched. "I know how you feel about her," he returned. "Well, you'll not be sorry she went along with me. And my skipper'll treat her right, when he's quieted down a little at being fooled. You know he's not the man to let anybody treat her badly, either. Say good-by to her now; I've got to use the longboat before the captain has a notion it's time to go back aboard the schooner."

A great gulp in Mrs. Latello's thin throat; she turned toward the slender figure waiting near. "Go with this mans," she bade the girl. "All happens now like I have said to you. In two, t'ree mont's, I come see you in Maneela. Here! Give me good-by kiss! And the money I will send where the good friends of mine will give it for you to live nice."

"Oh, Mamma Latello!" There was a moment of caresses and tears. The mate shortened this farewell by suddenly grasping the girl by a wrist and starting toward a door which led directly away from the barroom. "Keep your eye on 'em!" he whispered to Mrs. Latello. "Your old man! And my skipper!"

As she nodded, and dried her cheeks, Wright swung out into the moonlight,

taking girl and bundle with him. He looked at neither as he kicked the door shut in Mrs. Latello's face. But he made a cautious detour into the low brush, and avoided passing too close to the front of the house. And Mutiara followed him at a swift trot. Neither spoke. Arrived once more near the spot where he had bargained with Latello, the mate guided the girl to a canoe which lay turned over and half buried in the sand.

From under the overturned craft he took a second bundle, heavier than hers. It held his own belongings, packed hard in his canvas sea bag. "I hid 'em here when I thought I'd be staying ashore," he told her in a whisper.

Her teeth flashed in a quick smile. "More better I go," she answered.

As he led her away along the beach, heading for the waiting longboat, a bundle under each arm, he made out the anchor lights of the *Starlight,* and noted her position. She followed swiftly at his heels to the longboat with its four native seamen from the *Amy C.*

Wright looked back to the Penang Bar. He could see a figure outlined again a *kajang*—the watching Latello.

The mate pointed out the riding lights of the *Starlight.* "We go there," he said quietly. "Head straight for it."

CHAPTER III.

THE SEARCH OF THE SCHOONER.

CAPTAIN CARSTEN sat up in his bunk. Except for the pale glimmer of a lantern hanging in the mess room, the main cabin of the *Amy C* was in blackness. The portholes showed as round, dark blots on the curving skin of the ship, proving that the moon had set. And as yet there was no sign of morning. A glance at the radiant dial of a night clock, hanging against the bulkhead close to the skipper's pillow, gave the time as a little after four.

"Now what the devil's all that row about?" the captain demanded aloud to himself, and for any other ears that might be within range. "Is that fool Latello woman back again?" Then, grumbling, "This port's getting to be the noisiest stretch of water under the sun."

What had wakened him, and what he now heard, was a medley of voices—all of them voices of men. In the confusion, the piercing falsetto of his Malay *serang* rose highest, uttering what seemed to be a series of shrill and angry orders.

"Mister!" shouted the captain.

He did not wait for the mate's appearance, however. Pawing his way through his mosquito netting, and swinging his feet over the edge of his bunk, he felt about for his trousers, found them, pulled them on over his pajamas, caught up a pair of slippers, and started for the after companionway barefooted, hauling on one slipper, then the other, as he went.

Halting, and leaning on the hood of the companion, he heard sounds that told him a boat was alongside the schooner. Paddles were splashing toward the port bulwarks; and from the same direction was coming a light scraping, as of a small craft against the larger vessel.

Though the stars had swelled and brightened with the going of the moon, Carsten could see little by their brilliance as he peered forward. The booms and stowed sails were so much thick and partly shaped blackness, while overhead the bare masts reared themselves like vague, topless trees. Against the faint glimmer on the water, however, he could see several indistinct figures which were moving and swaying along the rim of the bulwarks.

As again the *serang* fell to spluttering shrill orders in a native lingo, Carsten stepped to the mizzen chains. Now he made out a canoe, its bow gently rising and falling. As the paddles stirred, holding the small craft near the *Amy C,*

the blades lifted the water in ribbonlike flashes of phosphorescence.

"Mister!" summoned Carsten once more—above the stream of outraged insult with which the *serang* all but drowned a raucous harangue coming up from the canoe.

There was a hush. Then, "Yes, sir," came the reply, and Wright's tall frame detached itself from the group forward as it milled in the dimness, and advanced toward Carsten on the quarter-deck.

Before the mate had made half the distance, a screaming voice burst from overside—the voice of a man, choking with rage. "I have been cheat from moneys! You lots of damn swindles! And Carsten, he is play also a rot game! I will not stand up for it! No, by gar! I want my properties! I want——"

At that, once more the *serang* cut loose, his fresh flow of language multiplied in intensity. About him, other natives' voices joined in, the shrill chorus swamping the screams from below.

"*Serang!*" bawled the skipper. "Belay that tongue clatter!"

Quiet was again restored on deck; but the charges from the small boat continued to mount, carrying in the stillness with amazing clearness.

"You below there!" went on Carsten. "Stop that racket, will you!" Then, as the screaming became prolonged into a grumbling undertone, "What's the rumpus, mister? Who's that screeching his head off?"

"A boat that wants to come aboard, sir," answered the mate.

"Crew been fighting ashore? Or maybe they done some boatmen out of a proper payment."

"No, sir," said Wright. "It's that crazy Latello."

"Latello!" cried the skipper. "What's he out——"

"Yes, Mister Captain! Latello!" was the cry from the water overside. "I am lose moneys out of my pocket! But I don't stand up for that! No! I make you bad troubles, say you don't give me back the girl and the cash!"

"Shut him up!" commanded the angry skipper. "What's the lunatic talking about, anyhow—girl and cash?"

"I'd say his old woman has put something over on him—and he's sore at us about it, sir," said Wright.

"So that's it! And he's gone off his head for fair." And as Wright hastened forward again to join the *serang,* the skipper roared over the side again, "Latello, you sheer off with that boat of yours. We ain't got the girl—and don't you come alongside me with a lot of crazy guff! Go somewheres else if you want to start an insane asylum!"

"I don't go!" retorted Latello. "No, by gar! I pay the mate of you! He takes my moneys! He take Mutiara! He not take her where I pays for. Oh, I am not fool one little lot. My wife, she's pay you, also, for carry this girl away. *I* know! I been buy what you call a gold stone! But you give back again all—moneys and Mutiara!"

"You blasted fool!" cried the exasperated Carsten. "Don't you come out here to me with any of your girl troubles, or I'll bash your head in!"

"The moneys I pay—I pay it—you got it—you got the girl!"

The sincerity of honest indignation was in his tone, wild as it sounded. And the skipper began to suspect that somehow Mrs. Latello had fooled her husband, after all, and had misled him into the belief that Carsten had the girl. "She's dragging me across the trail as a red herring," he told himself, "and she thinks that I'll be arguing with her husband while the ship that's got the girl slips out of port. Damn her picture!"

Latello continued to scream.

"Say, you look here," argued Carsten. "I didn't take a dollar from your wife, and I never let that girl aboard. Can you get that through your head?"

"All the time you lie at me!" Latello shrieked back.

Once more a babel broke across the still harbor—the sharp orders of the mate, the piping of the *serang*, the shrill complaints of Latello. In the midst of the fresh chorus, the skipper strode forward, went down the steps to the main deck, and hurried on to the group of sailors about the mate.

"All right, Latello," shouted Carsten to the bobbing canoe. "You come aboard here, and we'll straighten this thing out. Put the ladder overside, mister. He's talking through his hat, but you can't much blame him. He's got on to the fact that his—that a certain lady was out here earlier in the evening."

"Yes, sir," agreed Wright. And, as Carsten's order was being carried out under the direction of the *serang*, "I tried to get rid of him without a ruckus, but he stuck like a barnacle. He acts to me like he's crazy drunk on his own trade gin."

"His old lady's been putting something over on him, that's plain," returned the captain. "But we've got to prove to him that we ain't monkeyin' with his family. Because—look at all them portholes out there!"

He waved a hand to indicate the other vessels in the bay. Wherever anchor lights showed the position of a vessel, there were appearing rows of other lights from cabin ports. The shouting at the *Amy C* had evidently roused skippers, mates and crews.

Latello's head and white-coated shoulders now lifted above the bulwark rim; next, his soft-shod feet struck the deck. Out of his canoe, he was more quiet. But as the *serang* led him toward the skipper, the visitor's habitual swagger was expressed in a determined tramping of feet.

"Now, you Latello," began Carsten briskly, "you just come along aft and talk the grief out of your system."

The skipper's lack of seriousness for Latello's troubles only increased the rage of the visitor. Reaching out of the gloom, he seized the skipper by a shoulder. "You make trouble plenty for me! It is not joking talk!"

Carsten shook himself free. "You keep your hands off me!" he warned. "Oh, I'll stretch you! And go on aft, as I told you! Shackle that jaw of yours, too, you mud-head! Your bellerin'll make me laughed about in every port from Swatow to home and back again for the next twenty years!"

"Sure!" retorted Latello, seeing that Carsten knew his reputation would suffer as a result of the loud wrangling, "I want everybodies know you play tricks on me with my women! Everybodies!"

"Oh, is that so?" asked Carsten. "Then just bear in mind this little point—if you go too far, I'm likely to kick your backbone out of you and keep it to kill rats with."

Wright flashed a cone of light from his battery lamp, revealing the way to the break of the deck and the steps leading up to the forward companion. Latello, mumbling that he could not be fooled or scared, followed the mate. After them Carsten shuffled in his slippers, the *serang* trailing, while behind the *serang* the native crew whispered among themselves.

When the three got down to the main cabin, the captain lighted the gimbal lamp over the chart table, and waved Latello to the cushioned transom seat. Then Carsten sat and swung his chair to face the man from shore, while the mate remained standing at the foot of the companion.

"Now," began the skipper angrily, "I take it how you've got wind of how your missis came out to me with a passenger proposition. But what I don't understand——"

Latello, seeing that Carsten would not admit the girl was aboard, could no longer keep restraint. With his hands in swift byplay, Latello launched forth into tirade again: "You got mistakes! You got 'em! Not my wife, but *I* pays.

—to this mateman here!" He swung round with an accusing finger at Wright. "And fifty *dollar* I give to him. *Fifty!* But the girl, the stimmer ain't got her! I tal' to you, not my wife I talk about now! He is not put her where I pays him for! Well, by gar, I go and sue at the law on you!"

Now, and for the first time, Carsten grasped the fact that he had been arguing about something which was entirely new to him. Tipping back in his chair, he studied the man quietly for a moment. Wrght, as composed as his captain, also regarded the man from the Penang Bar with curious interest, as if Latello had made a charge which was beyond belief.

The skipper carefully turned and noted the quiet attitude of his mate in the face of Latello's complaint. Presently the skipper spoke again. "Oh, so you've got it into your fool head that you could do business with my mate. Well, people go crazy in different ways —and you've showed a good deal of invention when you say you paid Mr. Wright here any fifty dollars. Just what was he to do for the money?"

"To take Mutiara to stimmer," Latello explained with an amazing violence of expression. "Ain't I tal' it to you?"

Once more Carsten took his time, his look traveling from accuser to accused, and back again. "You mean steamer? Why, there ain't but one steamer in port, and that's the tramp *Starlight!*"

"Sure!" cried Latello with angry impatience. "*Starlight* is stimmer I means when I say it!"

The captain's face grew set and hard. "Now I know you're talking a lot of hogwash! Bragler'd be the last man to be messin' with your woman troubles —for any price. No, sir! It ain't like him! And what in hell would my mate be doin' with any of the *Starlight's* deals with you, assuming there was a deal? The more you talk the more you sound like somebody out of a goofy house!"

"What I cares where you think I come from?" almost shouted Latello. "I come here for my money what I pay out —and the girl!"

Carsten did not raise his voice. "You watch out, Latello," he warned. "If you drag Bragler into this with your loose jabber, he'll spill your teeth all over Numentia!"

Latello now pointed a carefully manicured finger at Wright and shook it severely. "But this fella!" he accused. "What you say loose jabber? *He* knows! Ask it *him!* Say to him, 'Don't you make promise for fifty dollar and take girl in boat of this schooner?' "

At that, Carsten half swung toward his mate. He put no questions to the younger man, but his move and his look demanded a reply to Latello.

Wright met the eyes of his captain squarely. "Oh, he found out that his wife was here last night," explained the mate, "and he's sure that you made some bargain with her, so now——"

"No!" almost screamed Latello.

"I don't care what he says," went on Wright. "I'd give him a good poke if he used that language to me ashore. I don't know why he's dragged me into it, sir." He spoke without a trace of ill nature, as if convinced that he was dealing with a poor fool who had been tricked by others.

"Have anything to say to him ashore about it all?" the captain wanted to know. "Anything said to get his tail up this way about you?"

"Why, yes sir, there was something said. He followed me out of the bar, and down to the beach. I couldn't get rid of him. He told me he knew his wife had been out here to you, and he showed me some money, and he gave me some fool song and dance about how he wanted me to take the girl to the *Starlight.*"

"I show you the fifty dollar—and you take him! And in the boat you take the girl! I see it in my own eye!"

"He certainly believes himself," said Wright soberly. "He must have made a deal with somebody, and was just goggle-eyed enough to think it was *me*."

At that, Latello lifted both arms aloft and spat through his teeth in impotent rage, as he tried to gather a group of words that would be adequate to his feelings.

"Just keep your shirt on," urged Carsten, almost gently. "We've got all the time in the clock to look into this thing. I think there's some mistake."

"If he'd drag himself home, he'd most likely find the girl there," said Wright, with the same cool composure that had already maddened Latello.

"My wife tell it to me the girl is gone!" insisted Latello. "I squeeze her neck till she talks trut' to me! And she say it that *you* got the girl in this ships!"

"Oh, that's a new tune on the old fiddle!" broke in Carsten. "Your wife's set this thing loose on us—and that's why you're so sure the girl's here!"

Latello vigorously nodded, at the same time pointing a finger downward. "I know! In this ships she is—and if I lose her and I lose my fifty dollar, I bring the law on you good, if I have go Maneela for that!"

It was the captain's time to shake a finger. "Now, don't you spew any threats!" he warned. "You hand me another, and I'll have both you and your wife arrested! Hear that! I'll put a stone wall around the pair of you if you think you can pull any holdup game like that on me!"

Latello quieted, seeing that for the present, at least, he had gone too far. So once more he shifted his attack to Wright. "Ver' smart mans, this one, Mister Captain. You say to my wife you not carry Mutiara, but *he* makes money from that. Maybe he has cash from my wife, too, on top my fifty dollar! And he smart, he think he fool two of us!"

"No, Latello, you're on the wrong tack there," said the skipper, severe again. "I'll admit it looks as if your wife's got ahead of you; but she can't lie about this schooner, to cover her tracks at my expense. You been played for a sucker right in your own home, and——"

Latello made a swift turn toward the mate. But the captain's hand shot out and gripped Latello's wrist. "Hold your horses! I'm going to show you just how wrong you are. You can go through the schooner! Git that? You can look through this cabin, and when you say you're done, we'll lock it up. Then the galley, and so on. I'm going to let you satisfy yourself, Latello, that there ain't any girl aboard here."

"All right! That is good! I look—and I find her, I bets!"

Wright was as undisturbed at the skipper's offer as any stranger aboard the schooner would be. "And I'd put my oar in, sir, to say that if I brought anybody aboard in the longboat, the crew'd know about it. If you'd call 'em in, sir——"

"Ha-a!" cried Latello excitedly. "Good again! We ask, like he say!" And he swung about as if to go up on desk.

"Now, here!" objected Carsten. "That won't do, Latello! I won't use any native sailors to back up Mr. Wright's word. I'll take his say-so every time, and we can run this thing without the crew messin' into it. You do your own job—and your own looking, and then you won't say we bunked you."

Out of his table he pulled a bunch of keys, unlocked the narrow lamp room next, then threw the door open. "Start out! She ain't in there, is she? I'm hog-full of copra, but I'll open the hatches and let you see when you're done with the quarters. And shake a leg. I sail with the morning breeze—fo'castle, chain locker, engine room of the anchor gear—just see for yourself."

Bending forward, Latello peered into

the lamp room. Next, escorted by the captain and the mate, he examined a small stateroom which was not occupied, but was used as a medicine closet and storage space for Carsten's spare clothing and other gear.

Certain that Mutiara was not in the main cabin, Latello willingly proceeded to the small mess room, on which opened the mate's quarters. He then visited the storeroom and peered behind the water casks. Carefully he inspected the galley and pantry.

Then Carsten locked the lower door of the forward companionway, and the trio went up on the quarter-deck, Wright in the lead with the mess-room lantern.

"Now I'll lock this after companionway," said the skipper. "So nobody can get below. That cleans up the cabin. Now, get the hatch off the lazarette, mister, and take Latello below."

Wright carried out the order, his battery lamp in his hand as he descended the straight ladder under the small hatch. Overhead, held by Carsten, the lantern added its light. Latello went after the mate and peered about among the spare blocks, the shelves of paint, the coils of rope and the bolts of canvas.

A few minutes, and he was convinced that the missing girl was not in this hold in the stern of the schooner. Back he climbed to the quarter-deck, Wright following.

"Now take him for'ard," said the captain. He handed Wright the lantern. "And get the crew to open the cargo hatches. When he's looked through the fo'castle and engine room and the forepeak, send him ashore."

But as Wright moved forward to leave the quarter-deck, Latello hung back.

"Go along with him!" commanded the skipper.

Again Latello was pointing a finger. "Come first to thees boat," he demanded, and moved aft, where in the davits over the schooner's stern, hung the longboat, ready for sea, well lashed and covered by canvas which was laced all round the gunwales.

"All right," said the captain. "Let him look in the boat first."

Promptly Wright went toward the boat, the swinging lantern casting distorted and magnified shadows of his legs along the planks. But Latello was ahead of him, already feeling for the ends of the lacing; and by the time the mate had arrived, the saloon man had loosened one edge of the canvas, and was trying to look through the opening he had made.

"Light this side!" he ordered curtly. "Lift him! Here!"

With a bold up-swing, Wright let the lantern shine into the covered boat. As he did so, Latello gave a cry of triumph.

"She be's here!" he shouted.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KILLING.

LIKE some wild animal digging for its prey, Latello clawed aside the canvas boat cover, thrusting in his arms to full length. There was a faint, terrified scream, the hollow rattling of an oar against loose thwarts inside the boat, and Captain Carsten ran aft in dismay to look under the cover.

"Well, I'm damned!" breathed the skipper, aghast.

Mutiara's tousled head was in view now. Her shoulders, too. Latello had the girl by her arms, and she struggled to free herself, her scared eyes beseeching the other two men. Then she was suddenly sprawling across the taffrail, still trying desperately to wriggle herself out of Latello's grasp.

"You! You pretty good hider, eh?" Latello cried into her white face. "*I* know here you come! You trying fool me! Ha-a-a! No good for that!" For the moment, he was too elated to remember that all this was Wright's doing.

Mutiara was now weeping heartbrokenly, one childish arm crooked to cover her face. Standing thus in the wavering light of the lantern, she made a pathetic little figure.

The mate's look was on her bowed head. "Don't cry," he told her. "I let him pull you out. But *I'll* tell him how far he'll go. Don't cry—everything'll be all right."

"Mister!" said the captain severely. "This is a nice kettle of fish aboard me! And what you got to say for yourself? You knew all the time she was there! How about it?"

"I brought her aboard, skipper," Wright admitted. "She was afraid she'd be sent to the *Starlight*. And I knew if I didn't save her from that—and Saigon—and take her where Latello couldn't get his paws on her, he'd get somebody else to carry out the job."

Ranged beside Mutiara, his arms folded with an air of self-satisfaction, Latello showed his teeth in a grin. "Now!" he said to Carsten. "Who is liar-talker? Didn't I speak trut' when I tal' to you all of it?"

The skipper did not look at him, but continued to stare at his mate. "You brought this girl aboard," he went on, "after you heard me turn down Mis' Latello?"

"Yes, sir. I *couldn't* let Latello send her to Saigon. It had all been fixed to put her aboard the *Starlight,* just how I don't know. So I took a chance, and figured you'd see the thing the same as I do before we got to Zamboanga."

Still Captain Carsten seemed unable to credit either his eyes or his ears. "But don't you *see?*" he asked. "The *jam* you've got me into? The schooner, too!" His voice quavered with suppressed wrath.

"Yes, sir," Wright admitted regretfully. "I see, and I know it's a bad business all around. Well, I suppose you'll put me on the beach, sir. Of course, I looked to be put out of the vessel at Zamboanga. That is, if you didn't understand how it all was with —this poor kid, after we got out to sea from here."

"You ain't aboard this vessel to decide things for yourself and argue me to your way of seeing things," said the captain. "And now that you've got me into this mess, you talk about the beach! What've I got to do with you and the beach! It's me that's responsible here. In this schooner, I—I——" But he did not finish. An explanation of his situation would tell Latello too much of the liability of the schooner. With a shake of the head, Carsten went forward and took the lantern from Wright's hand.

Wright was staring down. "Sorry to make so much trouble, sir," he confessed. "And terrible sorry to lose my berth with you. That'll work out later, though. One thing's sure, anyhow. I'll be on Numentia. And Latello's going to leave this girl alone while *I'm* ashore." He turned on Latello then, suddenly forgetful of his skipper's wrath and his own high-handed conduct.

Latello straightened. "So-o-o?" he inquired. "I like to know it!" There was a flash of his teeth. "You bosses your captain—and now you going boss me, eh?"

"This girl is white!" charged Wright, "and that's more'n you can say for yourself, Latello. It's more'n your wife can say, too. And you certainly ain't going to boss Mutiara, I can tell you that. I'll be on the island, and I'll look up some people—the missionary society'll want to hear about you—and Saigon. And if I don't miss my guess, they'll do something about it."

Latello lifted a warning hand. "You keep your nose out from my business!" he snarled. "Already you got my fifty dollar in your pockets! How you like be arres' for that, eh?"

"*Your* money!" sneered Wright. "When you throw cash around, it's your wife's money—and that's her fifty dol-

lars. And the thanks she gets from you is to have you double-cross her with her own cash!"

Latello was astounded. "You say I make no *work?*" he cried. "In the bar? Ain't I worth no *wage?*"

"Yes, you're a great help to your wife—stealing this girl to sell her away to Saigon!" Wright reached into his pocket and took out a small roll of bills. "Captain, here's his fifty—and you'll want to be sure he got it back, so he can't make any claim on you for it. So you can count it—and hand it back if you like."

Carsten made no reply; but he took the money and held it to the lantern to verify the amonut. Then he handed it to Latello with an abrupt thrust that was eloquent of disgust.

"You keep your bribe money in your belt," warned the skipper, "when my vessel's concerned. And I'd say the mate's got your measure about right. I don't want such swine as you aboard—so git ashore!"

Latello carefully tucked the bank notes in his cummerbund, then turned toward the girl. She still held her arm across her face, but she sensed his intention. A pitiful wail broke from her.

"That's all right, Mutiara," Wright soothed her again. "I'll be in Numentia now—and he won't send you anywhere. Don't be afraid."

"You be in Numentia, and quick I show you what troubles you got, you think you tell me what I do!" warned Latello. "If you——"

A voice from forward, shrill and familiar, broke in upon the threats.

"You keeps from my way!" was the cry from the newcomer.

The *serang* began yelling objections about the visitor.

"There's your wife coming over the side," said Carsten. He gave the lantern a swing forward to point his words. And he grinned at Latello's look of disgust.

"Mamma Latello! Come! Come!" cried Mutiara.

There was a *click-click* once more of sharp heels over the deck of the schooner, as Mrs. Latello came running swiftly aft and mounted to the quarter-deck.

Latello drew away from the lantern.

"Here you are—and your whole family, Mis' Latello!" Captain Carsten greeted her.

She brought up beside the skipper. No shawl now cumbered her free movements, and as she put her doubled-up hands on her hips, her whole attitude told that she was cleared for action. She leaned forward and gave a prolonged stare at the white-clad form of her husband.

"Ah, so you come here! You think you can stop Mutiara go away from this places when I pays my moneys for her to go, eh!"

Now Carsten swung the lantern up and threw the light on her thin, vivid features. "How's *that?*" he cried. "What're you talking about? You paid *who?*"

"Your mat', there," she replied, pointing at Wright. Then stretching an arm along so her bracelets glittered and tinkled, she beckoned in a commanding gesture to Mutiara. "Come away from that!" she directed.

The captain cursed under his breath. "Say, mister!" he exploded. "You mean that *she* handed you cash, too?"

"That's right, sir," said Wright. "I had to take Latello's money to fool him. But what I took from his wife, I didn't keep."

"What'd you do with it?"

"Some of it I gave to the crew to shut their mouths—and the rest of it I gave to Mutiara. So she could pay you when we got to sea and you found her."

"Blast your cheek!" said Carsten.

Mrs. Latello laid a pleading hand on the skipper's sleeve. *"Captinna,"* she began. "I talk to——"

"No!" cried Latello, guessing that she meant to renew her former plea to take the girl away. Mutiara was now beside the older woman, half leaned against her. He advanced to plant himself boldly before them both.

Mrs. Latello did not reply to him, but removing her fingers from Carsten's arm, and putting the girl aside, she took one long step and applied the flat of her hand to Latello's cheek in one stinging blow.

His blow answered in the same second, before either captain or mate, startled by the sudden turn of affairs, could save her from the attack. With tremendous force she was knocked past Mutiara and the captain, and struck the planks on her back.

Instantly, the girl was kneeling at her side with cries of sympathy. Carsten bent, too, lantern in hand. And Wright sprang to the farther side of the prostrate figure. In the light the three saw a face smeared and cut. And half loosened from its fleshly setting, the nose diamond glistened on her cheek.

"Mamma Latello!" sobbed Mutiara, a small hand reaching out to caress either side of the bruised face.

But Mrs. Latello, her breath recovered, heard no comfort, and waited for no help. With a catlike movement of her spare body, she was up once more. She stood with trembling knees for a second, as if to get her balance.

"You!" she cried at Latello. "Runner from jail! T'ief! I save you from police, and now——"

He started toward her, eager to punish her further—or stop her tongue. And Latello threw out an arm to fend off Wright, who moved as if to protect the woman. But Mrs. Latello was swifter than either man. She lunged forward at her husband. Something in her right hand flashed white in the yellow light of the lantern in the captain's unsteady hold. Then for an instant the struggling pair were together.

The mate had to tear them apart. As he did so, a thin blade flew from Mrs. Latello's hold and clattered upon the deck. Latello spun halfway round, as if seeking to steady himself; his knees collapsed, and he tottered against Wright, one hand clutching for support, the other groping across his own breast.

The last bit of swagger was gone out of him now. His legs folded downward with him, and his palms slapped the planks. He rested on hands and knees for a minute, and in the short, strained silence, only his hard breathing could be heard, as he fought for the air which was life.

"She's done for him, that's what!" exclaimed the skipper. "She put that knife in him!" He swung the light upward. "You she-snake, you've killed him!"

She was standing beside Mutiara, panting. The lantern flame showed a livid face distorted both from the blow of Latello's and the sudden horror of what she had accomplished. Her narrow eyes were glazed. Her body wavered groggily on her French heels. Her arms hung at her sides, all those bracelets in piled circles against trembling, clawlike hands—and one was stained red.

Carsten shifted the light to Latello. The latter had slumped down on his side. He was not battling for breath any more. He lay with his arms curled inward, as if he had languidly laid down on deck for a nap. His eyes were closed, his lips were smiling. On the left front of his starched white coat was a small scarlet stain that was slowly growing in size.

"Dead!" pronounced the captain. "Knifed here before my eyes!" Once more he veered the light to Mrs. Latello.

She nodded at him. "I keel him," she said. "I have right. He is choke me ashore before he come—look on my neck. He fight me here—you all see it!

And he strak' me, hey? Look on my face, *captinna!* Mister Wright, you mat', look on my face, *plis'!"*

They looked. And Mutiara looked, her own features, so pale and delicate, set rigidly, and those large, gray eyes fixed with fear.

"If I not keel him, he keel me," Mrs. Latello went on—and began slowly to win control of herself with the sound of her shaking voice to bolster her courage. "Also, we got no police at Numentia to protect me safe. Who was fight for me in my house when he choke on my neck? No mans! And who help me jus' now when he hit me flat down? No——"

But the mate was quick to resent the half-spoken charge that both the skipper and himself had failed a woman who was being attacked by a man. "Just now!" he broke in. "Why, it was all done so quick! You were down before Captain Carsten or I knew what was going on!"

"Ha-a-a!" was her jeering retort. She gave him a wise nod. "Before that tam'—before I am fight with Latello—you do not'ing to him! Don't I know? You got 'fraid for him."

Again there was silence. Carsten seemed to be dazed by the tragedy, so that he could not rally his thoughts, could not decide his course in the terrible thing he had witnessed.

But the other three—each was singularly alert. For each was waiting anxiously to know what would be the skipper's next move.

However, the latter did nothing more at once than discover in startled surprise that the light of the lantern in his hand was no longer needed. The body at his feet, the trio beside him, the longboat with its disordered cover and the figures of the crew gathered at the break of the deck—they all stood fairly clear in a new morning. He lifted the lantern and turned out its flame.

Mrs. Latello was the first to act. Out darted one of those clawlike hands, and she seized Mutiara. "Come!" she said. "You don't got to be 'fraid for not'ing at home now! My 'usban', he's not live no more. He don't send you 'way—for sal' you to rich mans. So. We go shore side." And she started toward the ladder leading to the waist.

At that, she encountered something which was totally unexpected. The girl, with a protesting cry, wrenched herself free from the woman's hold. And Wright, as if he had been waiting for Mutiara to make her own decision, caught the girl by the arms, swung her round behind him, and planted himself in front of Mrs. Latello, barring her way.

Not quite understanding what had happened, Mrs. Latello was speechless for a moment. Those narrow eyes widened, her swollen jaw dropped. Then, "What you do, you?" she demanded huskily, and stepped aside to go around Wright and once more take hold of the shielded girl.

But Wright still blocked the woman. "You're not going to have anything more to do about Mutiara," he answered sharply.

Mrs. Latello was dumfounded. She turned to Carsten in an amazed and shrill protest. *"Captinna!"* she cried in horror. "You hear what your mat' say at me?"

Carsten, now roused from his confused condition, and his temporary indecision, shuffled forward in his slippers, and stared at the mate. "Mister, what fool's trifling are you up to now?"

The mate's face was full of stern determination. "No trifling at all, sir," he answered, as respectful as always. "The truth of the thing is that I'm going to marry Mutiara."

"Marry!" Mrs. Latello screamed.

Captain Carsten gave a snort of disgust. "Damnation!" he exploded. "So that's what brought all this hellery aboard!"

Wright showed his chagrin and regret. "Course, sir, I never looked to have it turn out anything as bad as it has."

The captain shook his head. "You mean to tell me you're tyin' up to this girl, that you just seen since we dropped anchor in here?"

"But, *captinna,* your mat'——"

Wright broke in on Mrs. Latello. "I've been into Numentia four times in the past year—when I was mate in the *Planet.* And the reason I shipped with you, it was to come back here—for her."

"Ha, how slick you plays your gam' on me!" cried Mrs. Latello. "Five times you come here, but never I think you want this girl for wife!"

The mate returned a cool look. His composure further maddened her. "Sneaker and liar!" she charged. "And Mutiara is nawther big cheater, also! After all what I do for her, since long tam' she is almost babby! But, Mister Mat', you not have her! Mutiara is come back home along me!" Again she moved on Wright.

Now Mutiara overcame for a moment a little of her natural shrinking demureness. She backed as Mrs. Latello approached, but still clung to the mate's coat. "No!" she protested. "I don't go back—never!"

Infuriated, the older woman grabbed Wright by a sleeve. "You!" she screeched, the cords of her throat swelling. "You spik how you marry my girl! Then sure like hal' I cuts somebody again!" And she turned on her sharp heels and went clicking away for the stained knife near Latello's body.

But the captain instantly interfered, and brought her up short. Then he shoved her back without too much consideration. "Here, you lay off, you old battle cruiser! You've done enough with that knife!" And, as she retreated from him, "You take that girl of yours and git the hell ashore!"

She hailed the order with a yell of delight. Her eyes were dancing. "Sure! Now you spik right thing, *captinna!* Bot' of us go!" Swinging to Wright triumphantly, she threw back her head and laughed in his face. "Mister Mat', you hear how your *captinna* spik at me? I am win the gam' from you! Mutiara comes back to my bar! Along *me!*"

Wright made no answer; but he half turned to put an arm about the frightened girl, who was crying silently over the captain's order to go ashore. He drew her rumpled head against him comfortingly.

"Aw, my Mutiara, don't feel so bad because we go home," said Mrs. Latello, quick to soften her manner in competition with the mate. "We be ver' happy now—without Latello."

Carsten thrust a finger forward at her. "Get your dead man out of my ship, too!" he commanded.

With Wright and the girl watching anxiously, the woman ran to the side and leaned over the taffrail, calling down orders in the Numentian dialect to the two waiting canoes alongside. Then she came clicking back, ignoring the mate, but beckoning cheerfully to the girl. "We all ready, Mutiara," she said.

Still with Mutiara tight sheltered in the circle of an arm, Wright addressed the captain. "If Mutiara goes, I must go, sir," he said slowly.

"Go is what you'll do!" snapped the captain.

"Gran'!" It was Mrs. Latello, rejoicing more than ever. In that vague light before dawn, all that was wild and savage was emphasized in her thin face —the crafty, up-twisting eyes; that high-bridged, predatory nose so like the beak of an evil bird; the cruel, bloodless gash of a mouth.

Slowly the mate nodded at her, wisely. "That's what you want to hear —plays into your hand, to see me pitched ashore, where you're top dog!"

Showing her teeth at him, she held

out one bony, crinkled fist. "Top dogs!" she boasted. "You got it correc', Mister Mat'! Shore side is right in the middle of my fingers like that!" She slapped a finger to the center of her right palm.

"Then you're pretty cocksure that you won't have to fight Latello's bunch of cronies," Wright replied. "He's done dealing out your cash to them, and you know they'll swing to your side, where there's plenty of cash. They won't bother their heads about how he got knifed."

"Sure, I got plenty moneys!" she retorted. "So I pays good always if some-t'ing is do for me!"

"Oh, come right out plain with it!" he challenged. "You 'pays good' to the bird that slips a knife into *me*."

Now Mutiara wept aloud, in a new terror. She lifted her tearful eyes to Wright. "On the beach—they kill you!" she sobbed, her full, short-lipped mouth pathetically awry.

The captain moved impatiently to the taffrail. "Any time to-day for that job of yours!" he bellowed down at the two canoes where the crews were wrangling over the question as to which would carry out the distasteful task of touching a dead body.

Wright was gazing toward the island. With the morning light still dim, the whole scene was one of gloom. Blacker than ever, and higher, Numentia's hills seemed to him, with a strip of dirty gray where the beach stretched. Behind all, was a cold steel sky in which a few sickly stars were dying.

His hold tightened on the shaking girl. He took a deep breath. "Captain Carsten," he began firmly, "I must refuse to be dumped ashore in Numentia, sir. I signed with you in an American port, and it's my right to be paid off in an American port."

Captain Carsten's look was relentless. "Mister, this is where you belong, I'd say—with this mongrel crowd! The idea of a young man like you losin' a good berth—and gittin' a bad discharge—and all for what? Don't talk to me about your rights, after you've been insubordinate—close to mutinous conduct—what with smugglin' this girl aboard and bribin' my crew to break my orders!"

"Yes, sir," replied the mate evenly. "It's illegal, but you've the power to put me ashore here. Only, have you thought of *this*, sir: If you put me ashore, and they do for me, can you take a chance on the story that'll be cooked up about this murder?"

Captain Carsten's head jerked up. The sullen look on his face changed to swift concern. "Say, mister!" he exclaimed under his breath.

CHAPTER V.

THE SKIPPER'S DECISION.

WRIGHT was quick to see that he had made his point—he had brought Captain Carsten up, all standing. But he was careful not to take the effect on the captain for granted. The mate went on, as if he still believed he'd have to go ashore. "Before I leave the schooner, sir, I want to tell you that I appreciate the way you've always treated me. For what I've done to-night, most skippers would've had me in irons by now."

The captain was staring at the deck, thoughtful and worried.

Mrs. Latello seized the chance to speak. "What you talk, cooking the murder?" she demanded. Though she was gleeful at the way things were shaping, the idiom he had used was a puzzle.

The mate ignored her. He followed up the advantage he had gained with the captain. "Captain," he began again deferentially, "wouldn't it protect your interests better if you kept the lot of us under your control?"

The captain raised his head slowly.

"That's a pretty good point you're on, mister," he admitted.

"Because," persisted the mate, "suppose you were to lose me as a witness?"

Carsten nodded. "The commissioners of the Numentia Group are bound to look into this murder."

"Naw!" Mrs. Latello denied. *"Who* ask? Who care about Latello? Police glad to hear he is dead for good!"

The mate gave the skipper a significant look. "Wouldn't this woman manage to rig things up the way she'll want 'em?—if she finds she has to clear her skirts?"

Another strange idiom, another puzzle. Mrs. Latello looked down at her dress.

"If you're not able to put me on the stand, sir," said Wright, "she's likely to say anything—and have plenty to swear to her lies." And he added, in a quick, low aside, "Just look at her, sir! You know what she is! She can hardly hold herself over how she's splitting us. You told me Latello had a bad gang. Well, that gang'll be her yes-men—and she can buy even their testimony."

Now in Carsten's heavily pented eyes there was plainly a softening of the hard light. "You're right, mister! You're dead right!"

"And how can you be sure, sir, she won't try to load this killing on you?"

Mrs. Latello had been growing more and more restive while the two men were holding a conversation which she could not follow, and becoming more friendly. She looked apprehensively at their faces.

"But it's the law of the whole business as it concerns you, sir, that I've got in mind," went on Wright. "Numentia isn't an American port, sir—and the *Amy C* flies the American flag."

"And as she killed this man on my deck——" The captain was beginning to realize the legal aspects of the crime.

"An American court'll have to hold the trial, sir." Wright finished for him.

"Then if I don't arrest this woman, I'll make a mistake," Carsten asserted.

Mrs. Latello started fearsomely. *"Arres'!"*

"Yes, you're under arrest right now!" declared the skipper. And with his finger touching a shoulder, he added, "And you've got to go to Zamboanga in this schooner—to the American authorities."

"To Zamboanga!" she repeated. But, strangely enough, she did not appear hostile to this new idea. Next, what had come into her wily brain at the surprising change in the program, was made plain. "Mutiara, also, she must go? Fine! This is what I ask you last night, ain't it?" She showed all her crowded teeth in a thoroughly impudent grin.

"Well, I'm damned!" said the skipper. "If you don't manage to get your own way by killing a man!" He swept his hand at the three. "The lot of you go along!"

Mrs. Latello shrugged. "I not 'fraid for judges. Don't I keel Latello in self-defend myself?" Then, suddenly again taking a thought for her business, she turned friendly and ingratiating. *"Captinna,* you let me send for my No. 1 Chinamans for come out here?" And to allay any suspicion, she went on, "I tal' him run my business, while I be gone two, t'ree weeks."

"All right," said the skipper. "Send one of them boats ashore for the chink—and look sharp about it. I want to get under way pretty quick."

Once more, Mrs. Latello ran to the side and jabbered to the natives in the two canoes. One of the boats speeded for shore at once. She sat down on the after bitts, put a cigarette in her jade holder, and cocked her feet up on the taffrail.

Again the captain was gently chiding his mate. "Why didn't you tell me last night that you liked this girl—wanted to marry her? I'd've took her in the first

place if I'd known what was in the wind between you two."

Wright threw a quick look Mrs. Latello's way. He had still one more point to make. "Sorry I didn't," he confessed. "But you showed, by what you said to Mrs. Latello, you wouldn't have the girl aboard—and I couldn't risk telling you. And this woman may be able, under the law, to take Mutiara away from me at Zamboanga."

The captain cast a sly eye at the smoking figure on the bitts and allowed himself a grin. "Take nothin'!" he said. "The minute we're outside the heads, I'll marry you two."

"Captain Carsten!" Wright seized one of the skipper's hands.

"No, and you don't quit me at Zambo, either," said the older man. "Well, it's time to start the gas engine—and heave short."

Wright's face was flushed. His voice was husky. "I told myself last night that I could take a chance with you, sir! Thank you, sir! You'll never know me to go against your orders again."

A smile on his grave face, the mate drew Mutiara forward. About her still hung the heavy odor of the ylang-ylang neck-wreath she had worn in the Penang Bar. He took one of her hands and led her aside a few steps, facing her eastward.

There, rose and gold were pushing up from the bosom of the sea, laying a brilliant track for the coming sun. He pointed. "When we get out into that, Mutiara," he whispered, "we'll be Mr. and Mrs. John Wright!"

"For that," she whispered back, "I must put on my best clothes. Don't you want me to do it?"

Then, still holding the small fingers, he faced to where the native crew were watching from the main deck. *"Serang!"* he bawled in his usual tone of command. "Stand by! Anchor gear—and look lively!"

OUR MUSICAL STATESMEN

BIOGRAPHY is eternally interesting because it brings out the human qualities of our great men. We naturally come to regard celebrities as cold, symbolic statues in niches, and biography is a kind of magic ray which resolves the chilly marble into flesh and blood. How many imaginative children, for instance, have gazed at pictures of Washington and wondered whether he really lived? For most of us, he has come to be almost a legendary figure, a towering, dignified giant of history who typifies the noble spirit of the Thirteen Colonies. How revealing it is, therefore, to find that he was as human as any of us—and what a strange experience it is to stand in the music room at Mount Vernon and look at the flute he used to play, which lies in the very spot where he left it!

The records show that many of the men who have attained high places were—and are—clever amateurs in music. Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and later President of the United States, was also an enthusiastic amateur violinist. So eager was he in his musical studies that he frequently rose an hour before breakfast to practice. Even when he traveled, he took his beloved fiddle along with him. His close friend, Patrick Henry, knew how to play the violin, too, and many were the duets they enjoyed together.

In our own time, a number of prominent people are skilled violin amateurs. Among these are Ambassador Charles Gates Dawes, Benito Mussolini, Professor Einstein, and Charlie Chaplin.

SPUNK

By RICHARD BARKER SHELTON

Convicted, Ellis, the Farmer, Welcomed His Terrible Punishment —for the Weirdest Reason.

ALL the way up the sandy hill David Gale had been hoping he would find the house at the top of it deserted; but when he turned the car into the yard, there was Ellis Bradford puttering over a hinge on one of the big doors of the barn quite as if there was nothing unusual afoot.

It was an awkward job Ellis was doing, driving in spikes and clinching them on the other side instead of putting in the bolts he should have used. Ellis had become decidedly slipshod in all his efforts of late.

He straightened up from his work as the car rattled into the yard, and turned about to peer at the occupant, one hand shielding his eyes from the sun. Ellis would have been a tall man had he stood erect, but his shoulders sagged far forward. As he moved toward the car, still bearing in his right hand the hammer with which he had been working, the long arms dangled limply with scarcely a movement, and his feet dragged in an odd gait which was half shuffle, half lurch.

It struck the man alighting from the car that Ellis had changed vastly in these past few years; grown old before his time, for he was not yet an old man by any means. Ellis, too, was careless of his appearance. The khaki shirt he wore would have been improved by a little more intimacy with the wash tub, and there was a ragged hole in the knee of his stained blue trousers. There was nothing aggressive about the man; he was altogether too meek, too apologetic a figure.

"Good mornin', Ellis," Gale said absently. It was the middle of the afternoon.

" 'Tain't likely you're startin' your electioneerin' this early," Ellis hinted. Gale had been sheriff of Belford County for fifteen years.

"Not yet."

"Just passin', and dropped in, I take it."

Gale's brief nod seemed to indicate that such was the case.

"Now that's good of yer. I don't have any too many callers. Come in!" Ellis seemed genuinely pleased.

He gave the hammer a toss which landed it back at the barn door, and led the way toward the story-and-a-half house. Like its owner, the house had gone downhill during the past few years. The edges of the clapboards were blackening with the weather where the paint had worn off them, and many frost-started nails obtruded rusty heads. Quite a respectable patch of shingles was missing from the south roof; a broken pane in one of the kitchen windows had been replaced by a gunny sack stuffed into the opening.

"Let's set outside on the doorstep; it's shady here," Gale suggested when they had reached it. Ellis lived alone, and Gale had been in that much-littered house before. If they sat on the doorstep it would save him discomfort and Ellis embarrassment.

" 'Tis sort of pleasant here this time of day," Ellis agreed. "Lemme get you a chair."

"The step's good enough for me." Gale settled himself comfortably and took off his hat. He became engrossed in a small spot on the rim of it, rubbing away at it with a pudgy forefinger, scowling at any lack of results, and rubbing it again. Ellis seated himself on the other corner of the step.

"Them maples down in the pasture is gettin' a pretty color, ain't they? Turnin' kinder early this year," he observed.

"You been round the place all day?" Gale asked. "Were you here all the mornin', Ellis?"

"Yes. I've been here all day, settin' over them hinges on the barn doors. The posts have rotted a good deal where the hinges was set in the first place."

"I suppose the Dows"—Gale wagged his head toward a larger house across the road—"saw you there?"

"I shouldn't wonder. They know most everything that's goin' on."

"You've been there all day fixin' those hinges, then. Haven't been away from the house?" Gale persisted.

Ellis thought this over. His weak, blue eyes cast one swift, sidelong glance at the heavy figure on the other end of the step.

"Why, no. Come to think of it, I was away for a spell. Went down to the medder on the other side of the woods. I turned up half of it this year and planted it to corn. I went down there and finished toppin' the corn. I'd done most of it last Wednesday and Thursday."

"What time was that?"

"Dave, what you drivin' at? You're askin' a good many pointed questions, seems to me. Was there somethin' round here you wanted to know if I'd seen 'long about that time?"

"No, there wa'n't nothin' right round this place I wanted to find out about. Guess I'll have to keep on with the questions, just the same. It'll make it a good deal easier for me if you answer 'em."

"Go ahead. Ask as many as you're a mind to."

"Well, then, to git back to where we was—what time was it you went down to the medder to finish toppin' that corn?"

"It must have been somewheres about ten or half past. I never noticed particular."

"How long was you down there in the medder?"

"It was noon when I got back. Clock

was just strikin' twelve when I come in. I set to work gettin' my dinner."

"Any one see you while you was toppin' that corn?"

"No, I don't believe there was. You see, it's in back of that stretch of woods." He indicated with one long arm the maples aflame with color. "And there's woods the other side of it, between it and Old Road."

Gale was trying his thumb nail on that spot on the brim of his hat. "This mornin', some time between ten and noon, Steve Tarleton was killed in the kitchen of his house over on Old Road."

Ellis got up slowly. A thumb and forefinger pulled at the loose skin of his scrawny throat.

"Steve dead! Some one killed him, you say!"

"Abbie Brownell stopped there at quarter of twelve to see 'f she could have some crab apples," Gale went on, "and when she rapped and rapped and never got no answer, she looked through one of the winders; and there Steve was, layin' by the table with a carving knife through his neck. And Abbie she drove up to the Balches' as fast as that old flivver of hers could get her there, and George called me up and told me what had happened. Steve was mailin' a letter at the post office at ten, so they say."

Ellis flopped onto the doorstep again. He sagged far forward, a limp, silent figure.

"I was hopin' you'd have a good alibi," Gale mumbled when the silence began to get on his nerves.

Still Ellis said nothing; merely stared at the maples down the slope until Gale said almost irritably: "Well, there don't seem to be none."

The man on the other end of the step started violently like a sleeper awakened too suddenly.

"I wisht you'd ask Luther Dow if he'll take the two cows and the old horse over into his barn. Tell him I'll give him the hens. I wisht you'd do this instead of me havin' to. I sort of hate to go over there and have to answer a lot of questions. You want me to go along with you right off, I suppose."

"I guess I'll have to take you with me, Ellis. I ain't got no other choice. We better stop at the Dows' when we leave. I'll see none of 'em see you nor talk to you."

"That's the best way," Ellis agreed.

"Likely there's a few things you'll want to do round the place before we go."

"I should like to fix up the house a little inside; wash the dishes and pick up a few things. Then, of course, I've got to change my clothes."

So Ellis built a fire in the kitchen range and put on two big kettles of water, and Gale came in and took off his coat. While they waited for the water in the kettles to heat they busied themselves with brooms and dust cloths in the other rooms. Then the dishes were washed and put away, the kitchen tidied up.

"Looks awful good, don't it?" Ellis seemed childishly pleased when the work was done. "Much obliged to you, David. Now I'll change my clothes and we'll start. I'm goin' along quiet enough; ain't goin' to try to git away from you nor nothin' like that, but I suppose you'd ruther I'd leave the bedroom door open, perhaps."

"I guess you had better do that, Ellis."

"If you don't mind stoppin' in Ridgmont or somewheres so'st I can get a shave—anywheres except down in the village here—I won't bother about shavin' before we start."

"There are three or four barber shops on our way."

Presently Ellis came out of the bedroom, arrayed in his Sunday best and brushing the dust from a gray hat.

"I'm all ready, Dave."

They went out the back door, and Ellis locked it after them. "I guess you better leave the key with the Dows." He passed it to the sheriff.

"Perhaps you'd ruther sit right here in the car while I go across the road," Gale suggested. "I kinder think you'll stay there, if you gimme your word."

"I won't move." Ellis climbed to the front seat.

"You don't run a car, anyway, I believe."

"Never learned how."

Gale thereupon went across the road, was gone a few moments, and returned. The car swung out of the yard and down the sandy slope. Presently it had reached the point where Old Road branched off sharply to the left.

"I guess I'll have to go down to Steve's place and see 'f the medical examiner has been there yet," Gale said as if he were offering an apology. "We hadn't been able to get hold of him when I left to come over to your house."

"That's all right. No need frettin' yourself about that."

Old Road wound through stretches of pine with here and there an infrequent set of buildings cropping up. Twilight, coming on, softened every outline. Ellis sighed. "There's some awful pretty spots round here."

"Lots of 'em."

"This time of day they always look better'n ever."

"They do. That's a fact."

They reached the Tarleton place. There was a big two-story house in the best of condition, a row of sheds behind it, and back of these the inevitable huge barn. Everything about it suggested prosperity. Steve Tarleton was reputed to have been a shrewd man—overshrewd, perhaps—and to have made a great deal of money in various and more or less mysterious ways.

A light glowed on the back porch and one of David Gale's deputies stood near it, talking to a little group of people from two automobiles parked in the yard. Ellis leaned forward to look at them, relieved when he found they were not townspeople—no one he knew, in fact. They glanced at him with eager interest, at the sheriff beside him, whispered among themselves and then moved to the two cars. The deputy came up to Gale's car, remarking:

"Doc Hunter is fishin' up to White Lake. They've got to send a messenger in from Spring Station. They think he can get down here some time to-night."

"Up to White Lake, eh? What time did they start the messenger in from Spring Station?"

"Little after four, I should say."

"Guess I'll be back, then, before he gets here. I'll make it as soon as I can." The starter buzzed.

"Ain't you goin' to take him in?" the deputy asked, glancing at Ellis.

"I don't believe in those methods," said Gale shortly.

"I should sorter like to go in, if you don't mind." Ellis seemed very determined on this point.

"I don't believe you really want to," Gale objected. "We'd have to go in with you, of course. Anything you said we'd have to take down. It could be used against you."

"I should like to go in, all the same," Ellis persisted.

Gale shut off the engine and he and Ellis got out of the car.

"I should be careful what I said, if I was you," Gale warned him. "It ain't goin' to be easy pinnin' this on you as things are now."

The deputy went ahead of them and opened the back door. A switch snapped and the kitchen suddenly blazed with light. Ellis shuffled in, the sheriff close behind him.

Like Ellis, Steve Tarleton had lived alone; but unlike Ellis' house the place was scrupulously clean and orderly. The only things out of place in that big, spotless kitchen were bits of broken

crockery scattered over the floor and the red-checked tablecloth, pulled from the table when Steve had fallen and still clutched tightly in his left hand.

Ellis lurched to the table and leaned heavily upon it, staring down at the prone figure on the floor close by. Little beads of moisture started out on his forehead. His tongue began to move slowly back and forth over his lips.

"I might as well get it all off my mind now," he said at length.

"No need talkin' too much, Ellis. Don't do nothin' you're goin' to be sorry for later." Gale spoke with a certain grim pity.

But Ellis was beyond advice. "I guess you don't know what it means to have folks despisin' of yer because you ain't got no spunk, do you?"

The deputy took a pencil and two envelopes from his pocket. He reached for a chair, drew it up to the table and sat down.

"I've been keepin' away from folks for months," Ellis went on, staring at that huddled thing by the table leg. "There was somethin' expected of me; somethin' that would have been expected of any man under the circumstances."

The deputy's pencil set down two lines on the back of one of the envelopes. David Gale was scowling darkly. "We'd better be goin' now, hadn't we, Ellis?"

Ellis paid no attention to this well-meant suggestion. He moved slowly along the edge of the table until he was standing directly over the dead man on the floor.

"You know all he's done to me," he said so thickly the deputy had to lean forward to catch the words. "First, he cheated me out of the gravel pit on my land. Done it by movin' two bound stones, and went and hired a smart lawyer and beat me when I brought suit against him. Paid a good round sum to two witnesses to swear them stones hadn't been touched for fifty years. He got a fortune out of that gravel when the State road was built. He'd got wind beforehand it was comin' through here. Stole money off me that way, and what did he do with it?"

"Yes, yes, I know, Ellis," said Gale. "He run off with Ellis' wife," he explained to the deputy.

"Flighty little thing, folks said she was," Ellis interposed. "I suppose they was right. Younger'n me, consider'ble, but awful pretty. I thought a sight of her. I do to this day."

Gale turned to the deputy again. "Tired of her after a time and left her. Nobody knows where she is at present."

"Then when he come back here after a time and fixed up his house and folks sort of gave him the cold shoulder, he laughed at 'em and acted like he'd never done a thing out of the way," Ellis took up the thread of the story for the deputy's benefit. "And because he had money there were some folks who begun to be friendly with him. There's always folks that will be friendly with anybody who's got a little money."

"Been tough for you, that's a fact," Gale said.

"He went around actin' as if I didn't count." Ellis had dropped his voice until it was little more than a husky whisper. "Tried to talk with me as if nothin' had happened. Made fun of me in the store one night before a lot of folks. And all I did was to slink out like a licked pup."

"I guess no one won't blame you much, Ellis—except the law," Gale said. "But you can't get around the law."

"I ain't lookin' to get around it. Whatever price has got to be paid, I'm willin' to pay it. It's worth it to me. Likely now folks will have a little different opinion of me."

"Likely enough they will," Gale agreed.

"There ain't no need of stayin' any longer." Ellis turned toward the door. "I wanted to come in here for a minute or two, so'st when I got thinkin' of that

night he made fun of me at the store I could remember—this."

Gale led the way out, Ellis shambling after him. The deputy switched off the lights in the kitchen and closed the back door very softly.

Ellis received a life sentence instead of the death penalty. He had pleaded guilty and David Gale had pulled every wire he could. Afterward he went to see Ellis often, and the change in the man surprised him. Ellis seemed contented with his lot, even mildly happy.

"There's lots of things worse than this," he told his visitor.

"For instance?"

"Livin' back home the way it was at the last of it."

"You could have got off, I believe, if you hadn't gone and talked so much."

"If you do anything, you ought to pay the price," Ellis insisted.

On another visit of the sheriff's Ellis inquired anxiously: "Is there much talk about me back there?"

"A lot of it. They're sayin' you can't ever tell about a man like you, Ellis. They say you sure took your time about it; case of still waters runnin' deep."

Ellis seemed vastly satisfied with this news. "I feel more respectable than I have for a long time. I can hold up my head once more."

"Treat you pretty good here, don't they?"

"Give me quite a few privileges."

Gale smiled quietly. He had pulled other wires to that end.

Thus it went on for five years. Gale had expected that first elation of Ellis Bradford's would wear away. He had expected the man to become, in time, apathetic, hopeless, broken. Nothing of the kind happened.

"There are things you have to do an' pay the price," Ellis maintained. "Payin' the price ain't nothin' compared with not doin' 'em. Most anything is better than bein' pitied because you ain't got spunk enough to do something you'd oughter do."

"Well, maybe you're right about that." Gale made this admission more to comfort the man than for any other reason.

"You'd know, if you were in my shoes."

Ellis was beginning the sixth year of his sentence when Gale one night received a message calling him to the hospital in Southport. A man near death wanted to see him, it seemed. There was something of importance, for Gale's ears alone.

He went to Southport as fast as his car could get him there. He was taken to a ward where a man he had never seen before was far gone with pneumonia. A thin hand clutched at his coat and drew his head close to the pasty, sweat-streaked face on the pillows.

"This Steve Tarleton who was killed in Melville Center five years ago last October—I did it," a hoarse voice quavered.

Gale started, looked sharply at the man staring up at him, and began searching his pockets for paper. He found a letter with the last sheet blank.

"Rum running—down from the border," the choking details went on. "Used to lay over at Steve's. He was in on it, too. Sold a lot for me, and that mornin' he tried to hold out on me. There was a fight in the kitchen. He had me by the throat, bent back over the table. Then I got hold of the knife —layin' there on the table beside me and——"

Gale said: "Anybody ever see you round Melville Center?" He was writing fast with his fountain pen on the blank sheet of that old letter.

"No one ever saw me there. Wouldn't have done. Queered Steve—and his customers, maybe. There's an old wood path curving in from the Colebrook Road right back of Steve's house. Used

to take that, always. Nobody else ever used it, I imagine. Nobody ever saw me come or leave."

"Your name—full name?"

"John Peter Dole."

Gale wrote on at his best speed, and when he had finished he read what he had written. "That right?" he snapped.

The man on the pillows moved his head in assent.

They were alone in a little inclosure formed by screens all about the bed. Dole had evidently made arrangements for such seclusion.

"Can you sign it?" Gale thrust his fountain pen into the other man's hand.

"Lift me up."

So Gale did this while the man he held in his arms wrote a shaky but legible signature.

"Man doing a stretch for this, isn't there?" Dole asked.

"Life."

"Get him out."

Gale nodded. He pushed back a screen and beckoned to a nurse, for the man who had just signed the confession was developing unpleasant noises in his throat. Then he left, with the confession in his pocket.

He went to see Ellis the very next day. Ellis was surprised to see him. "You're gettin' real friendly, Dave, ain't yer? Why, you was up here only last Wednesday."

"I was up this way. Thought I'd drop in on you." Gale did not want to bring up the subject of the confession too abruptly. Looking at Ellis he realized he had a delicate matter on his hands.

Ellis rambled on in the usual strain —he was happier than he had been for years; self-respect was about the most valuable possession a man could have; let him lose it and he had lost just about everything; there was no price too high to pay for some things in this world.

Gale listened, nodding sympathetically.

"I was past your place the other day, Ellis. I guess the new tenants are the sort of folks you want there. They seem to be keepin' it up fine."

"It's good of you to bother about lookin' after it, Dave. I suppose I'd ought to sell it."

"I dunno as I should want to if I was you. Something might turn up some time. You never can tell. You might get a pardon, possibly."

"Pardon?" Ellis Bradford's dull eyes brightened. "Heard any talk of one for me, Dave?"

"Well, I haven't heard anything about a pardon," Gale admitted.

"Just think I might get one some time? Is that it?"

"Never can tell what might happen, and I hate to see you here, Ellis. You've been here full long enough, seems to me."

"You're workin' for something like that," Ellis surmised. "You'll get it, too, if you are."

"I hope so; a pardon or something like that."

"I suppose Melville Center hasn't changed a bit."

"Same old town. Pretty there now, same's it always is in the fall. That stretch of maples in your pasture has got the best colors I ever see."

"I should like to see 'em."

"And the house looks first rate. I took some of the rent money and had it painted two coats last month."

"What color?"

"White with green blinds."

"That's the color it always was."

"Then I spent a little more on the inside; had the floors tended to and the ceilings whitened and a little paintin' done in two of the rooms that needed it most."

"I let it go down pretty far after I lost interest in most everything. If I ever got back I'd keep it up."

"I suppose you have times when you think a whole lot about it."

"Good many such times."

"I make a guess you'd like to get back there. Ain't that right?"

"Sometimes I do get pretty sick for another sight of it."

"They're makin' a lot of money out of sheep up-country. You could put some sheep in your lower pasture and make a pretty penny out of 'em."

"I'd try it if I ever had the chance."

"I guess you're payin' pretty high for your self-respect, Ellis. You just stop and think."

"If there ain't any other way to get it back I'm satisfied with the price."

Gale's fingers touched the confession in his pocket, but it was not yet time for that, he felt sure.

"I dunno about that last statement of yours, Ellis. It always seemed to me you were an awful fool to tell so much there wa'n't no need of tellin'."

Gale left that day without a word about what he had learned at the hospital in Southport. Again he went to see Ellis, and yet a third time with the same lack of definite results. Each time he harped on Melville Center, Ellis' place at the top of the sandy hill—the chances for making money out of sheep in the lower pasture, the color of the maples at the foot of the slope. He was biding his time, trying meanwhile to make Ellis miserably homesick.

And finally he fancied he had succeeded. Ellis said suddenly one day as Gale talked to him: "Seems to me I'd just about give my soul to be potterin' round the place again."

"I guess we can fix it so'st you can," Gale announced.

"You mean there's a chance of that pardon for me?"

"Something just as good, Ellis."

Ellis caught his breath sharply. His eyes, full of eager interest until this moment, became suddenly suspicious.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I guess you never killed Steve Tarleton, after all."

Ellis was sitting in a low chair on the other side of a steel grille which divided the visitors' room in halves. He jumped to his feet, and both hands clutched the steel bars.

"Who says so?" His voice rose until it was a shrill squeak.

"I shouldn't wonder if I could prove right now you didn't do it, Ellis."

"Who did it, then, if I didn't?"

"A feller named Dole—rum runner, he was, sort of a partner of Steve's—done it. He died a few weeks ago at the hospital in Southport." Gale reached into his pocket and drew out the sheet in his own handwriting with the wabbly signature at the end of it. Ellis read it, a shaking forefinger following the lines.

And as he read he seemed frightened, on the verge of panic. His shoulders sagged far down; his mouth hung open, He was muttering something, but to Gale, close as he was, the words were just a meaningless rattle in Ellis Bradford's throat.

At last with an effort he got a grip on himself. His blurry eyes were beseeching Gale to deny what he was about to say. "I suppose everybody knows it by this time."

"Not a living soul but you and me."

Ellis seemed to feel much better at that piece of news.

"Dave, you've been a good friend to me all through this. You're goin' to be a good friend still, ain't you?"

"I guess you can count on me, Ellis."

"Then keep this to yourself, Dave, for God's sake!"

"That's just as you say, Ellis."

Ellis began to tear the confession into the smallest bits. David Gale reached through the grille to stay him. "Wait a minute, Ellis! Think hard, first. This is your one chance to get out of this living hell. Don't change your mind when it's too late."

"I shan't change my mind about this—ever."

"There's the place waitin' for you, Ellis; all fixed up. Them tenants will move out any time you want; they're awful decent folks. You got a chance to go back, and potter round again."

Ellis went on tearing the paper into smaller bits. "I'd a good sight ruther rot here than go back there and go through what I did. And I guess you'd better not come here to see me again, Dave, because of what you've learned about me, and because I shall always know you've learned it. Only, don't let it go no farther, will you?"

Gale turned away. He went down a long corridor. Iron doors opened for him and closed behind him. Finally he climbed into his car in the shadow of a high wall of weather-darkened granite.

He took a roundabout way home, one which carried him through Melville Center and past Ellis Bradford's house at the summit of the little hill. He had no particular intention of doing this; merely found himself there after a troubled and thoughtful hour and a quarter of riding.

He paused to talk for a moment with the man who rented it; agreed, as Ellis' agent, to have a leak in the roof of the barn attended to, and drove on down the sandy slope.

It was approaching sunset. The maples in the lower pasture were a riot of color. Ellis would have liked them as he saw them now, Gale reflected. He let the car out. He wanted to be away from this vicinity; felt rather foolish for coming here.

"Poor fool!" he muttered to himself. He was thinking of Ellis, tearing up his chance for freedom, back there behind that steel grille. "Stayin' there till he dies, so'st folks round here will think he has got a little spunk," his troubled musing went on. "Well, he's got enough of it, all right. Even if he ain't got one kind, he's got another."

Another story by Richard Barker Shelton will appear in a future issue.

WHEN A DOUBLE DOUBLED

YEARS ago, when the late William Jennings Bryan was campaigning for the presidency, he arranged to address the law students at Buffalo University. For some reason the distinguished speaker could not keep the appointment, and the committee which had arranged the occasion was at its wit's end. Adjourning to go to a near-by club, the members were astonished to see there a man who resembled Mr. Bryan closely enough to be the candidate himself. It was such a remarkable coincidence that they begged him to don the kind of clothes characteristically worn by the great speaker, impersonate him, and save the day.

The double did so, even arranging such details as his hair and necktie in order to resemble Mr. Bryan more faithfully. And in due time the expectant law class received and hailed him, listened to an address about the Democratic issues, and broke into wild cheers when it was over.

But the story "broke" the next day when the newspapers told of the clever hoax. It never did any harm, however, and Mr. Bryan was probably highly amused.

The death, in November, of Frederick F. Fulcher, of Buffalo, recalls this anecdote, for Mr. Fulcher was the man who bore the striking resemblance to the "Great Commoner."

The Crown Jewels of a European Kingdom Are Lost to an American

The LUCK of LICANIA

CHAPTER I.

CROWNS AND A SCEPTER.

CAPE COD is like an arm lifted by cringing Massachusetts to ward off a tremendous buffet by the brutal Atlantic, and the town of Wellfleet is just below the elbow. The Cape at that point is nothing but a sand bar a mile or two wide running on some twenty miles or so to Provincetown, where it ends in a clenched fist.

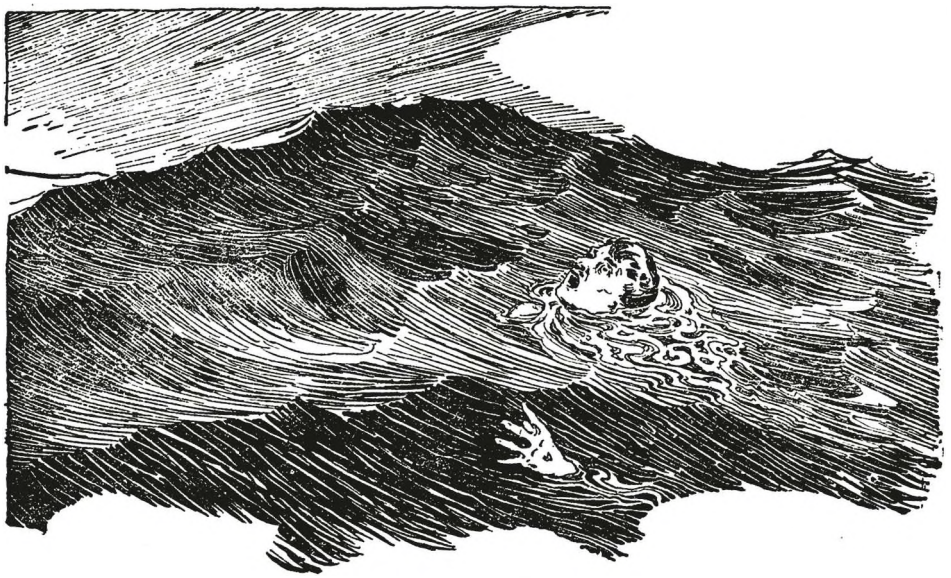
In the whole world there is no more dismal place in wintertime than the forearm of Cape Cod, a region of bare sand or snowdrifts, beaten upon by furious easterly gales, smothered in boiling surf, plastered with fog, chewed upon by tides; open, unguarded, helpless and forlorn. Yet there are people who live there all the year round, snug in low, weather-worn houses set in hollows between the sand hills, or huddled together in slightly sheltered villages.

When summer comes, there is a charm about this part of Cape Cod which is unique. The sun is bright, the yellow sand glitters like gold, the sea booms musically upon the beaches, the coarse grass is green, the stunted trees boldly put forth green leaves, the stubborn pines dare to rear their heads and their needles assume a gloss and sheen, and down from the hot cities come throngs of summer visitors to open up shuttered cottages and populate the long porches of the old wooden summer hotels.

It is hot in Wellfleet in summer, but the heat is tempered by fresh sea breezes, and there is bathing to be done and motoring over smooth macadam roads, and golf on courses as sandy and sparsely covered as some of those courses laid out upon barren Scottish moors.

Down to Wellfleet on June 15th came a retinue of servants to open up the

Banker—The Crown Prince Comes to America to "Steal" Them Back.



By Fred MacIsaac

Welden cottage; and the opening of the Welden cottage was the harbinger of the season in the vicinity of Marshton village.

Elisha Welden was a New Yorker, head of the banking house which bears his name, but he was really a transplanted Bostonian, member of a respected Boston family, graduate of Harvard, aristocrat, snob, multimillionaire, art collector, and arbiter of the finances of more than one small European country. In his youth he had summered on Cape Cod with his family and he had never lost his zest for it. He had married a New York woman, widow of a great New York banker, who brought him a villa in Newport and a great summer home at Long Branch, but Cape Cod had drawn him back, and some ten years before this story opens he had built a lodge near Marshton in Wellfleet.

The plans he had drawn himself—an H-shaped structure with a long, sloping roof. Actually it was two houses with a broad passage connecting them like the bar of the letter "H." Each side of the house was ninety feet long and the bar was thirty feet wide, making a great central hall with a huge stone fireplace. Protected by the wings of the building, there was a thirty-foot porch in front of the bar and a second great porch in its rear. There were a series of living rooms in the left wing and a row of chambers in the right wing. Above the ground floor in the left wing were quarters for servants, under the sloping roof, and there were several comfortable attic sleeping rooms for guests in the right wing.

Houses of this peculiar character have been found best suited to withstand the furious gales of the exposed portion of Cape Cod and of the adjacent islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard.

The Welden house overlooked the

broad Atlantic, squatting between two great dunes of sand. Mr. Welden had set a layer of rich soil over several acres of wasteland about his residence, and his gardeners, by dint of genius and hard labor, had caused the desert to appear to bloom. It was, in fact, an oasis in a sea-bordered Sahara.

In appearance Mr. Welden was portly and dignified. He had the misfortune to have a bulbous growth upon the end of a short, broad nose which no medical science had been able to treat, and which had so disfigured him in recent years that he made as few public appearances as possible.

Always quick tempered and stern, his misfortune had made him irascible and hard to live with, but he ruled his family like an ancient patriarch and his children had to put up with him and give him perfect lip service.

One of the world's largest fortunes would be their reward for servitude, and quick disinheritance the punishment for disobedience. William, the eldest son, who had been cut off without a penny upon his twenty-second birthday, and who seemed to have vanished off the face of the earth, was always before them as a horrible example. Martha, the eldest daughter, had married a man for whom she didn't care much, just to escape; but Janice, twenty-two, and Bertram, twenty-one, were kept at heel while Mrs. Welden, a meek little woman who enjoyed martyrdom, was her husband's most faithful attendant. None of the family shared Mr. Welden's great love for Wellfleet, but they spent their summers in the place, just the same.

The Weldens left New York on June 17th at seven in the morning in an enormous foreign touring car, lunched early at the Griswold in New London and arrived at Marshton in time for a late dinner. It was a dank, dark, dismal, drizzling day, and the sea air was as unpleasant as a wet blanket laid against the naked body, but the weather was never allowed to interfere with Mr. Welden's arrangements. Clad in a fur overcoat, his head upon his breast, he slept during most of the journey, and his snores were as regular as and much more audible than the gas explosions in the cylinders of the superb motor of the car.

The machine tore through the quiet main street of Marshton at forty miles an hour, scattering dogs and groups of loungers who exchanged ideas in the middle of the road, disturbed the constable, who was dozing in a wooden chair tilted back against the show window of the post office, and spread to the local merchants joyous tidings—for the Weldens were their best customers.

Mr. Welden awoke as the machine came to a stop before the door of his house. He blinked, shook himself, looked around and presented the family with one of his infrequent smiles.

"Home," he declared cheerfully. "It has been a delightful journey, hasn't it?"

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Welden dutifully.

"It has like the devil!" muttered Bert under his breath.

"I do hope there's a fire," said Janice. "I'm chilled to the bone."

"Of course there's a fire," replied her father. "Jenkins knows his duty."

Eight servants were assembled upon the porch, neatly uniformed and obsequiously welcoming. A footman opened the door and offered a hand to Bert, who ignored it but who helped to the ground his sister and his mother. Welden got up slowly, accepted the servant's hand, and stepped out, stamping his feet to restore circulation. He drew a bunch of keys from his pocket and handed them to the man.

"Open the trunk at the back, lift out the mahogany box you'll find there, and follow me with it," he commanded.

The rest of the family had rushed into the grand hall and were clustered in front of the fire, but Welden ignored

them and passed through the door into the left wing, walked through several richly furnished rooms to the rear of the house, and entered a large chamber equipped as an office.

Upon the desk were four telephones. In a corner was a stock ticker, and in the right wall was a huge safe of the latest type. He motioned to the great table desk in the center of the room and the footman set down there the box which he had carried in from the car. It was a box about two feet long by one foot wide, its corners bound in brass, a combination knob where the keyhole might be expected to be.

"You may go," said Welden curtly. When the man had left, he stepped to the door and locked it, threw his great-coat upon a chair, tossed his felt hat upon it, and then began to fumble with the combination of the box. The tumblers clicked softly. He raised the cover and a grim smile lighted his heavy face as he looked down at the contents of the casket.

He lifted something out and held it up before his eyes reverently. What Mr. Welden held in his hands was a golden crown, glittering with jewels which blazed at him defiantly. It consisted of a circlet, an inch and a half wide, of yellow gold, in which were set innumerable diamonds, the smallest of which was at least a carat.

There was a Latin inscription at the bottom of the circlet in the front which said, "Rex Licaniæ."

Welden's cold gray eyes glittered avariciously as he contemplated the marvelous thing and then he laid it upon the table and reached again into the casket. He drew out another broad circlet in the center of which gleamed a diamond as big as a pigeon's egg, and which was studded with diamonds of great size and flawless quality. He set it beside the first and drew forth a scepter. This was a thick staff of solid gold, some eighteen inches long, bulging near the top like the head of a war club, beautifully chased, and ending in a round red knob of what one might suppose was colored glass, if he did not know, as Welden did, that it was the largest ruby in the world.

There was a tinkle, and Welden, laying down the scepter beside the two crowns, picked up one of the telephones.

"Transatlantic call, yes, yes. Who is speaking? Oh, Lord Chancellor Gratzburg. Yes. Well, you may tell his majesty that the answer is 'No.'"

He laid down the phone as though the miracle of talking by radio to the royal palace of Galeta in the kingdom of Licania, which, as everybody knows, is in east central Europe, was of little moment, and was lost for some seconds in contemplation of the marvels sitting on his desk. Then he picked them up, returned them to their nests in velvet inside the casket, snapped the combination knob and walked to his safe.

After a moment of manipulation a four-foot door swung open. This door was a foot thick, a mass of wheels, rods, glass and solid steel, and it revealed a space some four feet by three with a triple row of compartments at the rear. Welden opened a large compartment in the floor, placed the casket within it, went out, carefully set a time lock, and swung the safe door to.

The Welden safe was set in solid concrete in the side of the house. Though smaller than the door of the vault of a bank it was the last word in the art of strong-box construction, and only Welden himself and his attorney back in New York City knew the combination.

It seemed as though the crown jewels of Licania were as safe in the Welden cottage in Wellfleet as they would have been in the royal palace in Licania—safer, because there were well-organized revolutionists in that remote kingdom.

During the great revolt in Licania two years before, Elisha Welden had

loaned the government ten million dollars from his own private fortune, at eight per cent, and accepted as a pledge the crown jewels of the kingdom, the value of which was undoubtedly more than ten millions. He had driven a sharp bargain and inserted a clause that the jewels would be forfeited if they were not redeemed in eighteen months. Licania had defaulted her interest and her payments and pleaded for an extension of time which was curtly refused. By strenuous efforts, the government, at last firmly reëstablished, had succeeded in raising the principle and interest, three months too late, and notified Welden.

The cold, self-contained business man, under other conditions, would have gladly accepted the tardy offer of redemption. But Elisha Welden had yielded to the first passion of his life; he had come to worship the crown jewels of Licania, and, acting like the most unscrupulous pawnbroker, he had refused the offer. Licania had his ten millions of dollars and had failed to keep her agreement. He was the legal owner of the pledges and he proposed to keep them. Welden was convinced that the loss of the jewels would end his own life —at least to the extent that he would have nothing left to live for. He kept them always by him and had even risked transporting them to Wellfleet, a risk he did not underestimate.

Naturally there was no publicity. Welden's own family was not aware that, among other things such as railroads, mines, airplane corporations, and hundreds of millions in various sorts of investments, Elisha possessed the most wonderful royal jewels in existence with the exception of those owned by England and kept in the Tower of London; and it would have cost the head of the king and lord chancellor of Licania if it were known that they had pawned what the nation believed to be the talisman of national prosperity and what was affectionately called by them the "Luck of Licania."

That there was rage and bitterness in the palace at Galeta Elisha Welden was perfectly aware, but it did not perturb him. A man like him was always in danger and he knew how to protect himself.

Already there had arrived in Wellfleet a score of individuals whose job it was to protect the Welden place.

The superstition which attached to the jewels in Licania meant nothing to the banker. When the lord chancellor had informed him that the old king was ailing and was unlikely to live many months longer and the coronation of the crown prince made it absolutely necessary to produce the crown jewels, he had smiled ironically and said:

"Have imitations made. They'll never know the difference."

"But, sir, the crown was blessed by St. Stanislaus in person. Evil will fall on my country if a false crown is placed on the head of the new king."

"You don't believe that rubbish," Welden had declared rudely. "The jewels are now my property and I have no intention of relinquishing them."

By piteous efforts the lord chancellor had raised two millions more—a million dollars is one hundred million crowns in Licania, and the telephone call had been an offer of these as a bonus for the return of the jewels. Elisha Welden had said no and cut the man off abruptly. Now he drew a fat black cigar from his pocket, lit it and pulled on it complacently. The troubles of Licania were none of his business.

Regarding Janice Welden, Luiz Valdez, the Spanish portrait painter, had said this:

"The miracle of America to me is the exquisiteness of daughters of stolid, ugly, prosaic and vulgar parents. I have met no more hideous man in this country than Elisha Welden—and I am not

referring to his nose. He wears fine raiment, carries himself proudly, boasts of what you call gentle birth, but put him in a smock and he would be a typical clodhopper of Yorkshire or Devonshire; while his wife, Mrs. Welden, might be a prim spinster of Banbury or Bath. Where, then, does Miss Janice Welden get a fairylike beauty, a grace like Tanagra, and the dignity and poise of a duchess? Where her patrician head? Whence come azure eyes containing the aloofness of a Slav princess, the nose of a Greutz Infanta, the daintiness of a countess of the court of Louis XV.? I have made inquiries about the Weldens. The father came from Boston. His father was a linen draper, his grandfather was a sea captain, his great-grandfather was a slave trader. The mother is the descendant of middle-class provincial English. Yet the girl is divine. She must be a changeling."

Making allowances for the exuberance of a Latin artist over subjects who pleased him, Janice Welden, as she warmed her hands before the fire in her father's Cape Cod hall, was exceptionally lovely, though there was petulance in the curl of her lip and disdain in the regard she was throwing at her brother.

Bert Welden would not have provoked superlatives from any artist. He had small, deep-set gray eyes; a broad, low forehead; a short, broad nose; a long upper lip; a wide, loose mouth, and a jaw which was much too solid and heavy. Aware that his father was out of hearing, he was expressing himself fluently and nastily about the inconsiderateness of his parent and declaring an independence that his sister knew he was too cowardly and too mercenary to assume.

His voice, like his father's, was harsh and unpleasant, and he larded his remarks with rather too many "damns."

"Oh, dry up," said Janice. "If you don't consider me a lady, remember that mother is present and she hasn't any affection for profanity."

"She hears enough from father," Bert retorted ungallantly.

"All the more reason for not taking it from you, then. Some day I'll tell father a few of the nice things you say about him behind his back and you'll have a chance to try this independence you are so eager to get."

"Say, if you start carrying tales——" he cried truculently.

"Children, children!" pleaded Mrs. Welden. "Don't bicker. I don't like Wellfleet any more than you do, but we've got to make the best of it. We are all tired and cross from an unpleasant ride, and you'll both feel better after dinner."

"I feel all right now," declared Janice. "And I don't mind Wellfleet. But, of course, *I* don't need night clubs to be happy."

"Yeah?" the boy retorted. "I've heard you say often enough that there wasn't anything to do here or anybody to amuse you. Well, I'm going to get away from here somehow. Everybody I take any interest in is at Southampton."

"You mean Great Neck, don't you?" she said impishly.

Bert stared, glowered, and said sullenly:

"I don't know what you mean."

"Really? I understood that Jenny Jarvis was resting there for a month before starting rehearsals for her new operetta."

"You know too damn much!" he growled, but his eyes begged for quarter, and his sister's laugh assured him she would expose him no further. Besides, there was a heavy tread in the left wing and in a few seconds Welden entered.

"Well, well," he said affably enough, "all assembled before the fire. You should have good red blood in your veins like me. I'm not cold."

How were they to know that he had just warmed hands and heart before the blaze of the crown jewels of Licania?

CHAPTER II.

A ROYAL CONFERENCE.

KING WENCELAUS I. founded Galeta in 1042 and carved out his kingdom with a five-foot sword which he wielded with both hands. Licania at one time possessed half the territory of the modern kingdom of Poland and much of what is Roumanian Hungary, and upon several occasions was reduced to a principality so small that its boundaries could be seen from the watchtower of the royal castle upon the high hill of Galeta; but it has always preserved its independence.

Modern Licania has a territory of some fifty thousand square miles and a population of about four million people. Galeta, its capital, contains two hundred thousand souls, and Franzvolk, upon its western frontier, has over a hundred thousand people. The Licanians are a mixed race of Slavs, Magyars, Jews, Teutons and Tartars. During one invasion by the hordes of the grand khan, a minor chief, being sentenced to death for the loss of a battle, fled into the Licanian mountains with five hundred followers, captured a village and a castle, and settled there. At the last census it was estimated that some sixty or eighty thousand Licanians were of Tartar descent. Agriculture and cattle raising is the chief source of wealth, for there are great and fertile plains between the high ranges of mountains, but during the last fifty years considerable manufacturing has been done in Licania. Licanian glass beads, Licanian prints, and Licanian pottery are world renowned.

The River Shindau divides the city of Galeta in two, and the houses rise in tiers high upon the sides of the lofty hills which shut in the river valley. Upon top of the highest hill stands the ruins of the castle of King Wencelaus. The present royal palace, which is as much fortress as palace, is strategically located at the head of the valley upon the right bank of the river and to the north of the city. Upon the crest of the hills behind the palace, modern batteries are planted to command the town, and from the high walls of the palace machine guns frown upon the capital.

During the republican revolt, with most of the nation in the hands of the rebels, Galeta lay at the mercy of the royalists, and, whatever the sympathies of the burghers, was forced to remain loyal to the crown.

Seen from one of the bridges across the river, the palace is grim, gray, and forbidding. Modern artillery would have reduced it, of course, but the rebel army was unable to plant its guns because of the devastating fire from the batteries upon the hilltops behind it. The king's shells passed high over the city and kept at bay the rebel army advancing from the plains up the river valley, which narrowed to a gorge beyond the palace.

In truth, the royal stronghold is more like a town within walls than a castle, for there are scores of big stone buildings from which the palace is hardly to be distinguished.

In a large room on the second story of his majesty's dwelling upon the day following that when Elisha Welden arrived at Wellfleet, three men were seated before a large ebony table of Chinese workmanship. There was a blue Chinese rug on the floor, a ragged tapestry of great age upon the wall, a very large and faded painting of a whiskered man in armor wearing a crown, and several tall, black, straight-backed and uncomfortable chairs. The ceiling was high and beamed with oak and black with age.

A frail wisp of a man sat at the head of the table. He was bald with a fringe of gray. He had large, tired blue eyes with great circles beneath them, and

emaciated cheeks. His long gray mustaches accentuated the thinness of his poor old face. His hands were folded before him to keep them from shaking. This was King Theodore VII. of Licania. He wore a suit of gray tweeds and no orders or decorations.

Opposite him sat a heavily built man of sixty, with a round, florid face and a heavy thatch of graying hair. He had three chins, and a stomach which bore testimony of overindulgence in black beer. His thick lips were pursed, and as his eyes were very round and China blue, he wore, at the moment, a particularly idiotic expression. He was lord chancellor of the kingdom, however, and he was anything but a fool.

The third man was young and strikingly handsome. His trim figure was set off by a green uniform tunic and tight white riding pants with high, polished riding boots. He had a striking profile, with a fine brow, long, very slightly aquiline nose, pleasant mouth and firm, cleanly chiseled chin. He had dark hair closely cropped; but unlike the chancellor, he had a back to his head. His eyes were shining with anger.

"The man turns out to be no better than a dishonest pawnbroker!" he exclaimed in the rather musical Licanian tongue, which is a member of the Slav family of languages.

"He is a scoundrel!" declared the chancellor. "If I had known we were dealing with a thief!"

"The question is," said the king, in a thin, tremulous voice, "what is to be done? I understood these Americans were money mad. We offered him the principle and interest and two millions of their dollars as bonus."

"No doubt he can sell them for twice that sum," declared the chancellor. "Legally, of course, the jewels are his property."

"Get them back!" piped the king. "I authorize you to take any measures. Go to the President of the United States and explain our extremity. Surely his government can persuade him."

The chancellor sighed. "It is impossible, your majesty. Let a whisper get out that we pawned the crown jewels and the people will tear us to bits. The transaction is known only to us three and this accursed Elisha Welden. There is no one in Licania whom we dare take into our confidence—no one. The government of the United States has no understanding of secrecy."

"The doctors," said the king, "give me six months to live—no more. My son, there is no possibility of your being crowned without the crown and scepter of St. Stanislaus."

"Imitations?" suggested the young man.

"Your highness," said the chancellor, "that, also, is impossible. Let us approach jewelers in any country in the world to make imitations and within a week the jewelers of Licania are aware of it."

"Can we get them by force, do you think?" asked the crown prince.

The chancellor spread out his palms despondently. "Your highness knows the superstition regarding the crown of St. Stanislaus. When it leaves the country, our independence departs with it. We are not superstitious—his majesty, your highness and myself—but we are not without respect for the Luck of Licania. To seize the jewels, hands are necessary, and hands are attached to bodies which also have heads and tongues. I dare not approach a single person in the kingdom upon this subject."

"I protested," said the king irritably. "I knew no good would come of pledging the crown jewels."

"And I hear of the transaction for the first time to-day," said the crown prince sharply. "It would seem that you are entirely responsible for our lamentable situation, Count Gratzburg."

"Your highness was in the field," ex-

plained the chancellor. "Our arms were being defeated, our enemies were everywhere, the treasury was empty, our munitions plants were captured, and we had to have big guns, airplanes, rifles, shells and bullets. Our soldiers had to be paid. We were holding only Galeta and a few villages for the king. Foreign bankers considered our cause as hopeless and refused to lend us a kopeck. And in our extremity Elisha Welden called me on the phone from New York and offered a loan if I would pledge with him the crown jewels. I consulted his majesty and he finally consented. I carried the jewels to New York in person, received the money.

"You know what happened then. Slowly and steadily we drove back the rebel armies. With our great cannon we blasted our way from one end of the land to the other. It was slow work, of course. The chief of staff estimated he could conquer in three months, with adequate weapons, munitions and supplies, but it was fifteen months before peace was restored, and Licania lay bleeding and exhausted. The Welden loan was spent and it was necessary to demonstrate to the other great bankers that we were firmly reëstablished before we could float a new loan. Was I to dream that this Yankee would not be delighted to receive back his principle and interest? Could I guess that he had deliberately made the loan to get possession of the jewels and keep them for himself? An enormous amount of money, he is sacrificing by his action, this man whose god is supposed to be a great bag of money."

"But it is possible that he can make much more by selling them," said the crown prince.

"My God!" exclaimed the king. "Consider our dishonor if he throws on the American market the Luck of Licania."

The prince struck the table with clenched fist. "That must be prevented at all costs. Count, he must be forced to return them."

"Please to condescend to tell me how?" asked the chancellor ironically.

The prince knit his fine brow. "It is as you say. There is no soldier in Licania who would not look at me in horror if I told him that the crown is in pawn to an American. The superstition is deep rooted in every one of our countrymen. I consider myself free from superstition, yet I shudder at the fate of our country without its Luck."

"And when I die and you become king the jewels must be produced," said his majesty. "You will be driven from the thrown, my son. Most likely your life will be forfeited."

"I understand that. Therefore, since there is no one whom we can trust with this mission, I shall go to America and bring back the crowns and scepter," the prince said deliberately and calmly.

"Impossible!" shouted the chancellor. "You are the heir to the throne. You are sacred. You would run risks. You might be killed."

"If we do not produce the Luck for the coronation, there will be no throne, and I shall be killed anyway."

"I forbid this!" exclaimed the king.

"I shall go, your highness," said the count. "I will make a personal appeal to this brute."

"You have done so. It's useless. They must be torn from him."

"It is probable that the crowns and scepter are locked in the vaults of the greatest bank in New York," the chancellor declared.

"I'll find a way. St. Stanislaus will direct me. Father, I can board the Zeppelin from Berlin to New York to-morrow. I shall land in New York in two days from to-morrow. In a week or two I may accomplish my mission and return before my absence causes comment. If I fail we are no worse off than at present."

"What can you do?" protested the

king. "You are young, Vladimar, and you know nothing about America. Welden is an uncrowned king there."

"By St. Vitus!" exclaimed the crown prince, "I shall not go alone. There is one officer I can trust, one man in the army untainted by our superstition—the American, Major Nedlew. He was born and educated in New York. He is my friend, a loyal soldier and a man of great intelligence. Why, this makes the task a simple one."

"He has a good war record," said the chancellor slowly. "Dare you trust him with our secret?"

Vladimar nodded. "He has fought by my side. We have slept in the trenches together. I believe he is devoted to me."

"Then send him alone," said the king. "Offer him any reward."

"Your majesty, the thing is too vital for a messenger, no matter how able. This is my affair. I shall, I must, go with him."

"St. Stanislaus guard you!" said the chancellor solemnly. "Welden is not in New York. My phone call was transferred to a place called Wellfleet, which is in a province called Massachusetts. It is, I believe, a watering place."

"With your need of secrecy, how dare you talk across the world upon a telephone, count?"

"Both Welden and myself have been careful. We have always referred to the jewels as a commodity. And his first offer was made in a code previously arranged by cable."

"Are my wishes no longer of importance?" cried the king. "Am I dead already? This scoundrel will have you assassinated, my son."

"Your majesty permitted me to risk my life on the battlefield. This is even more vital than the suppression of the rebellion," the prince cajoled. "Give me your blessing, sire."

The king lifted a trembling hand and made the sign of the cross.

"Go," he said, "but return safe with or without the baubles."

CHAPTER III.

THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE.

MAJOR BILL NEDLEW was lying in a big armchair by the window of his chamber in the officers' barracks of the Royal Guard. His feet, freed of his riding boots, were lifted higher than his head, resting on a small table. On the back of a chair beside him was hung his green and gold tunic, and his uniform cap of gold cloth trimmed with bearskin lay upon the bed. In his mouth was a big German pipe and upon his lap was a book which had run through its popularity in America but which had just reached Licania.

"Come in," he called ungraciously. There entered a palace equerry, who saluted smartly, and Nedlew was forced to rise and return the salute.

"Major, his royal highness, General Prince Vladimar, commands your presence at the palace," said the man.

Nedlew lifted rather bushy eyebrows and whistled softly. What the deuce did the crown prince want of him? Why, he hadn't been addressed by his highness for a month. During the war he had served as aid-de-camp to the future ruler of Licania and had become greatly attached to the gracious, brave and handsome young prince. And Nedlew had been a trifle piqued when he was relieved from duty and replaced by an influential nobleman of Galeta, but he had got over it. After all, he was only a soldier of fortune, useful in battle but worthy of little consideration in times of peace, and he had about made up his mind to get out of the army and go back to China, where things were popping.

When the United States entered the World War, Nedlew was sixteen years old and attending a prep school in America. Being undersized for his age, he had no chance to worm his way into the

American army or navy, and he railed at the fate which had brought on the conflict two or three years before he was old enough to be in it.

From boyhood he had thirsted for military action. In 1914 he followed the progress of the great struggle with an understanding of its strategy or lack of it astonishing in a small boy. From the beginning he was certain that America would go in, and his disappointment when the armistice came before he reached the age of service embittered him. He was wild and unruly at college, resentful of parental discipline, and as soon as he was of age he cut loose and went abroad to find trouble wherever it might be.

He tried to enlist in the French Foreign Legion, but France, at the moment, was being economical and reducing her forces. He shipped as a seaman on an English vessel at Marseilles bound for the Far East and arrived there when the Chinese were arming for civil war. Having attended a military preparatory school, he convinced a Nationalist general that he would make a good officer and received a commission as captain in his forces. Nedlew turned several hundred nondescript Chinamen into a very efficient military company and for several years marched across China and back again as the strange and dilatory war continued its deliberative progress.

Trouble in Licania drew him as carrion draws a vulture, though there was nothing of the buzzard in his nature. Though an American and a democrat, the cause of royalty appealed to him in Licania, especially as the king at the moment appeared to be under dog. Nedlew received a commission as lieutenant despite lack of knowledge of the language, learned it rapidly, and was promoted twice on the field for bravery. For several months during the close of the war he had served as aid-de-camp to the crown prince, who was no older than himself.

It was a hot June day when he received his summons, and he donned his uniform reluctantly, crossed the parade ground to the palace, was admitted without question and entered the main hall. If the royal palace was not impressive except for bulk upon the exterior, it was very regal within. He walked upon marble flaggings, across a cathedrallike hall with vaulted roof and stained-glass windows which depicted the glories of the kings of Licania, to a stone staircase of great breadth at the far end, past endless stands of colors, past statues of armored men, and ascended to the second floor, where he was met by a captain on duty who conducted him to the suite of the crown prince.

His royal highness was in his drawing-room, standing beside a great window from which he looked down the valley and over the great city he would some day rule. He turned at Nedlew's entrance, and as the major clicked his heels together he returned the salute with an affable smile.

"My friend," he said in English which he spoke faultlessly like the Oxonian he was, "it is too long since I have seen you. I fear you may have thought I had forgotten my faithful aid and companion in arms."

Nedlew smiled. "The war is over and I can no longer be very useful to your royal highness. And I am aware that you have many duties. I appreciate your consideration for me now."

Vladimar walked to him and threw his arm over the major's shoulder.

"Princes are supposed to have short memories," he said. "I have been at fault. Come, sit down. A cigar?"

"No, thank you, sir."

Vladimar seated himself in a French armchair and Nedlew sat uncomfortably in a straight-backed affair at least four hundred years old.

"You are a man of action and I suppose that barracks life irks you, major?" said the prince.

The American nodded. "I have been considering resigning from the army."

The crown prince smiled and nodded. "Your resignation is accepted."

He saw the hurt look in the eyes of his old comrade and impulsively he grasped his hand. "It is accepted, if you wish, but I suggest a leave of absence and your return with the rank of colonel. Nedlew, you and I are going to be comrades again. We are going into action."

Nedlew looked puzzled, and observed that the prince was scrutinizing him closely.

Vladimar saw a young man, slightly under middle height, with broad shoulders and powerful, chunky frame, whose black mustache and closely cropped chin whisker made him look several years older than he was. By no flight of fancy could Nedlew be called handsome. There was a scar on his right cheek only concealed at the lower part by the beard, a white welt on his forehead, and a flattened nose. The gray eyes alone were an attractive feature, and his smile tempered the severity of his countenance, for his mouth was kind and his teeth white and even.

"Surely Licania is not going to war again in her condition."

"It's a private war, Nedlew, to be fought by you and me, but the throne is the stake and the odds are tremendously against us. May I count on you?"

Nedlew sprang to his feet and saluted. "To the death, your royal highness."

"I was sure of it. Now I am going to confide in you a secret known only to three men in Licania. And there is no native of this country to whom I dare speak. It is because you are an American as well as my trusted friend that I ask your aid."

"You can depend on me, sir," Nedlew said simply.

"Listen." Briefly he told the story which the reader already knows, and Nedlew heard him with growing astonishment, indignation, and another emotion which will be revealed.

"So," he concluded, "you and I shall go to America and in some manner, which we shall discover, compel this Shylock to return to us what is our own. Will you come?"

The American laughed harshly. "Yes, I'll come."

"And time is vital. If Welden is content to hold the jewels and keep the secret, we shall rule Licania until the death of my father and my coronation. That may be six months, but the doctors say that his majesty may pass away at any moment. If, however, as is more likely, this devil makes public announcement that he has the crown jewels of Licania for sale, the revolution will break out immediately and there will not be a loyal officer and soldier in the army."

Nedlew nodded in agreement. "Your forces remained steadfast in the darkest hour because they were confident that the Luck of Licania would conquer for his majesty. It's astonishing the hold the superstition has upon the army."

"The people are just as bad," said the prince sadly.

"What makes you think that Mr. Welden will throw the jewels on the market?"

"Because some of your billionaires would pay more for them than he would get by returning them and accepting his loan and interest. Your great business men think only of money, do they not?"

"Some, maybe; not all," he said thoughtfully. "I have heard a lot about Elisha Welden. He is a hard man, but he is considered a model of integrity. I cannot understand a man of his type holding you to the letter of your bargain. It was a business matter, this loan. Would you mind telling me how it was arranged?"

"The chancellor tells me that the offer came like a gift from God. He had

approached all European and American bankers, including Welden, and had been refused. Then he received a cablegram containing a code and a phone message from America saying that Mr. Welden would talk to him the following day in the code. The count learned the code and next day Welden made him the offer of ten millions of your dollars on condition that the Luck of Licania was placed in his keeping. Count Gratzburg persuaded my father to consent, and went by airplane to Berlin with the jewels and by Zeppelin to America. The details were arranged in Mr. Welden's office."

"The eighteen-month time limit puzzles me," confessed Nedlew. "I know a little of banking methods. The security was adequate and eight per cent is much more than ten millions can usually earn in a safe investment. I would have supposed that Welden would have been delighted if you took five years to pay it off—or ten years or twenty. You say he refused an additional two millions as a bonus for the passing of the time limit?"

"The offer was made yesterday and refused."

"Then you need have no fear that your Luck will be peddled by Welden, your royal highness. The eighteen-month time limit was a trick. He probably knew better than the chancellor that you wouldn't end the war in three months and he assumed that you would not worry about the time limit. When he made the offer he was confident that he would get the jewels—and he wants to keep them."

"But—but why?"

Nedlew shrugged. "Probably gets a great satisfaction in being the owner of the crowns and scepter of St. Stanislaus. You know that there are art collectors who buy stolen paintings by old masters which they dare not hang in their galleries but keep rolled up in bank vaults. I heard years ago that Welden tried to buy the crown jewels of the Czar of Russia but was unable to get them."

"It's a mania, eh?"

Nedlew smiled. "In Europe men who have done great things are rewarded with honors and decorations and titles of nobility and may even win a throne. In America there is no such reward for a man who has accumulated great wealth. The public distrusts him. He is just a private citizen with no more legal rights than any other citizen. If he walks in a crowd people will jostle him and step on his feet and there is nothing he can do about it.

"Some of our millionaires," the American continued, "satisfy their craving for recognition in one way and some in another. Next to being a king, Mr. Welden may think that possession of the marvelous crown jewels of the King of Licania is the best thing. You may be certain that he won't sell them, and from what I have heard about him, he isn't in the least likely to display them." He laughed. "Perhaps he will have a throne built for himself, go into the room and lock the door, sit on the throne, put on the crown, take the scepter in his hand and have a grand time."

"And for so indulging his vanity, he is willing to drive a dynasty from a throne, overturn a government, and cause the loss of thousands of lives," said the prince bitterly.

"Mr. Welden wouldn't care about that," said Nedlew dryly.

"Thanks to his insanity we shall have a little time. You will come with me?"

"Yes, I'll go with you. One thing. If you recover the jewels, you will, of course, return the money for which you pledged them?"

The prince's eyes flashed and his mouth set. "You forget yourself, sir! Do you think the royal family of Licania are thieves?"

"I humbly beg your royal highness' pardon."

"Granted, my friend."

CHAPTER IV.

THE REVOLUTIONARY JUNTA.

WHERE Fleet Street in London is at its most narrow point there is a narrow passageway opening off at the right which is dignified by the title of "St. Dunstan's Lane," at the end of which in olden times was a smithy where a haughty blacksmith shoed only the horses of the aristocracy.

The smithy had long since been replaced by a grog shop, but the sign of St. Dunstan still swung above the door on rusty hinges. The buildings on either side of the lane were ancient, their windows grinned at one another less than six feet apart, but their dark rooms were used as offices for solicitors, house agents, copyists and nondescript business people who worked by gaslight and warmed themselves in winter by burning a few coals in inadequate and smoke-choked fireplaces.

In a room above the grog shop at the end of the Lane a long, cadaverous individual whose pasty face and almost Oriental eyes contrasted curiously with his unkempt red hair was sitting at an old-fashioned sloping-top bookkeeper's desk upon a high stool. There was a gas jet shaded by a cracked white globe above him and several sheets of foolscap were covered by what looked like hen tracks, hieroglyphics and misspelled words in English script.

The door opened abruptly and there entered without knocking a man so arrayed that in New York he would be set down as a Park Avenue elegant, but in London would be identified as a city merchant or perhaps a head clerk in some establishment. He wore a cutaway coat of black, gray-striped trousers and white spats, a very high starched collar, an ascot tie and a "topper," or high silk hat. He had a closely cropped blond mustache, thin blond hair, a double chin and a roll of fat at the base of his skull. Despite his garments, he did not look English, and when he spoke he had a slight foreign accent.

"Well," he said sharply. "You have deciphered it?"

The red-haired man shook his head despondently.

"It's a tough one, this, gov'ner," he complained. "It ain't no system at all. I've used every method we used ter try at Scotland Yard and it's no bloomin' good."

The man stood beside him at the desk and looked down.

"Can't you make any sense out of it?"

"Not yet, I can't. This bleedin' American, he picked words and made them represent other words for no reason at all; h'arbit'ry, that's wot it is. There ain't no key, sir. This bloke wot received it, he must have had a string of words and their meaning. It ain't no code in the proper sense, at all, it ain't. A lot of American business men, they just grab a word from the dictionary and make it mean, 'It ain't goin' to rain ter-morrer.' "

"I thought an intelligent decoder could read anything."

"A code, sir, if yer don't 'appen to know, is a whole langwidge and yer can talk about anything in it. This Yankee was only usin' it once, most likely, and he sent the blighter on the other end thirty or forty of these words that he expected to use."

"Give me the message, then," said the visitor irritably.

"I want two quid fer me work, sir. Two days I spent on the blime thing."

"You want to be paid for failing to decode it?"

"I'm a poor man, sir. Since I resigned from Scotland Yard——"

"Resigned? Discharged for betraying secrets, you mean."

"I take me oath, sir——" the other protested.

"Here is your two pounds. Give me the message. I'll find a good man."

"Thank you, sir. You won't find no-

body wot can read it, sir. Syve yer money, if yer tyke my advice."

"Bah!" snorted the disgusted customer, and strode out and slammed the door after him. The red-haired man listened to his footfalls on the stairs, a leer on his repulsive face, wagged his head, chuckled, and drew from a drawer in the desk a copy of the code telephone message which Elisha Welden had repeated to Count Gratzburg and the count's reply.

In this year of 1930, when transatlantic telephone messages are still very expensive, and wave lengths for private conversation cannot be kept entirely a secret, there are many telephone conversations in code.

Certain unscrupulous persons make a business of listening in. The cryptic remarks of Welden and the Lord Chancellor of Licania had been taken down in shorthand in a certain office in London.

The disappointed possessor of the code message picked up a cab at the corner of St. Dunstan's Lane and was driven to the Savoy, where he entered the grillroom and was conducted to a private dining room with covers for three. He was the first arrival and he smoked a cigar while waiting.

In five minutes those whom he awaited arrived together, a pair dressed, like the first arrival, in the height of fashion but betraying their foreign origin even more than he. The short man with black eyes and thin sallow face spoke in the Licanian language.

"Salutation, Crovak. What luck did you have?"

"None. Apparently an indecipherable code."

"By St. Vitus, there is none!" exclaimed the third of the trio. He was tall and would have looked like a soldier even without his sweeping military mustache of mixed gray and black.

These three men headed the revolutionary junta of Licania. Crovak was a politician; the second man was Ludovic Hantz, who would have been chosen dictator had the revolt succeeded; and the military man was General Hugo Filpek, who had commanded the rebel army.

They seated themselves and were silent as the waiter served soup. When they were alone, Hantz spoke.

"This much we do know," he declared. "The chancellor had appealed to all bankers for a loan and was refused because the royal cause seemed lost and he had no security to offer. Welden suddenly came forward after this very brief telephone conversation in code and loaned the king enough to enable the royalists to beat us to our knees.

"During the war we had no opportunity to investigate this transaction, and now we still find it most mysterious. All we have is this miserable jargon. Since I have been in London I have set afoot inquiries about Welden and I find that the loan was not a bank loan, nor was it offered for subscription. No bank would have loaned a pfennig, nor would an investor have bought a bond, unless there was security. The money came from Welden's private purse. Now this man had never visited Licania, neither the king nor the chancellor was known to him personally, and he has not the reputation of a philanthropist, which makes it evident that he was given security of some sort. The chancellor went to America and brought back the money. What did he leave in exchange?"

The general shrugged his shoulders. "Why ask riddles?" he said testily.

"He left security, but not the sort which could be advertised," Hantz continued. "I discovered something else about Welden. He is an art collector with a passion for jewels. Do you follow me?"

"No. The king had nothing worth pledging; all the gems of the family would not be worth a hundredth part of the loan."

Hantz smiled grimly. "You forget the crown jewels," he said softly.

General Filpek's pink cheeks lost their color. "The Luck of Licania! The crown of St. Stanislaus! Oh, no, they wouldn't dare!" he exclaimed.

"Thanks to your military genius, general, they were desperate. You had conquered everywhere and were advancing on Galeta. I think they dared."

Crovak struck the table with his fist. "Then we have them. Tell the people. Proclaim it from the housetops. Not a soldier will lift his rifle for the dishonored monarch." His eyes were blazing.

"A moment. I am but guessing. Suppose I am wrong and they produce the crowns and scepter. Why, they are stronger than ever and we are discredited."

"I do not think you are wrong," replied Crovak. "It explains what I could not understand. I brought here news for you, gentlemen. Yesterday Crown Prince Vladimar was recognized in Berlin. He was followed. Accompanied by that scoundrel of an American, Major Nedlew, he boarded the Zeppelin *Hindenburg* and at this moment he is halfway to the United States."

The effect of his announcement was as great as he had anticipated and he enjoyed the sensation he had created.

"He goes, of course, to see Welden and to implore him to return the crown jewels," said Hantz after a moment. "A vast sum has been accumulated and is now in the treasury to pay off the Welden loan, but it has not been shipped abroad. Could there have been a time limit? Could Welden have refused to permit an extension and kept the jewels?"

The general was biting the ends of his mustache in his excitement. "By God, if it's so, we have another chance in Licania! If the people learn that the Luck is sold to a Yankee, they will raze the palace and bury royalty in its ruins."

"And if we bring back the Luck to Licania," said Crovak softly, "there is no question but that we shall rule."

"I think an English dirigible leaves for New York to-morrow," stated Hantz. "We three must sail on her."

CHAPTER V.

STRANGE VISITORS TO MARSHTON.

BERT WELDEN complained—and his dissatisfaction was shared in some degree by Janice—of the absence of a smart summer colony at Marshton. The Welden house, unpretentious as it was, happened to be the only residence for a mile around that cost more than ten thousand dollars, and there were no families in the vicinity which could be considered in the least aristocratic. There were some attractive people living in Chatham, ten or twelve miles away, and others in Hyannis and Falmouth, and there were some decent country clubs and yacht clubs in those places; but no members of the sets to which the young Weldens belonged came to the Cape at all. However, Janice had made a few friends in the other Cape resorts and at the rate of speed which she drove her roadster could turn up at functions in from fifteen minutes to three quarters of an hour.

Elisha Welden had always discouraged entertaining at home on the ground that he came to Marshton to escape from the chatter of stupid people and he didn't want young people dancing and shrieking about the house. Janice usually fretted at the monotony of life in Wellfleet for a couple of weeks and then the quaint charm of the place captured her and she enjoyed its serenity and its peace.

Bert vanished after dinner every night and came home at all hours. Sometimes, when he had driven all the way around by Buzzards Bay and New Bedford to Newport, he didn't get in at all, and his mother, if Welden observed

his absence, said that he was spending the morning in bed, which only provoked a grunt and an expletive, "Lazy hound!"

About half a mile down the beach was a bleak board structure called the "Sea View Hotel," which the magnate was always threatening to buy and raze because it was an eyesore. The hotel accommodated about two hundred guests at moderate rates, and was very nearly empty in June, half full in July, jammed in August, and closed for the season in September. It had been erected about 1875 at a cost of thirty or forty thousand dollars and had paid for itself about forty times over in its fifty-five years of existence.

It was long, low, barren looking and innocent of paint, fronted by a wide porch upon which was a row of rocking-chairs about a hundred strong, many of them with broken seats in them. Its chef was a Pullman dining-car cook, wishing a change of air; its dining room was low ceiled and unappetizing; its soups and vegetables came out of cans; and its meats all had a dining-car flavor. The chambers had straw matting on the floor, mattresses stuffed with straw on the beds, a couple of decrepit chairs in each room, a bureau with a mirror which made those who looked in it despondent, a washstand with a water pitcher and basin, and wallpaper which was faded and coming off in strips owing to the great age of the original paste.

People who had comfortable homes came here and paid good prices for this sort of thing, remained from two weeks to a month, and went away to boast to their friends back in Boston or Providence of the good time they had had.

There were advantages to the Sea View Hotel. It faced the sparkling blue ocean and the roar of the surf lulled the occupants of the hard beds to slumber. There was no objection to bathing from the rooms, since no possible damage could be done to the chambers which had not been done already. People were sociable. Children were tolerated; there were no mosquitoes as the steady breeze from the ocean blew them inland, and it was possible to sit out upon the porch at night, sniff the fresh ozone and gossip healthfully and comfortably.

Young people liked it for other reasons. On moonless nights a couple was invisible when they passed beyond the dim range of the low-powered electric porch lights. There were miles of dark beach on which to roam and the sand was soft for sitting.

The man in charge of the old barn which had been turned into the garage was an agent of bootleggers who landed cargoes of Scotch and champagne on the beach once or twice a week from Canadian schooners which loafed along the Cape shore. Liquor was good and prices were reasonable. Mrs. Gribble, who ran the hotel, took it for granted that all her guests were of unimpeachable moral character and never bothered her head about what went on above stairs. Oh, there were advantages for the frolicsome at the rickety old Sea View Hotel.

Nevertheless, it seemed ghastly to the handsome, clean-cut, exotic-looking young man who alighted from the bus on the twenty-second of June about five o'clock in the evening.

"Surely," he protested, "I can't be expected to live in a place like that!"

The black-bearded, scar-faced person with him laughed unsympathetically.

"It's no use complaining, Basil. You're an old campaigner. You've got to rough it."

"I don't mind sleeping on the ground, as you know, Bill, but this building looks filthy. I'm sure its full of vermin."

"No. It's primitive but clean as a hound's tooth. It's a roost for middle-class working people who want to bathe in the sea every day for two weeks—annual vacation, you know. I'd take you to a better hotel, only there isn't any."

"And it is near the Weldens?"

"Half a mile up the beach. You can't see it because of the sand dunes."

"Doubtless the brute has good beds in his house."

"Of course. And every convenience and comfort American ingenuity has been able to contrive. Watch your step, now, your highness. We mustn't attract attention to ourselves."

The Crown Prince of Licania thrust his forefinger into his friend's ribs.

"Can that highness stuff, bo," he chuckled. "I say, I'm quite American, what?"

"Not within a thousand yards of it. You are English and you'll not learn how to toss off American slang in a million years. You've no idea how 'can that stuff, bo,' sounds with an Oxford accent. And I'm not so good on slang myself. I'm ten years behind the times."

"Oh, very well," said the prince huffily. "Let's see, my name is Basil Grantleigh."

"And I'm Professor Jabez Bentley."

"Why give yourself a title and deny it to me?"

Nedlew laughed. "Because a professor is the only person left in America who dares to wear whiskers. I wish I could shave them off, but that confounded scar is broader at the chin. I'd scare the children—and there appear to be plenty around."

They mounted the porch, Nedlew uncomfortably aware that twenty or thirty very plain and either bovine or vinegary women in rocking-chairs were staring at them with eager interest. Vladimar, trained from childhood to public parade, was not even aware of them.

The fine eyes of the prince kindled with amusement at the lobby of the Sea View Hotel, though he admitted it was larger and cleaner than the main room of an inn of the same class in Licania. However, antiquity and picturesqueness lent his native inns a certain attraction, while the bareness and crudeness of the interior of this pine box of a hotel shrieked louder than a December gale at Wellfleet. They stood upon creaking pine boards, confronting a counter made by an amateur carpenter and not varnished for at least fifteen or twenty years. The walls were yellow clapboards, upon one of which hung an atrocious painting of a steam tug named *Mary T. Wilkins,* whose pennants were very nearly as long as her hull and which floated upon waves which looked like lather in a shaving mug. Several half-sheet cards of local events, badly printed, were nailed unevenly upon the wall behind the desk and a wrinkled, gray-haired woman with a remarkable bust and a set of badly fitting false teeth was greeting them, pen in hand.

Nedlew registered for both of them.

"It's five dollars a week extry for rooms on the front of the house," she informed them in a flat, toneless voice.

"Nevertheless," smiled the black-bearded man, "we'll take them."

"Doctor, ain't ye?" she demanded. "Oh, a professor."

"And would you be so kind as to send me up hot water for shaving?" asked the man who was registered as Basil Grantleigh.

"Oh, you're English, ain't ye?" she exclaimed. "My folks came from England, but land's sakes, they been located in Wellfleet for nigh on two hundred years."

"Indeed?"

She handed two rusty keys to a blond, good-looking boy of eighteen, who already had their suit cases, and he led them up a narrow flight of creaking stairs to a long, uncarpeted corridor. On the way he informed them gratuitously that he was a student at Dartmouth, a sophomore, and he was only working here for the swimming—his folks were well to do and he didn't have to do it. But he took the fifty cents which Nedlew handed him and added he expected to put on enough

weight handling baggage to make the football team this year.

Nedlew followed the prince into his chamber and laughed at the horror on his sensitive face.

"Let's open the window," he suggested. "It will let in the sea air and soon clear out this musty odor. Our friend, the half back, should have done it, but probably thought it beneath him."

Vladimar looked at the window in perplexity. "It has no sash cords," he commented. "Does it open?"

Nedlew showed him how it was lifted and held in place by means of an iron pin in the sash which fitted into holes in the frame. A current of pure air rewarded them.

"Let us escape as soon as possible," pleaded the prince. "Fortunate professor, you don't have to shave twice a day."

The sophomore returned with hot water, watched the supposed Englishman open his Viennese traveling case with great interest, and began a cheerful conversation which was good-naturedly cut short by Nedlew.

"Let's see you make a flying tackle down those stairs, son," he said. "You've done your duty here."

The boy flushed, looked resentful, and departed.

"Curious kind of servant, what?" the prince asked.

"Oh, he's not really a servant. These summer hotels employ students as bellboys partly for the edification of the young lady guests."

"But surely lady guests do not——"

"You forget that America is a democracy. This is the freest country in the world until you want to do something—then you get arrested."

Half an hour later, having changed to knickers, the pair left the hotel and strolled with apparent casualness up the beach. There was a heavy surf running and it boomed like artillery heard from afar. As it was nearly six o'clock, there were no bathers in the water and few persons on the beach, which enabled them to talk freely about what was uppermost in their minds.

"It does not seem possible that Welden would have dared to bring to this desolate spot objects of enormous value," said the prince. "I fear we are wasting our time—and we have so little to waste."

"Either he did or he didn't," replied the American. "If he did not, the jewels are in his vaults in the Mastodon National Bank, so perfectly protected that the cleverest thieves in the world could not reach them. It would take a shell from a six-inch gun to break through the door of those safe-deposit vaults, and our prospects would be quite hopeless.

"It is my theory," Nedlew went on, "that Mr. Welden has not placed them in the bank vaults for the same reason that he refused to permit your country to redeem them, because he loves them and wants them with him. As he is here for a couple of months, I believe that he brought them along. There's the house. See the roof between the sand dunes, the one with the patch of green about it?"

The crown prince looked astonished. "That the Welden home? Why, surely a very great man would not live in such a place."

"It pleases Mr. Welden to conform to the prevailing architecture of the Cape," said the American, "but I assure you the house is enormous, and much more comfortable than the royal palace of Galeta."

"Nevertheless, it is remote, unprotected, and frail. Major, we shall win, if your theory is correct."

"I hope so, but I wouldn't bet on it. As for the house being unprotected, don't fool yourself."

They walked slowly in the deep, dry sand and the house and grounds of Elisha Welden came more fully into

view. There were neither wall nor fence about the front of the place—the gardens grew in open desert, so it appeared—and it was not until they were within a hundred yards that Vladimar realized that the house was truly enormous. And at that moment a man, who had been lying on his back on the grass at the edge of the grounds, rose and approached them.

This fellow wore blue flannels and a straw hat, but he had a hard face and huge, unpolished black shoes. His profession was obvious to Nedlew if not to the prince.

He barred their path.

"Private property, gents," he said with a coarse drawl.

"Who lives here?" asked Nedlew.

"Mr. Welden, of New York."

"Surely he can't object to our looking at his beautiful estate," said the prince.

"He's funny like that. You do your looking from farther away."

"I don't think your master would wish you to be rude," said Vladimar.

The watchman's face twisted into a mocking leer. "Hi s'y, me lud," he pleaded with the ludicrous effect of an East Side New Yorker trying to imitate an Englishman, "don't call me 'rude.' I just couldn't stand it."

Nedlew grasped his companion's arm and led him quickly away. The lips of the prince were tight and his eyes were smoldering.

"Insolent dog!" he muttered. "He should be horsewhipped."

"It isn't being done on Cape Cod. That's a pretty bad example of what we call a private detective. You have discovered that the house is guarded and you must be careful not to do anything which draws attention to us."

"But he was mocking me and I did not strike him."

"If you had he might have drawn a gun and shot us both. Mr. Welden would hire good lawyers to defend him and he would get off as having acted in self-defense. I understand how you feel, sir, but you left your title behind you in Licania."

"Of course. Of course. Do you suppose that man is the only watchman?"

"If Welden has the jewels here, you may be sure he has plenty of protection. Let's walk up the beach."

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE BEACH.

THE fashionable bathing hour in Honolulu is about four thirty in the afternoon, when the sun is no longer directly overhead dropping its blistering rays vertically; but on Cape Cod, as at most American beach resorts, it is considered the thing to bathe at eleven thirty, this despite the fact that the sun in the tropics burns no more fiercely than it does on the New England and New Jersey coast during our brief but torrid summers. For some reason which the writer can't explain, our summer temperature often is much higher than it ever gets in the tropics, but we are a hardy race and wear sunburn as a badge of intrepidity.

Janice Welden, accompanied by her brother Bert, came out of the house in a skimpy green one-piece bathing suit with a green-and-white beach robe on her left arm and a sunshade of green in her right hand. Bert wore a life-saving suit—black trunks, white shirt cut to display the greatest possible expanse of shoulders, and white belt. He was thin and his shoulders were narrow and his legs were skinny, but he fancied himself in a bathing suit.

Mrs. Welden was already waiting, but not in bathing costume. Sea water was bad for her, she believed. The young people slumped into chairs and waited for their father, who always made a family party of the ceremony of going into the surf.

Bert looked down at the beach, shading his eyes, for the light there was dazzling.

"Full of muckers as usual," he grumbled. "Why can't they stay where they belong?"

Marshton Beach was a shining gold expanse extending for miles and the swimming was equally good anywhere along its stretch, but, as at most beaches, there was a particular spot where everybody clustered, and here it was in front of the Welden cottage. The summer residents, rather naturally, liked to go where they would get a glimpse of the aristocrats of the place and the guests of the Sea View Hotel were even more curious to see what Elisha Welden and his lovely daughter and his sporting son looked like. The hotel folks walked half a mile up the beach in their bathing suits in the hot sun for the privilege and felt uplifted at the sight of the owner of hundreds of millions, even though he acted as if he were not aware of their existence.

A dozen big umbrellas were visible from the Welden porch and a string of bathers was moving slowly up from the vicinity of the hotel.

"Lot of gum-chewing shopgirls and shipping clerks," Bert continued to growl. "If we were in Newport we could bathe at Bailey's, where these saps wouldn't be allowed to show their noses."

"Oh, the poor things," said Janice tolerantly. "They only have a couple of weeks out of the whole year to enjoy themselves, and if staring at your remarkable figure gives them pleasure, I vote to let 'em."

"You're not so plump yourself," he retorted, "and you'd be arrested for wearing that bathing suit at Atlantic City. Why modern girls want to make a holy show of themselves——"

"Children," reproved Mrs. Welden, "be still. Your father is coming."

Mr. Welden appeared. Although a very great man, he suggested in bathing costume a musical comedy comedian, an uglier and less humorous W. C. Fields. He wore a bathing shirt popular in the effete '90's, which had a high collar and half sleeves, and a pair of trunks which came below his knees. From a practical standpoint it was more suitable than the affair worn by his son, but it set off his bay window grotesquely and Bert winked at his sister at sight of it.

"Well, well, here we all are," said Mr. Welden. *"En avant, mes enfants.* A swim will do us all good."

He walked across the lawn and out onto the sand, his wife by his side, his children a few paces behind, and a footman in the rear staggering under an enormous beach umbrella. All heads on the beach and in the water were turned in the direction of the procession. It was the peak of the bathing period.

Mr. Welden walked straight toward the water, ignoring those who ventured to bow. Mrs. Welden and Janice smiled in friendly fashion at acquaintances, but Bert imitated his father. Cottagers and hotel guests were the same to him, all muckers. About fifty feet from the water's edge, the servant put up the umbrella and Mrs. Welden, Janice and Bert sought its shade. Mr. Welden walked into the surf, stooped, wet his hands, splashed water on his clothed shoulders, shivered and then dove forward. He swam laboriously, using the breast stroke, for five minutes, and then emerged, shook himself like a wet dog, and marched to the umbrella.

"I'm going back to the house," he announced, and left them. The family breathed more easily. Janice's conscience pricked her often because she could not love her father, but Bert's never did. He had hated his father since childhood, while Janice had only hated him since he ordered her adored elder brother out of the house and forbade him ever again to communicate

with his mother or his sister and brother. However, a girl ought not to hate her father and she tried hard not to.

"Look," exclaimed Janice to Bert. "What a very handsome man!"

He followed the direction of her eyes.

"Looks like a gigolo," was Bert's comment. "Wonder what old woman brought him down here."

"Don't be an idiot. He's a gentleman, and if you could ever carry yourself in a bathing suit with half his dignity——"

"Yah! He's probably a barber down here on a two-week vacation."

"He's no barber," she retorted with heat. "He looks more like a Russian, and I'm sure he's somebody."

She rose, threw off her robe, stood as slim and straight as a daughter of Nereus, and ran swiftly into the surf. Her entrance seemed to act like a signal upon a score of young men and women who were lying on the beach, for they also rose and entered the sea. Out of the corner of her eye, as she swam, Janice observed that the strange young man had continued his walk up the beach, but a hundred yards farther on he stepped into the white smother, stood undecided, waded out a little, and began to swim close to the shore.

Vladimar was familiar with rivers and tiled swimming pools, but he had little experience of the ocean and found it difficult to swim in surf. He had walked up the beach from the hotel because everybody seemed to be doing it and as yet was not aware that the lovely blond girl huddled under a big umbrella had noticed him; in fact, he had not seen her at all. He was alone because Nedlew had gone in opposite the hotel half an hour earlier and was back in his room dressing by the time his friend had made up his mind to test the qualities of the surf. He had donned a bathing suit because time hung heavy on his hands and neither he nor Nedlew had evolved a plan for carrying out their business.

He found surf bathing rather exhausting and he stood up after a few minutes to admire a young woman who was approaching with the speed of a dolphin, white arms flashing, face buried under water. It was the first time he had seen the Australian crawl as exemplified by a graceful young woman, to wit, Janice Welden.

She passed him fifty feet out, and he got a glimpse of a lovely pair of blue eyes and a perfect profile as she bobbed up for air and again buried her face in the foam.

What happened then was a variation of the Lorelei motive, or rather the enchantment of the sirens, since Lorelei haunted rivers while the sirens lived in the sea. Vladimar, ashamed of his timidity, swam out into deep water and was too inexperienced to synchronize his breathing with the passing of the big rollers. His eyes were fixed upon the girl, who had swum a hundred feet farther north and had turned back, and he was caught in the break of a wave as he was filling his lungs. He sputtered, swallowed a quantity of water, expelled it, and, as he breathed again, was struck by another wave. He found it impossible to swim. Like wolves the breakers crashed upon him. He was choking, he forgot how to keep afloat; he realized that he was drowning—and then two hands were supporting his shoulders and a thrilling voice was saying:

"Don't struggle. You're safe. Keep your eye on the waves and hold your breath when they pass over you."

With a dozen strokes she drew him into shallow water and set him on his feet and stood before him laughing.

Vladimar was sick and pathetically grateful.

"I don't know how to thank you," he stammered. "Are you a Nereid?"

"Just a girl," she said with a smile. "And you're an Englishman, aren't you?"

"Er—yes. I—er—must seem an awful fool. I swim fairly well, you know, but I have had little experience of surf like this. I believe I would have drowned if you hadn't come along."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't," she said quickly. "You would have got to shore, all right. Suppose you go out and lie on the sand. I know how it feels to swallow a lot of salt water."

"Thank you, I shall."

He waded ashore and flopped on the sand. She followed.

"Are you sure you're all right?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes, thanks."

"We have plenty of brandy at the house. Shall I get you some?"

"No, thank you. I am exceedingly grateful, though I am afraid I don't express my gratitude very well."

"Oh, yes, you do. And it was nothing. I'm a strong swimmer."

"May I ask the name of my rescuer? I am Basil Grantleigh."

"My name is Janice Welden," she said simply. She was used to having the announcement of her name create an impresison, but his reception of it astonished her. His eyes snapped and he frowned.

"Surely not! You're not related to the banker?"

"Why not? I'm his daughter."

"My word!" It sounded more like anger than anything else.

"Do you know my father, Mr. Grantleigh?"

"Oh, no. But I've heard of him."

"I'd like to have you meet him," she said impulsively. "Come to our cottage for tea at five. Perhaps he will be with us."

"Why—er—you are very kind. Thank you."

"Where are you staying?"

He pointed down the beach. "At that very weird hotel."

"Really? You must be very uncomfortable."

"It's roughing it," he said wryly. "But I came here with a friend, Professor Bentley, who is fond of Cape Cod."

"You picked a section which has poor accommodations for transients. There are good hotels at Chatham."

"I fancy I won't be able to stand the Sea View Hotel very long. But I shall be grateful for your tea."

"And bring your friend, if you like," she invited. "I must go now. I'm rather uncomfortable without a beach robe. Are you sure you are all right?"

"Perfectly. And very thankful to you."

She smiled, waved her hand and ran back into the surf. The prince continued to sit on the sand and marvel at the loveliness of the daughter of the enemy of himself and his country.

The women of Licania are justly admired for their beauty, but they are weird, mysterious, rather Oriental and almost always sex conscious. This exquisite little creature was as frank and open as a boy, athletic without being muscular, slender yet feminine, apparently unconscious of her charm and quite without challenge. She was as fresh and pure as the air he breathed. And she was the daughter of a dishonest pawnbroker. Furthermore, he was indebted to her for his life. That he would have drowned in a few minutes more he was certain. It was humiliating, of course, for him to have been saved from drowning by a young girl and yet she had been so casual and so tactful that he felt no humiliation. What a marvelous young person! What a pity that she was Welden's daughter. How sweetly and generously she had invited a stranger to her home to tea. And what an opportunity she had given him!

He and Nedlew had discovered that the house was guarded and anybody who approached it would be sharply challenged. By this present fortuitous circumstance, he could pass the guards and

have an opportunity to study the interior of the building, from which it was his duty to remove the crown jewels of Licania. A fine return for hospitality, though, to burglarize the house where he had been received as a guest. Vladimar had no stomach for the job now, though his resolution was unweakened.

As a man of honor he could not accept the generous invitation of Miss Welden to spy upon the interior of her home for the purpose of robbing it for his own advantage, but as the emissary of his country in the hour of her greatest need, he would be compelled to do so. The king depended upon him, the country's weal rested upon his success, and a pair of clear, honest blue eyes must not cause him to waver in his resolution.

He rose presently and walked slowly back to the hotel. Nedlew was sitting on the porch reading a magazine, and at a sign from the bather rose and followed him up to his chamber. Vladimar briefly related what had happened.

"So, this afternoon, you and I shall enter the Welden house," he concluded.

"I think you had better go alone," said the major. "I'm rather a sinister-looking person, and I should prevent you from making a good impression."

"That's nonsense!"

"No, no. You are an attractive and innocuous-looking young Englishman," the other declared, "but I am an American with a scarred face and black whiskers. I'm sure to awaken suspicion, if not in the mind of Miss Welden, certainly in the minds of the private detectives hanging about there. Welden, if he has the jewels with him, as I believe, must anticipate some move to recover them. He may accept his daughter's explanation of your presence, but if he sees me, he's likely to ask himself whether it isn't curious that you happened to be drowning just when his daughter and nobody else was at hand to save you. He may suspect a plan to get into the house."

The prince looked impressed. "I—I hope Miss Welden wouldn't think me capable of such a thing."

"Oh, she saw that you actually were in distress and she knows you were not faking. By the way, what kind of a girl is she?"

Vladimar's face lit up. "Charming! Perfectly exquisite! The loveliest, sweetest, most unaffected——"

"Enough!" laughed his friend. "I heard she had turned out to be a beauty. Don't fall in love with her. Remember that you're doomed to marry one of those homely princesses."

"I suppose so," sighed the prince. "I could fall in love with a girl like this one if I were a free man like you, you lucky devil."

"I have in my possession a plan of the Welden house already. Got it this morning. I know now much more than you'll find out, because you'll be given tea on the porch and won't be invited inside at all."

"At least the guards will understand that I am a friend of the family," said Vladimar, "and not be suspicious if they see me in the vicinity."

"And the tea is sure to be good," smiled Nedlew. "I'm going back to the porch, if you don't mind. Join me when you've finished dressing."

He went downstairs, strolled to the extreme end of the long piazza, selected an intact rocking-chair, settled himself in it and placed his feet on the top of the porch railing. He contemplated the shining blue sea for a moment while a curious smile played upon his plain features.

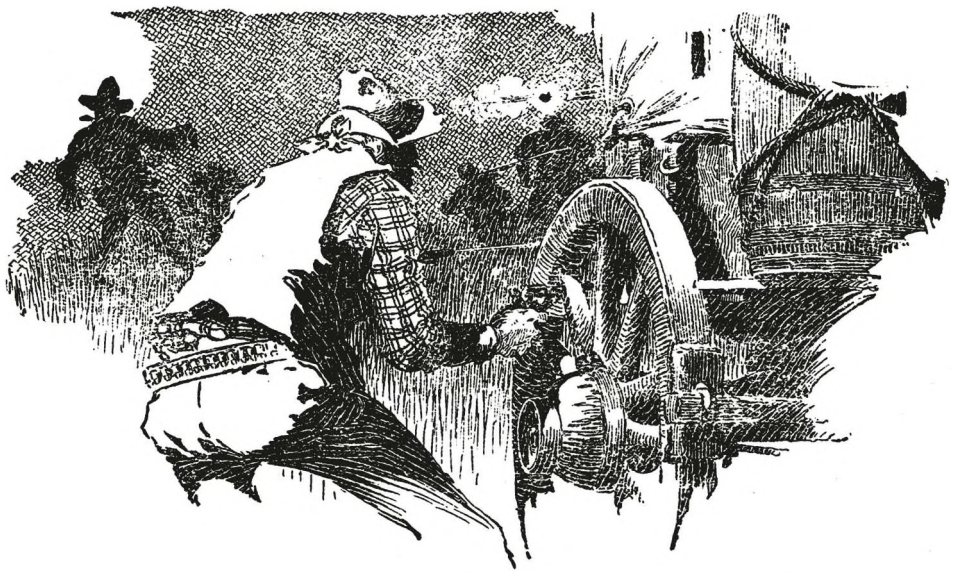
"So she has turned into a little beauty," he said softly.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said a voice behind him. "May I have a few words with you?"

To be continued in the next issue.

SPIDER WEB

By MARK PRICE



Like a Wily Old Spider, Sheriff Reynolds Spun His Web for Flash Selzer's Gang of Murderers.

IT was a pleasant morning in Fairfield. The three regular deputies came to the sheriff's office to report for duty as usual. They lounged in the doorway and chatted a while.

Ed Brown looked at his watch.

"Eight o'clock, and everything's O. K. in this part of the country," he said. "Wonder what's keepin' the sheriff?"

"Oh, I s'pose he's home readin' up on Rome or the north pole or some such truck," replied "Tex" Ramsey sarcastically. He was a very self-confident young man, just out of the border patrol and a new recruit among the deputies. Now he started on his favorite theme: "I been deputy in lots o' places, but the sheriff o' this county takes the prize. I've never seen the like. Old fat fool, settin' all day and readin' that cyclopædia of his!"

"Don't forget he's the man that got the 'Rojo Kid,' and 'Wolf' Hauser, and the Mayo gang!" retorted "Slim" Sutherland, the third deputy. "And I might name plenty more!"

"Yeah, but that was all twenty years ago!" cried Ramsey. "He's an old man now, and if yuh ask me he's loose up here." He tapped his forehead. "He'd be all right for sheep-herdin', but fer sheriff—bah! What the job needs is some young, spry fellow."

"Somebody like you, I s'pose!" jeered Ed.

"Yeah," said Tex. "Somebody like me."

"Listen, Texas," said Ed. "Mart

Reynolds can sling a gun, his nerve's like steel, and besides that he's got somethin' you'll never have."

"What's that?" asked Tex.

"Brains!"

Further conversation ceased as the sheriff appeared on the scene. As Tex had said, Mart Reynolds was old and stout, and only a fringe of gray hair encircled his head. But his pale-blue eyes were keen, his jaw firm, and he carried himself like a young man. As usual, he had a book under his arm.

"Mornin', boys!" he said. "What's the news?"

"Nothin' at all, sheriff," reported Slim. "Everything seems quiet."

Reynolds sat down at his desk and opened his book.

"Been readin' up on spiders, boys," he drawled. "They're sure remarkable animals. No bigger'n a minute, an' yet they act smarter than most humans. Why, they——" The sheriff was about to deliver a lecture on the habits of spiders. Tex yawned openly. Then the telephone rang.

Reynolds went and answered it. "Hello! Sheriff speakin'," he drawled. "Who? . . . Oh, yeah, yuh live down in Mavericktown, don't yuh? What's on yore mind?" Suddenly he stiffened, and fairly shouted: "What! . . . When?" Then he listened for a long time in silence, while the aroused deputies stared at him. At last he said quietly, "Much obliged. Good-by," and hung up.

He turned about, his wrinkled face stern. "Take this down, Ed."

Ed got a card and a pen.

"There's been a murder in Devil's Pass," said Reynolds. "A whole family wiped out—a man, his wife and two kids. They was homesteaders, headin' south fer the government lands with their life savin's with 'em. Passed through Mavericktown at sundown and camped five miles beyond. This mornin' they was found all shot dead, their valuables gone and their wagon stripped. No suspects, no clews, no nothin'." He sat down heavily at the desk again, and held his head in his hands.

"My God!" whispered Tex. There was a horrified silence.

The sheriff went to a large wall map of the county where he upheld the law. Fairfield County covered a territory greater than many eastern States. Two hundred miles south of Fairfield, the county seat, was a wild, barren region of twisted ridges and arroyos and towering mountain peaks. It was not attractive to settlers, inhabited as it was only by skulking criminals and outlaws. North of this region were great cattle ranches, south of it government land, for homesteaders. Through the wilderness ran a broad, pleasant valley, Devil's Pass, the only highway between the north and the south. And in the valley lay Mavericktown, a hard, lawless town, like a beast of prey that crouched there to take toll from the travelers who passed.

"What's the late record on Devil's Pass?"

Ed looked through the file and took out a card. "Three months ago a stranger broke the faro bank in Mavericktown. He was found a few days later with his throat cut and his pockets empty. Couple of weeks later two ranchers with money fer their spring herd on 'em was robbed and murdered. You was laid up with a busted leg, then, sheriff, and each time I took a posse, went down there, searched around, questioned everybody—an' found nothin'. And now—this."

"You don't know the guilty parties?" asked Tex.

Mart Reynolds pursed his lips. "Don't know, but got a darned strong suspicion. It's 'Flash' Selzer and his gang."

"Why don't you get them, then?"

"There's no evidence. We can't get the goods on em," said Reynolds. "They

rob and then kill, and dead men can't testify."

"Dirty wolves!" growled Tex, and paced up and down.

"Let's see," said the sheriff, half to himself. "I've never been south yet since takin' office an' nobody down there knows me. And the same fer Tex."

"What of it?" cried Tex. He took an extra cartridge belt from a hook and buckled it about him. "Well, what are we waitin' fer?"

"Where d'you think you're goin'?" asked the sheriff.

"We're gettin' up a posse and ridin' fer Devil's Pass, ain't we?"

"Set down, son," said Reynolds mildly. "We ain't goin' down there today, nor to-morrow either. We're stayin' right here." He looked down at his book. "Smart animal, the spider," he continued. "He don't gallivant around chasin' his enemies. He just spins his web in a likely spot, and sets down to wait. And pretty soon his prey comes along and gets caught in the web."

Tex's self-control broke. "Are you crazy, man?" he shouted furiously. "There's been a cold-blooded murder, a woman and kids—and you don't do nothin' about it; just set there an' gab about spiders. Damn it, what kind of a sheriff are you?"

Mart Reynolds' mild expression did not change. "Feelin' sort of upset, ain't you? Don't you worry, now." He arose. "Got some things to look after," he said, and went away.

Tex hung up the cartridge belt again. "The damned old fool must be off his head!" he said.

Ed Brown took offense at that, and came up growling: "Say, you——"

But Slim grabbed Ed by the arm. "Easy, boy," he counseled. "Tex is new here. He just don't understand the old man."

It was the most atrocious crime in half a century, and Fairfield was deeply stirred. It was the chief topic of conversation in the streets. "Get the killers!" said every one. And Sheriff Reynolds did nothing.

Every one expected him to lead out a posse to Devil's Pass. Instead, he lounged in his office most of the time, now and then departing alone on mysterious journeys. People began to grow astonished and indignant, but to all questions he gave evasive answers. "Ain't got around to it yet," he would say. And thus two weeks passed.

Then one afternoon he came in the office and said: "Get ready, boys. We're ridin'."

Several men lounging by the doorway looked interested, and Tex jumped up. "To Devil's Pass?" he asked.

"No," said Reynolds. "There's a fine fence dispute between two cow outfits a day's ride north. There may be trouble, and we'd better look after it first."

Tex choked down his anger and got ready, while the bystanders muttered among themselves. In a half hour the sheriff and his three deputies took the trail for the north.

They camped that night at a creek beyond a ridge. As darkness fell and they cooked supper, the sheriff kept glancing about.

His vigilance was rewarded. As they lingered over their coffee there was a slight noise, and Reynolds saw a dim figure skulking away over the near-by ridge.

"What's that?" said Tex.

"Spy," said Mart Reynolds. "He's goin' back to report I'm safe on my way. They're worried a bit down in Devil's Pass."

He smoked a pipe, then arose. Tex was about to unroll his blanket. "Don't do that, Tex," said Reynolds. "No sleep fer us. We're ridin' to-night!"

"Where to?"

"Back-trackin' almost, down to Hayes Corners," said Reynolds. "They're off

our trail now, and we'll get down to business. Let's go!"

Mart Reynolds was not mild and slow now. He moved swiftly and there was a ring in his voice that made his men move also. They mounted again and rode hard toward Hayes Corners, which was a little east of Fairfield.

They reached their destination after midnight. Everything was quiet and deserted, but old man Hayes, the livery-stable owner, was awaiting them. "Everything's ready and fixed just like you said, Mart."

"Fine," said Mart, and led the way into the stable. There stood, of all things —a covered wagon! A big, clumsy thing, canvas covered, the coach of the homesteader and pioneer.

"Hitch up them four mules, boys," the sheriff directed, and they led two teams of mules from the stalls and spanned them to the wagon.

Reynolds looked into the wagon at the supplies and weapons there, and seemed satisfied. "Fine," he said. "And now, Tex, you put these on."

Tex looked at the garments handed him with amazement. There was a woman's gingham dress, shoes and a huge sunbonnet. "What you doin', kiddin' me? I'll be damned if I wear these things!" But the sheriff was not kidding. He said coldly: "Deputy Ramsey, you're under my orders. Do as I say!" And Tex put them on.

When he was done he stood blushing furiously and the sheriff looked him over. The dress reached almost to the ground, and the huge sunbonnet almost hid his face, so not much of Tex was visible in his outfit.

"You'll do, as long as nobody looks too close," said Mart. He grinned. "Lucky you're young and beardless and round faced. You make a purty good woman!" And Tex blushed once more.

"Ed and Slim, you get into the wagon, and don't ever stick yore noses outside," directed Mart. "And you, Tex, come up and sit on the seat beside me." Mart went to his place, and took up the reins. "All set? Let's go."

"Wish I was goin' with you," said Hayes.

"Remember, not a word to nobody, Hayes," said Mart. "So long!" And the covered wagon rolled out of the stable into the night. No one saw them go.

"Where to?" asked Tex wonderingly.

Mart's blue eyes were sparkling. "We're goin' down to visit Devil's Pass," he said. "Maybe this time Flash Selzer's foot will slip!"

Late one afternoon a covered wagon rumbled into Mavericktown. The loungers roused and stared. They saw a stout, good-natured old fellow on the driver's seat, a thin woman in gingham dress and sunbonnet beside him. He waved genially as he passed.

"Is she a good looker?"

"How c'n yuh tell, with that riggin' she's got on? Can't see her face. 'Tain't likely worth seein', anyway. Must be the wife of the fat nester, and a dried-up bag o' bones at that."

The wagon did not stop, but kept going south through the town and went out of sight down the trail. The loungers relaxed to indifference again.

At sundown the old man returned to Mavericktown alone, riding one of his mules. He went to the saloon. "Give me a slug of red-eye," he said to the bartender. "I ain't drank fer a month."

The bartender filled a glass. The old man downed it and sighed with satisfaction. "That hit the spot! Let's have another."

"Stranger round here, ain't you?" asked the bartender as he refilled the glass.

"Yeah," said the old man. "Name's Smith. I'm goin' down south o' here to take out a homestead. Campin' a bit south o' here to-night."

"This is a poor year to start," said

the bartender. "You got to have plenty of cash to weather the drought."

"That's what I've got plenty of," laughed the old man. He ordered another drink.

"Yeah?" said the bartender. He winked at a man, who went out. Several of the loungers edged closer.

"Step up and have one on me, boys," invited the stranger. They did so. The old man turned and looked at a group of men who sat at a large table in the corner. There were ten of them, a dangerous-looking lot, with hard faces and cruel eyes. "What's the matter with them stand-offish jaspers? Ain't they drinkin'?"

"Those are Flash Selzer's men," explained the bartender. "Everybody up!" And they all crowded to the bar as the stranger, already showing the effects of the liquor, led them in downing another glass.

The old man had started his fifth glass and was becoming maudlin when another man came in. "There's Flash Selzer! Hi, Flash!" they greeted him.

"Have one on me," invited the old man. Selzer accepted, and soon the two were laughing and chatting like old friends.

Selzer was very genial, and seemed a good sort of fellow until you looked at his eyes. They were small and green and unwinking, and there was a strange light in them that was not pleasant to see. They were the eyes of a killer.

"Have one on me," invited Selzer in turn.

"I'll take another, but the drinks're on me," insisted the stranger with drunken dignity.

A few more and he was very drunk. He laughed loudly, and tried to sing. Selzer kept watching him. At last he looked at his watch. "Got t' get back to m' wagon. Old woman's waitin' fer me. What's the bill, barkeep?"

The bartender told him. The old man reached into his pocket and pulled out a roll of bills big enough to choke a cow. Every one stared, and Selzer caught his breath. The ten men crowded nearer. The old man peeled off two bills from the roll and tossed them on the bar. "Keep the change!"

He restored the small fortune to his pocket, patted it. "Gotta watch that—it's m' life savin's," he said. He staggered back to Selzer, grasped his hand. "S'long, Selzer. See y' again. Friends—ain't we?"

Selzer showed his teeth. "Yeah," he said with a curt laugh, "we're friends."

The drunken stranger staggered toward the door. He could hardly walk, and a man took his arm and assisted him. Outside at the hitching rack this man glanced right and left fearfully, and whispered: "You old fool, get out of here and run like hell if you want to save yore neck!"

But the old man did not seem to have heard the warning. He slowly mounted his horse, announcing the while that he was a curly wolf on the prowl. Then he rode away, swaying in the saddle, and singing.

Strangely enough, once out of sight of town the old man did not seem drunk at all. Mart Reynolds had a real capacity for liquor; half a dozen drinks scarcely affected him. He sat erect now, and chuckled softly. "Reckon it's all set," he said aloud.

He came to his camp at dusk. The canvas-covered wagon stood beside a spring, the mules picketed near by, and Tex in his disguise sat glum and scowling.

"Had supper yet?" asked Mart.

"Yeah," said Tex. "When do I take off these heifer clothes?"

"Right now," said the sheriff. "Get in the wagon." Tex got in and proceeded to shed his female garments with great speed. Mart folowed him inside and closed the flap. Ed and Slim lay stretched out on the floor.

"When do we come out o' this coop,

chief?" asked Slim. "I'm near dead fer a breath o' fresh air."

"It won't be long now. To-night's the night," said Mart. "You're on guard to-night. Set tight with yore guns ready, and lots of ammunition."

Tex protested: "But it ain't safe in this flimsy canvas wagon!"

Mart took hold of the inside canvas and ripped it down. Beneath there were steel plates lining the wagon on all sides, with slots cut in for loopholes. And the deputies understood that their innocent, frail-looking wagon was really a moving fortress with walls of steel.

"Had this wagon made to order," drawled the sheriff. He struck the steel and it rang. "Reckon thet'll turn a bullet."

"Who's comin'?" asked Slim.

"Ain't quite sure yet. I got drunk and flashed a roll in town this evenin', and got everybody plumb interested." He put a revolver in each side pocket, and took a volume of his encyclopædia under his arm. "I'm expectin' company to-night. Eleven men, all killers. Be waitin' at the loopholes and when I yell 'Now!' give 'em all you got. On yore guard, boys!"

Mart went out into the night. He threw wood on the camp fire beside the wagon till it blazed up and lighted all the surroundings. Then he sat down, lit his pipe and began to read.

Hours passed. At midnight there were stealthy sounds out in the darkness. They seemed to come from all around. Mart puffed his pipe and read on.

A group of men came into the circle of firelight. There were eleven of them, and they approached the wagon from all sides, hemming it in. It was the gang from the Mavericktown saloon, with Flash Selzer leading them.

The old man laid down his book and glanced up. "Why, it's Selzer and the boys! Howdy, Flash! How's my friend?"

They advanced in ominous silence with hands on guns and faces set. Flash Selzer laughed, but it was the laugh of a jungle beast, and in his green eyes was death.

"Can the talk! Hand over yore roll!" he snapped.

Mart arose and backed against the wagon. "Why, you can't do that!" he protested. "I'll have the law on you!"

"Yeah?" sneered Flash. "When we get through with you, you won't do any talkin'! Pedro, fix him! Buck, go in and look after the old woman!"

A huge, unshaven man drew his gun and headed for the covered wagon. A little, swarthy man nodded. *"Si,* my chief. And always the knife is much more quiet and neat than the gun." He drew a long knife from his belt and approached the old man, his eyes mere slits.

Mart Reynolds stood erect and held up his hand. "Wait a minute." They all stopped. He spoke coldly and swiftly. "I'm Sheriff Reynolds. I arrest you-all fer attempted robbery and murder. My deputies are coverin' you, and I warn you not to resist!"

His voice rang out, and after he had finished there was silence for a second. Then a burst of scornful unbelieving laughter rang out. *"Dios!* the old man is loco! He will be better off dead, no?" cried Pedro. He balanced his knife in his hand, and rushed.

"Now!" shouted Mart Reynolds, and he crouched down beside the wagon and whipped out his guns. He shot the charging Mexican, and the fellow fell dead at his feet. Then the covered wagon above him burst into roaring flame as his deputies went into action.

A hail of death came out of that wagon at Selzer's gang, and swept them down. The surprised gunmen fired back in vain, and dropped one by one. Everywhere was the flash and roar of gunfire. And in the midst of it Mart Reynolds crouched beside the wagon, the

deadly gun fighter of old, his eyes grim and strangely youthful, shooting with both hands.

A third volley, and a fourth from the death-dealing wagon. Another outlaw dropped, and another. They had little chance. Selzer's gang, superior in numbers, was almost wiped out. The man named "Buck" fell forward beside the fire. Of two survivors, one turned and fled. The other was Flash Selzer, and he rushed at Mart, snarling: "I'll get you ——" He and the sheriff fired together. Reynolds reeled back, clutching at his side, even as Selzer crashed into the wagon and fell dead, shot in the heart. The lone fugitive was just beyond the circle of firelight, and Mart steadied himself, fired again. The flying figure dropped.

The sheriff abruptly sat down on the ground. "Come on out, boys," he called. "The party's over."

They came out, stared at the figures sprawled in the firelight. Ed ran to Mart crying: "Are you hurt, sheriff?"

"Just a scratch," said Mart, and started to rise. Then things seemed to go around, and he fell back.

The next thing he knew he was on the wagon seat between Ed and Tex, and they were driving through the night toward Fairfield. He opened his eyes and said: "I must've passed out."

Ed turned to him. "You shore did," he declared. "A wonder you wasn't killed out there. But you only got a couple flesh wounds."

"Oh, I c'n feel 'em all right," declared Mart, straightening painfully. "Everything fixed?"

Ed cracked the whip over his mules and answered: "Yeah. They're all in back of the wagon, with Slim on guard. Four of 'em wounded and seven dead."

"I'm glad they resisted," said Mart softly. "Dirty killers like that deserve nothin' but lead. And, besides, a man needs a good fight once in a while."

"Yeah," said Tex.

Suddenly Mart sat upright with a stifled groan. "Did you bring my book?" he demanded.

"Yeah," said Ed.

"That's fine. I got to finish readin' 'bout spiders," said Mart. "I sort of copied 'em this time. Knew I couldn't get the goods on Selzer; only way was to catch him red-handed. So I spun a web with a fake roll and a fake drunk and a fake wife and a fake covered wagon. And Selzer ran plumb into it, and got his!" He leaned back and sighed. "Spider methods suit me fine. 'Stead of chasin' around after yore man, just set down and let him come to yuh. That's laziness, I reckon. Or maybe it's 'cause I'm gettin' old."

Ed cracked his whip and cursed his mules again. "Reckon that's right," he declared with mock solemnity. "You're gettin' old, Mart, and you ain't fit to be sheriff no more, and you ought to step aside fer some spry young fellow that would do better. How about it, Tex?"

The recruit deputy looked at the sheriff and then at Ed, and he blushed and grinned sheepishly. "Aw, shut up!" he said.

Watch for more stories by Mark Price.

NOT A FAIR TEST

THAT researcher who says he has found that what a woman wears amounts to little more than three pounds must have caught her at a time when her troubles weighed heavily upon her.

Detective Corrigan Makes the Underworld Live Up to Its Code of "An Eye for An Eye."

ON the SPOT

By SEAN O'LARKIN

THE gray-haired man with the tired blue eyes looked up from a badly typed report he was trying to read and glanced toward the door which some one had opened. The tired eyes narrowed down to red slits.

"What are you doing here?" he yelled.

"I had to come, Corrigan—I had to."

"And you're no damn good to me from now on. Everybody that comes into this house is lamped by those old ladies across the street. In an hour, everybody in the neighborhood will know that 'Gimpy' Hone walked into the station house without a cop dragging him in!"

"I had to come," Gimpy reiterated in a weak voice. He was afraid of the lieutenant in the detective bureau, but there was a matter that had impelled him to brave Corrigan's wrath. "I know I can't stool for you any more, but this *is* important!"

"It must be!" Corrigan sneered. "Spit it out!"

"It's about Frank——"

The plain-clothes man sat up straight in his chair, his tired eyes forcing themselves wide open.

"What about Frank!" he barked impatiently.

"Ranzoni found out he was your brother."

"How?" Corrigan roared. He was feeding his rage to quell his fright.

"Frank told him—just ten minutes

ago—and told him, too, to go straight to hell!"

Corrigan sprang to his feet with clenched fists, and Gimpy fell back a few steps, thinking the detective was going to hit him. But Corrigan turned from him, walked over to the tall window and, staring down into the teeming street, shoved his fists into his pockets. Somewhere in the distance, a hand organ was blaring: "Button Up Your Overcoat."

Gimpy suddenly remembered he owned no coat to button and had been counting on his tips to the police to pay him enough to get one. He was a far-seeing stool pigeon, and he knew now that his work with the police was over and that he would have to hop the rattlers and go south to avoid the cold session promised by the weather man.

"Tell me about it, Gimpy. What happened?" Corrigan asked as he turned from the window and allowed his gaze to drop from Gimpy's eyes to Gimpy's shoes.

"It was like this," the little lame man began, after clearing his throat: "I was up to Frank's radio shop listenin' to the big horn outside givin' the football scores. It was about four o'clock, see? I was there about ten minutes when up waltzes Ranzoni—Giuseppe himself in person—all smarted up in a raccoon coat and a derby on his nut. He says, 'Get outer my way, you bum!' to me and pushes past me to go into the shop. Frank was just inside the door, see, and he holds the door open while he talks to Ranzoni.

"Well, to make a long story short, Ranzoni says somethin' to Frank that I don't hear. It was long and low and like a proposition. Frank shakes his head and says to Ranzoni: 'I'll let my brother know about that. You'll pull no racket on me! Get the hell out of my store!' Ranzoni gets angry and asks: 'Who's your brother, dumb-bell?' And Frank says: 'Eddie Corrigan. You oughter know him well. He's tried hard enough to put you where you belong!' Ranzoni laughs and asks: 'Where's that?' And Frank comes back with: 'Makin' little ones outer big ones!' Ranzoni laughs and walks out and goes off toward Hillman's radio shop."

"Toward Hillman's?" Corrigan repeated in a surprised tone.

"Sure. I followed him. I couldn't hear what he said to Hillman but I saw the old man through the front window. He turned green and got the shakes. Yes, sir, he turned green."

"That was about fifteen minutes ago?"

"Yeah!"

"Thanks, Gimpy. Run along now. I'm busy. If I can, I'll throw something your way. But lay low a while. You've been seen here and you know what that might mean."

The lame man nodded, mumbled a good-by and went out, taking care not to slam the door after him.

Corrigan sat down at his desk. He brushed the badly typed report aside and continued to stare with unseeing eyes, dead ahead. Then he picked up the telephone and gave a number to the operator. Meanwhile he nervously lighted a cigarette and stuck it between his lips.

"Hello. Corrigan radio store?" he said. "Put Frank on the wire."

"He just left here. Is this Mr. Corrigan?"

"Yes!"

"Well, he just left here. Didn't say where he was going."

"Thanks." Corrigan jammed the receiver on its book.

He must find Frank. That thought kept echoing in his mind. He must get Frank to go away for a while. Giuseppe Ranzoni was a bad man. And so was Ranzoni's brother, Tony. Frank should have known better. Didn't the police know the Ranzonis were to blame for

the deaths of Freddie Williams, "Gashouse" Smithy and "Trouble" Baxter. All shot to death—in the back, too. But they were gangsters, and the police couldn't hang the shootings on any one. Giuseppi Ranzoni was a smart guy. "Don't I know it?" Corrigan cursed. He, himself, had tried to send Ranzoni up on a grand larceny charge. But the racketeer hired the best lawyer in town, who in turn coached all the witnesses in high-class perjury. There was no conviction and Ranzoni, leaving the courtroom a free man, stopped at Corrigan's side and offered him a cigarette. "Behave yourself and have a smoke!" were his words. He knew now, Corrigan did, that Giuseppi Ranzoni was the sort of fellow who liked to even scores.

But Frank—no one knew of his relationship to Lieutenant Corrigan of the detective bureau. No one knew that Frank Corrigan who ran the successful radio store was Eddie Corrigan's brother. It had always been a superstition of Eddie's that Frank would be safe only if no one knew he was a detective's brother. The underworld that Eddie worked to clean up had a horrible sense of vengeance. Hadn't Captain Mason's son been shot by "Red" Kiley's gunmen because the captain had sent Red to the penitentiary for six months? The boy's subsequent death killed the police captain. The boy was an only son—an only child.

Frank was Eddie Corrigan's only relative. He was like a son to Eddie, who had brought him up. Eddie had kept him out of the police department because there was little honest money in making a city behave itself.

Yes, Corrigan told himself then, Frank was like a son to him. When he, Eddie, died, Frank would get the few thousand he had to leave behind him. Frank was a good boy, a brother who by his industry and sense of loyalty had more than repaid the elder Corrigan for his care.

Now Frank had betrayed his identity to Ranzoni. And the racketeer was out to get Corrigan—or at him. The detective bowed his head and pressed shut his tired eyelids. He must bawl Frank out for being so careless. And Frank must go away. He must——

A blast from the street below stirred Corrigan from his thoughts. Was it a backfire or a shot? A woman was screaming. There was a commotion in the squad room below the detective bureau.

Corrigan got up and went over to the front window. Through the pane he could see a crowd gathering in the street, pressing toward the station-house door. He threw up the window and poked his head out.

A man was lying face down on the steps leading to the station house. Four policeman were trying to push the morbidly curious crowd back. The desk lieutenant was shaking his head slowly and sadly. Across the street a child cried out with laughter, and Corrigan, looking at it, saw it join its playmates and run, screaming merrily, toward the corner. The late afternoon sunlight fell in a blaze on the children's uncovered heads.

Murder on the station-house steps! Corrigan smiled grimly. Ranzoni! He'd lay two to one on that—five to one, too! Probably the killer got away in a taxi. He withdrew his head from the window, closed it and started for the door. Might as well see what it was all about.

Hagan, one of his men, was rushing up the winding stairs as he started to descend. The man was out of breath and quite excited.

"S'matter, Hagan? You're all winded. Cut out the cigarettes for a while. I tried it and worked wonders."

The other man stopped halfway down the winding stairs and stared mutely up into the face of his superior officer. Corrigan proceeded to descend. He was

about to pass Hagan when the man laid a nervous hand on his arm.

"Don't—don't go down, Corrigan!"

"What's wrong?"

"Come upstairs and I'll give it to you."

"Come down and give it to me!" Corrigan moved down a step.

"No, don't—don't go down there!" Hagan's grip tightened on his superior's arm.

A strange, indefinable fear caught Corrigan, seemingly in the pit of the stomach. His face grew white and even Hagan, standing in the gloomy stairwell, knew it.

"Who's the guy they got?" Corrigan cried. Yet he knew.

"Come upstairs!" Hagan said weakly.

"It's Frank! They got him! Ranzoni got him!" Corrigan felt a fierce rage take hold of him and shake him the way a cyclone budges a firmly founded house.

He sprang down the stairs, taking the steps by threes. The desk lieutenant stood in the middle of the squad room and shouted something to the detective which the latter did not hear in his mad dash. Corrigan pulled open the front door and beheld the body. Yes, it was Frank's chestnut-colored hair. There was his gray-felt hat; there was the blue overcoat Corrigan bought him a year ago Thanksgiving; there on the hand was the ring his mother gave him.

"Well?" Corrigan growled at the nearest policeman.

"Dead. Sorry, Mr. Corrigan. Got him in the back. He was coming up the steps—to see you, I guess. A taxi passed. Murtha heard the shot and saw the man fall."

"Ranzoni!" Corrigan muttered, dropping his head on his chest and backing into the station house. "Ranzoni! In the back! His old trick. Frank knew something. Gimpy had the dope. The radio racket! Ranzoni goes on the spot for that!" This last he shouted aloud.

"What's that, Corrigan?" the captain asked, coming out of his office. "I didn't hear you. Close that door, Doyle! It's like a boiler factory in here—door open, windows open. What was it, Eddie?"

"Oh, go to hell!"

"See here, you can't talk to me that way because——"

Corrigan dragged himself toward the winding stairs with the effort of a man hauling a wood cart. His shoulders were slumped and his head was bowed. Slowly, tediously, thumping with heavy feet, he mounted the steps to his office. Halfway up, he stopped and leaned against the banisters.

"Murtha," he called to the desk lieutenant, "have them bring him in the back room. I'll notify his wife."

"Sure."

Corrigan continued his climb, his blue eyes more tired than ever. But there was a small, secret light in them. Ranzoni had put it there.

Corrigan found Hagan sitting in a corner of the bureau room, mopping his head with a soiled handkerchief. His eyes rested on the other, thinking—thinking.

"Hagan, take a cover on the Ranzonis. Get Murtha downstairs and have him watch Tony Ranzoni. You watch Giuseppe."

"Where are they? The Starlight Club?"

"How do I know! Pick 'em up. I'll be along later."

When Hagan had taken up his hat and left, the man with the tired eyes listlessly took hold of the telephone and speaking mechanically, gave a number. It was Frank's home that he called.

"Hello, Ethel? This is Eddie. Can you come over to the station house?"

"Sure. What's up, Eddie?"

"Tell you when you get here." Abruptly, he hung up. And he decided not to be present when Ethel saw Frank. It would be too much. Besides, he had business to do. About Ranzoni.

He got up from the desk, swung into his overcoat, slammed on his soft hat and went out. At the foot of the stairs the desk lieutenant met him and nodded toward the back room. Frank was in there, probably in a corner on the floor with a blue blanket thrown over him. The coroner would turn up any minute.

"I'm going out," Corrigan said, and he went out.

Hillman's radio store was his destination. That was where Ranzoni went after seeing Frank. The radio man ought to know what the racket was. Hadn't Gimpy seen him turn green with fear?

Crossing a traffic-laden avenue, Corrigan noticed out the coroner of his eye that Pete Canati was following him. Canati was one of Ranzoni's guns. It wouldn't do, at this stage of the game, to let Ranzoni know what he was up to. He turned into a side street and Canati followed.

An idea came to Corrigan. He was in front of an old tenement. Turning quickly, he took the four steps of the stoop in two jumps and darted into the dark hallway. An alcove beyond the stairs afforded protection and a hiding place.

Peering out, he saw Canati standing on the street, looking with squinting eyes into the dark hallway. Presently, after glancing up and down the block, and with one hand tense in his coat pocket, the gunman entered the buiding. He strained his neck to look up the stairs and listen intently. Then he started for the rear of the house—for Corrigan's alcove.

The moment Canati saw him, Corrigan stepped out and swung a huge fist. The blow, taking the gunman by surprise, caught him on the chin and dropped him. The detective stepped over the man quickly, removed the gun from the coat pocket and frisked him under the armpits and at the hip pockets. Canati was completely disarmed. He groaned and rolled over. Corrigan watched him carefully. Canati drew his knees up under him as though in pain and then, with startling agility, leaped to his feet. He went for Corrigan's stomach with a fierce jab, but the detective was ready. He connected with the gunman's jaw again—the same spot—and Canati's eyes closed like a light being snapped out. He fell and remained still.

"That's what I was after, Canati," Corrigan muttered. "Sleep for you. What I'm going to do is my business."

He left the tenement, retraced his steps to the avenue, saw that no one was following him and made for Hillman's. The radio shop proprietor, a wizened little man with blinking eyes, stared at the detective when the latter threw open the door and entered.

Corrigan's eyes lighted upon a rear door and on an assistant in the store.

"Where does that door lead to, Hillman?"

"The—the workroom, sir." The little man was frightened.

"Come along back there," Corrigan said, leading the way. "Your man can take care of the front and I want to talk to you."

Meekly, Hillman obeyed.

"Ranzoni visited you this afternoon, Hillman." Corrigan was bluntly to the point. "What was his racket?"

"Oh, Mr. Corrigan, he wanted to buy a radio set. He had no——"

"He told you to say that, Hillman. Be a man and don't hide a murderer. I'm out to get Ranzoni and I know he was here to-day to proposition you. Why, you turned green with fright when he laid down the law!"

The little man began to tremble and shake his head, words failing him.

"He put the fear of God into you, didn't he, Hillman?" the detective sneered. "Well, I'll put it into you, too!"

"But—but—Mr. Corrigan——"

"My brother Frank—you know him—turned him down. He propositioned him and then came over to you. My men saw him here and saw him throwing the scare into you."

Hillman swallowed hard and then weakly sat in a broken chair. At length, he looked up at Corrigan.

"Yes, he was here," he said in a cracking voice. "And he did threaten me. If I tell you all, Mr. Corrigan, you must give me police protection——"

"Don't worry about that, Hillman."

"He—well, he said I must pay him fifty dollars a month or he'd have my radio store broken up so it would cost me more than fifty to fix it up again. I was terribly scared, Mr. Corrigan!"

"And you forked over the fifty to him?"

"Of course, Mr. Corrigan. He demanded an immediate first payment and said if I squealed—that was the word he used—I'd get it in the neck. He drew his finger across his throat."

"Thanks," said Corrigan, reachin for the doorknob. "Sit tight and keep your mouth shut."

He left the little man, shaking and rooted to the floor of the repair room. The street was empty and the autumn dusk was gathering rapidly. It was nearly six o'clock.

The Starlight Club—owned by Ranzoni and a hang-out for his guns—was five blocks away. Corrigan covered the distance quickly. He had his plans set. He knew that Ranzoni would slip out of a conviction if the radio racket were used against him. Nothing could be hung on him for Frank's death. It would be useless to try. But there was one thing that Corrigan could do to put Ranzoni where he belonged.

The detective found himself across the street from the Starlight Club, a ramshackle building embellished by red paint, silver stars and a huge electric-light sign spelling out the name of the club in flickers. It was flickering already.

At the end of the street, he met Hagan. Corrigan got into step beside him and they walked back past the club.

"Tony is still inside," Hagan said. "But Giuseppe went out about fifteen minutes ago—just after Canati went in. The gun looked like he ran into a windmill."

"He did."

"Murtha is tailing Giuseppe. That's all."

"Thanks." Corrigan walked off and headed for the station house. It was too early for him to move.

The desk lieutenant greeted him with a yell.

"Say, Corrigan! Giuseppe Ranzoni was in here raisin' hell! He said you beat up a friend of his without cause. He's carryin' it to the commissioner."

"Maybe. I'm getting Ranzoni tonight."

The desk lieutenant opened his mouth and stared.

"You had hard luck before, Eddie."

"Not this time—not this time!" His eyes rested on the door to the back room. "Was she here?"

"Yeah. She's in there with him now."

Corrigan nodded slowly and mounted the stairs. He could not bring himself to go in there.

Lacey was waiting for him in the bureau room. He was talking to a sad-looking woman who had a shawl over her head.

"Hello, Eddie. I got a witness for you," Lacey spoke up. Corrigan stared at him. "She and two friends of hers think they know who was in the taxi—you know what I mean." Lacey was trying to spare his feelings.

"Who was it?" Corrigan barked.

"Tell him, Mrs. Kaster. Tell what you told me."

"I know I shouldn't do it," Mrs. Kas-

ter said in a low, somewhat timid voice. "It's dangerous, but I think they ought to be cleaned up. I was with Mrs. Hinen and Mrs. Zimmer on our stoop—it's right next to the station here—when I saw the taxi slow down. A man's face came to the window of it and then there were shots."

"Who was the man?" Corrigan insisted.

"I—we think it was Tony Ranzoni," she stammered.

"Thank you, Mrs. Kaster. Thank you very much." Corrigan beamed and breathed deeply. He nodded to Lacey, who showed the woman to the stairs.

"Well, there's your man, Eddie!" Lacey said, coming back into the room. "I understand you have Hagan tailing him."

"Yes, but he's not the man I want."

"But you just heard what the woman said. Three witnesses."

"Oh, Tony might have fired the shot. But it's Giuseppe I want. He was behind Tony."

Lacey gave a low whistle and nodded. Corrigan sat down at his desk and, clearing his mind of all emotion, continued reading the badly typed report. He finished it and laid it aside.

"We get Giuseppe and Tony to-night, Lacey," he said suddenly. "I want you to stay on duty."

"Sure thing. Count on me," Lacey grinned. "But say, Eddie, if we clean up the Ranzonis there'll be nothing else to do in this precinct."

"Then I'll have you transferred to where there's work and action, Lacey," Corrigan smiled dryly.

He sent Lacey out to dinner and had some sent in for himself. Ethel tried to see him, but he sent word downstairs that he was out. Hagan phoned and said that neither Giuseppe Ranzoni nor Murtha had put in an appearance.

"Flash me when they do," was Corrigan's only comment.

He examined his own gun and Canati's and stuck one in his hip pocket and one in his coat pocket. Lacey came back and they talked for a while about the coming elections. Each favored an opposing party, so they had it out hot and heavy and each thought he had it all over the other.

Nine o'clock came around. The desk lieutenant, now off duty, came upstairs and told Corrigan that the coroner gave permission to keep the body in the house until the undertaker turned up. One was expected that night. The lieutenant said that Frank's wife took it bravely and expressed the hope that Eddie would do something about it. And the captain wanted an apology for being told to go to hell.

"Tell him to make another trip!" Corrigan grunted. Then to Lacey: "Watch the phone. I'm going to get a nap. I don't expect much doing before midnight."

He went into the next room where four cots were ranged along the wall. Throwing himself on one, he closed those tired eyes of his. The desk lieutenant's voice droned in the other room. Corrigan was about to yell out, "Shut up!" when sleep took him.

No sooner had he fallen asleep, so he thought, than he was awakened by Lacey shaking his shoulder. He yawned and sat up.

"Murtha's on the phone, Eddie."

Corrigan sprang to his feet and dashed into the other room, where, dropping into his desk chair, he took up the receiver.

"Yes, Murtha?"

"Giuseppe is back at the club," the voice on the other end said. "I tailed him home where he got into soup and fish. Then he went to a dinner with some swanky people on Foster Avenue, and then they went to the opera and he sat in a box, and then they went to 'Chuck' Pigeon's night club where they had a few drinks, and then Giuseppe left and just turned in at the club. Guess

nothin's doin' to-night. Hagan said he saw most of the mob go in. Now we've seen it leave. I think Ranzoni's alone with his brother and the waiters."

"No customers to-night?"

"Sure, plenty, Hagan says. But they've all gone."

Corrigan was surprised to hear this until he looked up at the clock on the wall. It was half past three.

"Hang around with Hagan. I'm coming over." Then he hung up. "Put on your coat, Lacey. We're on our way."

Corrigan patted his guns again to make sure he had them, got his own overcoat and hat and started out.

There was a sergeant on the desk, and his eyes were glued to a copy of a magazine. He didn't look up when the two detectives came down the stairs, nor when Corrigan paused by the door to the back room and opened it.

A light was burning dimly and on the floor was the blanket-covered body. Corrigan went over to it, knelt down and threw the blanket back. Frank's face was calm and peaceful. Corrigan stared at it for a minute and then, after patting a cold hand reassuringly, got up, put the blanket in place again and rejoined Lacey. As they went out the street door, they bumped into the undertaker. Corrigan grunted and almost ran down the street in the direction of the Starlight Club.

Hagan and Murtha were standing in a vestibule when the two men reached that block. They came out and walked with the newcomers.

"The waiters have gone," Hagan said.

"Tony and Giuseppe are still in there," Murtha added. "All alone, the way we figure."

"Cover yourselves out here," Corrigan instructed them. "If you hear a commotion or my whistle, break in. That's all for a while. And don't let any one in, either."

The other three men exchanged puzzled glances, and Lacey ventured:

"You're not going in alone, are you?"

"Why not?" Corrigan snapped. "Do as I say!" He left them and, crossing the roadway diagonally, approached the front door of the Starlight Club.

The front door was locked. He knocked and kicked at it. By peering through the grilled glass doorway, he saw the interior was dark save for a light coming from an upper floor and streaming down a stairway. Ranzoni's office was upstairs.

Presently he saw Giuseppe come to the head of the stairs and descend. Ranzoni opened the door and smiled out at Corrigan. He was a lean, dapper sort of fellow, no more than thirty-two and dressed to kill with the latest clothes from London. His dinner coat was perfect and he looked like a gentleman with his ascetic face and sleek, black hair.

"Well, if it isn't Eddie Corrigan!" Giuseppe purred with a pleasant grin. His eyes scanned the street over the detective's shoulder and seemed satisfied. "Come on in and have a drink, Eddie."

"Sure. Thanks. Thought I'd find you up."

"Oh, I'm up all night and in bed all day. This night club game keeps one out of the sunshine, Eddie." He closed and bolted the door.

"Sure does." Corrigan followed the man to the stairs.

"I've been going over receipts in my office," Giuseppe explained. "But I've got some of my private stuff upstairs."

"Great. By the way, is Tony around?"

Giuseppe had his back to Corrigan but he stopped a moment on the stairs. The detective knew the other man's mind was working fast.

"Don't know where he is, Eddie. He was around a while ago but I guess he's gone."

They reached the office, a grim, barren room in the back of the house. Giuseppe chatted merrily about his social evening, the opera, the poor work done

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by the tenor, the poor business the club was doing, and at the same time he took a bottle of Haig & Haig out of a closet and poured out two stiff drinks.

Corrigan watched the man drink his before he took his with a gulp. They sat down, Giuseppe still talking about the opera and the swells he had seen and his hope to have a box some day.

"I suppose you're surprised to see me, Ranzoni," Corrigan said, interrupting him curtly.

"Not at all, Eddie. I know we haven't been good friends since that racket you tried to pull on me in court." Giuseppe was bland and suave. "But I knew you'd come around all right. They all do—especially where the gravy's thick. I hold nothing against you for that old trick. I'm not that sort, Eddie. We're friends now and I'll take care of you."

"Thanks," Corrigan said sourly.

Giuseppe flipped a check book from his pocket: "I'm taking care of a lot of the boys, Eddie. How about a hundred now?"

"What for?" Corrigan pretended to be amused. "You know I don't go in for that. What are you trying to cover up, Ranzoni?"

"Why, nothing at all, Eddie. But I thought we might sort of cement our friendship with a little cash."

"We can't ever be friends, Ranzoni." Corrigan got up and his hand fell into his coat pocket carelessly and gripped the revolver there.

"Well, if you feel that way—— But why, Eddie?"

"Because you killed my brother when he wouldn't knuckle under in your lousy racket! That's why! And I'm going to see that you burn for it, Ranzoni! You don't get away this time!"

Giuseppe fell back in his chair and laughed so hard that tears came to his eyes. He roared and chuckled and coughed.

"That's hot, Eddie! When did I do all this?"

"This afternoon, Ranzoni. But you didn't fire the shot. You made the mistake, however, of going the rounds of the radio stores yourself. Frank Corrigan turned you down and told you who he was—that I was his brother. You knew he'd come straight to me with the story, so you had that rat of a brother of yours, Tony, shut his mouth with a bullet. And he got Frank on the station-house steps. He was seen, Ranzoni, he was seen—and he's the killer and you put him up to it!" Corrigan drew back and watched his man.

"Why, Eddie, you're either drunk or crazy. You've got me on the brain because I tricked you in court. Why, you even beat up Pete Canati this afternoon because he was a friend of mine."

"You know damn well that isn't the reason, Ranzoni. You had him tail me after Frank was murdered to see what move I'd make. I put him to sleep so I could work without company. Now I've got the goods on you from three other radio dealers." He was bluffing but it worked. Hillman was the only man he had spoken to.

Giuseppe's smile faded and was replaced by a frown. He was disturbed by the news that three victims had squealed.

"Who's the liar that says that?" he snapped.

"You'll meet them in court—maybe."

He considered his next move. He wanted to be sure of Tony's and Giuseppe's part in the killing. He wanted a confession—now. There was one more bluff to be made.

The gun came out of his pocket and its black eye glared at Ranzoni, whose own eyes popped and filled with fright. He was yellow and Corrigan knew that.

"I said maybe you'd be in court," Corrigan spoke between his teeth. "But you may never get there, Ranzoni. This little popgun in my hand may pop off —to settle that score about my brother."

"Corrigan!" the other cried out. "I

swear I didn't shoot your brother. I swear to——"

"Shut up! Well, one of your men did. And I'm going to get the dirty rat—who shot Frank in the back. He goes on the spot!"

Giuseppe's olive complexion was now as white as though he had powdered his face. His body was quaking. He knew what "on the spot" meant to the underworld. When a man of one gang was killed by another gangster, the killer's gang had to put a man on the spot—send him out on the streets to be killed by the victim's men—or else there would be war. It was considered a peaceful policy among the gangs—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—but no warfare. Now, Giuseppe knew Eddie Corrigan was asking for a man to go on the spot—to be killed to avenge Frank Corrigan's death.

"On the spot, I said!" Corrigan repeated. "Why not you, Ranzoni? You were responsible for Frank's death!"

"No—no!" The man staggered to his feet and tore open his collar to breathe more freely in his terror. "But if you feel that way about it—if you really do—I'll—I'll give you a man—to go on the spot. Take—take Pete Canati!"

"But I know who the killers were, Ranzoni. I know Tony had the gun and that you told him to——" His bluff about putting him on the spot was working.

"Then, if you think Tony did it—take—take Tony! He's down in the cellar now—in the cellar!"

"You put your own brother on the spot?"

"No—yes! Take anybody, only leave me alone, Corrigan! For God's sake, put that gun up!"

"And have you drill me, you yellow rat? You'd send your own brother to death to save your dirty skin. But I've got you where I want you now, Ranzoni. You've admitted everything I want to know. I'm going to take anybody I want—I'm going to take you—and see that you burn for it, too! And for a lot of other things! Come over here!"

Dumbly, involuntarily raising his hands over his head, Giuseppe came around the desk. Corrigan frisked him, took a gun from under his armpit and slipped it in his own pocket.

"Where's your hat and coat?" the detective demanded.

Ranzoni, shaking, nodded to a closet. Still covering him, Corrigan got the things, searched them and then threw them to the gang leader. Quickly, nervously, Giuseppe put them on.

Corrigan got in back of his man and with the gun pressed in his back and without a word, he marched him from the office to the stairhead. Giuseppe hesitated to go down.

"Eddie," he whined, "can't—can't we fix this some way?"

"Sure thing, Ranzoni. You go on the spot yourself—on the spot of rubber matting that holds the chair!"

The next instant, Giuseppe dropped to his knees, caught Corrigan by the legs and pitched him over his head. The gun went off harmlessly. The detective caught an arm around the banisters and broke his crash to the bottom of the flight. A moment later, the light over the stairs went out and he found himself in an inky blackness. No light reached the dance floor and it was impossible to see even a hand in front of him.

There were footsteps on the landing above. Corrigan slid off the stairs and rolled noiselessly toward the middle of the polished dance floor.

An automatic spat at the spot where Corrigan had landed on the stairs. He could hear the bullets biting and splintering the wood.

He replied by firing at the flashes on the upper landing and heard Giuseppe curse and return the fire. Three bullets sang past the detective's head. Silence followed.

Corrigan quietly sat on the floor and removed both his shoes so that in his stockings he could be on his feet and moving about quietly and quickly. He tossed a shoe at the bottom of the stairs and again bullets flew in that direction. Giuseppe, by his fire, was halfway down the stairs.

The room was one that Corrigan knew of old. In front of him was the stairway to the upper floor—and the man who would kill him to silence him and to feed an ancient hate. Behind him was a wall lined with tables, now probably piled with chairs, a mechanical piano and the double door leading to the kitchen. At the left was the orchestra stand and more piled tables and at the right the door to the foyer and coat room and street and more tables.

Slowly, cautiously, noiselessly, Corrigan backed to the farthest wall. His gun held before him, a searching hand behind him feeling his way, he moved and marveled that he could not hear himself—only his breathing which he managed to control. His hand touched a table, he felt his way toward the center of the room, touched the mechanical piano and backed into an opening between table and piano.

Giuseppe fired again, hoping probably to draw a flash of the detective's position. Corrigan did not answer and was again surprised to learn that the gangster was now at the foot of the stairs. Somewhere a clock was ticking loudly. In the street outside, a passing automobile sounded its horn. Corrigan wondered why Hagan, Murtha and Lacey weren't doing something about his plight. Hadn't they heard the bark of gunfire?

A slight movement came to Corrigan's straining ears. It was at his left.

There was a third person in the room of the cabaret, silent and invisible—and stealthy.

Whoever it was, he or she had entered by the double kitchen doors. And the person was in stocking feet. While he saw and heard nothing, after the slight sound, Corrigan felt the third presence. He was now crouched on his heels, waiting patiently for something to happen.

It suddenly occurred to him that it might be one of his own men—Hagan, Murtha, or Lacey. But again intuition cautioned him. The third presence was one of Ranzoni's mob. He felt that. He felt a second enemy in that room.

The minutes ticked themselves away. Corrigan wished that he had an illuminated dial on his watch. Probably five minutes of tense expectancy had passed. Only the ticking of the clock could be heard.

"Well," he said to himself, "this won't do. I might wait here all night and then get plugged when light comes. And Ranzoni might do a Houdini on me. I want him. So I'd better start something. I want Ranzoni—the Ranzoni—dead or alive!" He smiled at his last thought—dead or alive. It sounded melodramatic—like something you hear on the stage—but he meant it.

He began to think of a ruse to draw fire—from either man. He sensed that Giuseppe was still at the foot of the stairs—that the other man was still by the kitchen door. But they were veiled in the blackness of Cimmerian night.

He had it!

He fished about in his coin pocket for a dime. He found a thin one, knowing it by the feel of it and careful not to let the coins tinkle and betray him. Then he slowly elevated himself to his feet and felt the side of the mechanical piano.

The coin slot was what he wanted. He stood clear of the piano and with trembling fingers found the slot. Poising the dime in the opening, he stood at arm's length from it.

Then he let go the dime and sprang as fast to the right of the room as possible—noiselessly.

There was a sharp clang as the coin

struck the mechanism. A moment later the piano blasted out: "I can't give you anything but love—baby!" The racket was awful.

A shot flashed from the foot of the stairs and hit the piano. A reply came from the person by the kitchen door. Three more yellow flames spat from the gun by the stairs.

Corrigan heard the person near the piano choke and stifle a cry. Something clattered on the floor—a gun. Then there was the dull thump as of a body falling on wood.

Again that heavy silence only broken by the clock tick.

Corrigan held his breath.

Giuseppe was moving across the dance floor toward the kitchen door. The detective covered him but did not fire.

A pocket flash light cut through the darkness and fell upon a huddled form slumped against a table adjacent to the kitchen door. The holder of the light—Giuseppe—gasped and fell back a step.

"Tony! Tony!" he gasped with horror. The voice rose to a wail. He, murderer that he was, had murdered his own brother!

"Drop your gun or I'll kill you, Ranzoni!" Corrigan snapped from his cover of darkness.

Giuseppe was standing, facing Tony's body, his own body half turned toward the detective. The pocket light wavered. The mechanical piano stopped playing with a loud click.

"So you've got me on the spot, Eddie!" his voice sneered harshly. "Why don't you shoot?"

"I'm saving you for the chair—if I can. Drop it!"

Giuseppe swung full around and hurled the flash light at the detective. It went out with a flicker and smashed against the wall behind Corrigan's head. At the same time, Giuseppe's gun spoke viciously.

Corrigan dropped like a piece of lead to the floor.

Giuseppe raked him, bullets spattering the tables behind Corrigan and digging into the floor in front of him. It was a miracle that he remained unscathed.

Then the detective took aim into the blank of darkness and pulled his trigger. He fanned the area dead ahead of him with fire.

Giuseppe cursed. His gun dropped with a bang on the floor. Staggering steps came out of the blackness, then the sound of a heavy body pitching forward on a table. A chair fell to the floor with a crash and a moment later, that dull thud of a falling body.

Corrigan dared not move. His man might still be playing possum. Again the invisible clock ticked away the minutes.

Cautiously the detective moved forward. He wished he had a light or knew where the switch was. His knees hit against an overturned chair. If Giuseppe was wounded, Corrigan reasoned, he should be breathing heavily—or noticeably since he could no longer control that function.

Corrigan reached forward and felt the back of a still form. The flesh at the neck was still warm. But Giuseppe did not move.

There was a crash at the front door which some one was forcing. Hagan called out for Corrigan.

Corrigan reached in his pockets, took out a pack of paper matches and struck one. Holding it close to Giuseppe, his gun against the man's back, he rolled him over. The gangster's eyes were half open, his mouth agape.

Automatically, Corrigan dropped his gun and with the free hand fished out a cigarette and lighted it. His work was done.

He had taken his man—on the spot, after all. He had to!

Watch for another story by Sean O'Larkin.

BAD BLOOD

By CHARLES NEVILLE BUCK

In Five Parts—Part V.

Judge Bratchell, Deserting Logic, Allows His Fantastic Imaginings to Solve the Mystery of a Double Murder.

CHAPTER XV.—*(Continued.)*

THE room in which the conference had gathered, reflected rather the youth of Muir Bratchell than his maturity. It gave back a reflection of times when men still bit vigorously into life to taste the tang of pioneer hardship and pioneer stanchness.

The group of men, too, was a study in contrasts. Sample himself, naturally urbane but now under strongly curbed emotion, was obviously a cosmopolite and a man of affairs.

Aaron Goldman, quietly but elegantly tailored and suave of manner, had traveled from lowly beginnings to power at the bar and in politics. His broad face was like a page on which much had been written and rewritten, but its present legend was one of poise and success.

Of a cruder type was the grave but confident assurance in the eyes of the commonwealth's attorney. Here was the country lawyer of the older school, strong and roughhewn as a shag-barked hickory, while in Brook Seely, younger, thinner, one encountered shrewd and resourceful eyes looking out of a gaunt country-bred face. That face indicated a mind adroit enough to meet opponents as they came.

"I reckon, gentlemen," began Muir

Bratchell, standing and looking down into the faces about the table, "before I bring my first witness before you, I'll follow the usual course of making a sort of opening statement. You know the lines I've been fightin' along to save my boy. I won't go into how strong a case you have. You know your evidence better than I do. My attitude has been that, in spite of all seeming, he fired neither shot; that he confessed falsely to save another."

He paused, noting the stiffening expressions about him, and went smoothly on:

"In support of my claim, I sought to find another man with an equal or a stronger motive than Cawdon's jealousy. I built me a number of theories, only to see them collapse. For a long while I clung to the idea that Matt Lacey, himself a fugitive charged with murder, had been confronted by a witness to his escape—and killed him—and then killed another in his eagerness to get away."

"We know all that, judge," Sarver reminded him. "I don't aim to hurry you, but——"

"Very well," acquiesced Bratchell, "I'll pass on. With my first premises ending in failure, I sought counsel with a friend—a man who writes novels—and he made a suggestion. 'Look,' said he, 'for an unlikely motive,' and I did."

The speaker let his glance range around the attentive but indulgently skeptical faces of his hearers, and in them he read, at best, a commiserating respect.

"Killing for reprisal is a familiar motive in these hills—too familiar," went on the judge. "Killing for robbery and greed is rare—and we knew that both of these boys were poor."

As he paused, it was Aaron Goldman who commented with entire courtesy:

"So another hypothesis failed you there, judge."

"I haven't said so. If I sound absurd, bear with me until I'm through. Now let us make a seemingly wild assumption. Suppose these boys, first one, then the other, had borne about his person something which was worth close to half a million dollars. There you have a motive for robbery that might drive some men to murder. Is that much granted?"

As he stopped speaking, Sample's face mirrored the incredulity of shocked conviction—the conviction that he was listening to a man suddenly deranged. Goldman's heavy socketed eyes remained expressionless, and only Seely permitted a smile, not wholly devoid of a sneer, to flash briefly on his face. Bratchell appeared to mark none of these mental reactions.

"Suppose," he went on steadily, "the treasure borne on the person of first one, then the other of these boys, was such a thing as could be converted into its money value only slowly and with the utmost caution. Let us take an example."

The judge paused, and then proceeded with no break in his sober manner:

"Let us use the example, my friend, the story writer, suggested. Suppose it was a rich jewel that had been an idol's eye in some far-off temple of the Orient."

It was Seely who broke into a short bark of laughter, and though the other attorneys turned on him with frowns of disapproval, it was reproof only for the gaucherie of bad manners—the rebuke of men pitying a hitherto fine mind fallen into obvious decadence.

Muir Bratchell was, to all seeming, equally oblivious to the note of ridicule and its reproof. He stood looking fixedly through the window; then he turned and went to the door of the second room.

"Mr. Castle," he called in a steady voice, "will you please come in here?"

The little group sat silent, like men in a benevolent conspiracy to humor a broken intelligence, as the novelist took

the seat which Bratchell indicated, and bowed gravely to the assembled attorneys.

"Mr. Castle," directed Bratchell, "will you please describe to these gentlemen the nature and operation of the Calcutta Sweep on the English Derby?"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TIGHTENING NET.

IN the pause following Bratchell's first question, even Aaron Goldman's face failed of its studied impassivity, though that was only for a moment. Before Castle could respond, Brook Seely was on his feet.

"Gentlemen," he made impatient observation, "we have reserved the right to end this conference when we see fit. I have every wish to indulge Judge Bratchell as far as possible, but this bids fair to be a long and rambling session. To-morrow we go to trial. I have still much to do. In fairness to my client I must——"

John Sample spoke with short impatience:

"Let's hear the thing out."

"Go on, please, Mr. Castle," suggested Bratchell quietly; and the novelist looked up.

"The Calcutta Sweep," he said in a matter-of-fact voice, "is perhaps the richest and most picturesque lottery in the world. It is almost a century old and this year it distributes prize money aggregating several million dollars."

After that short introduction the speaker paused only a moment; then he took up afresh his thread of narrative:

"First, let us assume that we are present at the home of this gigantic and colorful game of chance. Let us imagine ourselves to be in the Royal Turf Club in Calcutta, on the occasion of the drawing, which takes place a few days before the English Derby is run at Epsom Downs."

Aaron Goldman sat twisting an unlighted cigar in his stout fingers. Now he turned his head toward the circuit judge.

"Do I understand, Judge Bratchell, that you undertake to make this Oriental travelogue relevant to our concern in these two murders?"

"I undertake," replied Bratchell, "to make it the gist of the inquiry. Will you go on, Mr. Castle?"

"It is the day of the drawing, then," proceeded Castle. "Into the club and out of the club drift the diverse personnel of its membership—men in whites and pith helmets, British army men, civil officials. From all India they have journeyed to this spot and are making holiday. They crowd the great halls while the stewards of the club, with ceremonious gravity break the seals on two large glass barrels and turn the cranks. In one of those barrels are slips rolled in tubes, bearing the names of the fifty thousand pure-blooded colts and fillies foaled three years ago.

"All of these horses were originally eligible for the world's greatest race—many are now dead or forgotten. In the other barrel are hundreds of thousands of marbles bearing numbers. As the drawing continues, the tellers reach each time into each barrel. The marbles are mated to names, until the name slips have run out and the rest of the marbles become blanks."

"For those of us who are not race followers, Mr. Castle," suggested John Sample, "be as explicit as you can. If any of this matter concerns us, we must understand it."

But Castle did not seem to hear. He sat in the preoccupation of reminiscence and went forward conversationally:

"All day the drawing continues—and most of the night. The members drop in and out. They wander to the lounge for a peg of brandy and are drawn irresistibly back again. The names of horses long since dead, or long since broken down, come out mated to their

numbers, and chance holder after chance holder is eliminated. Then comes a stir—a murmur of excitement—a shout that shakes the rafters. A rolled slip is drawn bearing the name of a colt still eligible—perhaps highly fancied for the Classic, and the man whose number corresponds with that marble has drawn a coveted prize. His name will be cabled over the empire. Offers will come to him for a part of his chance. His name will go on reference lists in clubs and newspapers from Rangoon to Frisco."

"Why," interrupted Goldman sharply, "has any man drawn a prize with the race yet unrun?"

"Because," came the easy response, "every horse that goes to the post on Derby Day at Epsom draws a prize; and every chance on a favorite immediately becomes the object of competitive bidding. The holder of such a chance usually sells a part of it for a material and often a large sum. He thus stands immune from loss—and is still the potential winner of a great deal more."

"And the man who draws the actual winner," questioned Sarver in a voice that dragged drawlingly in contrast with the quick utterance of the narrator, "what does he get?"

"He has gotten as much as a million and a half, if he refrained from selling any part of his chance," Castle enlightened him. "But one rarely does so refrain. Now, however, the club splits up the first award. It gives one fourth to each of four holders. Four slips and four marbles are mated in that name. Each such share this year netted about four hundred thousand dollars."

"When," inquired Goldman, "do these tickets go on sale in the first place—and how?"

"They are sold in the first place for months ahead of the drawing, and only to, or through, members of the club; but bear in mind, gentlemen, that at that early date when a club member may sell as many chances to outsiders as he chooses, the chance is only a number, and the selling price is only a few dollars. Most of those chances prove to be worth less than the paper on which they are written; a few make rich men out of paupers."

"Or richer men out of plutocrats," observed Sample; and the witness shook his head.

"By a strange fortuitousness, it has held true through the long history of that great gamble that no club member, no rich or prominent man, has ever drawn one of the larger prizes. The Sweep has almost always lifted some obscure soul from poverty to wealth."

"What is the tangible evidence of a holding in this monstrous gamble?" demanded Sample.

The writer turned toward him.

"Formerly it was a ticket, such as other lotteries employ," he made explanation, "but of late years that has been changed. There was too much incentive for counterfeiting. Nowadays a man receives a number and his name is registered on the club books."

"And is such a vague asset transferable?"

Castle bowed his head.

"Not only are they transferable, but they are often transferred either in whole or in part. Transfers are made by indorsement—written memoranda of sale. Such sales are not protected by law, of course, but the Turf Club is reliable."

"So that such a chance may pass from hand to hand?"

"It may, and it frequently does. A few years back," smiled Castle, "the race was run and the cables announced the winner. At that time it was a single prize topping a million dollars. For a long while the supposedly lucky man could not be found. He was said to be on the high seas. When he turned up it developed he had sold his whole chance. It had passed through several

hands and been subjected to several divisions."

"Interesting," commented Goldman dryly, "but still remote from murders in highland Kentucky."

Brook Seely was on his feet again. His manner was amended now from the unmannerly derision which had previously brought down upon his head the unspoken disapproval of his colleagues. Brook Seely was quick to learn a lesson. He stood with a grave face, and spoke with the forcefulness of a nervous energy well commanded.

"Gentlemen," he offered remonstrance, "I am sorry to be once more the only attorney here offering objection to this unique proceeding. I yield to no man in my respect for his honor, Judge Bratchell, and save that time presses, I should be as willing as any of you to indulge his wishes."

He broke off to bow deferentially toward Bratchell, then continued:

"None the less, we have embarked on an obviously long and fantastic hypothesis. We are only in the beginning of it. It would seem that we are to be carried to the Orient and back. Our honored colleague now offers, as a motive for crime, a prize in a great lottery. He has substituted this prize for a jewel stolen out of an idol's eye. Frankly, gentlemen, I have no time for it. A busy day confronts me. I have witnesses yet to visit, and a long ride to make——"

Alec Sarver raised his eyes, eyes which blended severity with benignity.

"If you can't remain, Mr. Seely," he suggested, "you may for the time being safely leave the interests of the prosecution in my hands."

But the younger attorney was obdurate.

"You are the State's official, Mr. Sarver," he argued; "but I represent the McCaleb family, and I am responsible to them. The cases concerning young Jase and young Maynard Sample are close linked, but they are separate. The commonwealth has elected to take up the McCaleb case first. In that case I am employed."

"We are contending that both murders were the work of the same hand," observed the prosecutor. "I see no reason why we should not state frankly what Judge Bratchell here must already assume—that we go first into trial with the McCaleb case because it is the stronger by reason of a confession. If we convict in one case, we may save the State the cost of two prosecutions."

"But I," urged Seely, "represent the McCaleb family, and to-day I have pressing work on hand."

"And I," declared the prosecutor tersely, "am responsible to the commonwealth of Kentucky. Associate counsel acts with me by sufferance. I mean to hear this thing out."

Reluctantly Seely resumed his seat, and Bratchell spoke in a low tone:

"Please go on, Mr. Castle."

"I think," responded the witness, "I have given you the skeleton of the matter. I am ready to answer any questions."

"As I understand you," put in Sarver, "the men who gamble on the Calcutta Sweep are gambling on a horse race—at tremendous odds?"

"They are gambling indirectly on a horse race," answered the writer, "through the medium of a lottery."

"Keep your seat, please, Mr. Castle, for further questioning," instructed Judge Bratchell. Then he began speaking again:

"I have told you gentlemen I started out with an idea that Matt Lacey, a man with a murder record, might have had a hand in this business. I was forced to abandon that hypothesis, but in following it out, I came on other things. The sheriff arrested Lacey at Churchill Downs. It might have been anywhere else, but it was at the race track—and the man was a gambler."

Again there was a pause, and then the judge's voice went on steadily:

"Sheriff Talbott told me he might not have recognized Lacey but for his having been in company with an old race-track habitué known as Nova Scotia. This man had talked to the sheriff about the Calcutta Sweep—so, in a fashion of coincidence, the Calcutta Sweep was responsible for that arrest."

"An arrest," Seely reminded him, "which you admit had no connection with these cases."

"No direct connection—but a collateral bearing," admitted Bratchell. "It set me thinking. I couldn't seem to get away from that idea of the men directly concerned being gamblers. It stuck in my mind like a bur in a mare's mane. Young Sample himself was an inveterate gambler—on everything except horse races."

"And the English Derby is a horse race, isn't it?" The interrogation came sharply from Goldman.

"Yes, but the Calcutta Sweep is a lottery," responded Bratchell. "Young Sample had been in India. He might have picked up such a chance and, being little interested in horse racing, might have valued it lightly—forgotten it, in fact, until the news of the drawing and the Derby brought it to light again."

Bratchell's eyes wandered almost dreamily in their gaze through the window.

"Such a man," he commented absently, "might have staked his little trusted chance in a poker game."

"'Might,'" smiled Brook Seely satirically, "is a big word for such a short one."

The judge's voice was still meditatively soft.

"The Derby was run at Epsom Downs," he told them, "two days before these boys fell dead. You see, gentlemen, I got to ponderin' on that—Kentucky Derby—Old Nova Scotia, the wanderin' story-teller—English Derby—things far apart and fantastic, yet a repetition of ideas, a coincidence of dates."

After a pause, he resumed more sharply:

"Then I got Mr. Gibney to run off his film, and had old Deadear Posen turn the lip movements into words. Mr. Castle was there when we tried that experiment. What did you get out of it all, Mr. Castle?"

"Nothing," came the disconcerting response. "There was a scrap of accidental film which Maynard Sample had taken, showing Jase McCaleb talking to his lawyer—but we got only a few words out of that, and they were disjointed."

"You say," intervened Brook Seely pointedly, "that out of that talk, construed by a lip reader, you got nothing tangible?"

Joe Castle's lip corners lifted in a faintly cynical smile, and his response was dry.

"I got nothing out of it. It was Judge Bratchell who got something."

The mountain lawyer bent forward in his chair and he barked his question:

"You were there, weren't you? You had the same opportunity that he had—and you got nothing."

"I had the same opportunity, but not the same mental keenness," the witness answered. "At all events, I made nothing of it until Judge Bratchell pointed out the significance."

"What did I point out, Mr. Castle?" inquired the judge; and Castle let his eyes travel around the circle of attentive faces.

"Deadear Posen told us that Jase McCaleb said three words: either 'Cal got a——' something—that objective word was lost, or, 'Cal caught a——' something. Judge Bratchell later suggested, that instead of three words as translated by Posen, it might have been one word only—Calcutta."

The witness paused and glanced at

Bratchell, and the judge instructed him slowly:

"I think that's all I'll ask you to tell us just now, Mr. Castle. Take one of those chairs over there by the wall."

He went to the door and called Carroll Gibney.

"Mr. Gibney," he asked, "what were the circumstances of your first hearing what horse won the English Derby this year?"

"I was sitting," said the producer, "in the gallery of the Bush Hotel on the evening of June 6th, when the news flashes came over the radio. Among the items of information given us was the statement that Jack Horner had won at Epsom Downs and had paid his backers amazingly long odds, since he had been rated as an outsider in the betting."

"That's all," Bratchell said crisply.

Goldman lifted his stout hand as he inquired:

"Was there any mention in those news flashes as to the Calcutta Sweep—who held winning tickets?"

"None," responded Gibney. "The sweepstake was not mentioned."

"Just one more question, Mr. Gibney," suggested Bratchell as if in afterthought: "Did young Maynard Sample say anything to you about the poker game in which he played one evening with Jase McCaleb and others at Mr. Seely's law office?"

"He told me," responded the witness, "that he got very drunk toward the shank of the evening and that his memory became hazy. Young McCaleb, he said, was one of the winners. Maynard lost every sent he had in his pockets."

"You see, gentlemen," complained Brook Seely, though this time he did not rise from his chair, "we have here, after all, a theory not much bettered since it dealt with the idol's eye. We have an elaborately and adroitly woven fabric of assumption that comes to this: If young Sample had held a ticket on the Calcutta Sweep, some one might have tried to steal it. There is no evidence, however, that he ever held such a chance—and nothing could prove that but the paper itself."

"I'm not quite through yet," observed Bratchell coolly. "I want Sheriff Talbott next."

When the small man had taken his seat at the table, the judge asked him directly:

"Sheriff, who introduced you to the old man called Nova Scotia at the race track, on the day you arrested Matt Lacey?"

"His rightful name was Sennings, but he went mostly by the name of 'Squire.' He was the racin' editor of the Louisville *Star*."

"An' this man Nova Scotia told you a story of how he had once sold a chance in the Calcutta Sweep—before the drawing took place—and of how that chance won the capital prize, did he not?"

"He did, yes, judge."

"That's all just now, sheriff. Take one of those chairs over by the door. We may need you again."

Bratchell stood with his hands behind him and with his face thoughtfully drawn. During the ensuing silence the other men waited patiently until the judge turned abruptly to Castle again.

"Mr. Castle," he made smooth inquiry, "you're the only man among us who has ever been to India or seen this lottery work. I want to ask you a hypothetical question."

"I'll answer it if I can, judge."

"Suppose a young man with a bent for gamblin' should happen to meet up somewhere in India with a sailor who was down on his luck—a British sailor, let us say, by the name of Caspar Hawkins—or any other name, for the matter of that. Suppose the sailor offered to sell a ticket on this lottery which at that time, of course, had a very slender chance of being worth anything at all. Suppose the boy in question bought it from him, more as an accommodation.

than anything else—thinkin' very little of the transaction."

The speaker broke off and his meditative eyes appeared occupied with the green-blanketed slope framed by the office window.

"Suppose," he went on after an interval, "that boy came down here months later and sat in a poker game and got tipsy and went broke. Suppose he hunted round in his pocketbook for something to raise a dollar or two on and fished out a forgotten scrap of paper—a scrap of paper bearing a number and the indorsement to him by a sailor by the name of Caspar Hawkins, or some other name?"

This time the pause following the question was so prolonged that Castle prompted:

"Yes, judge?"

"Suppose," came the evenly inquiring voice again, "one of those card players finally agreed to give the boy a dollar or two's worth of chips for the paper that he frankly but drunkenly said might be worth nothing at all—or on the other hand might be worth quite a pile of money, and suppose that paper changed hands just as it stood?"

"If by the words, 'just as it stood,'" remarked the witness gravely, "you mean without being duly indorsed, then the mere passing of the paper would have transferred no title which the Turf Club would recognize—unless the deficiency was remedied by successful forgery."

The questioner sat silent for a moment, and his next interrogation seemed to pass by the suggested point:

"Suppose the parties to that transaction let it pretty nigh slip from their memories—neither one taking it very seriously? Then suppose, later on, the race was run and the winner was broadcast in the news—would the announcement of that horse's name mean anything to the fellow that had bought the chance in the poker game?"

"It would not," responded Castle instantly, "unless he had some other means of knowing. The paper that had changed hands would bear only a number. It would not, on its face, connect itself with any particular horse—winner or loser."

Bratchell nodded his head. It seemed as if he were gravely accepting from his own witness a succession of damaging admissions. But then he drew from his pocket a newspaper clipping and handed it to the writer.

"What is that newspaper item, Mr. Castle?" he inquired.

The other man, after a glance, gave his answer:

"It's a clipping from the Louisville *Star* dated June 7th last. It names the holders of the four principal prizes in the Calcutta Sweep."

"Who does it say they are?"

"A Miss Bowling, a milliner's assistant of Simla; one Abraham Noakes, a taxicab driver of London; a solicitor's clerk named Henry Pelham, also of London; and an able-bodied seaman named Caspar Hawkins, of Singapore."

Bratchell inclined his head.

"When did the newspaper that carried that item reach this town, Mr. Castle?"

"In the ordinary course the Louisville morning papers get here on the late afternoon of the same day."

This time Bratchell spoke even more slowly:

"Then suppose the man here who held the chance on the night of June 7th, saw that newspaper item, and suppose that on the piece of paper he had was the indorsement of one of those original holders? In such event, even though he had no horse's name and had heard nothing else of the lottery drawing in Calcutta, still he could feel pretty confident, by matching that indorsement with that newspaper item, that the thing he had was worth nigh half a million dollars, couldn't he, Mr. Castle?"

The witness bowed his head, but qualified his gesture of affirmation.

"It would be only a matter of adding two and two to make four—provided the indorsements were in order. As I said before, in the absence of such indorsements for each transfer, there would be no valid conveyance beyond that last noted and specified with names of assignee and assignor."

Bratchell was silent long enough to let the answer register its full force, then he asked almost casually:

"The addin' of two an' two to make that particular four, the enhancement in value of that paper from nothing to a large fortune, might induce a man of a certain sort to patch it up with one or two forged signatures, mightn't it, Mr. Castle? It might even cause him to kill the persons who knew the signatures to be forgeries—an' who stood in the way of cashing, mightn't it?"

"If he were that character of man," affirmed Joe Castle.

Bratchell turned and spread his hands with a gesture which seemed to be one of submitting his case, and there was a long silence broken at length by Aaron Goldman, who sat suddenly straighter and spoke with a quick forcefulness:

"You have built up for us a most ingenious structure of hypothesis, Judge Bratchell, ingenious and comprehensive." The Louisville lawyer drew a long breath and gazed at the still unlighted cigar which he twisted in his fingers. "But it is deficient in one respect—and fatally deficient. It supplies a motive but brings that motive home to no identified suspect. If you mean to indicate young McCaleb, we have only to remind you that young McCaleb himself is dead—and if it is not he, who is it? Who, among these simple mountain folk had enough knowledge, enough sophistication——" He paused and let the eloquent shrug of his stout shoulder finish where his words ended.

Judge Bratchell remained standing, meditative but undisconcerted. Then his voice ripped through the silence as sharp as a challenge and as vigorous as a blow.

"Mr. Castle," he demanded, "when we were watching—and construing the talk in that piece of moving-picture film, what other words did Deadear Posen hear?"

"He told us," replied Castle, "that during most of the talk Mr. Seely had his back turned to the camera, but just at the end his face became visible, and the deaf man caught these words: '— not worth aught, I reckon—but let me have it as your lawyer, and I'll see.'"

Over the bare room fell a silence through which the ticking of the tin clock seemed clamorous, and Bratchell's next question fell upon it like low drumbeat.

"That conversation took place before the English Derby was run, didn't it?"

"Yes, some time before."

The judge turned his head and addressed Gibney:

"Mr. Gibney, when you heard the name of the winner, over the radio, was Attorney Brook Seely present? Did he hear it, too?"

"He was present," answered Gibney from his chair against the wall, "and he had the same opportunity to hear it that I did."

"Could you pass on the authenticity of an alleged signature of Maynard Sample, Mr. Gibney?"

"I could if I saw it. Yes, sir."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MURDERER.

ATTORNEY SEELY of the prosecution had come to his feet and his face was white with mortal indignation. His narrowed eyes blazed through the slits of their drawn lashes and his voice shook with hard-held rage.

"Is this an accusation against me," he demanded witheringly, "or only a gra-

tuitous insult woven into a crazy man's fairy tale?"

Bratchell's meditative face hardened at a breath into a flinty mask.

"An innocent man," he made curt assertion, "need fear neither. A man guilty of such a bloody deed can't be insulted."

"If this is in the nature of a charge against Mr. Seely," began Aaron Goldman with a chilly deliberation, "it is serious enough to warrant responsible care."

Bratchell met his eye with so aggressive a directness that the criminal lawyer glanced aside.

"Whatever responsibility I assume," said Muir Bratchell, "I aim to stand or fall by it."

"This foolishment," declared Seely passionately, "has gone far enough." And he glanced toward the door. "I can submit no longer——"

"Then you, most of all," Bratchell reminded him with entire composure, "must needs insist on having me finish, so that my folly may stand manifested and vindicate you."

The local lawyer, still pale with a wrath which was easy to understand, resumed his seat.

"Let the farce go forward," he said in a voice of suppressed fury. "Let it play itself out."

"I'm goin' to call a witness now," announced Bratchell, "who may be a stranger to most of you—but you'll know him better soon."

He went to the witness room and beckoned to a man who came forward and stood framed in the door. He was not a mountaineer, but a stocky and middle-aged man of urbane appearance with an agreeable face.

"Mr. Sennings," began Bratchell, "I guess you don't know many of these gentlemen. They are all lawyers in this case."

The new arrival glanced amiably about him, then nodded to Brook Seely.

"Good morning, Mr. Sully," he offered greeing.

"You know him, do you, Mr. Sennings? But you have the name wrong. It's Seely."

The inquiry and correction came with suave deliberation from the judge, and Sennings bowed as he answered with unembarrassed composure:

"My mistake. I met him once—and of course, Sheriff Talbott, there, is an old friend of mine."

"I'll ask you later when you met Mr. Seely." Bratchell's face was impassive again. "First, though, what is your business and what brought you here?"

"I am turf editor of the Louisville *Star*, and I came here at your request."

"Are you familiarly known as the 'Squire' among your colleagues?"

"Sure. The newspaper boys call me that."

"How did I come to meet you, Mr. Sennings?"

"Sheriff Talbott brought you to the editorial rooms of the *Star* in Louisville some time ago. You wanted to ask some questions about the Calcutta Sweep."

The speaker leaned back comfortably in his chair, then volunteered innocently:

"That's how I came to meet Mr. Seely, too. Both lawyers, with an interest in the same case, I guess, but I thought he said Sully, and I understood he came from Harlan Town."

"And Mr. Seely, like myself, was not as familiar as he wanted to be with the machinery of the Calcutta Sweep?"

The inquiry was beguilingly gentle, and the reply came with responsive readiness.

"Lawyers are like reporters. Many things come up in their business they don't know much about—but they learn. They have to qualify as experts on short notice."

"What did I want to know about this lottery, Mr. Sennings?"

"You said my friend, the sheriff, had talked to you about the Sweep, and you

wanted more information, both general and specific."

"Did I ask you to amplify the news contained in this press dispatch, published in your paper the day after the Derby was run in England?"

Bratchell handed the clipping to the newspaper man, who glanced at it before he answered:

"Yes. In particular, as I remember, you wanted to know who were the capital winners. I gave you all the information at hand—and got some more for you."

"What did you add to that printed news?"

"I told you that three of the winners, Miss Bowling, Abraham Noakes and Henry Pelham had all sold a part of their chances, and had collected the balance."

"Yes—and what did you say about the fourth winner?"

"I learned from stories carried in Eastern papers that he was a figure of some mystery."

"In what way?"

"He couldn't be found. He had made no claim to his money—four hundred grand. So far as known, his chance has not been divided or sold in part—at least, the Turf Club had no such record. They were hunting for him and holding the big prize to his credit."

"What was his name?"

"Caspar Hawkins. He was a sailor."

"Thank you, Mr. Sennings."

Judge Bratchell paused once more, then spoke as if in afterthought.

"And was that the general trend also of Mr. Seely's inquiry?"

"Mr. Seely came to the *Star* office shortly after the running of the Derby, if I remember rightly," answered the turf writer thoughtfully. Then he looked over at the man of whom he spoke. "You asked me chiefly about how a man might go about seeking to collect a prize that had passed through several hands, didn't you, Mr. Seely?"

The inquiry on the newspaper man's face was childlike in its innocence, but the expression on that of the lawyer was apoplectic.

"Mr. Seely isn't being examined, Mr. Sennings," commented Bratchell with a velvety gentleness of intonation; and Seely came half to his feet only to drop back again into his chair.

"But," continued the judge, "I would like to question you along that same line. Suppose a man held a winning chance, several times indorsed, and wished to move cautiously in its collection. How would he proceed? What would the Turf Club do about it?"

"I can answer that best by telling you what I told Mr. Seely. The Club, even in the absence of any warning from an authentic source to withhold payment, would be apt to hold the money for a reasonable time and seek to find the man registered on their list—or his heirs and assigns. They would want to trace the transfers carefully."

"Do you know, Mr. Sennings, whether or not I cabled such a warning as you mention, to the Calcutta Turf Club?"

"No, sir, I don't."

"Unless Mr. Seely wants to question you, Mr. Sennings, you are excused. I want Ira Lile next."

At that name Seely started violently but controlled himself and settled back with a sneering bravado on his lips, as a gaunt man in overalls came into the room and stood glancing about him with incurious eyes.

"Ira," began the judge, "you told me you wanted to make a soon start back to Squabble, an' I promised not to keep you any longer than I had to. I want to ask you some questions."

"Done kep' me settin' in thar quite a spell a'ready," grumbled Lile, but it was rather as if the manner of complaint were habitual than specific, and Bratchell nodded amiably.

"I'll be brief with you. On the night

when you played poker in Brook Seely's office with the two young men who are now dead, did Maynard Sample get anything out of his pocketbook an' try to raise money on it?"

"Some kind of a thing, yes—a right dirty scrap of paper, I'd call hit."

"Describe it to the best of your recollection."

"He 'lowed hit war some manner of chanct in some kind of lottery. I didn't pay him much mind. He was drunk anyhow, an' talkin' all fashion of random folly."

"Who took him up on his offer of sale, if any one?"

"Leetle Jase—he give him six bits wuth of white chips fer hit."

The judge let his glance stray over to the face of Sheriff Talbott, but the officer was sitting indolently with his chair tilted and did not seem to meet the other's eye.

"Did Attorney Seely ever mention that transaction to you—afterward? Did he ever refer to it one way or another?"

"No, jedge," said Ira. "Why would he?"

"Perhaps he wouldn't." concurred Bratchell. "However, Attorney Seely did evince a belated interest in your wish to go West—far West, after that, didn't he?"

"He 'lowed I hed ther right notion. What's thet got ter do with these killin's?"

"That's all, Ira," the judge told him. "If you want to get home, you can start back now."

Muir Bratchell turned and walked to the window where he stood with his back to the sunlight.

"Mr. Goldman," he inquired, "have I answered your question? You asked me what thief and murderer hereabouts had the worldly wisdom to piece together the patchwork of this business and turn it to account. Our newspaper friend has reminded us that reporters and lawyers learn the trick of educating themselves rapidly at need. A lawyer who held a winning chance in the Calcutta Sweep—in trust for a client—and who wished to divert it to his own use, would have need to silence all who could testify to its rightful ownership. That need would arise when it appreciated suddenly in value from two bits' worth of white chips to nigh a half million dollars in British gold."

Brook Seely had at last come up standing, but now the sneering defiance on his face was palpably spurious, and the pallor, at first reasonably enough attributable to righteous indignation, had taken on the sickly tinge of terror. He licked and opened his lips; but John Sample roared out furiously

"Silence! You can talk later!"

"Sheriff," said the judge sharply, "I asked you in advance to keep your gaze narrowly fixed on Brook Seely from the time you took your seat, on. What have you seen?"

Talbott had the appearance of a man almost napping, and now his speech was a lazy drawl—yet informing:

"I noted that when the name Caspar Hawkins was first mentioned, Lawyer Seely nigh jumped out of his skin, then peered about to see if airy person was watchin' him." The sheriff nodded his head sagely. "An' I've been notin' thet ever since the talk's been goin' forard about thet piece of paper with a number an' some names on it, his right hand has been twitchin' toward his breast pocket. Seems like there's somethin' in that pocket he can't git out of his mind."

There was a sound that was part outcry of fear and part roar of fury, and it came from the throat of Brook Seely. This time he made no effort to control his twitching hand—only to hasten it, but when it leaped from under his coat it held, not a piece of paper, but an automatic pistol.

"Let me out of here!" he bellowed. "Stop me at your——"

But though he was talking fast he did not finish. Sheriff Talbott had been sitting indolently in a tilted chair. Now he was standing, feet apart and legs braced. In his own hand was a pistol, too, not pointed but palmed, and on the floor, at his feet, lay the lawyer with a bleeding bruise on his jaw.

Talbott turned his head toward Alec Sarver, the commonwealth attorney.

"Shall I let him git up?" he inquired bluntly.

The State lawyer nodded.

"Let him up—and then take him over to the jail!" he ordered with a crisp economy of words. "I'll be there with a warrant by the time you have him locked up."

The hills were aflame with the brief glory of autumn. Off to the distances where the peaks merged all other color in an ash of violet against the sky, they flaunted the maple's crimson, the oak's burgundy and the hickory's living yellow, accented between with the steadfast sobriety of spruce and pine.

At the footbridge across the brook where the minnows were flashing darts of silver in shallow rock pools, Cawdon Bratchell stood waiting, and from his lips came the whistle of a Bob White three times repeated.

Soon he saw a figure coming toward him, and when Lakeery stood at the other end of the squared log, he made the brief announcement:

"I reckon, Lakeery, I've got to get back in these hills an' hide out."

Her face, which had taken on again its blossom color, paled suddenly, and her response came in a gasp of reborn fright.

"Hide out!" she exclaimed. "But you won't ever have to hide out now, Cawdon, will you?" Then, as she caught the teasing smile in his eyes, she added: "When it might have profited you to hide out, you wouldn't. Now you don't have to."

His smile had died swiftly and guiltily at her alarm, and he spoke contritely:

"I didn't aim to frighten you. It's different this time. I'm taking leg-bail from the moving pictures."

"What do you mean, Cawdy? Tell me."

"I've got me a letter here," he answered. "They offer me five hundred dollars a week to come to Hollywood, and——" He broke off, and her eyes sparkled.

"But you're goin', Cawdy, aren't you? You'll be famous and—and rich."

The boy shook his head.

"I'm not going," he declared emphatically. Then he came forward and caught her shoulders in his hands.

"Would you be content there, Lakeery," he demanded, "away from these hills——"

She stood silent for a space; then her eyes met his and she shook her head.

"I don't reckon," she told him. "Not skeercely. No, I wouldn't go, Cawdy; but that mustn't hinder you."

He did not tell her all that was in his mind. Judge Bratchell had confided to him that his own mother had sickened in soul under transplanting, and that because of that, he had himself relinquished to another the seat in Congress which might have been his. The women's root of nativity seemed to be more deeply grounded in the soil than that of men.

Now Cawdon grinned contentedly.

"I reckon we both belong here," he said. "I'll stay on and study to be a lawyer."

THE END.

WHY LIFE IS LONGER

The span of life is increasing, also the swiftness of the pedestrian's jump.

Her Senses Alive to Something Wrong, She Looked Into the Library and Saw in the Great Teakwood Chair——

The AFFAIR of the BLUE SCARAB

By W. A. SHRYER

THE cold, dismal November day was coming to a rapid close. There had been no sun since early morning, and the lowering promise of a real storm intensified and became a reality as the clocks of Detroit pointed to the hour of five.

From a cold, cutting rain the change to sleet and then to snow was rapid, and for an hour this uncomfortable downfall silently covered the walks and hedges of the residence district. The shrubbery drooped forlornly, and the more sturdy of the late flowers gradually gave up the ghost.

Pedestrians hurrying to the cross-street homes of North Woodward saw little of beauty in the snow, but dodged the skidding procession of motor cars with increased wariness, and shivered in their unpreparedness.

A northbound Woodward Street car slid to a tardy stop at Burlingame Avenue, and two girls hurried to alight. Waiting but a second for a break in the honking line of speeding machines, they ran, slipping and out of breath, westward toward the middle of the block. At No. 65 the taller of the two turned into the automobile drive at the side, her companion continuing to the back entrance of the house next door.

As the young woman belonging to No. 65 ran to her back door she shivered with the biting cold, and seemed rather startled at the somewhat forbid-

ding aspect of the house. Not a light glowed at a single window, the wind made disconsolate noises, and the snowy bushes cast disconcerting shadows in the twilight that was fast deepening outside.

With a scarcely perceptible show of hesitation the girl unlocked the back door, which she left open until a flood of light burst over the kitchen. She then closed the door, lit the gas under a teapot on the gas range, stepped briskly into the dining room, and turned on the light there.

For a moment she stood in the lighted room as though listening for some sound from the long, dark hall that ran to the front door. With her hand to her mouth, she then walked slowly and with a show of dogged resolution to the front of the house, and pushed the switch controlling the cluster of lights between the two large rooms giving off the front hall. The burst of light partially illuminated both of these side rooms, and as she turned to the right she faced the library. What she saw there blanched her face with terror.

"Oh, my God!" she moaned, slumping to the floor in a heap. As she half sat, half lay, on the floor she faced the object of her horror. It was the body of a man. Seated in an elaborate teakwood chair, he faced the door, veering unnaturally to the left, his chin on his breast and his legs sprawled awkwardly to their full length. The chair was back to a beautiful, claw-footed rosewood table.

The girl dragged herself to her feet, furtively wiping her dry lips with the back of her hand. She skirted the chair to the side of the table, and, reaching over the end, felt the back of the man's neck with the first two fingers of her hand. "Ugh!" she panted, and, turning with a run, raced for the front door and out of it without a backward look.

With breathless haste she ran to the back door of No. 67, rattled the knob, and half fell into the kitchen, where her companion of fifteen minutes ago was busily engaged in the preparations of the evening meal.

"Ellen! Oh, Ellen!" sobbed the intruder. "Call your master to come quick. Something dreadful has happened to Mr. Allen."

"All right, Georgia," gasped the astonished Ellen. "I'll go and get him right away. Whatever's the matter? You look like as if you had seen a ghost——"

But Georgia broke in:

"Oh, don't stop to gab; just get him, and get him quick."

"Here, drink this, anyway," protested Ellen, handing the terror-stricken girl a glass of water. "I'll fetch Mr. Simms right away."

In less than a minute she returned, half pushing, half pulling, a protesting little old man of at least sixty years. His bright, keen little eyes peered querulously over the tops of a large pair of old-fashioned steel-rimmed glasses. With one hand he tugged to extricate a large silk handkerchief from the pocket of an absurdly long alpaca coat, and with the other scratched the back of his shiny bald head.

"What's this? What's this?" he asked. "Can't I have a minute's peace even in my own house? Well, miss, speak up, speak up. If anything's the matter with your precious Mr. Allen, remember I'm no doctor, I'm no doctor."

"Oh, Mr. Simms," begged the girl from next door, "I'm afraid it's too late for a doctor. And I'm afraid to go back alone. I can't go back alone—I can't, I can't."

Soothingly, he replied:

"There, there, my girl, no hysterics, please; I'll go over and see your precious Mr. Allen. Infernally inconvenient, but no more hysterics, mind that

now," and with a grunt of disdain the wiry Mr. Simms padded out of the back door and across the yard, followed by his own servant, more terrified by the weeping of her friend than by anything she expected to find next door.

The three entered the brightly lighted front hall.

"Well, well, miss," complained Mr. Simms. "Why in Heaven's name don't you shut that door? Think I'm 'What's his name,' defying the elements? Where's your master now? If I've got to see him, let's get it over with."

"Oh, he's in there," she pointed. "I can't go in, I can't, I can't."

"Well, well, well!" grunted Mr. Simms. "You women aren't mostly so backward. Well, well, well, what's this? What's this?"

Mr. Simms had entered and turned on the light in the library. In a moment his fidgety manner dropped from him. He glanced around with a comprehensive and studied curiosity, apparently concentrating his attention on everything else before stepping to the side of the man in the chair. He lifted the hanging right arm of the body. It dropped back inertly.

"Ellen," he directed crisply, "get that girl into the kitchen. Then ring up Doctor Broad and tell him I want to speak to him. And be quick about it, please."

As the panic-stricken Ellen hastened to obey her master he dropped on his knees beside the body and squinted carefully at the object he found on the floor beside the chair. It was a pearl-handled revolver. The nimble Mr. Simms noted its position with reference to the chair and to the dangling hand, but carefully refrained from touching it. He arose, dusted his knees with meticulous care, and slowly walked around the four long walls of the room.

As Mr. Simms circled the library he expressed alternate contempt and ecstasy at the objects engaging his interested scrutiny.

"Hum, fine taste in books, I must say—'Arabian Nights,' *unexpurgated;* Boccaccio, Queen of Navarre, Daudet, Rabelais—faugh! Hum, some better—Landor, Lamb, Spencer, Tyndall, Ruskin, Darwin, Malthus. Bah! Voltaire, Swift, Ingersoll. My word! Maspero, Budge, Petrie, Wiedemann, De Morgan. Well, well!"

"Doctor Broad is on the wire, Mr. Simms," Ellen called from the doorway, interrupting the old gentleman just as growing interest prompted an invasion of the bulging mahogany bookcases.

"Ah, yes; thank you, Ellen," the old gentleman sighed as he stepped to the phone in the hall. "That you, Broad? This is Simms—hum—yes, Josiah Simms, No. 67 Burlingame. Want you to come right over to No. 65 Burlingame. What say—to see me? Lord, no; I've no use for you fellows. What say—sign my death certificate yet? Hum, dare say. That's all you're good for. That's what I want of you now. Dead man here. What say? How should I know? That's what I want you to tell me. Hurry now; remember the number, sixty-five, Holbrook Allen's house. Yes. Good-by."

As Mr. Simms stepped from the phone he paused in the doorway of the library and again carefully inspected everything in it. It was a very low room and a trifle narrow for its length. This lack of proportion was accentuated by the massive bookcases that lined the north and south walls from end to end. There must have been at least five thousand volumes, nearly all in expensive editions. Three very large and very magnificent Oriental rugs covered the floor. Their value Mr. Simms tentatively appraised at four thousand dollars apiece. Between the two large windows on the east stood a mahogany buffet. It was stocked with wines,

cordials, and liquors, and a box of cigars on top presented a name unfamiliar to Mr. Simms, but that was because the limit of his indulgence was two for a quarter, while these choice Havanas cost fifty cents straight in any quantity. Three large, sleepy-hollow chairs stood invitingly close to the buffet. Behind each stood an adjustable reading light. Against the west wall on one side of the door stood a long, deep, and luxurious couch, with a reading lamp at each end. On the other side of the door was a large glass case. After scrutinizing the room thoroughly for the second time, Mr. Simms gave his undivided attention to this case.

Whatever feelings of contempt the luxurious furniture may have aroused in the breast of Mr. Simms, the contents of the cabinet quickly dispelled. It was filled with Assyrian and Egyptian antiquities, which instantly aroused both his wonder and delight. There were cuneiform tablets from Nineveh and Babylon—priceless seals and intaglios from the Nile and Euphrates Valleys. Three shelves of such perfect and rare scarabs as Mr. Simms had never seen even in the museums of Cairo, London, or the Louvre. Tear bottles of the most dazzling iridescence from Greece and Syria, together with a collection of Egyptian jewelry and images arousing in the old man a spirit of envy that no one but a collector could possibly understand.

With a sigh he tore himself from the contemplation of a sight that made him all but forget the cause of his presence here. He nervously wiped his shining bald head with his big silk handkerchief, and with a reluctant look behind him stepped to the table. It was a massive affair, almost seven feet long. It was clearly an antique, and by peering behind the chair in which the body of the dead man sat Mr. Simms saw a monogrammed "N." "Um," he mused, "I thought so. A genuine Napoleon I. Must have cost a pretty penny."

From the desk he walked to the north wall and examined in turn every picture on that, and then those on the opposite wall. There were eight—four on each side—all large, mounted photographs.

As he examined each one he commented aloud, moved it from its place on its chain hanger, looked at the back, and carefully replaced it.

"Um, Bacchus, Baalbek, Temple of Nike, Acropolis, Temple of Athenæ, Pæstum, Dier el Bahari—um—Rameses the Great from Luxor Temple, the Taj Mahal, the Sacred Lake, Karnak, the Ming Tombs. Decided Oriental flavor. Must look at that Taj Mahal again," murmured the old man, who carefully examined for the second time the picture that hung nearest the west. He stepped onto the soft couch, which brought his eyes on a level with the picture. He again moved it from the wall, peering at its back, the wall, and the molding from which the picture was suspended. He then stepped to the floor, closely examined the top of the bookcase below the picture, and grunted to himself several times.

Finished with his scrutiny, but apparenty unsatisfied with it, he walked slowly to the chair facing the heavy desk, pulled it slightly toward him, and started to seat himself.

"Scat, you brutes!" he cried as, with a lunge, he slapped at the chair seat with his handkerchief. With spitting yowls two beautiful Persian cats sprang to the floor and disappeared rapidly into the hall. One was a large "Smoke," and the other a "Brown Tabby," but their beauty and very evident breeding were lost on the perturbed Mr. Simms. Carefully feeling on the seat for still another which he seemed to expect, he gingerly seated himself and gazed steadily at the back of the dead man's head.

"Pretty thin on top for forty, seems to me," he mused. "Regular lady's hair, too, in its heyday. Skin's pretty pasty. Wine, women and song, I reckon."

With a sneer of disgust he glanced at the top of the desk, and became immediately engrossed in a letter he found on the blotter there. It was written in longhand, and contained nothing on its face to justify the apparent interest devoted to its examination by the old man. There were but five lines, which contained a simple request to a firm in New York City to forward an atlas of the world.

After gazing intently at the letter for almost three minutes, the old man arose, and, taking a small metal box from his pocket, pulled therefrom a three-foot metal tapeline. He walked to the side of the dead man and measured an imaginary line from the elbow to the wrist, and repeated the same operation on the other side. He then gazed in perplexity toward the picture of the Taj Mahal, jerked out his ever-ready handkerchief, and blew a forceful blast with his nose, scratching the back of his head with his other hand at the same time.

"Ah, ha, um, hum," he muttered. "Hello, there's Broad, I expect!" he said as the doorbell rang.

The doctor was admitted by the girl Ellen, who ushered him into the presence of Mr. Simms.

"Dead man, Broad. Out of my line, so I called you. Just tell me how long he has been dead, but don't disturb anything. I'll run along then. Past my supper time. You do the honors."

"Look here, Mr. Simms," protested the doctor, who was young, thin, and very businesslike. "What's this all about? How did it happen? No use calling me in. This man's been dead three or four hours. Rigor mortis hasn't started to set in, but he's cold as a stone."

"Three or four hours, eh? Along about two or two thirty." The doctor was told very briefly all Mr. Simms had to tell of his being called over, after which the little old man continued: "Now you do the necessary; I'm going home. Call up the police, the coroner, or whoever you think ought to be told, and don't forget there's a hystericky girl in the kitchen. I'm taking mine home to get my supper. Good night."

After the departure of the old man the doctor wasted no time in musings, further than to say to himself: "Queer old codger, but certainly no fool. Where's that telephone now?"

Calling to the somewhat sobered maid, he was directed to the telephone. Securing a number, he asked: "This you, lieutenant? Doctor Broad speaking. You'd better come to No. 65 Burlingame at once. There's a dead man here. What? No, I don't think so. Looks more like suicide. You attend to the coroner. I'll wait for you. Fifteen minutes? All right."

The doctor thought for a moment or two, and then, ringing up a second number, said: "That you, Bennett? Think there's a pretty fair story for you at No. 65 Burlingame. There's a victim of sudden death here. May or may not be suicide, but the setting is certainly luxurious. Rich and cultured, all that sort of thing, you know. Don't mention it. Just called up Lieutenant Reed. He'll beat you by fifteen minutes, so come as soon as you can. Good-by."

The doctor returned to the library, and, selecting a book from the heavily laden cases, composed himself to wait. He had read hardly a chapter when the lieutenant and a plain-clothes man arrived.

"Gimme the facts, doc," said the lieutenant, to which he listened with attention.

"Where's the old guy?" he asked next.

"He said he was hungry," replied the

doctor, "and returned home twenty minutes ago."

"You get him over here, George," directed the lieutenant to his subordinate. "Looks simple enough," he added. "Croaked himself with this .38. No sign of any trouble, and not a piece of evidence that ain't clear as a brass button. Some place they got here, too. Must be a rich guy. What do you know about him?"

"I never heard of him before, lieutenant, and don't know the first thing about him now. Old man Simms may, though."

"All right, George will have him here in a jiffy. Let's quiz that K. M. while we're waiting. I say, girl," he called, raising his voice.

Red-eyed and shaky, the maid entered the room, edging away from the dead body as far as possible. "Yes, sir," she said meekly.

"Speak up now. Tell us all about it," commanded the police official.

"There's very little to tell, sir," she replied. "This was my afternoon out, and Miss Linn and myself went downtown together about a quarter of two. We went to a movie after buying some things we needed. We got home at ten minutes after six."

"Hold on!" interrupted the officer. "How'd you know it was just ten minutes after six?"

"I looked at the kitchen clock the minute I got in, sir. I knew I was late, and thought it was later than it was," replied the girl.

"All right; go on," growled the policeman.

"That's about all, sir. I came right in and started to light up, as the house was all dark. I saw Mr. Allen as soon as I lit the hall light. It gave me an awful scare, sir, but I walked up to him to be sure I wasn't wrong, and when I touched him I knew something dreadful was the matter, and ran right out to get help."

"You ain't the only servant in this big house, are you?" queried Reed.

"No, sir," replied the maid. "There's a chauffeur, a laundress who comes Tuesdays and Fridays, and a man who tends to the furnace every morning and evening."

"Where is this chauffeur?"

"He drove Miss Allen downtown about half past one. She said they would be back for dinner," replied the maid. "They ought to be here any minute now."

"Mrs. Allen is his wife, then?" queried the officer, pointing to the dead body in the chair.

"No, sir," replied the maid. "I said *Miss* Allen. She is Mr. Allen's sister."

"Oh, I see," replied her questioner. "Who's this Miss Linn you spoke of?"

"She's Mr. Simms' Ellen next door, sir."

"To be sure," replied Reed. "Well, why were you in such a pucker about being ten minutes late, since you didn't expect your mistress back until much later?"

"I didn't say I didn't expect her back till much later, did I?" The maid was slowly but surely losing her temper under the close checking up of her replies. "I said I thought I was later than I was."

"That's all right, missy," the lieutenant attempted to say soothingly. "I forgot that's just what you did say. What time does this guy come every day to fix the furnace?"

"At five o'clock in the morning, and between half past six and seven in the evening," replied the girl, with no evidence of being mollified.

"Oh," exclaimed the detective, "then he is past due now; it's almost a quarter past seven. He ain't been here by any chance before I got here?"

"No, not a chance," the girl replied shortly. "And he won't be here, either. He quit yesterday."

"How do you know that?" Reed

asked in a tone he clearly desired to sound impressive.

"That's how Mr. Allen came to be home. Miss Allen told me he had put in an ad for another man, and that he would stay here to hire him."

"Was Mr. Allen alive and all right when you left at two thirty?" The question stiffened the maid at once.

"He was alive all right, and as cranky as usual, if that answers your question," the girl shot back.

"So," drawled the detective. "Well, let's answer the first part first. How do we know he was alive?"

"I don't know or care how *you* know he was alive, but I can tell you how I and Ellen knew he was alive," snapped the girl vindictively. "We'd just started around the house to leave when a man came with a bottle of brandy Mr. Allen had ordered over the phone. I guess he was in a particular hurry for it, which ain't unusual, so he came to the front door."

"I guess that answers both parts of my question," mused the officer. "Just go to the door, will you, miss? I think I hear George coming back with the old party."

"Hello, doc; hello, lieut," called a cheery voice from the hall. A very cocksure young gentleman literally breezed in, shaking the proffered hand of the doctor with vigor and forcing a reluctant welcome from the police officer. "Johnny on the spot, lieut. Where's the corpus delicti?"

Before the lieutenant was given time for a fitting rebuke, the doorbell rang again. Pushing ahead of the maid, a young lady walked rapidly into the library, and before the startled trio could prevent it faced the stark-dead body in the teakwood chair.

"My God!" she gasped. "He's done it!" And before any one could catch her she fell in a dead faint on the floor.

"Here, you!" shouted the lieutenant to the terrified maid in the doorway. "Oh, thunder!" he continued, as the maid suddenly burst into violent hysterics. "You, Bennett, drag that skirt out of here. You, doc, do something. This dame's out for fair."

"Best thing that could happen," the doctor calmly replied. "Catch hold of her feet and we'll move her across the hall. Hello, here's George back again. Just light up in the room across the hall, George. That's good, lieutenant. Let her rest on this couch, and put those pillows under her knees. She'll recover in a few minutes. You just run across and see if the girl is all right, and send Bennett in to me."

The lieutenant and his subordinate seemed glad of the chance to get away. The elegance of the young woman very evidently overawed them. The doctor called to Bennett, who assisted him in removing a long cloak of sable and a strikingly stylish hat with a most magnificent spray of white aigrets.

"Some glad rags, doc," interjected the irrepressible Mr. Bennett, gazing admiringly at the hat and cloak. "Must have stood somebody five thousand iron men, if it set 'em back a single bean. Some swell looker at that, eh?"

"Sh!" admonished the physician. "Get me a glass of water. She'll be coming around any minute. If that girl's cooled off, bring her with you."

The maid had evidently mastered her attack of nerves, for she appeared with the water as the doctor spoke. The young woman also showed signs of a rapid return to consciousness, and the doctor gave a few simple directions to the servant and pulled his young friend into the hall, closing the door after them.

"Slip me the dope, doc," whispered the young reporter. "It's going to be some story; you were right about that."

The doctor rapidly communicated everything he knew to the newspaper man, who attempted at the same time

to listen to the lieutenant and the policeman, who had returned to the library.

"The old guy won't come over, eh?" the lieutenant was saying. "Well, what do you know about that?"

"No, kept me talking for twenty minutes, and his story jibed with the doc's to a dot, but he wouldn't come over; said he and the lady here weren't exactly on speaking terms. Said she claimed his dog chased her cats and that she was in the habit of taking a shot at his pup every time he got on her lawn. Queer old party, but perfectly harmless."

"I'll see to him myself later on. You go call up the coroner's office and find out what's the matter somebody ain't up here long since," directed the lieutenant. "Here's Miss Allen. You run along."

The young lady, visibly distressed, but thoroughly self-possessed, had opened the door, and, supported by the maid, made her way very slowly into the library.

"My maid has told me that she found Mr. Allen dead, and that you are here because of that." She spoke very slowly and very carefully. "I assume that you will want to ask some questions, but this has been a terrible shock to me, as you may doubtless recognize, so please spare my feelings as much as you can."

"Certainly, Miss Allen," replied the officer. "Just sit down and take things easy."

The young lady was dressed faultlessly, and by a tailor who had brought out every line of her seductive figure. She was small, but plump, with beautiful blond hair, marceled. She might have been thirty, or possibly less, but the careful accentuation of her every charm insured a degree of masculine interest to which the cynical would instantly declare she was far from indifferent.

"She's certainly a copious beauty," whispered Bennett to the doctor as they stood in the hall.

"Don't lose your heart, my son," the doctor whispered back. "Her eyes are too far apart to insure connubial felicity, and when you combine that with those voluptuous lips look out for squalls."

Whether the lieutenant's deductions were the same as the physician's or not, it was evident that he preferred allowing the mistress of the house the first word. His silence must have disconcerted the young woman, for at last she asked:

"Won't you ask me what you wish to have me tell you, please? I feel the need of immediate repose."

"Well, madam, or I should say, miss," replied the officer, "we were called here, as you know, and find your brother dead. The doctor there has made no physical examination, but it is pretty plain to us that Mr. Allen was shot in the left breast. This gun was on the floor, within a few inches of his right hand as it hangs over the chair. Did you ever see it before?"

Miss Allen shuddered, and declined to take the revolver as the officer extended it to her.

"Yes—oh, yes," she stammered. "I know it perfectly. It is my own, but you will find it to be loaded with blanks. I bought it to frighten that horrid little dog next door. He was continually barking, and chased my beautiful Persian cats."

Lieutenant Reed actually flushed as he caught the gleam of derision in Bennett's eyes.

"Hem, hem," he grumbled. "We've been so busy looking after that hysterical girl I haven't had a chance to even break this gun. Well, what do you know about that?" he exclaimed, as, suiting the action to his words, he broke the breech and looked at the five shells automatically extracted. Four of the shells were unexploded

blank cartridges, but the fifth was empty.

"Let's have a look, lieut," the young reporter interrupted. "This empty doesn't match the blanks at all. It's either newer or a lighter shade of copper."

"Where was this gun kept, Miss Allen?" asked the officer.

"In the left-hand corner of the French desk there," she replied.

The policeman stepped around and opened the drawer indicated by the young woman. There were several boxes of pens, paper clips, pins, and a miscellany of writing supplies. In the front right-hand corner the officer saw a box of fifty .38-caliber cartridges. He opened the box. The even rows of shells disclosed two missing. He compared one of the cartridges with the empty shell. They were identical.

"Did these cartridges belong to you, too?" he asked.

"No, I never saw them before. Winthrop must have placed them there," she faltered.

"Have you any reason to think he was likely to do such a thing?"

"He has complained of trouble with his stomach, and though I hate to say it he has been drinking rather heavily of late, and I have had a strong suspicion for some time that he has been using drugs. He has been extremely cross and irritable, and at times somewhat despondent. He has never given me any reason to apprehend that he would attempt to end his life, although he has said and done some very strange things. I have tried repeatedly to get him to a physician, but he resented every suggestion of that kind very strongly. It was this reluctance, more than anything else, which strengthened my suspicions regarding his use of drugs." The young woman gave this explanation with a growing appearance of determination. Her eyes became hard, and her entire aspect as she finished was not pretty to look upon. There could be no doubt as to her feelings. If she felt grief, there was a much stronger current of emotion gaining ground.

Before the lieutenant could ask her any further questions the doorbell rang. A fat, sleek-looking little man with a black leather bag under his arm entered the room with a hesitating, apologetic air.

"Well, doc," exclaimed the officer, "it took you long enough to get here."

"Couldn't be helped, lieutenant," apologized the newcomer. "We skidded at the corner of Grand Boulevard, and it took us quite a time to repair our tire. Blow-out."

"Good night for a blow-out," grumbled the detective. "George, you talk with Miss Allen in the next room—will you?—so the doc can get busy here." As the young woman retired with manifest relief the officer whispered hurriedly to his assistant, who nodded and followed Miss Allen to the hall, closing the door after them.

"Well, doc," bustled the lieutenant, "take a slant at the body as she lays before we lift it to that couch so you can finish up and get us out of here."

The coroner's assistant fingered the costly clothes of the dead man almost with envy, nodded as the officer pointed to the powder-scorched hole in the fine silk shirt, and deftly removed the handsome, quilted silk dressing jacket. He then removed the shirt and a silken undergarment as the officer supported the body in the chair.

Stripped to the waist, the dead man certainly presented a repulsive picture. His face and thinly covered head were pasty and sallow, with the blotches of dissipation clearly indicative of a loose moral character. Almost six feet long as they stretched the body on the couch, it presented an appearance of emaciation, while the long, thin arms were dotted with numerous red spots.

"Dope," the coroner commented.

Probing the neat blue hole in the left mammillary region, he closed his eyes thoughtfully. "Ball's there," he commented. "In the heart, and, I should say, lodged in the posterior wall of the right ventrical. Death was instantaneous. Very little bleeding."

Removing his probe and arising to his feet, he looked at Doctor Broad. "Dead about four hours, I should say, doctor?"

"So I judged," replied Doctor Broad.

"Dead open-and-shut case, ain't it, doc?" queried the detective. "Shot himself in that chair. Dope and booze, despondent and all that sort of thing, eh?"

"Looks like it," replied the doctor carelessly. "That's about all I can do now. I'll run along and report. Good night, everybody."

After a few curious glances at the body during the examination by the coroner's assistant, the young reporter had busied himself with an examination of the drawers in the large French table. He had made a note of several things he found to interest him, and, as the physician was packing his small bag, approached the body and gazed down at the left hand with sudden attention.

"Wait a minute, doc!" he exclaimed. "Look at that left hand. Tight as a monkey wrench. Better open it up, what?"

The physician reluctantly turned to the body, and, examining the clenched left hand for the first time, pried the fingers loose with the greatest difficulty. The four men bent forward and looked at each other with undisguised perplexity as the physician plucked from the dead man's grasp a small, oblong object, possibly three-quarters of an inch long, convex on top and flat on the bottom. It was blue, mottled with grayish white, and roughly carved in imitation of a beetle's back. On the bottom, surrounded by an elongated circle, were daintily carved several cabalistic figures, a full moon, a small serpent, and ears or horns, and a small bird or young chick.

"Now what!" exclaimed the lieutenant.

"Scarab," spoke up Bennett, making a number of notes on his sheet of copy paper. "Case full of 'em over there. Prized 'em highly, evidently. Some folks go batty over 'em. Ruling passion strong in death, and all that sort of thing."

"Regular bug, eh?" grumbled the detective. "Guess you can beat it now if you want to, doc."

"I'll be going, too," said Doctor Broad. "You may give me a ride as far as Bethune, if you will, doctor. Good night, everybody."

As the two departed the detective called to his assistant, who entered and closed the door.

"Anything new, George?" he asked.

"Nothing much. Miss Allen says she left at one thirty with the chauffeur, as she had a date with young Bedford, the automobile man, to go to the Detroit Opera House. Went to Newcomb-Endicott's and Hudson's, and left the machine at two thirty, meeting her young guy at the door of the opera house. Got out at about five o'clock, and was met by the chauffeur, who drove 'em to the Pontchartrain for tea. Said she danced for an hour or so, stayed longer than she expected, and drove home with Bedford, who left her at the front walk. Chauffeur drove him home, and ain't got back yet. Drove him out to the New Golf Club."

"What did she have to say about Mr. Allen staying home to hire a man?" queried the detective.

"Said he told her the man had quit to work at Ford's, and that Mr. Allen had put an ad in the morning's *Herald,* and intended to stay home and hire the best man who answered. She said he

usually went downtown in the afternoons. Didn't know what he did with his time, as he slept late every morning and beat it right after lunch as a rule. Said they had plenty of money, which Mr. Allen spent some time in looking after, but that he had little to really do at any time."

"I say, lieut," interrupted young Bennett. "Think I'll run along and get out a story on this for the eleven o'clock. Better play it up as a sure suicide, eh?"

"Sure," grunted the officer. "George and I'll stick around a while. Want to see the old guy next door, and straighten things out here. I'll call you up if we find anything suspicious."

"All right. Oh, I'll laud your untiring zeal and all that sort of thing. By the way, let me take that scarab, lieut. I'd like to have some photos made and play it up in the story. I'll give it back to you to-morrow."

"Oh, all right," grudgingly acceded the officer. "Can't see what you can write about it to interest anybody, though."

Bennett returned to the office of the *Herald,* and for an hour extended himself on the kind of story he loved to write. Of the dead man he said but little, except to describe the position of the body, the single exploded shell, and a few glowing paragraphs regarding the "wealthy and eccentric Oriental collector" and the magnificence of his home. Having photographs of the scarab prepared, however, he found in a history of Egypt that the characters on the specimen found in the dead man's hand exactly corresponded to the royal cartouche of the great pyramid builder Khufu, or Cheops, and on this discovery he based the most flowery portion of his story.

As an exposition of the great Egyptian builders his effort was a masterpiece, as all the "boys" admitted. He described the charm as a lapis lazuli scarab of the great Cheops, and drew a fervid comparison between the dead king reposing for centuries in his great tomb and the man of to-day clutching in his dead hand the reminder of everlasting life so highly prized by the ancient forerunners of a great civilization. He cast a fanciful prediction of the dead man's last thought before grasping in one hand the ancient symbol of resurrection and in the other the modern weapon that was to loose his harried spirit to the peace of oblivion. The city editor smiled as he read the story, but it went on the front page.

After reading proof of his story, the enterprising Mr. Bennett retired to his hall bedroom on Alfred Street with a feeling of considerable self-satisfaction. His dreams were peaceful, and his return the following Friday afternoon at two p. m. was a duty not unmixed with pleasant expectation. He accepted the congratulations of his fellow reporters with condescending dignity, and received a message from the city editor to "see the chief at once" with a feeling that at last his genius had been fittingly recognized.

Composing his features into a semblance of modest self-depreciation, he entered the sanctum of the managing editor with a confident mien. That august director of his destiny scowled over his horn-rimmed glasses.

"Ah, Bennett, sit down," he said. "Just read this through, will you?"

The M. E. handed to the young reporter an envelope postmarked "12 M." Bennett withdrew the letter it contained, and read as follows:

Managing Editor, Detroit HERALD, *City.*

DEAR SIR: I have perused with considerable interest a report of the tragedy enacted at No. 65 Burlingame Avenue. The account in your worthy paper represents an effort on the part of some enterprising youth that is highly commendable from a literary standpoint, but I feel the urgency to correct several very glaring errors of fact therein contained.

The exposition of ancient Egyptian customs as reflected by your account is a noteworthy contribution to modern-day journalism, and I have been especially impressed with the description of the alleged scarab found clasped in the left hand of the deceased. The author of this masterpiece states that the aforementioned scarab is a priceless specimen of the reign of King Khufu, the second king of the IV. Dynasty. It further states that this charm is an elegant example in lapis lazuli of the work of that period.

I beg to submit for your investigation the following facts:

1st. The photographs of the object found clasped in the left hand of the deceased clearly indicate that the alleged scarab is an imitation.

2nd. A collector of such discernment as Mr. Holbrook Allen would have known at a glance that this alleged scarab was not a genuine scarab of King Khufu, and therefore it is extremely improbable that he could have attached the least value to it.

For the information of your youthful scribe, I may venture to observe that while it is possible that King Khufu may have had scarabs with his royal cartouche thereon prepared, no one has ever had the good fortune to discover a perfectly authenticated scarab attributable to the period antedating the VI. Dynasty. I might also go so far as to observe that were it probable for a single specimen of this rare scarab to be in existence, it is practically impossible for it to be one of lapis lazuli, which was not used for such purposes until materially later than the period in which King Khufu flourished; in fact, not until the end of the XII. Dynasty.

I have not had the pleasure of inspecting the specimen photographed. I may say with definite conviction, however, that the photograph of the back of this scarab establishes its period exactly. It is a product of the XVIII. Dynasty, or an imitation of a scarab of this period. Lapis lazuli was popular at that epoch, and the specimen herein discussed may have been a genuine scarab of that interesting Queen Elizabeth of Egypt, Hatshepset, or possibly some king of that dynasty, with the cartouche shaved off and the one shown in your photograph forged in place thereof.

I have had the pleasure of inspecting the matchless collection of Mr. Allen, and may say with certainty that such a connoisseur as he doubtless would have been able to make the deductions I have herein respectfully brought to your attention in a much quicker space of time than it has taken me to express them in this brief epistle.

Trusting that these suggestions may further and quicken a most noteworthy spark of antiquarian zeal not to be disparaged because of its embryonic character, I remain, sir, yours most respectfully, ANTIQUARIAN.

P. S.—To my positive knowledge Holbrook Allen was *left-handed.*

"Phew!" whistled Bennett. "I wonder what I ever did to that guy?"

"I am afraid you have again allowed your feeling of self-esteem to blind you to the importance of a more careful examination of self-evident facts," retorted the managing editor. "It may or may not be important in this case that the object found in the hand of the dead man was a genuine scarab of fabulous value, or whether it was an imitation scarab of no value whatever. It is an extremely important fact, however, that this paper has announced, before the holding of a coroner's jury, that Mr. Allen is a suicide, because some of the evidence tends to show that he might have shot himself. If Mr. Allen is *left-handed,* how did he shoot himself to instant death with his left hand, drop the instrument of death on his right side, and then grasp again in his left hand the object you found him to be clasping?"

"Well, what do you know about that!" exclaimed Bennett.

"I don't know a thing about it," rebuked his superior. "That is the first thing for you to investigate. When you have done that I shall have something else for you to do. While you are about it your investigations will doubtless throw you in touch with some one able, even if unwilling, to tell you something of the antecedents of this Mr. Allen and his household. I have a little personal knowledge of one or two recent operations of his, and on that account I shall take a personal interest in this case. You will send me the first report of any and everything you learn. Now get!"

The irrepressible Mr. Bennett might

have been expected to feel some diminution of confidence after this unexpected turn of his interview with his chief. If he felt any, however, he certainly didn't show it. He whistled gayly as he made his way toward the North Woodward Street cars, and during the half hour's ride to Burlingame Avenue spent the time with perfect satisfaction to himself by perusing for the third time the two-column, first-page story written by him the night before.

On arriving at No. 65, he found no one at home but the maid. Having achieved a certain facility in the capacity of what he would have characterized as a "modern Don Juan," he experienced no particular difficulty in effecting a successful working basis with the girl Georgia. After the passage of his high-speed gallantries it was no time at all before she was willing to assure him that her late master was certainly left-handed. He always took his coffee and tea on the left side, wrote with his left hand, and went so far on occasions as to throw books at her with the same. His temper lately had been "something awful"; she wondered she had stood it as long as she had.

It developed that her stay with the Allens had covered a period of about eight months. When she came, there had been a better understanding between Mr. Allen and his sister, apparently. Of late, however, it had been more or less strained, reacting on her and every one else in the establishment. It was her opinion, gathered from stray bickerings she could "hardly help overhearing," that these misunderstandings had arisen over certain divisions of sums of money, why or what she didn't know.

As to how long they had lived at No. 65 she didn't know. They sometimes spoke in her hearing of having lived in London before coming to Detroit, but that meant little or nothing, as they had traveled everywhere, apparently. So far as she knew, Mr. Allen had few, if any, friends, though Miss Allen was rather gay and spent a good deal of time at tea dances, being brought home by very prosperous individuals, who never came into the house excepting at rare intervals. She had gathered that most of them were in the automobile business, but did not know the names of any of them.

Satisfied that he had secured all the information he could reasonably expect, Mr. Bennett returned and sent in word to the chief that he was ready to report. The managing-editor did not keep him waiting, listened to his story, and gave him immediate directions for further investigations.

"You'll have to go back there later and have an interview with Miss Allen. I doubt your having as much success with the mistress as you have had with the maid, but you will try your best to secure some information of a definite character as to whence they came and why," said the M. E. sternly. "In the meantime I shall tell you something I do not wish you to repeat. I am telling it to you because it will help you to handle more intelligently the assignment I am about to give you."

"Yes, sir," replied Bennett meekly enough.

"A few months ago I secured an inside tip that Universal Motors was bound to take a very sudden and very large rise on a certain date. There have been several such rises, several such tips, and several such big jumps in that stock, but in this particular case no one was supposed to know a thing about it, and to the best of my belief no one acted upon it in Detroit in any very large way except one man, and that man was Mr. Allen. He beat me to a local firm of brokers by six hours, and as I was not dealing in margins, but wanted the stock, his large purchase beat me out of at least one hundred and twenty thousand dollars on an investment of less than twenty thousand dol-

lars. Now, I want you to go to those brokers and tell them I want to know all they know about this man. I also want to know where he banks. The banks will be closed when you get that information, for the brokers will give it when you explain it is a personal favor to me *as editor of this paper.* You will then go to the bank or banks they mention to you, and at each you will secure the amount of this man's deposit and all they can tell you about him. You may make the same explanation to them that you will give the brokers, who are Bell, Mead & Co., in the Ford Building. Now, hustle and get back here with the information as fast as you can."

It was all the same to the young reporter whomever he might interview, and his reception by Mr. Bell, of the firm of Bell, Mead & Co., accorded well with his own sense of importance. When Mr. Bell learned that the editor of the *Herald* asked a favor in the name of that paper, the office boy himself would have secured it. Bennett soon learned enough to make him "sit up and take notice." He was told by Mr. Bell that they knew little or nothing about Mr. Allen, except that he had called on them in May, 1928, stating that he had seen an advertisement of theirs suggesting the purchase of a certain motor stock. As the purpose of that advertisement was to secure customers with the money to buy, it was a matter of no concern to them who the customer was, so long as he produced the cash with order.

Mr. Allen, it seemed, *did have* the money. He ordered a purchase of one thousand shares of Blessington stock, and paid for it in cash on the nail. In the course of several months he bought other motor stocks. At three separate times he had bought Universal before spectacular advances, and in each case the stocks commenced to rise within two days of his purchases. It had become a habit in their office to trail every buy he made. He was, Mr. Bell might say, their best and biggest customer, and the only customer of any note of whom they knew nothing except that he seemed infallible.

Consulting his books, Mr. Bell advised Bennett that from May 12, 1928, to November 16, 1929, they had bought and sold to Mr. Allen's account the sum of one million six hundred and twelve thousand one hundred and thirty-two dollars and eighty-six cents. He kept a balance in cash to his credit with them of exactly twenty thousand dollars at all times. On every sale they paid him at once down to that balance. At his request, they had introduced him to the National Bank of Commerce and to the First National. He presumed his accounts were kept in those two banks.

"By the way," asked Mr. Bennett, just as he was leaving, "do you happen to know whether Mr. Allen was left-handed?"

"Yes, he was left-handed," replied Mr. Bell. "Here is an order in his own handwriting we received five days ago. You can see that no right-handed man ever wrote it."

"Thanks," replied Bennett, hastening to the First National Bank.

It was after banking hours, but he had no trouble in securing admittance to the side door. Also he had no difficulty in securing an interview with one of the vice presidents. The latter knew nothing of Mr. Allen, but spoke to several of the officials still busy at their desks. None knew a thing about him, either, but the A to G bookkeeper supplied enough information to satisfy the newspaper investigator.

"Yes, I handle that account," the bookkeeper said, after he had been turned over to the tender mercies of Bennett by the vice president. "He was introduced by Bell, Mead & Co., but I don't think anybody here knows anything about him further than that.

However, a five-hundred-thousand-dollar balance is quite a sufficient recommendation in itself, eh?"

"Would be for me," answered the reporter pertly. "Any other little thing of interest about his account except the half million?"

"Yes, there is," said the bookkeeper, instinctively lowering his voice. "The account was started in July, 1928, as a joint account in the names of Holbrook and Alice Allen, checks on it to be honored when signed by either. In July of this year Alice Allen relinquished her checking interest, and it was put in the individual name of Holbrook Allen. On the first of November it was changed back again to a joint account. Nothing has been withdrawn since October 30th, I see."

"Thanks, very much," bowed Bennett. "By the way, was Mr. Allen left-handed?"

"Sure he was," replied the bookkeeper somewhat in surprise. "He's the only left-handed check writer on the A to G ledgers, too, peculiarly enough. How did you know?"

"Didn't; just occurred to me to ask," answered the reporter. "By-by."

In the National Bank of Commerce he secured practically the same information, except that the sum on deposit there was found to total eight hundred and forty thousand dollars and to average about seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the entire time they had had the account on the books.

"Well," mused the investigator as he hurried back to the office, "if he croaked himself, he must be ambidextrous, and he surely couldn't have been worrying much about the high cost of living."

The managing editor heard his subordinate's report in silence, and made no comment after it was finished except to say:

"I'll write the story for to-morrow myself. Tell the city editor to put you on something else, but show up here to-morrow at twelve thirty."

There was considerable surprise in the editorial rooms when it became noised about that the chief himself was writing a murder follow-up. There was more surprise when the story itself was read. It contained but brief mention of the tragedy, to the effect that the police department wished a correction made of the preceding day's story. The police had authorized no official conclusion that Mr. Allen had died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. As a matter of fact, the surroundings seemed to indicate that Mr. Allen had shot himself with a pistol held in his right hand, whereas it was learned that Mr. Allen was left-handed.

Extended reference, however, was made to the scarab found in the left hand of the victim. A very scholarly dissertation on scarabs followed, with all the available proof regarding the specimen found being a barefaced imitation. A number of corrections in relation to Egyptian beliefs and customs were apparent to those able to understand and follow the article, which was long, and, to many, interesting.

Young Mr. Bennett read the story of his superior on his way down the next morning. "Well," he commented, "seems to me I did a lot of running around for a million and a quarter all for nothing. Wonder if he'll send me to Pontiac this morning."

As the reporter entered the editorial rooms the chief was talking to the telephone operator.

"If Lieutenant Reed calls up again, tell him I just arrived, and immediately connect him with me," he was saying. "Ah, Bennett, come to my office at once."

"Read that," he continued as they entered his sanctum.

"That" proved to be a second communication from "Antiquarian," and was as follows:

Managing Editor, Detroit HERALD, *City.*

DEAR SIR: There is nothing so dear to an antiquarian's heart as to see the true light of knowledge diffusing itself in unexpected quarters. It was with but faint hope that I suggested a more scholarly research on the part of your energetic subordinate into the interesting realm of Egyptian mysticism. His more careful dissertation on the subject of scarabs in this morning's issue proves that my implied criticism of his erudition was a trifle immature.

Please extend my felicitations to him, as one true seeker after knowledge to another. Say further to him that I can find but one ground for issue between us. In referring to the development of the cartouche he assigned its birth as probably coincident with the dynastic kings of the first period. I am sure a more extended investigation on his part will convince him of the error of this statement, as the first known king to employ the royal cartouche was Besh, the first king of the II. Dynasty.

Doubless this was but a slight slip of the pen. The rare genius which he displays for investigations of this character prompts me to suggest another line of Oriental lore equally interesting. Even the Indian mausoleums are not to be overlooked. Who knows, a look behind the scenes at Taj Mahal to-day might prove as enlightening to the true seeker after knowledge as one behind the scene at Cheops five thousand years ago. Perhaps a far cry, but transmitted to you, my dear sir, as a thought in passing.

I thank you most gratefully for the consideration accorded my suggestion of yesterday. Yours most respectfully,

ANTIQUARIAN.

P. S.—I am quite positive *two* shots were fired on the afternoon of Thursday at No. 65.

"By gosh, chief," exclaimed Bennett, "my hunch was dead right! I wondered if you were about to hike me to Pontiac, and this letter begins to look like it. This guy's sure balmy."

"I didn't take the trouble to show you that letter in order to secure your idle comments," the chief commented severely. "I hope I have not given you credit for more sense than you actually possess. Please concentrate your entire attention to that paragraph in reference to the Taj Mahal and kindly tell me, if you can, just what possible light it may throw on this problem."

"Lord love you, chief!" remonstrated Bennett. "If you were to give me the third degree, I couldn't tell you whether it meant a shot of hop or a shell of suds."

"And I suppose you expect to make a newspaper man some day," sighed the editor. "The Taj Mahal is one of the wonders of the world. It is a mausoleum at Agra in India. I shall show you a picture of it in the encyclopedia. Does that assist your feeble cerebration in any manner?"

"I get you, chief," gleefully responded Bennett. "I've seen a lot of these pictures. There's a dandy in Allen's library, by the way."

"Ah, there is, eh?" exclaimed the managing editor. "Well, I'm glad you're good for *something.* Now listen. I don't know who is writing these letters, and of course you don't, but he isn't writing them for nothing. This reference to Taj Mahal means something very definite, I am sure. Now what does he say? 'A look behind the scenes at Taj Mahal.' The first thing that naturally occurs to me is that there is a message or letter or something of that nature hidden in the back of the picture. You will have to go out there and find out. Use your head. If you can't find anything, try to impress on your mind everything, *everything,* mind you, that is in any way worth noticing about that picture or around it. Then come back and tell me what you find. Contrive to be there alone, and don't touch a thing unless you are alone. Nobody knows what that girl may say or do, if she should happen to let you in. Now off with you and hurry back."

As Bennett hastened away from the M. E., the latter's telephone bell tinkled. "Yes, lieutenant," he answered. "No, I wasn't taking any liberties with the department, Reed. I learned that we had made an error in rushing into print on that story and calling it a suicide. I am very sure the man was mur-

dered. I tried to get you to explain, but couldn't reach you either at your office or at home. You won't hold any hard feelings when you learn everything, lieutenant. By the merest chance I happened to secure some very important information, and what I used this morning will give you a chance to turn a good trick and nobody the wiser. Come on down. It will be worth your while. Good-by."

The editor attempted to busy himself with routine affairs, but with ill success. He looked nervously at his watch every few moments. "Should have told that boy to telephone me. Hope he has that much sense," he muttered. "Well, I can put off seeing Reed till I *do* hear from him."

His bell rang. "A police officer to see you, sir. And Mr. Bennett on the wire to speak to you."

"Connect me with Bennett at once. Tell the gentleman I'll see him in five minutes. Hello, hello, Bennett. Yes, speak up."

"Hello, chief!" Bennett's voice shrilled excitedly over the wire. "The bug's there, chief. It was dead easy The maid let me in and went upstairs to call Miss Allen, who was taking a nap. Walked right in and looked at the back of that picture. What'd you think, chief! There's a bullet hole there new as paint. Dug it out with my penknife. Yes, it's a .38, too. Picture had been moved over about three inches to cover the hole. Dust on the molding on either side of the place where the hanger was before. Couldn't wait, chief. Had to call you up. Be right down with the bullet. So long, chief."

"Ah!" sighed the editor. "Hello, Miss Grace. Send Mr. Reed in, will you, please?"

"Welcome, lieutenant," he greeted the frowning police officer. "Glad to see you."

"Say, where do I get off on this double-cross stuff?" growled Reed.

"Now, just forget it, lieutenant," soothed the editor. "I've done you the best turn you ever had happen to you. That Allen business is a case of murder, and not suicide, and if it hadn't been for sheer luck you'd have put your foot in it. As it is, I have the proof, and have framed it all up for you in advance."

"Well, I'll listen, but you have got to show me," replied Reed.

The lieutenant was told all of the essential facts learned by Bennett under the guidance of his chief, the only reservation observed by the editor being a refusal to state the source of the information which had made his investigations possible.

"You win," uttered the officer. "Granting the facts, they kind of make me out a big dub, don't they?"

"No, they don't," replied the editor. "Every fact we've picked up has been due to mere chance, as I told you before. Anyway, nobody is going to know a thing about it. You go right ahead from here on and claim all the credit."

"That's mighty white of you," Reed replied. "But look here. There ain't a single fall guy in sight. Now who done it? The only possible motive is for this here Miss Allen to get all that coin, and at that she could have drawn it, anyway, and ducked without any killing. Besides, I checked up her story and it's exactly two by four. She *did* leave about one thirty. She did go to Newcomb's and to Hudson's, and charged stuff at both places. She *did* go to the Detroit Opera House, and she did go to the 'Ponch' with young Bedford, and stayed with him till she blew in about seven thirty. I've checked her up at every step, and I've checked up the maid. Every door was locked and every window was fastened. He was all alone. It wasn't no inside job, I'm sure of that, and if it was an outside job, who did it?"

"Now, my dear lieutenant," smiled the editor, "I'm no detective; I'm just a common, garden-variety editor trying to keep his paper from making a monumental error, and at the same time do the police department of this city a good turn. I haven't an idea in the world who did it. I have a suspicion I may fall on to an idea or two in the next few days, but if I do it will be pure chance, just as I have assured you the rest has been."

"Well, I don't know, but it seems to me you got a lot of dope mighty easy," the officer replied dejectedly. "Oh, hello, Bennett, anything further the boss hasn't sprung on me?"

"Not a thing, lieut. Say, chief, that guy——"

"Sh!" warned the editor.

"I get you, chief," grinned the reporter.

"The lieutenant here has checked up all the stories, and finds everybody in sight has a perfect alibi. Wants us to pick out a nice, soft goat for him. You've been pretty busy on the job. Suggest somebody for Mr. Reed."

"Well, lieut," suggested the boy, "if everything else fails, you can lay it on one of those furnacemen looking for a job."

"Sure!" exclaimed the officer. "I never thought of that. You just cook up a nice story along that line. Party or parties unknown. Police on the lookout for suspicious parties seen answering an ad, and so forth. You know the dope. Give us a chance to get busy and commit us to nothin' at all. Eh?"

"All right, lieut. Use that over your say-so?" queried the reporter. "No leaks now; this is to be our scoop for to-morrow morning. Rich millionaire murdered. Foxy Reed runs down tough clew and so forth."

"Sure, go to it," replied the now smiling detective. "And be sure to slip me the new dope as it turns up."

"All right, lieut. So long."

The editor turned to his desk with the smile gone. "All right, Bennett. Write it up just that way. Be rather vague. Glittering generalities about vast wealth and so forth, and salve the lieutenant a bit. Can't do any harm, and may do some good. Get out. I'm busy. That was a quick bit of work you did. Thank you for telephoning me so promptly."

"All right, chief. I get you. Much obliged."

The reporter worked steadily on the morrow's scoop. Credit for the finding of the bullet was generously allowed Lieutenant Reed, and an interview with this doughty official foretold an early apprehension of a nameless miscreant, whose probable vocation in life was answering "Help Wanted" ads with the sole purpose of murdering wealthy employers of domestic labor. It was finished in less than an hour and submitted by Bennett to the chief.

The managing editor read the copy with alternate smiles and frowns. He blue-penciled and corrected freely. "Send it down and leave word that I am to read the proof," he directed. "And by the way, Bennett, how did you improve the shining hour when Miss Allen *did* appear this afternoon?"

"Oh, yes," he replied, "I forgot to tell you. I told her that Mr. Allen was such a wealthy man we ought to have some biographical data to run after this scare stuff was over, and asked her where they came from and all that."

"Well, what did she say?"

"She said they were English, but explained that as a matter of fact they had traveled most of the time during the past ten years, going almost anywhere and becoming, as she expressed it, 'strictly cosmopolitan.' When they were living in London, however, the name of their street was St. John's Road or St. John's Wood or something like that. It was near some famous cricket

joint or other. I remember she told me that as though I ought to know all about it."

"Did she say how they came to be here?"

"Yes, she said an uncle of theirs had died in Australia, leaving them fifty thousand pounds, and that when they felt it was best to leave England they decided they would come to America and invest the money in some of our wonderful industries. As she told it, I wasn't near so much interested as I was in getting off to telephone you about that bullet, but as I look back on it now it seems to me a lot of it was bunk. Anyhow, she had it all down pat, if you get me, chief?"

"I get you, Bennett," replied the chief soberly. "Now, I wonder if you could get me a picture of the lady? I don't think I have ever seen her, but a picture might bring some association to my mind."

"I can try, chief," Bennett replied. "I've got a date to take Georgia to a movie to-night. 'Romeo and Juliet.' Romance and all that sort of thing, you know. I'll call her up and ask if she can't cop off a picture for me. I thought I ought to kind of keep in touch with the situation, you know, chief." The latter was in the nature of an apology.

"Go ahead. Get me a picture by to-morrow and I'll see your salary is raised a dollar a week."

"You're on, chief; I've got that bean in my kick right now."

"Get out. I'm busy."

Within ten minutes the chief was disturbed by the impertinent entrance of Bennett's head in his doorway. "I say, chief. We both forgot. That's a Sunday beat we got, and I ain't working to-morrow. Extend that bet till Monday, will you?"

"All right, my boy," smiled the chief. "I'll do just that. I'll give you until Monday at two p. m."

"Thanks. I'll be there with the goods. You just leave it to me."

Sunday and even Monday morning dragged somewhat for both the managing editor and Bennett. For the former because he wondered what "Antiquarian" would have to suggest, and for the latter because he had earned his raise and burned to prove it.

Both beat the clock by two hours, and met in the elevator at noon. "I got it and then some," Bennett whispered to the chief.

"Good!" the latter whispered back.

As they entered the chief's private office, Bennett drew out a cabinet photograph and triumphantly flourished it. "Just take a peek, chief."

The picture was an excellent group of five people. It was evidently a holiday picture, with an imitation bathing beach in the background. There were two ladies and three men, the former in bathing suits and the men in white flannel trousers, serge coats, and yachting caps. The picture was full and clear, and "Bottomly—Brighton" was printed at the bottom.

"The two in the center are Mr. and Miss Allen. The girl said it was the only picture she could find in the house, and seemed sorry she couldn't do better by me. Cost me one dollar and eighty-five cents in entertainment and refreshments. You can slip the word to the ghost to add that on."

"Excellent. Make out a slip and I'll O. K. it. Sit down. I'm expecting a letter that may have some news. Ah, here it is!" replied the editor, picking out the expected communication. "Let's see what 'Antiquarian' has to say to-day." They both read:

Managing Editor, Detroit HERALD, *City.*

DEAR SIR: It is a significant fact, and worthy of philosophical contemplation, that the wisest men are prone to accept as verity the statements of those they might well suspect of possible prevarication.

I note with interest that your ponderous sheet of Sunday conveys with a spirit of conviction the intent of one Lieutenant Reed to apprehend with certainty the murderer of a wealthy citizen. I note with perplexity that said malefactor committed the foul deed while intent on responding to an advertisement inserted by the victim in the public press of Thursday. I have carefully perused every issue of the four daily papers of that date under the caption "Help Wanted," and even under "Business Opportunities." There is no announcement that by the remotest stretch of a fertile imagination may be so far distorted as to meet the required specifications. Yours most respectfully, ANTIQUARIAN.

P. S.—Of course, I should hardly go so far as to assert that no such announcement might have been *ordered.*

"That guy is crazy, like a fox, I don't think!" exclaimed the young reporter. "I'll just beat it for the business office. We've got to copper every bet that gink makes."

In twenty minutes he was back.

"Here you are, chief!" he exulted. "The *Pro Bono Publico* sure gets his dope straight from the feed box. Listen!" And he read:

"Received one eight p. m., J. C. B. Charge to Hemlock 4936, Mr. Holbrook Allen. One time—Thursday. Classification, Male Help Wanted. 'Reliable man to tend furnace morning and evening, and remove ashes. Apply two to four to-day, No. 65 Burlingame Avenue."

"And here at the bottom is:

"Hold. Canceled by phone five twenty p. m."

"Who received this cancellation, Bennett?"

"Beat you to it, chief," the young reporter replied pertly. "Maybe I'm no star on this travel stuff, but I'm some guy on this system gag. I've broken too many rules myself not to know one when I see it badly bent. Be that as it may, or as the case may be, as the judge said, it didn't get me anything. There ain't a girl on the board'll admit she took the message and forgot to initial it. What's more, there's the John Hancock of every one of the regulars, and it might be any, all, or none of 'em."

"Curious," mused the chief. "However, the important fact is that the ad was ordered and then canceled. Of course, we should like to know whether it was a man or woman who canceled it, but I am not at all sure that would give us any peace of mind, either."

"Nope, you agree with me there, chief," replied Bennett. "If the young lady or the maid canceled, what good would that do us? Neither of them croaked him; that's a copper-riveted cinch. If he canceled it himself, why? There is just one sure thing we're up against. We've got to cook up a new alibi for the lieutenant."

"Ye-es," replied the editor absently. "By the way, put in an order for a duplicate photograph or two of this Brighton picture, and tell the girl to ask Reed to run in some time this afternoon if he will."

The lieutenant, however, had seen no particular reason for awaiting a special invitation to call on the managing editor. The story of his supposititious activities, as reported in the Sunday edition, had pleased his conventional mental attitude exactly. It was quite in keeping with the character of interview he was best able to accord on most of his "investigations," and in the present case reflected a spirit of sincerity that most of his own excuses usually lacked.

As this conviction grew upon him he decided that he was at last in the hands of his friends. As a result he felt it incumbent upon him to call on the editor and assure him of this, or, as he expressed it to himself, "slip him a little bull." In pursuit of this laudable design he announced his arrival to the office girl a very few moments after her unsuccessful efforts to connect with him at his office.

His promptness was a matter of no

surprise to the managing editor, who was in the habit of securing very quick responses to most of his requests. He wasted no time, either, in dispelling the equanimity of the lieutenant. He reported that an investigation of their files, as well as those of each of the other daily papers for Thursday last, failed to disclose any advertisement such as that for which the murdered man was supposed to have remained at his home.

Nonplused momentarily, more because of his necessity for a new excuse than because of his very evident oversight in failing to discover this important bit of information himself, the lieutenant reverted to his original conviction, and decided to throw himself on the mercy of his friends.

"Well," he commented, "we ain't learned a single new thing. We'll have to stall again. What'd you think we ought to say now?"

"That predicament has naturally engaged my thought to a certain extent, lieutenant," the M. E. replied. "I also am of the opinion that a certain aspect of this affair seems to indicate a little 'stalling,' as you suggest. And by the way, Bennett at my suggestion secured an excellent photograph of the murdered man and his sister, together with three friends, taken in England. It has occurred to me that it might be a wise plan to mail this picture to the authorities in London. It may or not be followed by any definite result, but there can be no objection to the plan."

"Sure, sure," replied the police officer. "Just give me the photo and I'll send it off at once."

"I am having a duplicate or two made from the original, and I think they will be ready by four or five o'clock. If you don't mind, I shall write a brief request, outlining the salient points, which you may have copied on official paper and sent on over your signature," replied the editor.

"Just as you say," replied the lieutenant.

"Very well," replied the editor. "If you will return about five o'clock, we'll get the picture off. You might bring along a piece or two of official paper and save time."

After the departure of the police official the editor called a stenographer and rapidly dictated a story for the following day. He made no reference to the absence of the "Help Wanted" advertisement, but hinted at important developments tending to convince the police that the crime had been perpetrated by a criminal of much higher intelligence than that likely to be reflected in the person of any seeker for a furnaceman's job.

That this suggestion appealed strongly to one member of that organization at least was quickly manifest after the lieutenant read a proof of the story on his return at five o'clock. "That's the dope!" he exclaimed, with great satisfaction. "Couldn't have said it better myself. Pictures done? I'd like to get a slant at one."

The pictures were done, and the lieutenant examined one with marked interest. "Fine of the dame, all right. Some shape, too! Reckon this is her brother, though I can't say he looked quite so swell the night I saw him. Now where have I seen this guy right behind him? Face is familiar. I bet I've seen him or a picture of him. I'll take this copy along if you don't mind. I can't place that chap right off the bat, but it'll come to me."

"I had that extra one made for you. We'll just send this original right off, if you brought that paper. Here, I'll have this letter copied. You will note I have requested a cable reply, to be directed to you. We should receive it within eight or nine days. I hope you will have unraveled this mystery by then, but we might as well do everything we can," suggested the editor.

"Say," replied the lieutenant, "you send me to trampin' a beat in Hamtramck if I see a chance in a million of pinchin' the guy that done this job."

"*Nil desperandum,* meaning later," laughed the editor. "Just sign this, lieutenant, and if a reply comes pay for it and bring the bill to us. You will note that I have numbered the persons in the picture from one to five. I mention in this letter that Mr. Allen and his sister are supposed to have resided in St. John's Wood Road, near Lord's Cricket Grounds in London, and that they are supposed to have been under a certain measure of suspicion before leaving for America. I have further suggested that they send us a cable reply by Western Union code should they possess any information of an interesting character, a fuller reply to follow by mail."

"Just what I would have said myself," replied the lieutenant complacently. "I'll breeze along now, and if you get wised up on any new dope, tip me off. So long."

The account of the next morning was relegated to an inside position of no prominence, as the ardor of a jaded public interest was hardly expected to reflect the same degree of expectation shared by those on the inside. As a matter of fact, the murder had ceased to be a matter of any public concern, and even the announcement of the findings of the coroner's jury failed to arouse more than passing notice.

The decision of this self-important body was neither startling nor unexpected. They found that the deceased had met his death at the hands of some person or persons unknown. In the absence of any new evidence none of the reporters present saw fit to waste any time on the somewhat fulsome evasions of Lieutenant Reed, and to all intents and purposes the Burlingame mystery became a dead issue.

The report of the jury's findings appeared in the issue of just eight days after the letter signed by Lieutenant Reed had been dispatched to London. During that time absolutely no item of interest had come to the attention of the several concerned in unraveling the case. Every morning the managing editor sought for a letter from "Antiquarian." Every night he confidently expected it to arrive on the following day. None came.

The silence of his unknown correspondent perplexed and annoyed the editor, and on the ninth day after the receipt of his third letter he had the following announcement inserted in the "Personal" column:

If "Antiquarian" will take up his neglected correspondence with M. E., his letters will be received with the keenest appreciation.

On the noon mail of the same day he was rewarded. The answer he received read as follows:

Managing Editor, Detroit HERALD, *City.*

DEAR SIR: Your flattering announcement in the classified columns this morning is keenly reminiscent of a timeworn saw, much too trite to warrant unnecessary repetition.

Noting an absence of reportorial activity, it occurred to me that such pedantic suggestions as I had offered might have exhausted the deductive capabilities of your worthy young investigator. I accordingly deliberately desisted from a course which I assumed might thus but prolong an unwelcome spur to distasteful activity.

Encouraged by the implied invitation of your announcement, however, I shall venture to suggest a line of thought occasioned by a reference to your last report of proposed official investigation. The imaginative processes of the individual responsible for this unique theory is deserving of the highest praise, if judged by current short-story fiction standards.

However, as a practical course of possible value in the case at issue, it occurs to me that a study of less pretentious vocations than those of political or diplomatic character might be expected to yield results of a more tangible nature. In this connection it occurs to me that a study of chauffeurs might be productive of highly interesting developments.

As a profitable concrete study, also, I might

make reference to the interest I have felt in local financial institutions. Even branch offices of well-known depositories of acknowledged standing are not devoid of promise.

Yours most respectfully,

ANTIQUARIAN.

P. S.—The North Woodward branch of the Peninsular State Bank at the corner of Rosedale Court is not very imposing in aspect, but it is often a mistake to judge from casual appearances.

The managing editor called in his assistant, Bennett.

"About that Allen case, Bennett," he remarked. "I do not remember any particulars regarding the chauffeur. Did you see him?"

"No, I didn't, chief," replied the young man. "But Reed did the day after the murder. His name is George Canfield, and he lived in the house. I never paid a bit of attention to him, as the lieutenant reported he couldn't have been within five miles of the place. After leaving Miss Allen at the theater, he went to the Lafayette pool rooms and played pool and billiards all afternoon. He got there at two forty and left at exactly a quarter of five. The lieut didn't have any trouble in checking him up, as he had had a fuss with the cashier over his checks. He had been plugged in at a pool table at two forty and swore that while he was in the place by that time he hadn't got a game for at least fifteen minutes after. He'd had several fusses with his partners, too, and four or five bums remembered all about him when the lieut went up Friday afternoon to check him up. Lets him out without a doubt."

"So it would seem," murmured the editor. "However, I wish you would run out to the Peninsular State Bank's Rosedale Court branch and discover whether you can learn anything from them about this man Canfield. You might also discover whether your young lady friend can give you any interesting information about him. Telephone me if anything interesting develops."

"All right, chief," replied Bennett. "I'll call you up within an hour."

A few moments after the time limit the reporter had set for himself, the editor was put in communication with him over his private phone.

"I say, chief," Bennett's voice rang excitedly over the wire, "that chauffeur must have been J. P. M. in disguise. He's been carrying a balance at that bank as high as sixty thousand dollars. Had 'em all stepping sidewise yesterday morning when he wanted to pull it all out in real money. They gave him five thousand dollars in cash and a cashier's check for fifty-two thousand three hundred and twenty dollars on the bank downtown. Struck 'em dead when I told 'em he was a chauffeur. Always came in dressed up like a horse, and they thought he was some rich guy too lazy to go downtown to bank."

"Quick work, Bennett," replied the editor. "I'll find out at once whether he has cashed in downtown."

"But wait a minute, chief," remonstrated Bennett. "That isn't all. I called up my lady friend, and she says Miss Allen is in a terrible stew. Canfield hasn't been around since leaving the house about nine o'clock yesterday morning. Didn't come home last night at all, and she's sure he telephoned early this morning to Miss Allen. What'll I do next?"

"Go to the house and see if Miss Allen will give you an interview. Come in as soon as you can. I'll get in touch with Reed at once."

To the lieutenant the editor immediately reported these unexpected developments. The police officer said he would have the dragnet out, and promised to land the chauffeur within three hours if he were still in town.

"I shouldn't be too sanguine on that score," cautioned the editor. "If I do not hear from you by six o'clock, I think it will be good policy to run a story in the morning paper. I feel rather con-

fident that the quicker that man is under lock and key the better. The publicity can't do any harm, at any rate. By the way, is there any word from London yet?"

"Not a whisper," replied Reed. "Time they came through at that, if our letter ain't been blown up on the way over. But you watch my smoke! We land that guy or somebody will lose a sweet, fat job."

"Bennett is attempting an interview with Miss Allen, and if he should be able to secure any new or interesting data, I will instruct him to call you up the moment he returns."

"I'll be right here," replied the officer.

On his return, however, Bennett had little or nothing to report. Miss Allen had declined to be interviewed on any subject, claiming an attack of neuralgia. At his chief's suggestion, he reported to Mr. Reed in person, and returned with a personal conviction, shared with no reluctance by the editor, that little success was likely to follow the time-worn policy of the department in apprehending the missing man.

Accordingly the story in the next morning's issue galvanized the public into a renewed interest in the Burlingame mystery, and before noon the supposed fugitive had been definitely identified in no less than fifteen different places by fifteen different amateur detectives, no one of whom had ever seen him, knew in the least what he really looked like, or had any suspicion of his existence before. Wise to this species of folly, Lieutenant Reed wasted no time on wild-goose chases, but as usual sat in his office and waited for something to "turn up."

As it happened, something actually did. At one thirty he was delivered a long message from London. With the message in his hand, he wasted no time in seeking his friend the editor.

"I didn't want to do a thing," he explained to the latter, "until I could see what you thought about it. This dope is going to raise Billy Hell."

The editor took the message and read it from start to finish with the keenest interest:

Mr. Allen and sister not on record as having left. Neither did they live on St. John's Wood Road or remove thence since said date. No. 1 of your picture is the Honorable Cyril Westgate. No. 2 is not known to this department. No. 3 is Edward Kline, alias "First Cabin" Bigwood. No. 4 is the wife of Kline. Both are high-grade confidence people, and have been under surveillance here. No. 5 is the wife of No. 1. The Honorable Cyril Westgate was murdered in a Brighton hotel; jewels, securities, and money to the extent of seventy-five thousand pounds disappearing. This department unaware of Kline and wife or their exact whereabouts. Fuller particulars and further request mailed registered post.

"Well," exclaimed the editor, "that is a poser, isn't it?"

"Yep, and that ain't all, neither." replied the officer. "No. 2 is our missing chauffeur. The plain-clothes man I had a long while checking up on him the day after the murder slanted that picture in my office this noon and spotted it right away. I knew I'd seen the guy, but blame me if I got next at all."

"If I may venture to suggest it, lieutenant, I should counsel the apprehension of the alleged Miss Allen without a moment's delay."

"I guessed we'd agree on that all right, so I sent two men to No. 65 just before I blew over here. I've got a buzz wagon below, and told them to hold her till I got there."

"Well, I have a premonition you won't be in time," replied the editor. "However, hustle out there and telephone me what develops if you pinch the lady. You might take Bennett along. I know he is dying for a little excitement."

"O. K.," agreed the officer. "Call you up just as soon as I can."

The officer, attended by the highly excited Bennett, had not departed more than five minutes when the city editor closeted himself with his chief.

"I just received a message from a good friend of mine in the Receiving Hospital, chief," he said. "Fifteen minutes ago the ambulance brought in two serious cases from a Palmer Park road house. The woman died from a bullet in the brain three minutes after they got her in. The man is shot in two places through the chest. He is conscious, but is likely to croak within the hour. The interne who telephoned me says he is sure the woman is the sister of Allen. He feels pretty sure the man is the chauffeur, though he is dressed in the latest style. I thought I should tell you at once. What shall we do?"

"Get there just as quickly as we can. Leave word to get hold of Reed as soon as he arrives at No. 65, and have him burn up the road to the hospital. Hustle a boy out and have a taxi at the corner by the time we walk that far."

In less than eight minutes the two were at the hospital, where the editor identified the dead woman from the picture he had brought with him. The man was still on the table in the emergency dressing room, surrounded by a swarm of plain-clothes men and patrolmen in uniform. To their crude attempts at cross-examination he simply maintained a sneering silence. It was evident that his vitality was fast ebbing, and at the request of the managing editor they all withdrew but one chosen by the city editor. The latter explained that his chief was in the full confidence of Lieutenant Reed, whose presence was momentarily expected.

The editor stepped to the side of the dying man, and, holding the photograph before him, said:

"We know all about it, Canfield. Don't you want to tell us the reason before you go out?"

At the sight of the photograph the man's feeble eyelids flickered, and he whispered: "She said she'd burn that up. I always suspected she was in love with that boob. Well, she got hers."

"Won't you tell us all about it?" urged his questioner.

"Sure. I know it's all over, but those flatfoots made me sick. I haven't too much breath left, so if you'll just spill all you know I'll fill in the blanks for you."

The editor told him quickly the information secured from Scotland Yard, as well as the facts gleaned through the hints of his mysterious correspondent. The dying man was given a strong stimulant, after which he told his story.

"Ed croaked Westgate, but he didn't intend to do it. We had it all framed to get him for a one-hundred-thousand-dollar investment in an asphalt bed in South America. May spoiled it all by falling in love with the boob, and in a jealous rage Ed stabbed him when both of them were half tight in Westgate's private sitting room. Ed was sober enough to grab a suit case of plunder, and as it turned out we hocked it for close to two hundred thousand dollars in New York. We beat it for Southampton, and just made the midnight boat for Cherbourg. The *New York* stopped there the next afternoon.

"We held a council of war, and decided we'd make a break for Detroit. Besides, none of us had ever been there. As a matter of fact, we hadn't worked on this side for over five years, anyway. We decided that Ed would be a retired English gentleman with plenty of money to invest, and that May would be his sister. I was to fill in according to the way the cards ran when we got there.

"I've known Ed for twelve years, but just happened to run across him in London that summer, met his wife, and saw at a glance she was traveling double just for what there was in it. I fell

for her. If you are as wise as you look, that ought to be enough to explain a lot. I was wise all the time that she was handing me the double cross, but even a wise guy's a boob when he falls for any skirt.

"We landed with twenty thousand pounds in English bank notes, as Westgate had drawn the money for our asphalt game, and Ed copped that. We cleaned up nearly twenty thousand more on the other plunder Ed had riffled his private dispatch box for. We played around New York several months, making up our minds what lay we'd play in Detroit. May happened to get a rich guy on the string, who tipped her off to a big killing in steel, and Ed shelled out ten thousand dollars to play the hunch. We sold out too quick, but at that cleaned up about forty thousand dollars. Ed saw a waiter in the Astor piping him off the night we celebrated the clean-up, and swore it was a man that had served him at the Metropole Hotel in Brighton. He blew for Detroit that night, and we packed up and followed a week later.

"That stock deal gave us the idea, and as soon as we landed here we took a fine house, shipped on a lot of fine stuff Ed had bought in New York, and settled down to play a new game. I became a chauffeur, and got next to all the boys driving for the rich automobile crowd. If there is anything about a man's business a chauffeur doesn't know, you can put the guy down for a mutt. I lined up the live ones, and May got next to them. Ed worked the bucket-shop end of it, and pretty soon we were richer than any crooks had a right to be.

"As a result we all got pretty chesty. Ed got to drinking and hitting the dope, and was uglier than sin all the time. He made May sign away her right to half of the coin they banked, and for the last three months I have had to fight for every century I got. At last May threatened to blow the bulls to his Brighton job, and he got so scared he agreed to the old split. However, May felt he was likely to run the old bluff any minute, and said she would beat it with me if I'd just get rid of Ed. I never croaked a man before in my life, and I didn't want to do it, but she has put it over on a lot wiser than I am, and at last she wheedled me into it.

"She framed the whole thing. She bought two .38 guns, and left hers loaded with blanks around, taking a shot at a pup next door once in so often to make her bluff good. She gave the other to me, with a box of cartridges for it. She fired the furnaceman, and told Ed he had better put in an ad for a new one, as there were plenty in the neighborhood, but she wasn't hobnobbing with any of the neighbors.

"Ed telephoned the ad about noon on Wednesday, and about five o'clock May sent me out to wire the office to cancel it, which I did. She said Thursday was the girl's afternoon off, and that Ed would be all alone. She had me cancel the ad so no bum would be coming around to bother me while I was tending to Ed. She told him he'd have to stay home and answer the ad, as she was lining up a boob on whom she expected to palm off a bum scarab Ed had picked up. Ed worked Cairo two seasons, and got bit right by the Egyptologist bug, which from all accounts is more fatal than the loco weed is for ponies. Some slick dragoman had landed Ed for a pretty penny for a scarab of old King Cheops. That was before he got wised up to the game, and it had become an obsession of his to unload it on some other sucker. He had tried it a dozen times, but always fell down.

"Everything worked out just as May had doped it. We left the house just as the maid was about to pick up a friend of hers next door. We left in the machine at one thirty, and took fifteen minutes to drive to Newcomb-En-

dicott's. I left her there, and beat it back, taking my time and reaching the alley back on Lawrence Avenue in fifteen minutes more. I put on a muffler like the old furnaceman had worn and an old hat covered with ashes. The hat and muffler protected my face, and if anybody saw me, we figured he would take me for the furnaceman. I left these duds in the back hall, and ran in to where Ed was reading in the library. I told him May had sent me back for the scarab, as she had telephoned the boob, who told her he would take it. Ed got it out of the case. He was half stewed, and bawled me out for coming back to bother him. I had my gun in my hand, and as he started to cuss me I took a shot at him before I was ready. He saw my gun, and grabbed at my arm just as the gun went off. The bullet went wild, and hit the wall, but he was so drunk it was no trick at all to plug him with my second shot.

"I was perfectly cool and not a bit worried. Ed was a rat, and I had no compunction about croaking him, once I had made up my mind to do it. I dragged the Chinese chair to where he dropped, and lifted him into it. I got up and moved a picture over the hole in the wall where my wild bullet had struck, took out May's pistol, extracted one of the cartridges, and put one I had shot in place of it. I then placed all of the cartridges I hadn't used back in the box, and dropped it in the drawer where May always kept her gun, dropping the latter near Ed's right hand. I forgot entirely Ed was left-handed, but even if I had remembered it I should have probably done the same thing, as I never should have touched the stiff to get that scarab out of his left hand.

"I walked right out just as I had entered, and was backing out of the alley in twenty minutes from the time I had left the car there. I beat it downtown in just about twelve minutes, and took about eight minutes more to find a place to park my car. This brought me to the pool room at exactly two forty, which was the time we had figured on my getting there. I played all afternoon, making a fuss about everything that gave me a good excuse, as I wanted to perfect an alibi that would hold water, and I guess I did.

"When May got home she threw a fit that she had practiced on before, and from all accounts she put everything over to the queen's taste. After it was all over and I asked her to keep her promise, she just laughed at me. I was a boob not to draw down my cash and beat it then, but I hated to see her get away with it. I stuck around, hoping she would make good, but about three or four days ago I began to realize some one was following me up pretty close. I didn't get wise until day before yesterday who it was, when I caught that old Grumpy next door peeking in at me when I went to draw some money at the bank. I felt right then he had my number, for he is a foxy old busybody with not a thing in the world to do but make somebody trouble. I decided that night I should draw out my share of the spoils and lay low. I did it the next morning, going to a private rooming house in Highland Park.

"Last night I got terribly lonesome, and made up my mind May would have to beat it with me or come across with at least half of the plunder. I had telephoned her, and she had told me she didn't want to ever hear from me again. This morning, however, that story broke in the paper. I called her up, and told her she would meet me at the road house or I'd spill the beans. She agreed to come, and did.

"We got into a big argument in a private room I had engaged, and I told her flat she would have to go with me or dig up at least three hundred thousand dollars. I had no idea how much she had, but felt it was not less than six or seven hundred thousand dollars. She

said for me to go to the devil—that she was going to marry young Bedford, and that she wouldn't give me a copper. What she said about Bedford made me see red, and so I shot her. I haven't a thing on earth to live for, so made a good job of it, and sent two more shots where they would do the most good.

"That's all. I'll swear to it if it will do you any good. It's some relief to get it off my chest. Gimme another drink, and if there is anything hot around here just wrap it around my legs, will you, please?"

Lieutenant Reed had entered as Canfield was describing the cancellation of the want ad, and listened to the rest of the story with rapt attention. As Canfield finished, he asked him:

"What's your real moniker, Canfield?"

"Never mind," the dying man smiled. "We all have names better than our reputations, but where we're going names don't count for much. So long; give my regards to Grumpy."

The city editor wrote the story, and "Antiquarian" replied to it with characteristic pedantry. The letter is hardly worth repeating, so we shall content ourselves with the postscript. It said:

P. S.—If you can possibly secure that IV. Dynasty scarab for me, please send it to No. 67 Burlingame Avenue.

THE OLD QUESTION OF MARS

THE possibility that there may be life, even a highly developed human civilization, on the planet Mars is an ever-tantalizing problem. One of the best authorities in the world, Director W. W. Campbell, of the Lick Observatory, faced the question squarely and gave what is perhaps the clearest scientific opinion on it that has ever been expressed.

We can be almost certain that vegetable life exists there, he said in effect. Through our telescopes we have watched the changes on Mars as the seasons come and go, and there is no other explanation for the varying colors, which resemble the changing hues in our own vegetation. Director Campbell does not say positively that there is this kind of life on Mars, but he does say that, in view of these observations, there is no reason to doubt it.

As to animal life, he feels that there probably is, for it usually follows that if conditions favor the growth of plant life, animal life also exists. But in what form this life exists, it is impossible to say. He says definitely that, for the present, the question whether human beings or similar highly intelligent creatures inhabit the planet, must go unanswered. If such creatures do live there, they must present quite a different appearance from ours. The probable scarcity of water there, combined with the extreme thinness of the atmosphere, would make necessary various physical adaptations, resulting, quite possibly, in very large creatures with highly developed respiratory organs. But these are merely the logical conclusions founded on a large "if." It is safe to say that life in some form can exist on Mars, and that if it does, it is undoubtedly much farther along than the life on our own world. Perhaps some day our scientists will find out for sure.

Wanderer's Call

By Jack Aston

THERE'S a dank smell of river
In the city's streets to-night—
It's spreading 'cross the town from the docks;
And the honey-colored moon
Is a lonesome sort of sight,
Riding high over gay, lighted blocks.

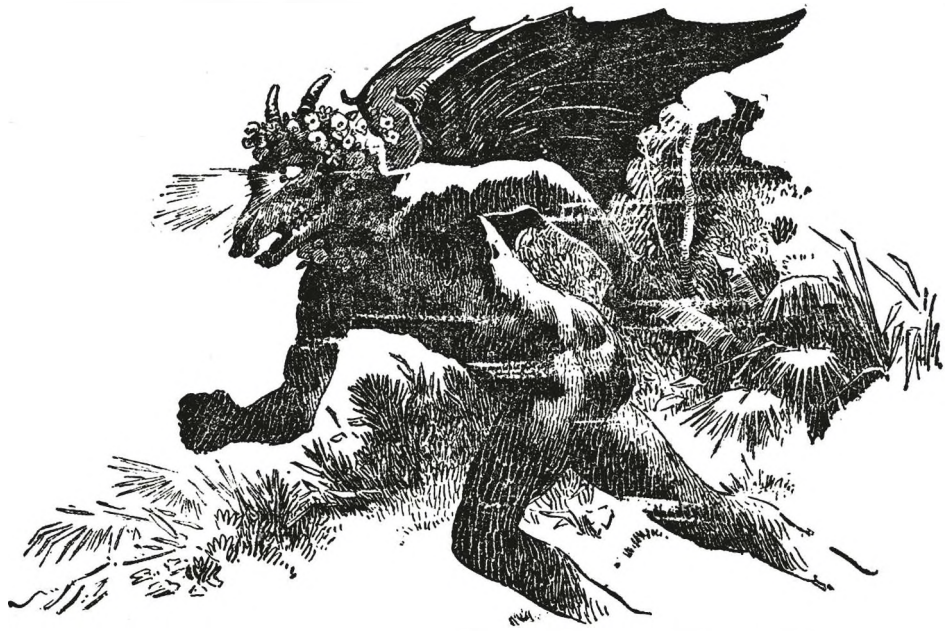
There's a west wind that's blowing
All the odors of the ships,
As they lie at their wharves in the dark;
And phantom lights are gleaming
On the water, as it slips
Toward the sea where the moonbeams spark.

I'm hungry for the motion
Of a vessel outward bound—
I'm restless in the heart of the town;
Something's dogging my footsteps,
And I cannot stay around,
While the dock smells keep calling me down.

There's an old scent of river
In the city's streets to-night,
And a mad moon is mocking the throng;
There are lands across the world
Far more glamorous and bright—
And with dawn I'll be rolling along!

The SCAPEGOAT

By CHARLES SAXBY



Unjustly Kicked from His Post in English Colonial Africa, a Very Clever Young Man Contrives to Give the Government Trouble.

THEY came in a flock of six, bleating down the path through the palm scrub back of old Quasie Baidoo's compound, two nannies and four kids. From the gallery of Hastings' quarters we lazily watched them as they went straying after special titbits of rotten bananas or moldy couscous, cast out from that human rabbit warren of a native household. Then, across the inertia born of the sodden heat of the afternoon, Hastings spoke.

"Queer beasts," he murmured reflectively, with a wave of his pipe in their direction. "Able to extract a living from all the things we don't want. Did you ever think of that? I like to watch 'em; they remind me——"

"Remind you of what, for Heaven's sake?" asked one of us.

"Of lots of things, most of which I have no intention of telling you," Hastings retorted. "Of the influence of the Russian ballet on colonial administration for one thing. Also of the mysterious ways in which our government moves to perform its wonders. Other things, too; of great, naked, black-winged natives, flitting through the silence of the Bush; and souls—strange, half-animal souls of lion or leopard or crocodile. Bodiless shapes, with the rain beating right through them, that hang over the villages at night, seeking a human form in which to incarnate."

"All of which sounds as if you had

been meddling with Fetish," the other returned in virtuous severity. "Better leave that mess alone. I knew a man once——"

"So did I," Hastings interrupted, with some firmness. "I knew him several times; he is quite frequent on the west coast of Africa, that man. But *this* fellow——" He paused, his eyes following one of the browsing kids below, as though seeking further reminiscence. "He was different, you see, though it took me some time to find that out. I never really knew him until that day when it all started. He had dropped into the colony, apparently from nowhere in particular, just before I left on a six-month furlough, and he was shelved and ticketed in my mind as merely 'Carr—oh, yes—that telegraph chap.'

"It was at Kaffradiddi that it happened. Things do happen there somehow; it is one of those places. It is so curiously obscure, in spite of its importance, tucked away up on the edge of the Bight. A sort of deliberate obscurity, as if it were holding a mantle about itself. No wonder those pestilential nuisances, the Three Societies, those secret black brotherhoods that are at the bottom of all the native troubles, chose it as the headquarters for their mysterious Sanhedrims. Or possibly it is the other way round, and that is why it is so hidden. Anyway, there it is, a sort of African Vatican, with its invisible tentacles reaching out over a considerable portion of the west coast. A sleepy place, with a perpetual beat of tom-toms and the flags of the societies fluttering over the roofs—Lion, Leopard, and Crocodile, aristocratic affairs, the members of which must be born, according to the tincture of their souls as decided by the juju men at their birth.

"It was several years ago, and one of those times of a queer, black unrest, with the Three Societies striving in a bitter rivalry that seeped up even into the fabric of government. Our cue was to support the one most potent at the moment, which happened to be the Lion Men, and it was with their chiefs of council we were holding palaver; fine, lean old fellows, blood to their finger tips, with the subtle faces of priests.

"Then came a bombshell of a code telegram from the governor, with a fatal mistake in it, as it proved, that made it read 'suppress' instead of 'support' the Lion council. No one could understand it, but orders were orders, and the administrator 'suppressed' very effectively. The chiefs stalked indignantly off under their state umbrellas, while the Leopards and Crocodiles jeered, and, in a week, the three were waging a nasty, underground warfare from Coomassie to the Niger.

"That was while I was away. For me it all began that night the governor came down from Accrome and summoned all the white men involved to meet him in the fort. Who was responsible for the mistake in that telegram no one seemed able to determine, but somebody had to pay for it, we knew that. The particular gods of the government machine were demanding a victim, and his excellency had come to find one.

"Thanks to that lucky furlough, I was out of it, but the tension was inescapable, and I paced up and down outside, waiting to hear the verdict. Then, all at once, this chap Carr came lounging up beside me, with a backward nod at the obsolete bulk of the fort behind us and a terse, 'Well—they've settled it.'

"I had suspected that as soon as I saw him emerge from the black tunnel of the gateway, a white figure of significant solitariness. He read the question on my face, and added:

"'Oh, *I'm* to be the goat—of course.'

"Till then I had scarcely met him,

hardly looked at him; but, as he spoke, he stood out with sudden sharpness, as though the acid of his words had etched him on my eyes. A long, lean fellow in the later twenties, with a long, sun-tanned face, a head of dark-red hair, and a slash of black eyebrow clear across his forehead, from under which he looked out at you with an effect of cynical consideration.

"I scarcely knew what to say. In fact, I was annoyed at having placed myself there, right in his path, as a sort of candidate for confidence. I made a noise like sympathy, illustrating it by a proffered cigarette case, and waited for him to pour himself out in profanity or self-pity. But, to my surprise, he stood silent, looking down at the town, a figure of contained concentration until, with an almost uncanny directness, his speech leaped to the very heart of the matter.

"'It simply couldn't have happened anywhere else,' he said. 'Look at it down there—the queer, infernal place.'

"It lay below us, squeezed between lagoon and surf, vocal with the native yap of a night of full moon. A queer place, and with damnation enough under its half-Arab surface of whitewash and moonlight. The terminus of a dozen of those old, old African trade routes; a sort of West African melting pot, bubbling with a fusion of strange races that came drifting in and then drifted out again, spreading over half a continent with the poisonous chatter of those alleys down there. I took his cue and carried it on, determined to keep to the impersonal view of things.

"'You know what the natives say: "The kings in Jenneh hear the mouths of the women in Kaffradiddi,"' I quoted, but he merely stared, and I saw he was a jump ahead of me in his mind. He had a way of being that, I found; he would suggest a thing that set you to thinking, and meanwhile he would be at something else. He would suggest a cloud of imaginations and then disappear behind them, like a cuttlefish escaping in a cloud of its own ink—only in his case he made *you* furnish the ink.

"'I never even saw that telegram,' he said. 'Of course, as head of the telegraph office, I have a certain responsibility, but I was up the line that day.'

"'Then how the dickens——' I began, and he laughed.

"'I'm not exactly popular here, you know.'

"I could understand that, as I remembered him on the only other time we had met. It had been a singsong in somebody's quarters, and Carr's contribution had been a song of his own making. 'My Kaffradiddi Rag' he called it; some twenty verses of local hits to a banjo accompaniment of syncopated fragments of native airs. The humor of it had been immense, but the sarcasm a shade too biting, and these things have a way of traveling in the government service.

"'Surely, if you proved to his excellency——' I began, in conventional protest.

"'It wasn't only the telegram,' he interrupted. 'They made a good job of it once they began.'

"He was suggesting things again. It was a long time since Kaffradiddi had had an official housecleaning, and things had been piling up; sins of omission mostly. I knew those men in that council up there. Since Carr had been selected for victim he might as well take the burden of the whole lot, to the purged relief of the entire station.

"'Still—if you didn't really do it,' I persisted, but he cut me short with a flat finality.

"'Oh, rats—you know all about it as well as I do!'

"Of course I knew, and so do all of you, that the machinery of government—of any government—is geared

to expediency only. But I had never before heard it said so plainly, and it shocked me a little. I remembered what I had heard about him: 'A queer chap, he *says* such things.' 'Where the devil did he come from, anyhow?' and, most damning of all, 'You never know what the fellow is going to *do*.' He puzzled me; for all his biting knowledge of the injustice of it he was so cool and quiet. But there must have been a raw spot in him somewhere, for he misinterpreted my silence.

"'All right, I understand,' he said, gathering himself together for leaving, as if his body had been a package he had momentarily forgotten. 'They will all be coming down directly, and of course—now—you wouldn't want to be seen—you needn't be afraid, I'm off.'

"He turned toward the steps that led to the market place, and I let him go. Not that I cared in the way he suspected; it was merely that I was taking a look at the situation. I had heard of such cases before, cases of men over whom the official juggernaut had rolled, but this was the first time I had watched the process. But he was marked for such an end, coming from nowhere in particular, without backing, influence, or any one to raise awkward questions on his behalf. I couldn't help admiring the sheer, unblushing 'expediency' of it all.

"He was at the top of the steps by then, standing out white again the pit of shadow below. He looked extraordinarily alone at that moment. I had seen them before, these solitary fellows who somehow never quite fit in the safe, middle course of things, and I knew there are only two ways for them to go—to the very top or the very bottom. It was ridiculous, of course, but just then those steps struck me as symbolic; he was going down them. Then, suggested by his own description of himself, came the comparison of that scapegoat of the Jewish scriptures, thrust out to bear the sins of a whole community. I had an impulse to go after him, though for just what I couldn't have said—to pat the goat's head perhaps. But he struck me as entirely too quiet for safety; I had known men to blow their brains out for far less.

"'Look here—what are you going to do?' I asked, as I came up with him. I must have rather shouted it, for the woods echoed back from the blank wall in a mocking, 'Do—do—do——' and he grinned as he stopped, a step or two below me.

"'I'm not that kind, you know,' he said. 'Thanks all the same.'

"'You had better clear out of here—there's a steamer for Lagos due in the morning,' I suggested, but after a moment's consideration he tossed it aside.

"'I think I like it here.'

"'But you can't stay *here* after this. You'd find it beastly unpleasant,' I protested, and he seemed to take my words under advisement until, with that perverse penetration of his, he arrived at a conclusion:

"'You mean that the other fellows would find it beastly unpleasant having me around after this?'

"That was just about what I had meant, but there was no necessity for him to say it so plainly as all that.

"'But what are you going to do if you stay here?' I asked.

"'I don't know yet. I never do know until I'm doing it,' he answered, and it flashed on me that probably we wouldn't know until he had already done it.

"'None of the traders will give you a position, you know,' I began; then a suspicion struck me. 'Look here, if it is that you simply haven't the money to clear out with——' I stumbled on, then stopped as he looked up at me from under that eyebrow.

"'Say—you are rather a decent sort

of ass.' He nodded, and turned deliberately down the steps, singing the most indiscreet verse of that 'Kaffradiddi Rag' thing.

"As I listened to it, whining up from the shadows with its atrocious minors and too-biting sarcasms, it occurred to me how little I knew him. I had been with him, in the last few minutes, through what, with most men, would have been a revealing time, but all I had discovered about him was that I simply couldn't make him out. I was angry, too. After all, I *had* been decent. To carry on my previous comparison, I felt as though I had patted the head of the goat only to have it turn and butt me in the stomach.

"It was quite a little while before it occurred to me that that was probably the most natural thing for a goat to do.

"So that was the end of that," Hastings went on after a moment. "I left for the Bush next day, and never expected to see Carr again, but my return found him still in Kaffradiddi, to the intense disgust of our fort circle.

"He had taken a house by the lagoon; a big, two-story, half ruinous place known to us as the *Casa Despena* (Tumble-down House), and, since he was never seen about the town, he was popularly supposed to be drinking himself to death. I doubted that, but that mess of a native town, steeped in the deviltries of the Three Societies, with its long, empty days and its nights too full of crowded possibilities, was no place for a white man cut off from the restraining influence of his own kind. I was sorry for the fellow, but it was none of my business to be running about playing amateur maiden aunt to young wasters.

"It was from Miss McNeish, Kaffradiddi's one white woman and the head of the Mission House, that I received my first direct news of him. She stopped me in the market one day, a thin, uncompromising woman of about thirty-five, in severe linen and an unbecoming sun hat. She had been many years on the coast, and her eyes looked out on things with an air of complete disillusion. I was surprised when she marched up to me, for one of her disillusionments was the methods, morals, and manners of colonial officials, both in general and in particular, and she rarely noticed us if she could avoid it without actual rudeness.

"'Have you seen Mr. Carr lately?' she asked, surprising me again, for I had not known that she even knew him. 'I hear he has been ill.'

"She looked at me hard, but I let it slide off, telling myself that I was no professional nurse. 'Why on earth doesn't he go away?' I said.

"'Why should he?' she demanded, more directly still. Then, as I shrugged my shoulders, there flickered in her eyes that curious woman's sympathy for the under dog. 'I think it is splendid of him, staying to face it out. I have sent him over some medicine and a few little comforts—things he could not buy here in the town,' she went hastily on, saving Carr's pride before my face. So he had found manna in his wilderness, I saw. 'But he is ill and alone—in that horrible house.'

"'Have you been to see him?' I asked.

"'No, I thought it better for you men to do that,' she answered, with a slow flush that almost made me gasp. It had never occurred to me that Miss McNeish could regard herself as a possible target for scandal.

"'Since he has been dismissed from the service it is hardly my place, as a government official——' I began, but she cut me short.

"'And as a *man*, and—presumably, at least—a Christian?' she asked acidly, and walked away.

"I watched her cleaving her uncompromising path across the bustle and

glare of the market, and I felt as though I were seeing her for the first time. It was as 'poor McNeish' that she was known to us, one of that most unattractive type, the withering virgin. But it suddenly struck me, remembering that flush, how little we know of how people seem to themselves.

"Her last words rather stuck in my craw, and I went out to see Carr that very evening, partly, I'll admit, because I wanted to see what sort of an establishment he might be keeping. It was a sickly night, heavy with heat, the sort of night that sits on your breath and sets your nerves awry. The place looked most unattractive, looming up in the dark, its bulging walls splotched with leprous damp. It belonged to Efuah"—Hastings pronounced it *Eff*-wah, in true Coomassie-side fashion—"an old, old Ashanti woman, the widow of one of the head juju men of the Lion society. She also kept a stall in the market, where she was enormously respected. We always avoided her, for her tongue could be quietly flaying and she feared none, but Carr, in one of his perverse caprices, had chosen to take a fancy to her.

"She met me just inside the courtyard, looking like an incredibly aged little brownie against that background of rank vegetation and crumbling disrepair.

"'The *Aoora* has come to see the *Brinnie?*' she asked.

"'For what else?' I snapped, annoyed at her giving that young derelict the higher title. 'And why do you call him so? Is he, then, a chief?'

"'Are not *all* white men great chiefs?' she asked, with a nasty twinkle.

"'Even chiefs lose favor sometimes,' I returned.

"'*Hoo*—the mouth of the *Aoora* speaks truth,' she answered. 'But even so, the blood of chiefs remains.'

"'"There are no chiefs save in the king's eye,"' I quoted, but she could match proverbs with any one.

"'"The ear of the king is behind his eye, and the roar of the lion comes even to the king's compound."'

"There was no arguing with her, I saw, and I left her, going up a crazy stone staircase to where a light showed above, and there I came on Carr, stretched out on a cot on the upper gallery.

"What I had expected I hardly know, but probably dirt, drink, drugs, and a grinning native wench. Since one never knew what Carr would do, it was even possible that he might do the usual thing. But the place was clean and swept; he wore pajamas, too, instead of the strip of 'country cloth' that is the first sign of your white man going downward. He was thin and pretty pallid, but he grinned as he saw me.

"'Hello, Native Secret Service,' he drawled. 'Is this an official investigation?'

"'No, purely private,' I replied, and he sat up and reached for a banjo that stood by his cot.

"'I see,' he grinned again. 'An errand of uplift—eh? A helping hand to the fallen. Welcome, Little Brother of Mercy.'

"There was just enough truth in that to sting, and, as he saw it, he tickled a laugh from that banjo that was positively obscene. The empty reaches of the house caught it up, passing it from room to room until the whole place seemed chuckling with softly sneering mirth. I determined that, since it was she who had let me in for it all, I would be very short with Miss McNeish the next time we met.

"'You might be civil, at least,' I growled. 'It is usual, for instance, to shake hands with a guest.'

"'So I have heard,' he said, with a stare straight at me. 'But, you see, I wasn't sure if you'd want to.'

"Oh—he behaved damnably, that is

the only word for it. He played every trick, touched every note, and then he had such a way of suggesting things. Just those words, for instance, coupled with his circumstances and surroundings. That ruinous, macabresque hulk of a house, the slip-slap of the lagoon against its walls, and that stifling, native reek sifting in from the alleys outside. He seemed so frightfully alone in it all, and he had wondered if I'd shake hands! Later on I was glad I had not let him see how effective that had been.

"'You ought not to be here at all,' I said, and he bent over the banjo with a pathos that almost fooled me again, as he began playing that 'Kaffradiddi Rag.'

"'I know it,' he murmured. 'I really *know* better, but it's my infernal disposition, you see. I ought to go away —far away—to some new land. Wipe the slate, start afresh, and live it all down, with stage business of repentant soul struggling upward. Ba-ah!' he jeered, the banjo blatting a chord in accompaniment. He could produce more insulting sounds from that instrument than any one I ever heard. 'And all that—for what?'

"'You are getting yourself frightfully disliked, staying on like this,' I told him.

"'Rotten bad taste, of course,' he agreed. 'But then what can you expect —of *me?*'

"He rather 'had us,' you see. Having kicked our goat out, we had practically given him a license to be as irritating as he pleased, out in his private wilderness, and right well he knew it.

"It was the first time I had seen him in a place of his own, and my eyes had been busy with the few belongings scattered about, mute evidences that his life had been one of considerable wandering. West Indian baskets, some Spanish copper, and, in a corner, a long, spiral sort of object that puzzled me until I recognized it as a conch shell, probably purloined from some Hindu temple. There was something else, too; something that had been so intensely present between us all the time that I had expected an explanation of it at least, if not some apology, but he had remained infuriatingly unaware of it.

"It stood just back of his cot on an upturned box draped in red and black cloth. The bleached skull of a ram, its empty eye sockets covered with red paper, behind which burned a candle, its horns wreathed with a chaplet of paper flowers, drunkenly awry. With its glowing eyes and that bacchanalian wreath it was about the most leering, cynical-looking thing I had ever encountered. Though I saw how much he was enjoying my curiosity, it proved too strong for my pride, and I spoke:

"'What the devil——'

"'Hush! Not the devil—my household god,' he interrupted, transferring his grin to his eyes. 'The distinction is a subtle one, though, I'll admit. "The Order of the Goat," I call it,' he finished, with a meaning nod and stare.

"'It's a beastly unwholesome thing to have about,' I snorted, but he just rubbed his fingers down the strings of the banjo in a series of insolent sounds. 'You make your own troubles,' I went on. 'Why the dickens don't you behave like other people?'

"'Partly because I can't, and partly because I don't want to—which is probably the real reason why I can't,' he said frankly. 'Just how would you like me to behave?'

"'Well—that thing——' I began, nodding at the skull.

"'Oh—that? It makes me think,' he answered. 'Nice, deep, solemn thoughts. The Egyptians used to keep a skeleton at the feast, you know. It suggests things, too. The natives say that there are Lion souls and Crocodile souls and Leopard souls—so why not some Goat souls, too?' As he said that

it occurred to me to wonder if he had perhaps hit the nail of his own perversities square on the head? 'I think I'll start some,' he went on. 'It ought to be popular—"The Order of the Goat" —there are enough of us in the world, Heaven knows. Can't you see it?' he asked, as under his words he began a running accompaniment on the banjo. Bits of songs that made me wonder where he had learned them, unless from that old bag of bones and unholy knowledge down in the courtyard. Fierce Arab war songs, such as seep down from the edge of the desert. Then that weird death chant of the dwarf people, full of the drip of the sodden Congo forests and all the voiceless ache of a dumb revolt. So it ran in an undercurrent of tone that seemed to come from the very heart of that which he spoke.

"'Can't you see it—up in the Bush there?' he asked. 'The great Supergoat, the father of all the goats there are, brooding over the night, sounding the call as he sends out his messengers through the villages to drop nice little goatlets into the bodies of squalling, just-born, human kids. And the mothers-to-be, cowering in the plantain gardens on the edge of the dusk, as the messenger swooshes by on his black wings. How many of us are there? Goats all of us, I tell you—goats on thrones and goats in gutters—all of us somebody's goat——'

"He dropped the banjo, and his hands went to his head. He was sicker than I had thought, merely going on pure nerve, and he had come to the breaking point. His wrists were blazing, and I shouted down to old Efuah to send some one to the fort to summon help. But she ran out herself, leaving me alone with him until she returned, to my astonishment, with Miss McNeish, laden with hot-water bags, medicine case, and bottles of champagne.

"She took command at once, keeping Efuah and myself on the jump as she directed the fight. She directed it magnificently, too, with a sharp fury of struggle against that presence that seemed encroaching on him from within himself as, hour by hour, the shape of his bones showed more clearly through his flesh. I wondered at her intensity, for he seemed so exactly all that she most condemned in life. Lying there with his red head and slash of eyebrow, behind him that leering, flower-crowned ram's skull, there was about him a touch of something that could only be expressed by the overworked word 'pagan,' while she herself was the very prototype of all the iron-bound repressions of her Scotch faith.

"It was one of those short, sharp affairs that are over, one way or another, in a few hours. Toward dawn he came to in a lucid moment of sheer exhaustion, a dangerous moment of a deadly sort of sweetness. He tried to press my hand, forgiving everything with his eyes, just waiting to drift out in a sentimental surrender. He was very dignified just then, and I was sorry—one always is, you know—but I couldn't help thinking how much better it was for him to go; it simplified things so, you see. Efuah plopped down on the floor, her dry knees cracking as she rocked to and fro with that soft 'keening' that the blacks use to waft each other out when death comes.

"I felt very solemn, with formless, slushy thoughts about 'wasted life' and 'the pity of it.' Miss McNeish mechanically reached for her prayer book; then her face, gray and worn by the night, broke with a spasm of rebellion. I could feel the struggle as she flung the book down, and, with one swift, sure movement, caught up the red-and-black-draped pedestal with the ram's skull on it and placed it deliberately just where he could not help seeing it.

"That would never have occurred to me; it took a woman to think of that.

It worked—worked magnificently. That sentimental sweetness fled from his eyes, and there came a faint flash of his old grin. As I bent my ear to his lips I could hear his whisper: 'I'd forgotten—good old McNeish—she knows.' Then, after a moment: 'I'll be damned if I'll die—the Order of the Goat—perhaps they'd like to hear about it up in the fort.'

"There was the pop of a champagne cork, and Miss McNeish motioned me away as she knelt by his side and began feeding him the wine with a spoon, while Efuah packed fresh hot-water bags about him. I was no longer wanted, so I went. Looking back from the stairs, I was struck with the sight of that long, white boy stretched out between those ministering women. The two extremes they were; the white Mission lady and the old, black witch wife; the pinnacle of condemnatory virtue and the repositary of all the darkness of Fetish, met in common cause over a man to whom it would probably never occur to give a second thought to either of them.

"There seemed to be an added leer on that beastly goat skull, watching, red-eyed, behind them like the presiding deity of the whole affair.

"So that was the finish of *that,*" Hastings resumed. "He got over it; Miss McNeish told me that the next time I saw her, some weeks later. She was looking rather ghastly, her face all ravaged by lines of struggle, which her eyes somehow denied, as if they knew that that struggle, whatever it was, was all over long ago. And yet, in a way, she looked better than ever before. There was a hint of defiance, too; a sort of 'I know I'm wicked, and I don't care,' and I came nearer liking her than ever before.

"There was some joking about her, just then, up in the fort. An enormous packing case had come through the customs for her, with a French manifest that read, *'Effets du theâtre,'* and we wondered, in a coarse way, if 'poor McNeish' was about to blossom out in stage finery. But she vouchsafed no explanation, and went about her business of saving souls and cleansing bodies as uncompromisingly angular as before.

"Carr disappeared soon after that case came, and old Efuah's stall in the market was empty and untended. Where they had gone, or if they had gone together, no one knew. He had just slipped out, and Africa had swallowed him up; it was easy to do that from the Casa Despena, with its convenient water door that gave right upon the lagoon, stretching away in a shifting, uncharted maze of creeks and swamps.

"After a while some queer reports began to come down from the district commissioners up in the Bush. At first we took little notice of them, knowing the men who sent them—young Wilson, up at Kapputti, and Halkett, of Kayancor, fellows with a habit of seeing bears in every tree stump. But when such a time-tried man as Blair, of Akim, reported similarly, we began to sit up. There was nothing very definite as yet; merely a strange call from the depths of the Bush at night and a weird, winged shape that flitted through the vallages in the dark. Ordinarily we should have hardly considered it, but, as I said, it was one of those times that come every so often. Times when those strange dreamers of Africa seem to stir in their sleep and things get thin and mixed up. Times when the flutter of a straw may have more deadly significance than the roar of a hurricane.

"Of one thing we were sure: If there was anything back of it, it would be known in Kaffradiddi, so I bent my ear to the ground in every way at my disposal. There was an unpleasant atmosphere in the market; furtive gossip

behind the stalls, a smothered chuckling as we passed. The chiefs of the Lion Council, too, scraped their feet and bowed too low when we met them, their subtle old faces creasing as with a knowledge that was hidden from us. My agents brought me rumors of a fresh Fetish; rumors of rumors of a new dispensation out in the Bush, but whence those rumors really came there was no telling.

"I went up to Akim, a week's weary hammock journey, and saw Blair. It was still going on at irregular intervals, he said, and for several nights we hid in the edge of the village, where the cassava gardens melt into the forest, and waited till dawn.

"Then at last it came. It was a moonless night, but clear, with that grisly earth shine that just makes things visible. The wall of the Bush rose black against the stars, and the broad leaves of the bananas slopped buckets of dew down our necks. The village was dark save here and there, where a flickering 'borning light' before a hut showed an expectant mother. I was drenched and shivering, ready to give up in disgust, when there came a sound, faint and far off, yet tremendously present in its penetration. It wasn't a blare nor a blast nor a trumpet nor a cry; it was something like all of them and like nothing else at all, and yet I was sure that I had heard it before somewhere. It was inexpressibly eerie, coming out of that dew-dripping, poisonous African night, where, even after years of familiarity, everything reminded one of how strange it all really was. The chatter of an ape out among the trees, the sharp points of a palm fan against the sky, the splashing grunt of a crocodile down on the mud flats of the river. And that sound, coming again and again—I was remembering now, and gradually it came back, in detached flashes. Sun—sweat—and the scent of crushed marigolds; a blaze of blue sky, a poised hawk ready to swoop. I had it then. I was a kid again, back in Madras, and that sound was the call of the conch shell in the Jain temple back of the big oil tanks.

"A conch shell—there was a connection there, I knew, but Blair gripped my arm, pointing up the path that led to the Bush.

"It came skimming along, noiseless, fleet-footed; a huge figure of a naked native magnificently built, but from his shoulders sprouted a pair of enormous black wings, and his head was as nothing human. As the figure came abreast of our hiding place I saw that, instead of a face, it had a great goat's skull, red-eyed and grinning, its horns wreathed with a chaplet of flowers.

"It passed us by and on up the street. For all its darkness the village was awake and peering through its wattle-and-dab walls. As the thing skimmed by, with only the swoosh of its wings to mark its passing, there was a sound that followed it from the huts. A half sigh, half groan, and one shrill, woman's cry from behind one of those doors with a little lamp before it.

"All the rest of that night I paced Blair's veranda, piecing things together. I was certain that that was no native work; it was too effective for that. It was just the sort of thing the natives would do, if they could, but no black could be so simple. There was an elemental, almost naïve sort of poetry about it, too, splendidly calculated to catch the native imagination.

"I ran it down thread by thread: conch shell, goat skull, and Carr's wild talk on that night of his illness, and each thread led straight back to the Casa Despena. I was surprised at the obviousness of that connection, for I had thought him clever enough to cover his tracks. What he was up to I couldn't imagine, but the fact of a white hand back of it lifted it out of my

province. It was too dangerous to be permitted to continue, so I cut back across country to Accrome and laid the matter before the governor. From Kaffradiddi we learned, by wire, that Carr was back in the town, and next day the governor himself started with me for the port.

"It was morning before we sighted Kaffradiddi, and we had ourselves ferried across to the lagoon gate of the Casa Despena, a dank and uninviting portal, its steps alive with toads and covered with sun-cracked mud left from the last high water. The gate was open, and we walked straight in on Carr, seated in the shadow of the courtyard with the crumbling old house rising about it, yellow against the sky.

"He looked very fit, very bathed and shaved, lounging over an entirely respectable breakfast of coffee, toast, and half liquid, canned butter. There was no sign of goat skull nor banjo; even his sarcasms seemed gone, and I wondered if he kept them also exclusively for the nights. He greeted us with just the right shade of respect for the governor, just the right hint of a lift to his eyebrow, as if to ask what the devil it might all be about. But, once we began, he was frankness itself.

"'I am afraid perhaps I *am* the cause of these Fetish rumors, sir. You see, I wanted something to occupy myself with,' he said, much as he might have mentioned taking up tennis or golf. 'It was a bit dull for me here in Kaffradiddi.'

"'I can quite understand that,' the governor agreed, with a dangerous suavity. 'Excessively dull, I should imagine. But just why did you elect to remain here?'

"'There's an Arab proverb, sir,' Carr answered. '"Where the lock is, there the key fits."'

"'But you were—er—hardly locked into Kaffradiddi, Mr. Carr,' the governor parried.

"'No, but I was—er—very much locked out of it, your excellency,' thrust Carr.

"It was first blood to him, and the governor tugged at his mustache.

"'And how far has this goat affair gone, Mr. Carr?'

"'I give you my word I can stop it all to-day—if——'

"'Ah—"if"——' the governor smiled rather grimly. 'But suppose there is no "if"?' Then, from the blue sky of his suavity came a clap of official thunder: 'Young man, do you think you can bluff the imperial government?'

"'I assure you there is no bluff about this,' retorted Carr, and it was like the lightning to that thunder. Things were getting interesting now.

"'And do you imagine that we shall sit quietly by and permit a dismissed government servant to upset the whole colony?'

"'Oh, *no,* sir,' Carr answered, quite shocked. 'I fully expected you would do all in your power to prevent *that.*'

"'As, for instance, having you in jail in half an hour,' the governor pleasantly suggested, and Carr as pleasantly considered it.

"'That would certainly suit *me,*' he announced, and the governor's 'Suit you! How?' was something like a man springing away from a trap.

"'There'd have to be a trial then,' Carr explained. 'And I should petition, on the basis of possible prejudice, for a change of venue—preferably to Lagos, I think.'

"As once in heaven, so there was silence in that courtyard, broken only by the buzz of a 'marrowbone' drowning in that liquid butter. I knew the governor was looking at the same picture that Carr's words had painted on my mind. A pretty picture of us washing our colony's soiled linen before the critically amused eyes of Lagos. There were so many private garments might be hauled to that laundry, too. That

wretched mess over the telegram, for instance; there were rumors of Leopard intrigues in Accrome itself, and that that Lion-suppressing message had been twisted before ever it left the capital. Though how Carr suspected that I couldn't conceive, unless from that old, underground gossip conduit, Efuah.

"'You are a clever young man, Mr. Carr,' the governor nodded, clearing his atmosphere to a sunny blue. 'Had I realized, some months ago, just how clever you are you would be in a very different position to-day.'

"'Yes, I should probably be staked out in some nice official *oubliette* of an unhealthy station up in the interior, a hundred miles from everywhere,' Carr casually remarked. 'That is the usual end of too clever young men in the government service, I've noticed.'

"I expected an explosion, but none came. As they sat there, smiling warily across at each other, I could see why old Efuah had called Carr 'Brinnie,' though how she had nosed it out I couldn't tell. The governor liked him, so did I; but all the same he was wise in pinning his faith to something more potent than men's liking. We had no quarrel with that wasp in the butter —but we weren't rescuing it.

"'All the same I am afraid I must order your arrest, Mr. Carr,' the governor said.

"'Yes, sir. And on what charge?' Carr asked.

"'It is a serious thing, instituting rites of Fetish among the natives. Your "Order of the Goat"——'

"But Carr, interrupting with a laugh, put the question:

"'Did you ever see the Russian ballet, sir? Wonderful thing that, so suggestive. I saw them do one about the flight of the soul once, and when I was here, all alone, I thought I'd like to try it. You know—background of the Bush—touch of the real thing—quite poetic. So I got some things from Paris——' So that was the explanation of Miss McNeish's packing case, I saw. 'There were only three of us in it all—old Efuah, myself, and a big native.'

"'Even so——' the governor began, then stopped. 'And just why did you choose those especial places for your —er—performance?'

"'I wanted an appreciative audience,' Carr grinned. 'I knew Wilson and Halkett; nice, imaginative chaps, both of them. Give them an inch of evidence and they'll have a universe of conjecture,' he went on, looking straight at me. 'I tried it at Akim, too,' he finished, and I flushed savagely as I remembered those nights of waiting among the dripping bananas while he chuckled in some comfortable hut.

"'Quite a confession,' the governor nodded to me. 'A nice little case just as it stands.'

"'There's one thing, sir,' Carr put in apologetically. 'I'm afraid it may make some trouble for you. I tried to keep Efuah quiet, but you know how women are about a secret. She talked of it down in the market, and to some of the Lion chiefs, too, I believe. In fact, I'm really afraid they got the idea it was some sort of a joke I was playing—a joke on the government itself. Frightfully impertinent of them, of course, but—well, there it is, as you can see.'

"Not even Heaven ever accomplished the silence that descended on us as he spoke. So that was the explanation of those chuckles and smiles. We knew our Kaffradiddi, and we knew our natives, and we knew that the news of that projected joke was in Timbuktu by now, in Sokoto, and being discussed round the village fires on the Kru coast. We could see a large slice of the continent waiting to yap with native laughter if we sprang that trap for ourselves. And of all things a government fears perhaps ridicule is the worst.

"That 'marrowbone' was dead now, and Carr fished it casually out on the point of a knife. That struck me as symbolic, too. If his own sting had not been in good working order, we would have left him to go down in that morass of Africa all about us, just as inexorably as we had left that wasp in the butter. As it was, if we brought him to trial, we could almost hear the songs they would sing about us for the next twenty years. Those insolent native songs, too full of too indiscreet detail, that are so amusing when they are about the other fellow.

"For the last time in that place Carr was suggesting things, but this final suggestion was the most potent of all. It opened out before us with larger and larger vistas. We could see that joke going across the sea, leaking its acid into brains to whom we ourselves were no more than insects. There is so little appeal from humor; if that joke got abroad in Africa, it would take a year of black tragedy and the red of blood to wipe it out.

"Then the governor rose with the dignity of a good loser.

"'Your talents are wasted here, Mr. Carr,' he said. 'I happen to know of a vacant commissionership on the east coast. An unruly district and a bad climate, but the chances of advancement are great. I have some influence in these matters, and if you care to consider it——'

"'When shall I start?' asked Carr promptly.

"'There's a steamer for Lagos due this afternoon,' I said, making my sole contribution to the interview.

"From the beach that afternoon I saw him off to the steamer lying outside. Just before he left I snatched an instant alone with him.

"'Look here,' I said. 'Will you kindly inform me if *I* am one of those "nice, imaginative chaps" for whom you laid so neatly?'

"'Oh, well—you've *got* to have imagination in the Native Secret Service,' he said soothingly. 'Of course, I knew that, but you really are a decent sort.' And he had the courtesy to stop just there.

"As I turned away from the beach I saw Miss McNeish lurking in the shadow of a trader's veranda. She was apparently the same as ever, her greeting just as aloof, but there was something in her face like the break of a hard winter. For a moment we stood there, watching the surfboat bobbing out over the bar.

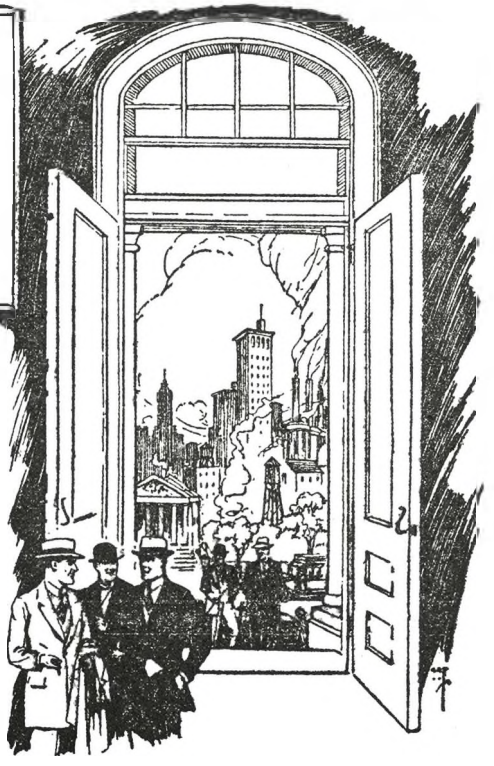
"'So that is the end of *him*,' I said.

"'No, it is only the beginning,' she answered, her eyes lighting with a mingled hunger and triumph. 'I knew *that* all along.'

"I went on up to the fort, wondering just how she had known that. Then, since Carr still suggested things even in his absence, it came to me to wonder just what that scriptural scapegoat had done with that load of the people's sins, once he got them out into the wilderness. I wondered for a long time; then the answer came to me——"

We waited long for that answer, but to no purpose. Hastings merely sat there in silence, smiling slightly, his eyes on the animals below. A flock of six, two nannies and four kids, bleating contentedly as they absorbed the contents of Quasie Baidoo's trash pile, and thrived thereon.

The POPULAR CLUB



Every reader of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE, man or woman, qualifies as a lover of good stories and as a good fellow, and is therefore automatically and entirely without obligation elected a member of THE POPULAR CLUB.

HERE is a letter from Babylon, New York, the discriminating praise of which we find particularly acceptable.

You certainly have given us some wonderful novels the past year, and I am looking forward with great pleasure to reading the one now running by Buck as soon as it is completed, for, you know, I never start a continued story until I have it all before me, as reading it in sections never gives me quite the solid comfort I get out of sitting down and getting it all at one sitting.

This series of Yiddish stories by Goldman are *great,* and they should be published in book form when you get sufficient of them to make a good-sized book. I enjoy every one of them, and more so because I have been tied up with a bunch, during the past three or four years, who are almost exact duplicates of the characters he so truly portrays.

The stories by James Sayre Pickering are wonderfully good, and I always look forward to reading a new one by him. By the way, I know relatives of his, if he writes under his own name, who are very old friends. I called their attention to these stories, and they are now regular readers of THE POPULAR in consequence. With every kind wish for a Merry Christmas and a real New Year, I remain,

Sincerely,

F. A. MASON.

CAPTAIN MOORE.

Skipper Frederick Moore, Author of "The Mate of the *Amy C,*" Makes a Few Personal Remarks About Himself.

I WAS born with what the modern scientists call "the unstable nervous temperament of the romantic adventurer." As a boy I was always quitting jobs and going off to sea, or into the army, or chasing away to the Malay Peninsula to look the sea gulls over. Just about the time I manage to get an extra pair of pants, some jackass starts a war. I sell my clothes cheap, and when I'm back after the war the price of suits has doubled, and jobs are scarce. Now they intend to abolish the army and the navy and war. Just when I can skipper a ship, everybody goes pop-eyed over flying. But when I was a boy, up in New England, I got walloped for reading the "Noname"

nickel novels. They were all about dirigibles and airships and such nonsense. I was refused a school diploma when I graduated, because my teacher said I'd wasted so much time reading about airships. You ought to hear the same folks now, telling what wonders Lindbergh and Commander Byrd are, and all those other airship fellers! Romantic adventurers, I'll remark!

No suiting anybody. Stick to your job, and you're a wage slave; see the world, and you're a romantic adventurer. Myself, I've seen a little of the world, mostly short of cash but long on fun and hardship.

You remember that little café in Aden where the camel drivers eat? I worked three months on a ship just to try a pair of eggs there. Not so good.

Take the Frog, who sells champagne in a tin thimble. Where? Why, just give her a spoke or two to starboard when you're coming out of Pango Pango harbor, and steer steady for about three weeks. French islands, those. Yes, the Frog's married again. No, not that wife he had when you were there. She stabbed him, a little, and he sold her to a sealing skipper on the run from the gunboats.

The human race is interesting. Take sergeants—always making a row. And bos'ns—they never let a man sleep enough. And city editors, too—I know those birds. All they're good for is to tell 'em you're done with the paper.

Now, that place in Gilbraltar, on the ramps. Garrison artillery hangs out there, mostly. That rock scorpion short-changed me for two shillings—and I'm from New England!

They've fixed up that mud jail in Suez City. Sure, there's progress in backward places like that. Got a floor now. No, you'd hardly recognize the place.

The government spent a lot of money trying to make me, who am of a naturally sensitive nature, hard boiled—and now my wife says I swear too much. Can you beat that? There's no justice in the world. I ate a lot of bad grub helping the army keep the Philippines, and now we're going to give the Philippines back.

A sailor's got no business going into the regular cavalry, anyhow. The horses step on your feet. That's another thing I almost forgot—about Sharkey's Place, in New York. Remember? It had swinging doors with mirrors in 'em. Yes, I'm getting a little old. Anyhow, I was a corporal of cavalry then, sailing in the *Kilpatrick*, through Suez, to hold the Philippines they don't want now, and I thought I might as well see Sharkey's Place. Might not come back. Yes, you can get killed in a little war, too, you know. And no doughnut girls around, neither, like you tin hats had. Well, now, Sharkey's Place. They were patriotic then—no men in uniform wanted there! The bouncer threw me out four times in four minutes. He was too heavy for me. A corporal of cavalry has a mean tongue, but is naturally a lightweight. All I got out of that was a bunged eye and a piece of the mirror off the swinging door. I took the half of the door with me when I went out the last time. Shaved with it four years. Packmaster stole it at Camp Wallace. My, but soldiers were popular in those days!

Like sailors. Handy when you need 'em. You remember that brown boy who used to come aboard ship in Singapore Roads? "White man call 'em debbil"—yes, that one. Saw him running an elevator down near the customhouse in New York the other day. And his regular trade when he was at home was taking live chickens out of eggs. Yes, magic. That's what you might call changing your profession. He says his folks back home are sore on him for going away to a country where people ride up and down

stairs, instead of walking. He's got a "romantic adventurer" temperament, too.

You take the Flagship Bar in Malta. A gunner's mate out of the *Inflexible* near bit my thumb off in there. He didn't mean any harm. Now you can see why people are talking of abolishing navies. I had my go at it, but Valetta is a poor place to start abolishing the British navy. Take a try at it yourself, if you don't believe me.

South Seas? Sure—only there's a lot of 'em. Big water, small islands. Look at the chart—you couldn't see all those islands if you were to spend four lifetimes on the job. Don't eat mangoes or you'll get the prickly heat. It takes about six thousand coconuts to make a ton of copra. Who wants a ton of copra? At the price copra brings to-day, I want several tons. So would you, if you could see tank steamers loading coconut oil, and you selling it to 'em. Copra plantations are not to be sneezed at. I'm going back with my own schooner, and—*Brrrr!* Shut that window!—I'll take the prickly heat, every time. This way for the South Seas! Keep the sails on her—and call me if it moderates, as they say in Gloucester. So long!

It is a true saying that a man must eat a peck of salt with his friend before he knows him. CERVANTES.

THE ENVIABLE ATTIC.

JUST a few short weeks ago we had a letter answering a question we, or rather our predecessors, had asked nineteen years ago. Mr. J. Wayland Clark of South Bellingham, Washington, took quite a while to think this thing over, and here is what he has to say:

Excerpt from A Chat With You in THE POPULAR out November 25, 1910:

"Incidentally, we often wonder just what is the life of the average magazine. You buy it and read it. Then what becomes of it? Do you give it to some one? Do you throw it away?"

Then you ask me, as a reader, to tell you.

Throw my POPULARS away! I guess not. Lend them? Yes, but a bond must be given for their safe return. For many years I have had the mischievous habit of reading in bed. A pile of POPULARS lies beside my bed, and I reread the stories that have given me so much pleasure almost continuously for twenty-two years—and odd numbers dating back to 1904. As soon as I get through one pile of magazines it is packed back to the attic and another bunch brought down. Do you not envy me a large attic about twenty-five by forty feet and twelve feet high in the center? Believe me, I need much of the room in that attic for my accumulation of POPULARS.

Do not these facts speak for the quality of the POPULAR? A pretty fair library, a large number of contemporary periodicals and daily papers, give me plenty of reading; but the only books or magazines in the house that will stand the work I give them are my POPULARS.

The best of wishes for your continued success.

A man once asked Diogenes what was the proper time for supper, and he made answer, "If you are a rich man, whenever you please; if you are a poor man, whenever you can."

"WHEN LOVELY WOMAN."

(After Goldsmith.)

When lovely woman wants a favor,
  And finds, too late, that man won't bend,
What earthly circumstance can save her
  From disappointment in the end?

The only way to bring him over,
  The last experiment to try,
Whether a husband or a lover,
  If he have feeling is—to cry.

PHOEBE CARY.

A Chat With You

WHEN you were a little boy—or girl—did you not, as most all of us do, long to get away by yourself now and then, off in a cave or up in the attic, just to be free and independent in a little world of your own, secure, for a short time, from the rule of your elders?

And you read, with secret longing, the tales of princes or princesses who fortunately possessed magic geese or magic carpets or wishing caps or cloaks with which they could transport themselves into distant, agreeable lands.

Or, if you were of a more practical turn of mind, you pored over stories like "Robinson Crusoe," and wished for an island where, in a hut made by your own hands, you might be a law unto yourself.

* * * *

GROWING older, you realized the reasons for your young dreams. You were merely filled with the darkling pride and rebelliousness which are characteristic of youngsters. And so, going to the very extreme in your fancy, you pictured the glory of complete isolation. But maturity showed you that it couldn't be arranged. Islands are not as convenient and plentiful as they seem on the map. And they are all governed in one manner or other.

You saw, too, just why your dreams always took the form of an island, or a cave—anything remote. When other people are around you, it is impossible to be a law unto yourself, impossible to be absolutely free and independent. Their rights must be considered. Otherwise civilization would not last half an hour. The world would be plunged into destruction. If we are to live together in cities or countries, we must have laws for our own protection, and for the protection of others.

* * * *

CHARLES NEVILLE BUCK takes for the theme of his new novel, "Hell and High Water," to appear in our next issue, the case of a Kentucky mountain family which isolated itself and defied the world. Strangers who came within their fences met bullets. Even the law was not suffered to touch the lives of these fighting men whose fierce, black pride hailed back to Scottish chieftains.

But these people, the McGrants, had never grown up in their minds, as the rest of us have, and they did not understand that their fellow men had their rights, too. If the McGrants had been living on an isle somewhere, with no one around, everything would have been all right. But they were living in a mountain county, situated in a great State which is part of a great country. And law, based on the needs of its citizens, runs that country, and that State, and that county.

* * * *

THEREFORE the McGrants were due for trouble, and they found plenty. Mr. Buck, with his deep understanding of those strange, solitary, eighteenth-century folk, the mountaineers of the Bluegrass State, tells this story, which is perhaps his greatest, with all the veracity and power and sympathy for which he is justly famous. In "Hell and High Water" you will meet a lovely mountain girl, too, Serenity, and Doctor Churchill, from "outside," the only two people toward whom friendship was displayed by the McGrants.

And you see the laws of man and of nature, the mighty armored twin guardians of human rights, advance upon these insanely proud, life-careless men, until, finally, the McGrants stand embattled in their hereditary log-cabin home, determined to fight to the last ditch for their almost fantastic notions, even while the abyss of death gapes blackly behind them. A story fully worthy of Charles Neville Buck.

* * * *

IN the same issue you will find a fat installment of Fred MacIsaac's serial, "The Luck of Licania," which, by the way, you should be starting in this present number, if you have not already done so. Other contributors to the First March Issue will be A. M. Chisholm, W. B. M. Ferguson, and John Randolph Phillips. Mr. Chisholm will be present with a mighty interesting little chat about his hobby, the Chesapeake Bay dog; Mr. Ferguson will spin a short mystery yarn for you, called "Red Hands," which contains a most ingenious and baffling idea; and Mr. Phillips, who is no longer a newcomer to THE POPULAR but a "regular," and a dog-goned good one, too, will take you again into the underworld of which he knows how to write so authentically and grippingly.

Other stories and various attractive titbits and features will help to round out an issue that, we feel, will live up to our best resolutions for this new year, 1930.

Signing off till next time.

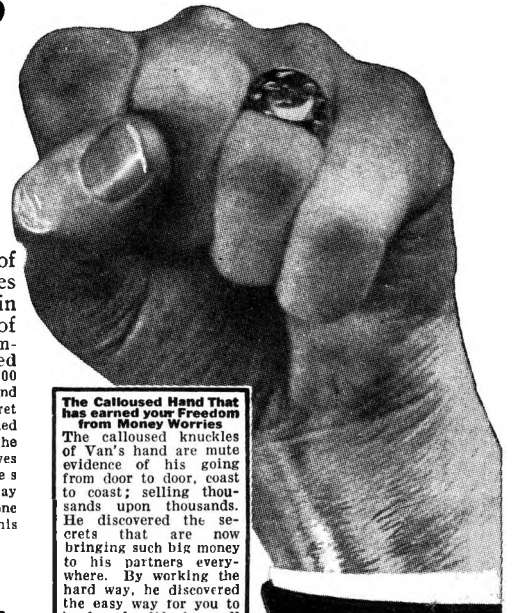
THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

In the First March Issue—Out February 7th

A Minute With—— The Chesapeake Bay Dog	**A. M. CHISHOLM**
Hell And High Water A Full-length Complete Novel	**CHARLES NEVILLE BUCK**
Side-Kicks	**JOHN RANDOLPH PHILLIPS**
Red Hands	**W. B. M. FERGUSON**
The Luck Of Licania A Five-part Story—Part II	**FRED MacISAAC**
The Popular Club	
A Chat With You	**THE EDITORS**

The Hand that knocked at 150,000 Doors

Signs a Guarantee that is bringing $15 a DAY *to Van's happy partners*



The Calloused Hand That has earned your Freedom from Money Worries
The calloused knuckles of Van's hand are mute evidence of his going from door to door, coast to coast; selling thousands upon thousands. He discovered the secrets that are now bringing such big money to his partners everywhere. By working the hard way, he discovered the easy way for you to be free for life from all money worries.

What other man could have dared to make such an outstanding written Guarantee as C. W. Van De Mark now offers to every honest man or woman? He can do it only because of the amazing principles which he discovered in his active experience of 33 years. "Van" himself has knocked at 150,000 doors! And the secret he learned—which he now gives you, makes $15.00 a day easy for anyone who will follow his instructions.

I'LL MAKE YOU MY PARTNER

In My Established Business and Give You Half of Every Dollar We Take In!

This is my solemn promise to you (and I am known to 20,000 partners as the man who always keeps his promise). Send the coupon today—let me show you how I set you up in a permanent dignified business of your own in your own locality and SHOW YOU HOW TO MAKE $15 A DAY STEADY INCOME.

I'll Take All The Chances

I don't want you to risk a penny. I'll take the chances—I'll furnish everything; I'll set you up in a business of your own and show you how to make others earn money for you. My instructions will show you how to be free from money worries for life.

NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED

Simply distribute teas, coffees, extracts, foods, things people need, to an established list of my customers. I want you to look after my business in your locality. No experience needed—I show you exactly what to do:—guide you and help you every step of the way.

RIDE IN CHRYSLER COACH

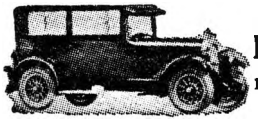
I offer a new Chrysler coach to every one of my partners. I give it absolutely free to producers to use in our business. No strings attached—it's yours to keep.

SPARE TIME OR FULL TIME

Thousands now free from all money worries through my new, easy way of making money in their spare time or full time. I assure $3 an hour for spare time work to anyone who will follow my easy plan. Hundreds have quit hard, low-pay jobs to make from $95 to $150 a week easy with me. Mail the coupon now!

YOU CAN HAVE $50 EXTRA CASH NEXT SATURDAY

Send coupon at once and I will prove my honest promises by making it possible for YOU to have $50 EXTRA CASH within a week from tonight!! Someone else in your locality may be reading this same offer this minute—so rush the coupon to me at once and have a steady income for life.



C. W. Van De Mark, President,

Health-O Quality Products Co.

1093-AA Health-O Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio

LET VAN PAY YOUR BILLS, TOO!

"You Paid the Mortgage on My Home"

Says Rev. C. V. McMurphy of Alabama. McMurphy got "Van's" offer. The first afternoon he made $30. He writes, "The notes on the house have been burned—we have a new car—I no longer fear financial problems." He has made as high as $300 in one week.

Mother Makes $2,000 Spare Time

Mrs. S. M. Jones, of Georgia, mother of four, says, "First hour and half made $36.47." She could only work on Mondays and Saturday afternoon. But with this easy work she has made over $2,000 in a few short months.

Big Money in Spare Time

C. C. Miner, Iowa, made $74 his first four days—part time. His first 15 days (part time) he made $200! He writes, "Van, I thank God for the day I signed up for you."

I'LL KEEP MY PROMISE TO YOU AS I HAVE FOR THESE PEOPLE

MAIL TODAY

C. W. Van De Mark, President,
Health-O Quality Products Co.,
Dept. 1093-AA

Mr. Van:—Without cost or obligation to me rush me your amazing portfolio, WRITTEN GUARANTEE and CHRYSLER offer. Prove to me that I can have $50 cash in my pocket within a week.

Name .....

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City .....State .....

When the table talk turns to cigarettes —

the men smile quietly and say: "To smoke Camels is to know the real pleasure of smoking."

The preference of experienced smokers has made Camels by far the most popular cigarette in the United States.

Camel

CIGARETTES